

David J. Skorton, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution

Dr. David J. Skorton is the 13th Secretary of the Smithsonian. He assumed his position July 1, 2015.

As Secretary, Skorton oversees 19 museums, 21 libraries, the National Zoo, numerous research centers, and several education units and centers.

Skorton, a cardiologist, is the first physician to serve as Secretary. He previously was the president of Cornell University, a position he held beginning July 2006. He was also a professor in the Departments of Medicine and Pediatrics at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City and in Cornell's Department of Biomedical Engineering at the College of Engineering. His research focus is congenital heart disease and cardiac imaging and image processing.

Before becoming Cornell's president, Skorton was president of the University of Iowa from 2003 to 2006 and a member of its faculty for 26 years.

An ardent and nationally recognized supporter of the arts and humanities, Skorton has called for a national dialogue to emphasize the importance of funding for these disciplines. He asserts that supporting the arts and humanities is a wise investment in the future of the country.

Skorton is a strong proponent of business–university partnerships. He has been active in innovation and economic development at the state and national levels to bring business and universities together toward diversifying regional economies. He is past chair of the Business-Higher Education Forum, an independent, nonprofit organization of industry CEOs, leaders of colleges and universities, and foundation executives.

Skorton was a pioneer in applying computer analysis and processing techniques to cardiac imaging; he has published two major texts and numerous articles, reviews and book chapters on cardiac imaging and image processing.

Skorton was elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies (now the National Academy of Medicine) and is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and an elected member of the American Philosophical Society. A national leader in research ethics, he was the charter president of the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs Inc., the first group organized specifically to accredit human research protection programs.

Skorton is an avid amateur musician who plays the flute and the saxophone. He cohosted “As Night Falls—Latin Jazz,” a weekly program on the University of Iowa's public FM radio station.

He is currently a Distinguished Professor at Georgetown University. Skorton earned his bachelor's degree in psychology and his M.D. both from Northwestern University. He completed his medical residency and fellowship in cardiology at the University of California, Los Angeles.