Cornell University First-Year Experience Mission Statement

Cornell University offers a coordinated and robust First-Year Experience for all new undergraduate students, aimed at providing an orientation to the University, easing the transition to university life, and helping students flourish this crucial first year.

Although new students have a wide variety of experiences as they find their academic paths, the University seeks to enrich and unify students’ experiences in six broad areas: academic/intellectual, community principles, diversity and inclusiveness, ethical Judgment and action, health and well-being, and Cornell traditions and history as identified in Goals for a Shared Experience for New Undergraduate Students at Cornell University: New Student Orientation and the First-Year Experience.

The First-Year Experience is highlighted for prospective undergraduate students and communicated in more detail to enrolled students. Once new students arrive on campus, the First-Year Experience is introduced to them through a variety of activities, services, and communications during New Student Orientation. Many offerings are at the Carol Tatkon Center, the University’s intellectual, support and resource center for first-year students.

Integral to the First-Year Experience is the North Campus Living-Learning Community. All first-year students live together on North Campus, allowing for a shared experience and supportive environment that fosters academic and intellectual learning, personal development, holistic well-being, and a sense of belonging and connectedness. Understanding that the First-Year Experience is pivotal to students’ overall academic satisfaction and success and that students establish patterns this first year, the North Campus Living-Learning Community is academically oriented and intellectually rich.

North Campus Faculty-in-Residence and Faculty Fellows play a fundamental role on North Campus. They serve to reinforce the centrality of intellectual life at the University, encouraging intellectual curiosity, risk-taking, and exploration; inspiring learning outside the classroom; making the residence hall a space for learning as well as living; unifying and bridging academic specialization to offer a one-university experience; helping students develop core competencies; cultivating the university’s values, including our commitment to diversity and inclusion and civic responsibility; and advising and mentoring students.

Also central are Residential Programs staff in the Office of the Dean of Students, such as live-in professional Residence Hall Directors (RHDs), who, with the help of their student Resident Advisors (RAs), create a vibrant, healthy living environment.
The First-Year Experience is a collaborative effort of university and college faculty and staff across campus who work individually and collectively to create a successful First-Year Experience. Vision and strategic leadership are provided by New Student Programs, Office of the Provost and Office of the Dean of Students. New Student Programs is home to New Student Orientation; the Carol Tatkon Center; the North Campus Living-Learning Initiative, including North Campus Faculty Programs; a new comprehensive educational Academic Integrity Initiative; and First-Year Parents Weekend.

New Student Programs seeks to develop innovative initiatives, such as a new Orientation Program, *Real Students, Reel Stories*, and academic offerings and pilot programs designed to promote creative intellectual and cultural interactions between first-year students and faculty; develop closer ties to the undergraduate colleges/schools; and foster collaborations with the West Campus House System, the University’s Living-Learning Community for upper-level students.