First-Year Application Tips: 2014

The College of Human Ecology Admissions Committee is interested in academically talented students who are engaged in their school and greater communities, and who have a deep connection to the mission of the college as demonstrated in their essays, coursework, and lives. Our First-Year Application Tips are offered to help you thoughtfully approach the application process and present an application that most clearly reflects you as a person and as an academic.

Please carefully review the College of Human Ecology’s viewbook, major fact sheets, and website, as you consider our programs. Students who limit their search to online materials often present less compelling applications.

Attending a College of Human Ecology information session (www.human.cornell.edu/admissions/contact/visiting-the-college.cfm) is also strongly recommended. A visit to the College offers a more complete understanding of our mission, academic programs and how they fit into the context of the world, which is helpful as applicants craft their essays.

Choosing a college and a major
Selecting a college and a major are important decisions that might seem daunting. There are, however, a few tips to keep in mind as you consider your options at Cornell University.

- Consider the mission of each college - its academic objectives, research focus, family of majors, and graduation requirements.
- Review the Cornell University Courses of Study (http://courses.cuinfo.cornell.edu/) and the course descriptions listed under the major(s) that interests you. The course descriptions will help you better understand the program components and the curriculum requirements.

The College of Human Ecology is organized around the exploration of contemporary social issues, not simply academic disciplines.

In general, Human Ecology programs
- focus on contemporary issues that influence all aspects of the human condition;
- blend the liberal arts with practical, real-world experiences;
- are adaptable and allow for meaningful concentrations across Cornell’s colleges.

When considering Human Ecology’s programs know that your choice is not set in stone. We understand that interests evolve, and in fact, that is encouraged. We also know that you probably have had a combination of experiences – academic, research, extracurricular, work, and volunteer – that makes Human Ecology a compelling and thoughtful choice among Cornell’s colleges and programs. While we do not admit students to specific majors in Human Ecology, we expect all applicants to be certain that they are interested in the education, experience, and goals of the College. Applicants who are not yet sure about the major they would like to pursue are welcome to choose the “undeclared” option, but still need to demonstrate a deep connection to the Human Ecology mission and identify with one or more of our programs.

The application – an uncommon approach
We strongly encourage applicants to take an uncommon approach to the Common Application, particularly the essays. Students should use the essays as opportunities to reveal something unique about themselves and that is also relevant to our programs.

The Human Ecology Admissions Committee is very interested in how you establish a match between your academic goals and our College offerings. It is critical that applicants thoughtfully articulate a connection to the College’s mission and programs through their answer to the academic interest question on the Cornell Supplement. Be sure to answer the question that is asked.

The Human Ecology Admissions Committee wants to know which major(s) you are considering and why. What kindled your interest and how has that interest grown? How have you reflected on your academics, involvements, and experiences to develop this interest and find meaning? Do you have a career goal in mind (it is okay if you do not)! How will a Human Ecology education help you achieve your goals?

General or vague statements of interest are detrimental to the review of your application.

Personal essay
The personal essay allows the Admissions Committee to get to know you better – about what are you curious, what drives and inspires you, and/or what you find worthy of respect. This essay is an opportunity for you to express yourself. Your essays should be thoughtful and genuine; they should reveal, rather than report. Good grammar and spelling are always important!

DEA and FSAD applicants
Applicants to the Interior Design, Apparel Design, and Fashion Design Management options are required to submit a Design Index.

In addition, Interior Design and Apparel Design applicants are required to submit a portfolio; it is very strongly recommended that Fashion Design Management applicants also submit a portfolio. Portfolios and design indices are critically evaluated by faculty in the departments as part of the complete application.

Visit www.human.cornell.edu/admissions for more information.
The four year transcript
The high school transcript is a critical piece of the application that reflects academic growth, rigor, and persistence. The Admissions Committee is interested in students who have challenged themselves by taking the highest level of coursework for which they are prepared, and who are doing well in those classes. Our most competitive candidates consistently earn very strong grades that place them in the top of their class.

Students are expected to pursue challenging math and science courses, again, at the highest level for which they are prepared, throughout their high school career, regardless of the major to which a student applies.

Please pursue the established progression of course sequencing that makes the most sense for your level of preparation. We find that students who skip levels of coursework without a proper foundation are not always successful.

In the areas of upper level math and science the Admissions Committee prefers that applicants complete calculus before statistics; biology and chemistry or physics before environmental science or other elective science courses. Students interested in pursuing careers in medicine are strongly encouraged to take advanced courses in biology and chemistry if available at your high school.

We realize that high schools are as varied as the communities that support them, and while some schools might offer many honors, Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate courses, others might offer few, if any. The Admissions Committee is sensitive to these curricular differences, which are often reported by the secondary school profile that high school guidance offices provide. Ask your guidance office for a copy of the high school profile for your reference.

We hope students will find ways to reach beyond school offering limitations to comfortably incorporate more challenge into their curriculum. While we encourage students to stretch themselves, the Admissions Committee does not want students to overextend.

Applicants are required to provide senior mid-term grades; accepted students will also provide their final grades. Do not underestimate the importance of these grades. Apply yourself to your schoolwork throughout your senior year.

Accepted students should not drop any senior coursework without first consulting the Human Ecology Admissions Committee. Accepted students who do not maintain the academic momentum presented at the time of application will be contacted by the Admissions Committee.

Extracurriculars
The Human Ecology Admissions Committee is interested in how you use your time outside of the classroom, what engages you, and what informs your academic interests. The extracurriculars in which you participate are another way to establish your connection to the College of Human Ecology, to demonstrate an outward focus, and to test your interests.

Along with teams, clubs, and organizations, other important extracurricular activities include work, internship, volunteer, and research experiences.

We are interested in quality, not quantity. The Committee would rather have insight into something you really care about than see a long list of activities that might have competed for your attention.

Leadership is another factor considered when reviewing an application, and is demonstrated in many ways. Being an officer of an organization or a team captain is a great way to exhibit leadership, but it is also about meaningful and committed participation in an organization, group, team, etc.

Letters of recommendation
Letters from teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, members of the community, etc. are thoroughly reviewed to better understand the role that students play in the classroom and in their community. The Committee looks to these letters to address candidates' maturity, self motivation, initiative, and character. The letters are also used to get to know the applicant better since we do not conduct interviews.

Be sure to give recommenders plenty of time to craft a strong letter on your behalf. Again, the committee is interested in the quality of the letters, not in quantity. Deferred Early Decision applicants should refrain from sending additional letters of reference.

Standardized exams
Standardized exams are required as part of the admissions process, though students should realize that the exams are one of the many components of an applicant's story.

First-year applicants must take the SAT I or the ACT exam with the writing component. The Admissions Committee does not have a preference as to which exam is taken.

The SAT Subject exams are not required.

TOEFL/IELTS scores are required for international applicants for whom English is not their first language. More information is available at admissions.cornell.edu/apply/international.

Selection considerations
The College of Human Ecology Admissions Committee carefully reviews each application, including the essays and letters of recommendation, to thoughtfully craft an incoming class. The Admissions Committee is interested in academically gifted students who are engaged in their school and greater communities, and who have a deep connection to the mission of the college as demonstrated in their essays, coursework, and lives.

Miscellaneous tips
▲ Carefully conduct your college search to be sure that you can articulate a fit with the institutions to which you apply. The Admissions Committee is adept at determining which applicants have not done their research or are not presenting genuine interests.

▲ Contact us with any questions about the College of Human Ecology or the admissions process, or to request our printed publications.

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