

GUIDELINES & BEST PRACTICES FOR THE CORNELL ALUMNI ADMISSIONS AMBASSADOR NETWORK (CAAAN)

The Guidelines and Best Practices for CAAAN is a joint effort of the CAAAN Advisory Committee ('C'AC) and the Undergraduate Admissions Office (UAO). The goal of this document is to provide guidance to ambassadors in their work with CAAAN. We attempt to cover both basic and specific topics, as the document is intended for both experienced and new ambassadors. Many of the policies and best practices addressed are inspired by years of positive feedback and constructive criticisms received from students, parents, guidance counselors, admissions committees, and alumni.

CAAAN Mission/Goals/Activities

CAAAN's mission is to assist the Cornell admissions community in its efforts to enroll superior undergraduate students. Cornell seeks to attract applicants whose academic performance and abilities indicate a strong likelihood of continued academic success; whose interests reflect the breadth of Cornell's programs; whose personal qualities and achievements show promise for contributing to the quality of life at Cornell; and who reflect a wide spectrum of geographic, socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Increasing the number of applicants is not a primary goal. We are most concerned with the quality of the applicant pool, and seek to select and enroll the "best" of these students.

Among other activities, ambassadors:

- encourage qualified students to investigate Cornell, visit campus, and apply
- represent Cornell at local college fairs
- attend/assist with local prospect programs
- host admitted/entering student receptions
- assist with multicultural recruitment efforts
- personalize the admissions process by contacting applicants
- encourage students accepted for admission to choose Cornell

CAAAN General Chairs and Committee Chairs are the leaders of the organization at the local level. In addition to the activities listed above, CAAAN General Chairs/Committee Chairs work to:

- train committee members and serve as the communications link between UAO and volunteers
- manage the applicant assignment process for alumni contact meetings
- recruit new members and manage a committee
- coordinate other recruitment activities, including college fairs, prospect programs, and events for admitted and enrolling students

Guidelines/Best Practices

I. General Thoughts:

1. Your enthusiasm for Cornell is a key element of CAAAN's success. Don't hesitate to share a favorite Cornell memory with a prospective student. Enthusiasm is contagious!
2. Please be certain that you are conveying accurate information about Cornell. Keep yourself as informed and updated as possible. Read the training information and literature sent to you via email by UAO and CAAAN, plus check out the Cornell (<http://www.cornell.edu/>) and CAAAN (<http://caaan.admissions.cornell.edu/>) web pages. We particularly encourage you to review the sections titled *Contact Tips & Advice* and *Prospective Students FAQ* on the CAAAN home page. You are also strongly encouraged to attend regional Cornell events (trainings, admissions

information nights for prospective students, faculty speakers, etc.) to assist you in your dialogue with applicants.

3. You are responsible for keeping your contact information up-to-date, communicating with your chairperson, and maintaining an active email account.
4. Remember that your CAAAN Contact Meeting is very likely to be the most personal part of a very difficult and sometimes impersonal admissions process. Cornell receives high praise for the work that CAAAN volunteers (you) do in putting a face on the institution. Well-conducted, courteous, informative Contact Meetings go a long way toward encouraging the best and the brightest applicants to attend Cornell.
5. Any information shared with you by an applicant (and information sent to UAO on the Contact Report Form) is confidential and should not be shared with anyone outside the Cornell admissions community. Apart from contact information you may wish to save in order to remain in touch with an applicant you contacted who matriculates, all personal applicant hard copy and electronic data should be destroyed at the end of each admissions cycle. It is also inappropriate to share a student's contact information with other students or any person outside the Cornell admissions community without the student's expressed consent.
6. Alumni who assist students with the college preparation/application process in a for-profit capacity may not serve as CAAAN volunteers.
7. Contact with high school guidance counselors is generally the responsibility of Cornell's admissions professionals. However, if you speak with a counselor, please take care to foster positive professional relationships with these important colleagues and don't hesitate to refer them to Undergraduate Admissions for answers to any questions beyond your expertise.
8. If you wish to substitute out from contacting a particular applicant that has been assigned to you (for whatever reason – e.g. personal familiarity, a family friend, etc.), contact your Chair (and not another CAAAN volunteer or UAO) to make the reassignment.
9. We request that you take a one-year sabbatical from CAAAN if your child is applying to Cornell. Despite the best of intentions, any public involvement with CAAAN (i.e. applicant contacts or college fairs) during this time may create a perceived conflict of interest.
10. If you know an applicant very well, you are encouraged to submit a letter of recommendation to the Admissions Committee on his/her behalf instead of utilizing the Contact Report Form for this purpose.

II. Arranging the Contact Meeting with an Applicant:

Please see section III, item 1 for information about the acceptable types of contact meetings.

1. Contact Meetings can be set up by email (preferably using or listing your Cornell email address) or by phone. Email is often the most efficient manner of initial contact with today's techno-savvy applicants. You can obtain a Cornell email address (actually a forwarding service used in combination with your current email service) through the following link:

<http://www.alumni.cornell.edu/email/>

2. Whether contacting applicants by email or phone, clearly identify yourself as a Cornell alumni admissions ambassador calling or emailing to schedule an informational Contact Meeting and ask

if the applicant wishes to avail her/himself of such a meeting. Please specify if the meeting will be a group meeting or a one-on-one meeting.

