The CAAAN Contact
Tips & Advice

The following information represents tips and advice for the CAAAN contact. This information sheet was developed by the CAAAN Advisory Committee and staff in the Undergraduate Admissions Office in response to a request from CAAAN members. Please note that the following information should only serve as guiding principles rather than hard and fast rules. We encourage you to use your best judgment.

Tips

• 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 attracting the best and the brightest applicants to attend Cornell.

• 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.

• Please use a neutral site for the Contact Meeting: the applicant’s school, a public library, a quiet coffee shop or bookstore are just a few good options. Try to give the student a couple of site options. Please do not conduct one-on-one contacts in your home.

• Do not take notes during the meeting. It can make students nervous (“why IS s/he writing or why ISN’T s/he writing). We recommend that you jot notes immediately after they leave while your memory is fresh.

• Sometimes what applicants do not say is more important -- inability to articulate reasons for wanting Cornell or wanting to major in a particular program, etc.

• Please be sure to complete your CAAAN contact form ASAP after your contact meeting. For tips about what to include in your contact report, please see Effective CAAAN Alumni Contact Reports.

• If you don’t receive a response after your first attempt to contact a particular applicant, please try again using a different communication medium (phone if initial attempt was email, etc…). If the applicant still does not respond, you should submit a contact report indicating that the student did not respond to two different attempts to schedule a meeting.

• Ask open-ended questions, “Are there things that are important to you in a prospective college or university?” If the student gives what seems like a canned answer, try to delve deeper (e.g.”Diversity.” “What does diversity mean to you?”)

• Above all, have fun and be enthusiastic about your alma mater!

Advice

Do not ask

• About the numbers: GPA, SAT, Class rank
• If Cornell is the student’s first choice (if they volunteer the information, that’s great)
• Where else a student is applying (again, if they volunteer the information, that’s great)
Feel free to ask:
- How did you begin your college search? What resources did you use?
- What are you looking for in your college experience?
- What are/were your favorite courses and/or teachers/mentors in high school?
- Which of your activities have been most enjoyable? Which has been most meaningful for you?
- Is there anything that you did not share in your application that you would like to share now?
- What is the most important thing you want the admissions committee to know about you?
- What do you consider your strengths? What are some of your challenges?
- What do you feel sets you apart from others?
- Of what are you most proud? (An achievement or a quality)
- If you had the opportunity to take a year off between high school and college, what would you do with that year?

_Do not make negative comments about another college or university!_  
_Tout the strengths of Cornell instead!_

Any person…
13,800 undergraduates
All 50 states and over 120 nations
Multicultural and international student body
Variety of different religious groups practicing on campus
Socio-economic diversity (need-blind admission policy)

Any study…
One great university, seven unique colleges/schools
Over 4000 courses
100+ Undergraduate Majors/Interdisciplinary Programs
First year writing seminars
Ability to graduate in four years
Access to courses you need to graduate
73% of undergraduate classes enroll 2-29 students

Other highlights
Faculty who teach and advise
North Campus residential initiative
Study abroad and away opportunities
Beautiful campus
800+ clubs and organizations
One of the largest intramural programs in the nation
A top outdoor education program
Carol Tatkon Center (an academic and personal resource center on North Campus)
Undergraduate research opportunities
Cornell Commitment