Entering College: A Big Step

John W. Harp, Vice President for Student Affairs

It's almost time for your son or daughter to take the big step of leaving home and entering college. This will be both an exciting and anxiety-filled experience for new college students (and for parents). When new students across the country arrive on their college campuses soon, it will start the clock on a critical six- to 10-week period in which they will engage in new experiences related to their immediate and eventual success in college. Adapting to new surroundings, new friends, new academic expectations, new routines, and a roommate are just a few of the transitional challenges that new students encounter. But rest easy, the faculty and staff at Cornell College are well-trained to assist your son or daughter with these and other transitions.

As you will soon learn, Cornell College is a special place; a place that makes differences in the lives of students, differences that last a lifetime. Students are expected to learn in a unique format, and live harmoniously in a close-knit and responsive campus community.

Learning to learn

First and foremost, your Cornell student will be challenged to learn in a fast-paced, yet in-depth manner closely resembling the ways of the world of work and life. Most importantly, new Cornell students will enhance their abilities to learn, a skill that will benefit them for a lifetime. The first few months may be trying, but with the right dedication and support, your son or daughter will get the hang of it and will meet this challenge.

Finding their place

Secondly, your son or daughter will experience membership in the Cornell community. Almost immediately, he or she will realize that, along with learning our community values, involvement, leadership, service, diversity, and caring about others, new Cornellians will experience meeting people similar to and very different from themselves. Your son or daughter will reaps the rewards of participating in student organizations and service outings, attending campus cultural events, and engaging in thoughtful conversations. He or she will reflect critically after listening to new ideas, being part of a team, and finding activities of interest. Experiences in this community will produce times of joy and celebration and times of pride and belonging. But along the way there may also be times of anxiety and self-doubt. Your son or daughter will learn from these experiences and will develop a deep connection that will cause them to consider the Cornell community as a second home.

Developing as an adult

From the beginning, your son or daughter will be treated like an adult in progress. As you well know, this means having both significant responsibility and freedom. With this freedom and responsibility, your student can expect support and challenges from staff, faculty, and peers. As your student joins organizations, participates in service or excels in class, he or she will receive positive feedback, support and advice. However, if your student skips class or meetings with an advisor, there may be consequences. If a student makes inappropriate, unhealthy, or dangerous choices, he or she will likely have more serious interactions with staff members. Responses will be firm, fair, and supportive of the development of personal responsibility leading to adulthood.

This is just a capsule description of the unique challenges and experiences that lie ahead for your Cornellian this fall. We are proud that nearly 8.5 out of 10 first-year students return for their sophomore year at Cornell; a strong sign of the satisfaction, success and direction our students feel. We continually strive to provide an outstanding educational experience for Cornellians in and out of the classroom and to engage students in extraordinary opportunities with meaningful outcomes. We are very excited that you and your student will be a part of our community and hope you cherish the experience.

6 ways parents can help students have a successful first-year experience

1. Encourage them to establish guidelines with roommates early, and to talk regularly with each other about how they are getting along.
2. Discuss the necessity to attend every class meeting, prepare before class, and turn in all assignments.
3. Stress the importance of effective time management, and discuss the dangers of spending too much time online.
4. Encourage them to meet with professors and advisors, and use resources in the Center for Teaching and Learning.
5. Advise them to take in campus events, meet people, and get involved. Engagement outside of the classroom contributes to learning and development.
6. Ask what they like most and least about college; help them build on the positives and develop solutions for alleviating the negatives.
**Move-in Day Information**

Bringing a student to college, especially for the first time, can be stressful. This information is meant to help ease the transition.

**Arriving and First Stop**

Upon arriving in Mount Vernon, the first stop will either be a parking lot or your student's residence hall. Your route around campus will vary depending on your destination, so print the move-in map found on this helpful page and look for signs as you approach campus.

**Move-in**

Moving in may be the most challenging part of the day, and volunteers will be on hand to help. When it’s your time to move in, follow the move-in map to get near your student’s residence hall. Staff and signs will provide direction. As soon as your vehicle is unloaded, you’ll be asked to move it to a nearby parking lot. When packing, label all boxes with your student’s room number. Remember that on-campus storage is not available and that college furniture must remain in the room. New students should plan to arrive at Cornell on Wednesday, Aug. 27. Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate special requests to arrive on the weekend.

**Validation**

If Validation is first on your schedule, park and walk to Thomas Commons. This is a short process through which enrollment details are completed. Students with work-study awards will be required to complete an I-9. Please bring "original" documents for the verification process. You can find a complete list of acceptable documents by reviewing the I-9 form located here. Please contact Shelly O’Neal at 319-895-4243 or email soneal@cornellcollege.edu with questions.

**Questions and Answers**

Many questions, particularly regarding financial aid, registration and billing, will be answered during Parents’ Orientation. Please refer to the NSO webpage (see link below) for your student’s checklist, a schedule for Move-in Day and Parents’ Orientation, and much more.

Can’t find answers to questions before your arrival? Use this guide or call the Info Desk at (319) 895-4334.

**Early Arrival Fall Athletes**

Parents bringing students to campus early for fall sports do not need to return on Aug. 27, but are welcomed.

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**Academics**

**Focus on Academics during NSO**

A significant portion of NSO sessions are dedicated to immersing students into Cornell’s academic culture. Most sessions are led by faculty members, and include:

- Introduction to the liberal arts
- Individual and small group meetings with academic advisors
- Registration assistance
- Academic expectations (led by upper-class students)
- Pre-Law and Pre-Health interest lunches
- Interactive Library Tour
- First Year Seminar course preview

Academic resources are listed here.