3. If you set up the Contact Meeting via phone, call your applicant at an appropriate time of day – not early in the morning (before 9:00 a.m.) or late in the evening (after about 9:00 p.m.).

4. The first call or email to your applicant should only be to schedule the time and place of the Contact Meeting (or phone contact, if meeting face-to-face isn't possible). It isn't fair to the applicant to turn the first call into the Contact Meeting itself.

5. Remember that Contact Meetings, whether by phone or in person, are optional for the applicant. If the applicant does not wish to have the meeting, simply note this on the Contact Report Form. Leave the option open, however, for the applicant to change her/his mind about a Contact Meeting at a later date and mention that you will be available to answer questions, should any arise during the application process.

6. We ask that you make two attempts, including both phone and email, to contact an applicant before submitting a Contact Report indicating that he/she did not respond to your meeting invitation.

III. Contact Meetings:

Please be sure to review and utilize *The CAAAN Contact – Tips and Advice* (<http://caaan.admissions.cornell.edu/ContactTips&Advice.pdf>)

1. Contact Meetings may be conducted in-person, by phone, or via video chat (e.g. Skype).

2. Clearly characterize the Contact Meeting to the applicant as an informational meeting, not an interview, nor an official part of their application process. CAAAN contacts are made for the purpose of putting a personal face on Cornell by enthusiastic, informed volunteers answering applicants' questions and providing them with information about the university.

3. CAAAN contact reports are not intended to evaluate whether an applicant should or should not be admitted. Rather, the information reported on the Contact Report Form is useful to Admissions Committees as background and additional information to confirm and enhance the picture of the applicant already presented in her/his application. Feedback from admissions committees supports the usefulness of these reports.

4. We, as CAAAN volunteers, do not conduct evaluative 'interviews.' The best Contact Report Forms normally include observations from the contact meeting and any salient information about the applicant that might not appear on their application (such as a change in a family situation or an award received after an application was sent in). If there is nothing new or informative to report, it is perfectly acceptable to state on the Contact Report Form, "No additional information about this applicant arose during the course of the Contact Meeting."

5. When a Contact Meeting is arranged with an applicant, be certain to arrive (or call if a phone contact) on time. Some volunteers have 'stood up' their applicants or been very late. Problems in effecting the Contact Meeting can be extremely stressful and discouraging for applicants. If a postponement of the Contact Meeting is necessary, provide notice well in advance to change the date, time or location.

6. Contact Meetings by phone should normally only be conducted if a one-on-one or a group meeting is not possible. One-on-one or group meetings (face-to-face contacts) are preferred by both applicants and by Cornell; however, a phone, video, or email contact is preferable to no contact at all.

7. Contact Meetings by phone should preferably be conducted from a landline. Use of cell phones for conducting phone Contact Meetings is discouraged, but if that is your only option please make certain you have a reliable signal. Select a private/quiet location for your call to prevent distractions and interruptions.

8. Please submit your contact report online ASAP after meeting with an applicant.

IV. Contact Meeting Locations:

1. Please remember that as ambassadors for Cornell, we should strive to ensure that applicants and their parents feel comfortable with the contact location.

2. A neutral site for the Contact Meeting (applicant's school, a public library, a quiet coffee shop or bookstore) is preferable to almost any other location.

3. If the applicant offers her/his house for the Contact Meeting, that is certainly okay, but as a volunteer you should not suggest this yourself. If the applicant wishes to meet at her/his house (because, for example she/he wishes to have her/his parents be present), suggest an appropriate day and time (weekends or early evening on weeknights). For your own protection, we discourage meetings at the applicant's home if there are no other adults present.

4. For the comfort of our applicants, potential liability, as well as perception reasons, conducting one-on-one Contact Meetings at the CAAAN volunteer's residence is prohibited. Group meetings or meetings including the applicant's parent(s), at the volunteer's residence at an appropriate time of day (weekends or early evenings) are acceptable. Please contact your local chairperson if you need help identifying an acceptable location.

5. CAAAN volunteers should avoid providing transportation for applicants (organized bus trips are okay). While offering a ride seems like a nice gesture, it creates a liability risk in the event of an accident.

6. Please be thoughtful and aware of students' transportation concerns. Not every applicant has access to a car.

V. Inappropriate Actions/Behaviors:

1. Reporting of any personal characteristics (height, weight, disabilities, physical attractiveness – or not, etc.) about the applicant on the Contact Report Form is not appropriate.

2. As a CAAAN volunteer, you are an advocate for Cornell, not for the applicant, high school, geographic region, nor for individual colleges or programs at the University. Advocacy for Cornell by denigrating another college/university is not appropriate.

3. Wait-listed applicants should not be invited to accepted student events, nor should they be advised to go to campus for an 'interview.' If approached for advice, you may encourage wait-listed applicants to add any new information to their applications by emailing the items directly to the admissions office (admissions@cornell.edu).

4. Do your CAAAN work yourself – using a personal assistant or staff person at your place of employment to set up Contact Meetings de-personalizes the process that CAAAN is trying to personalize. Involvement of non-Cornellians in the CAAAN contact process not only compromises secure information, but may also leave a bad impression with the applicant.
5. Charging an applicant or admitted student a fee for attendance at any meeting or event (even Cornell Club events) is inappropriate.