

Career Engagement Center Assessment Project Summary: Cornell Fellows Program

The Cornell Fellows program is the college's premier opportunity for high-level internships and professional mentoring. We intend the fellowship experience as a chance for students to "apply the liberal arts to the world" by taking the knowledge they have gained through coursework and co-curricular opportunities at Cornell and applying those lessons to real world scenarios.

To facilitate the learning experience, Cornell Fellowships complete a tangible project comparable to an entry-level work experience; collaborate with a professional mentor on-site to guide the work of the Fellow and to support the student's career exploration as it relates to the site's industry area; and engage in multiple reflection opportunities before, during, and after the fellowship. Ultimately, we hope that a Cornell Fellowship enables students to refine their career interests and gain some clarity on the pathways they might pursue to achieve their academic and professional goals.

After reviewing 34 post-fellowship reports from Cornell Fellows participants in the 2011-2012 fiscal year cycle, we believe the Cornell Fellows experience advances student learning about careers as a result of meaningful interactions with people and active engagement with their fellowship environment.

Interpersonal Interactions

The people Cornell Fellows interact with throughout their fellowship experience play a significant role in helping a student expand their knowledge about possible careers.

- **Site mentors** were instrumental in providing guidance and feedback to Cornell Fellows, and the conversations students had with them were profoundly influential to influencing their thought processes and career paths students considered.
 - *As my supervisor, Amy gave me great responsibility and allowed me to express my creativity through virtually free reign of designing the Civil War exhibit. (Elle)*
 - *This "project" was given form and guidance by my mentor, Jim Paul, who directed me towards certain authors, tapes, and Biblical passages to which my theological or artistic focus was drifting. Our many conversations led to a few central themes. (Alec)*
 - *For me I believe it makes the most sense to obtain an M.D. before attempting a Ph.D. as opposed to the other way around or some programs that offer M.D./Ph.D. dual degrees. I owe this decision to the multiple discussions I had with Dr. Kraig and my PSOMER directors. (Jordan)*
- The professional colleagues Cornell Fellows had at their site served as **role models** and helped expose fellows to what it is like to work in their particular field, provided an opportunity hear stories about the best path to take to get into the field, and allowed the fellows to see first-hand what that particular profession is all about.

- *The staff at the Marietta Museum went out of their way to ensure that my internship was extensive and comprehensive by allowing me to shadow each of their jobs, letting me sit in on board meetings, and counseling me on the next and important steps towards working in the museum world. (Elle)*
- *With the insightful career advice of my coworkers and experiences I have learned from interning in the Accounting Department, I have finally decided to pursue an accounting career after I graduate from Cornell. (Yee)*
- *I had the opportunity to discuss many factors relating to medical school and a future life as a physician with medical students in a way not typically available to a pre-medical student. (Matt)*
- Through interactions other employees/staff members at their fellowship sites, Cornell Fellows were able to practice their **networking** skills, expand their professional network, and utilize their network to expand knowledge on how to advance professionally.
 - *I was exposed to the administration and planning aspects of this large non-profit organization while connecting myself to various talented professionals that make up this think tank organization. (Xinrui)*
 - *I was able to shadow many successful individuals and make a lasting relationship/connection that is a very important at this early stage of my career. (Nga)*
 - *...my Fellowship taught me just how important networking is in the real world...All of the meetings we scored came through Marcia's connections. (Lindsay)*
- Cornell Fellows gained exposure to the **broader community** their host site operated in as a result of the various individuals the fellows interacted with as part of their day-to-day responsibilities.
 - *During my Fellowship, I attended staff meetings, Cultivate Hope meetings, and a Healthy Living Coalition meeting at Linn County Public Health. The staff and Cultivate Hope meetings were a time to strategize with other Matthew 25 employees regarding urban farm planning and grant applications. (MacKenzie)*
 - *[Visiting different public health organizations] provided me with the opportunity to view a wide array of Indian society that I would have otherwise not had the opportunity to see. (Matt)*

Influential Surroundings

Through actively engagement with the new professional, personal, and cultural environments of their fellowship site, Cornell Fellows gained meaningful insight into not only an industry but about themselves as young professionals.

- Cornell Fellows were able to develop an understanding of relevant **industry standards and practices** and how those concepts contributed to the operations of their host site.
 - *I learned about size standards for various private companies interacting with Government and how a company's size standard can play into their ability to submit a proposal or bid for upcoming procurement opportunities. (Spencer)*

- ...through my research I have found that there are viable and legitimate methods of evaluating teachers on their performance. (Jack)
- My fellowship involved researching key companies and sectors of the council's member companies and prospect companies to recommend speakers and topics for the upcoming CEO Speaker Series and Annual Corporate Conference. (Xinrui)
- Cornell Fellows had an opportunity to learn about **foundational policies, practices, and information** that allowed them to develop a deeper understanding of how and why an organization functions and works on what it does.
 - During my experience at the Mayo Clinic, I learned a lot about CAP rhythms and RSWA patterns as well as various sleep disorders like RBD and sleep apnea. I did a lot of reading on REM sleep behavior disorder. (Parker)
 - All of the research I did truly reinforced just how familiar I became over the past two months with knowing where to obtain specific information, how to use certain programs that provide the necessary data (e.g., PubTrack), what the fastest and most efficient ways of searching for specific items (i.e. syllabi from specific schools on specific courses/topics) are, and how to best sum up my findings for the editor's use and convenience. (Melissa)
 - Another one of my responsibilities was writing applications for grants to fund the urban farm... In each application, I had to describe the goals of Matthew 25, the Cultivate Hope program, and the urban farm. This helped me understand the urban farm and how it would operate, and I learned about sustainable, local food production. (MacKenzie)
- Cornell Fellows were able to learn about **technical skills** and use tools used by their organization to implement the work of their host site.
 - I was assigned two regular tasks: reconcile expense reports of sales representatives on [the] expensewire website and verify TCM's daily UPS shipment (Yee)
 - Throughout this fellowship, I also worked on several other tasks, including statistical analyses, webinar testing for webinars that BCS helped developed for SEE Action (Spencer)
 - ...using Microsoft Outlook, scheduling a meeting, as well as paging to find someone in the plant are basic, but important, office skills I have gained (Thu)
- Through active engagement and reflection about their fellowship organization, Cornell Fellows were able to gain greater insight into the **philosophical and practical underpinnings** of their host site.
 - I am so lucky to have been a part of one of the largest Arts in Healthcare programs in the country, and to have worked beside major pioneers in this growing field... This is proving that non-traditional ways of healing are beneficial, and that making art and showing compassion for the patients improves clinical outcomes. (Ellen)