**Grade Reports**

Students receive a grade for each course taken and the grades are available to students on a secure website by the first week of the next term. A student’s academic information, including grades, is considered confidential information by federal law. Students can share their grades via email with parents (and others) by following instructions found here.

Additionally, under federal law, Cornell personnel cannot necessarily discuss academic information with parents, even if you receive grade reports. Please expect that Cornell College faculty and staff will pause to verify that they have permission to speak with you before they share any information about your student. If your student has not given us permission to speak with you and wishes to do so, he or she can fill out the “Parental Release” form. Questions? Contact the Registrar.
Health & Wellness

Student Physicals
As previously communicated, all students are required to submit health information forms by July 31. Students who have not turned in the required health forms cannot attend class beginning second block, until the information is complete. Please make sure that the medical history, immunizations, physical forms and insurance information have been sent.

Health Insurance
Although students are not required by the College to have health insurance, we strongly encourage them to enroll in a plan that provides coverage in the Mt. Vernon area. Before arriving on campus, please review your current policy to make sure it covers your student when they are away from home. If your student does not have good coverage in Iowa or is not currently insured, these healthcare websites may be helpful to you in finding a policy.

Questions about student insurance can be directed to Cindy Krob, Student Affairs Office at (319) 895-4234 or email ckrob@cornellcollege.edu.

Emergency Planning
Family, campus or regional emergencies may occur while your son or daughter is at Cornell. Have multiple options for communicating (e-mail, cell, text, designating a friend of family member outside your hometown and Mt. Vernon through which to relay messages) in case one mode is down.

Rapid Alert Messaging
All new students should register for Cornell’s emergency text messaging service (“RAM Alert”) that notifies them of safety concern situations on or around campus. You can read about the RAM Alert system here.

Smoke-free Campus
State law requires all indoor and outdoor campus spaces to be smoke free.

Managing Stress
Stress can affect students physically and emotionally. There are many ways students can manage stress on campus for no cost. Short-term counseling is available at the Counseling Center. There is a Stress Free Room located in Ebersole or the Roe Howard Fitness Center located in the middle level of the Thomas Commons, or sign up for yoga, Pilates, or other activities here.

Renter’s Insurance
Cornell highly recommends that you obtain a renter’s insurance policy to cover replacement of your student’s belongings while living away from home. Just like in your home, destructive events (like pipes bursting) can destroy property. Cornell, like other colleges, does not insure students’ personal property, but we do provide immediate assistance. Think of us like the Red Cross; we’ll intervene right away to place students in safe and secure places to live and help meet immediate needs (e.g., textbooks, clean clothes). But replacing entire wardrobes, computers, etc. is the purpose of insurance. Check with your agent or research online to obtain a

Information Technology

Personal Computers Security and Virus Protection

- It is the responsibility of each student to ensure that their personal computer which they will use on campus meets Cornell’s minimum requirements. These requirements can be viewed here.

- In addition to having a support operating system and current virus protection, it is extremely important that your student’s computer is up-to-date with the latest available security patches. Please use the appropriate update method for your operating system. The two most popular methods are running Windows Update on your Windows based computer or Software Update on an Apple system.

Network/Internet, Cable TV, and Telephone

- All on campus residence hall rooms have network access, both wired and wireless. To connect a personal computer to the college network, simply connect a network ready computer into the network port in the room using an Ethernet cable, or in the case of a wireless connection, follow these instructions. When your student opens a web browser, they will be directed to Cornell’s online registration page. If needed, IT will assist in connecting a malware free system to the college network.

- All on campus residence hall rooms are cable television ready. To connect, all that is needed is a cable ready TV and a standard coax cable. Once connected, don’t forget to have the TV automatically scan for available channels. There are more than 60 cable channels available through Cornell’s cable system.

- We have recently installed a new campus voice-over-IP (VoIP) phone system, although we find that most students do not use our phone system, students do have the option of connecting a standard analog phone to the campus system. To do so, students are required to purchase a VoIP-to-analog converter which is available at the Office of Information Technology. Converters cost between $50 and $75 and require 1-3 business days to configure. To begin the purchase and set up process, please contact the Office of Information Technology at 319-
Add us to your favorite links: www.cornellcollege.edu

Block Break Notes and Travel Planning

Please note that Thanksgiving break, which will occur during block 4, begins at 12p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 26. Most classes will meet until noon, so please do not schedule an earlier departure from campus for your student. Also, as a result of Thanksgiving break occurring during the block, block 4 will end on a Friday instead of a Wednesday. The block officially ends at 12p.m. on Friday, Dec. 19. Again, most classes will meet until noon, so please do not schedule an earlier departure from campus for your student. Residence Halls remain open for Thanksgiving and Spring break. Dining service is provided during Thanksgiving break. The meal plans do not involve Spring break. Meals can be purchased during Spring break.

Transportation to airport or bus station

Mount Vernon is just 20 minutes from both the Eastern Iowa Airport and the bus terminal in Cedar Rapids. Students who need transportation to or from one of these points can find options here.

Money matters

There are three local banks in Mount Vernon (links on NSO webpage); one has an ATM in Thomas Commons. Iowa Banking laws require anyone using it be charged $1.50 per transaction with the exception of Mount Vernon Bank & Trust customers or Shazam Privilege Status card holders. Students may cash checks for up to $100 in Old Sem during business hours Monday-Friday.

Stay Connected with Cornell

- This regularly updated site serves as the starting point for ongoing information for parents and families:
- Read about the happenings at Cornell via the news center page.
- Follow us on a variety of social networking sites.