

Cornell University

20th Century History

In 1967, Cornell experienced a fire in the Residential Club dormitory that killed eight students and one professor. In the late 1960s, Cornell was among the Ivy League universities that experienced heightened student activism related to cultural issues, civil rights, and opposition to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. In 1969, armed anti-Vietnam War protesters occupied Willard Straight Hall, an incident that led to a restructuring of the university's governance and forced the resignation of then Cornell president James Alfred Perkins.

Since the 20th century, rankings of universities and colleges, Cornell University and its academic programs have routinely ranked among the best in the world. In 1995, the National Research Council ranked Cornell's Ph.D. programs as sixth-best in the nation. It also ranked the academic quality of 18 individual Cornell Ph.D. programs among the top ten in the nation, which included astrophysics (ninth-best), chemistry (sixth-best), civil engineering (sixth-best), comparative literature (sixth-best), computer science (fifth-best), ecology (fourth-best), electrical engineering (seventh-best), English (seventh-best), French (eighth-best), geosciences (tenth-best), German (third-best), linguistics (ninth-best), materials science (third-best), mechanical engineering (seventh-best), philosophy (ninth-best), physics (sixth-best), Spanish (eighth-best), and statistics/biostatistics (fourth-best). The council ranked Cornell's College of Arts and Humanities faculty as fifth-best in the nation, its Mathematics and Physical Sciences faculty as sixth-best, and its College of Engineering as fifth-best.

Natural Surroundings

Cornell University's main campus in Ithaca is located in the Finger Lakes region in upstate New York and features views of the city, Cayuga Lake, and surrounding valleys. The campus is bordered by two gorges, Fall Creek Gorge and Cascadilla Gorge. The gorges are popular swimming spots during warmer months, but their use is discouraged by the university and city code due to potential safety hazards. Adjacent to the main campus, Cornell owns the 2,800-acre (1,100 ha) Cornell Botanic Gardens, which features various plants, trees, and ponds.

Sustainability

Cornell University has implemented several green initiatives, designed to promote sustainability and reduce environmental impact, including a gas-fired combined heat and power facility, an on-campus hydroelectric plant, and a lake source cooling system. In 2007, Cornell established a Center for a Sustainable Future. The same year, following a multiyear, cross-campus discussion about energy and sustainability, Cornell's Atkinson Center for Sustainability was established, funded by an \$80 million gift from alumnus David R. Atkinson ('60) and his wife Patricia, the largest gift ever received by Cornell from an individual at the time. A subsequent \$30 million commitment in 2021 will name a new multidisciplinary building on campus.

As of 2020, the university, which has committed to achieving net carbon neutrality by 2035 is powered by six solar farms, which provide 28 megawatts of power. Cornell is developing an enhanced geothermal system, known as Earth Source Heating, designed to meet campus heating needs.

In 2023, Cornell was the first university in the nation to commit to Kyoto Protocol emission reductions. The same year, a concert held at Barton Hall by Dead & Company raised \$3.1 million for MusiCares and the Cornell 2030 Project, two organizations which have contributed to the establishment of the Climate Solutions Fund and aims to catalyze large-scale, impactful climate research across the university, which will be administered by the Atkinson Center.