- *I also learned how to market SmartVote itself to organizations that typically don't spend a lot of money on increasing their membership or utilizing professional calling centers instead of volunteers. (Lindsay)*
- *My fellowship taught me a great deal about the inner workings of a successful non-profit organization. (Liz)*
- Cornell Fellows had exposure to different **organizational and social cultures** while at their fellowship site which allowed them to better refine how they would fill their role as young professionals in the workplace.
 - *I now feel that I have a better grasp of what a “regular” office day is like, what the “realities” of working in the publishing industry are, as well as a better understanding of various publishing elements from common jargon to how to go about completing different basic tasks. (Melissa)*
 - *Working in a professional office allowed me insight into office politics and political offices. (Kalissa)*
 - *As welcoming as everyone in the school was, it was clear that I was regarded as a cultural outsider. This could be due to the fact that I am not a native Spanish speaker, but this pushed me to break through this language barrier. (Rose)*
- Cornell Fellows were **challenged to adapt to and learn from their new surroundings** beyond their fellowship site and consequently challenged their own perceptions of who they are and what they are capable of.
 - *...everyday experiences, such as walking on the street, turn into adventures because it is so different from what I have encountered in the past. (Matt)*
 - *I found it interesting that I was responsible for giving presentations discussing Ghana in a broad sense when I had only been there for a few weeks. In a way, it forced me to immerse myself in both the language and culture more so I could gain a better understanding and appreciation for the country. (Alyssa)*
 - *Not only did I learn more about the US Conference of Mayors than I thought possible, I also gained some insight into how I react in situations that push me out of my comfort zone...I began to embrace the madness that defines city life. (Kalissa)*

Active Learning

The Cornell Fellows experience provided a lively learning laboratory for students to develop and utilize their skills in meaningful ways as well as to refine how they will approach their future successes.

- Cornell Fellows were in environments that challenged them to develop a deeper understanding of the **skills necessary for success in the professional world.**

- *I learned that reading the literature pertaining to your area of research is requisite. I had never understood a lab project so well because I had never spent so much time reading the technical literature, such as electrophysiology, that described the underlying theory behind my experiments. (Jordan)*
 - *I learned a lot about financial modeling in Excel and practical business functions in Excel. This internship made me realize how broad and helpful Excel is for businesses and reporting. (Yee)*
 - *...the interaction with corporate members and prospect companies allowed me to build important business skills and conduct professional business communications. (Xinrui)*
- The Cornell Fellows experienced provided an opportunity for students recognize the ways in which they were **growing personally and professionally**.
 - *Moving to a new city and living on my own as a young professional has fostered me to develop a great level of adaptability and flexibility. (Nga)*
 - *[the] fellowship permanently instilled in me a strong global perspective.(Anders)*
 - *Not only have I learned an immense amount but I believe I have also gained much more confidence as a professional” (Melissa)*
- Cornell Fellowship projects gave students the chance to **recognize the complexities** of the work they and their host organizations were engaged in.
 - *Being given the project of assessing the manuscript not only gave me some invaluable practice in assessing and analyzing a manuscript, but it further impressed upon me how essential it is within this industry to carefully consider and research all the little details about the market before making any final, larger decisions (such as whether to sign this book or not). (Melissa)*
 - *Even a small piece of metal in a package out of a million packages can create a bad reputation for the company. I also have learned how a food production company will go above and beyond to prevent this issue. (Thu)*
 - *In my third month, I learned about event planning and organization. Non-governmental organizations run on the money they fundraise from donors in order to keep their doors open and their programs running. Without the support of such kind individuals, programs like those run by PEACE would be non-existent. (Emily Z)*
- As Cornell Fellows, students had a rich opportunity to **refine or redefine the career paths** they aspired to following the fellowship.
 - *From my experiences, I have decided I would like to continue studying in the area of Bioscience, specifically genetics. My knowledge of this area has grown exponentially from working in the lab and from the seminars given by faculty and alumni. (Ben)*
 - *I went into this fellowship absolutely sure that marine biology was my passion... [my experience] also gave me a chance to think critically about my decision to pursue a career in marine biology. (Sophie)*

- *[the fellowship has not only] informs my future career goals, but also the way in which I plan to teach: with an intercultural sensitivity and emphasis on social justice and humanism... (Anders)*

In summary, the Cornell Fellows experience is truly an extraordinary opportunity that helps students advance their career plans. Through quality interactions with professional colleagues, active involvement in the workplace, and opportunities to make meaning of the experience, Cornell Fellows gain clarity and focus on not only what they might want to do after college but also how they might successfully achieve their professional goals.