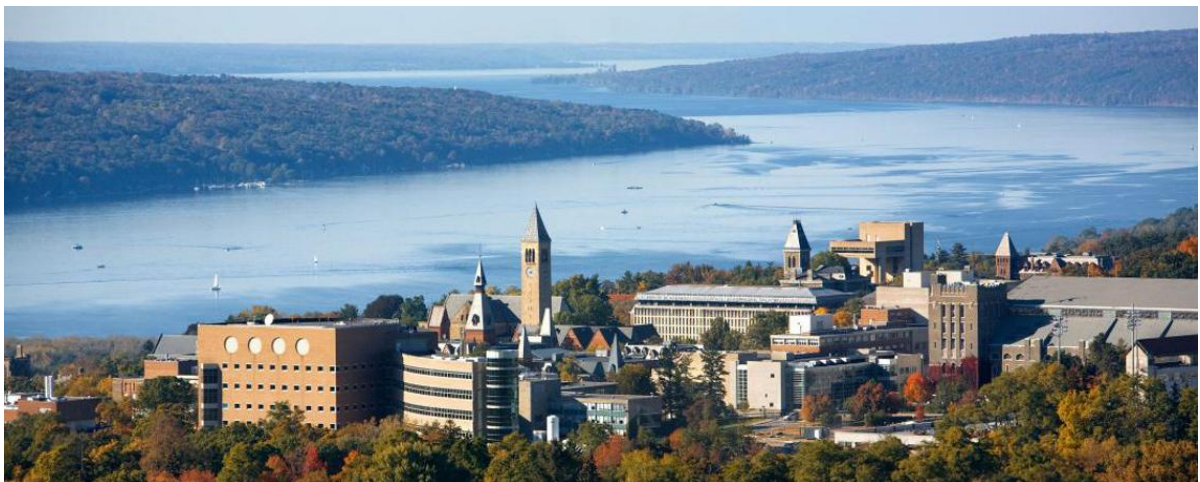




# Cornell University Ithaca, NY

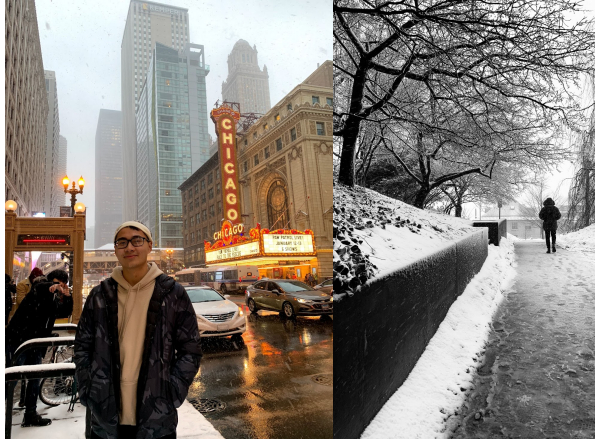
TJIE, Joshua Yustira Bayan  
Spring 2019



# EXCHANGE REPORT

## Part 1: Monthly Activity Log

January 2019



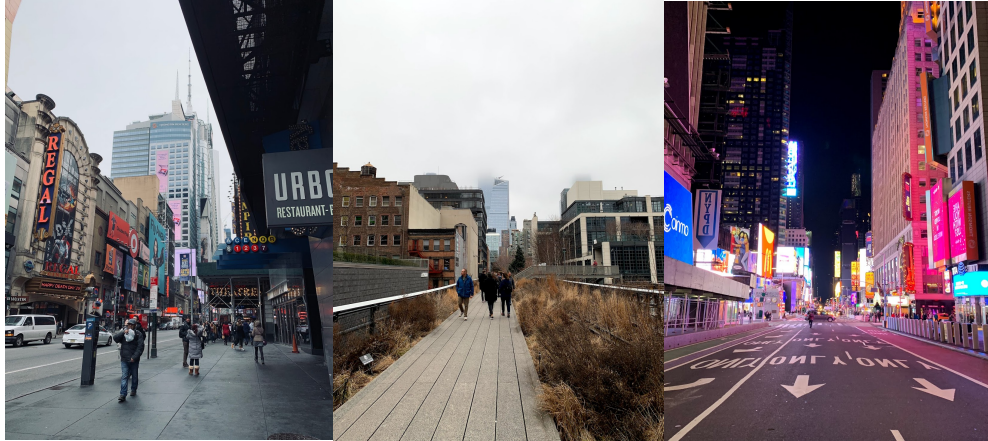
Cornell started its semester on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, but exchange students had to check-in on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Before arriving to Cornell however, I landed in Chicago which was in Illinois. This was a great part of being able to go on exchange in the USA; the accessibility to major cities such as Chicago or New York City wherever in the country you are. As you can notice in these photos, it was snowing at this time. Winter is quite cold up North in the US, and it is **extremely** cold in Ithaca, where Cornell is located – temperatures could drop lower than -20 degrees Celsius, especially in January. Bring many winter clothes, it's always better to be overprepared. Upon arriving in Cornell, I was able to check-in with the other exchange students who came from countries around the world. Little did I know that they would be my closest friends throughout the semester. Don't be afraid to interact with anyone here, because everyone is so friendly, and you could undoubtedly make lifetime friends.

February 2019



It continued to snow for many days of February, but in days that it didn't people spent a lot more time outside eating or just hanging out with friends. There are many libraries in Cornell that you can choose to study in (which is an incredible privilege, because it provides you with

so much flexibility and allows you to still have a spot even when some libraries may be overcrowded), and the picture on the right is one of them, the Olin Library. I spent some time here to work on assignments with friends, but it was not the library I spent the most time in that semester.



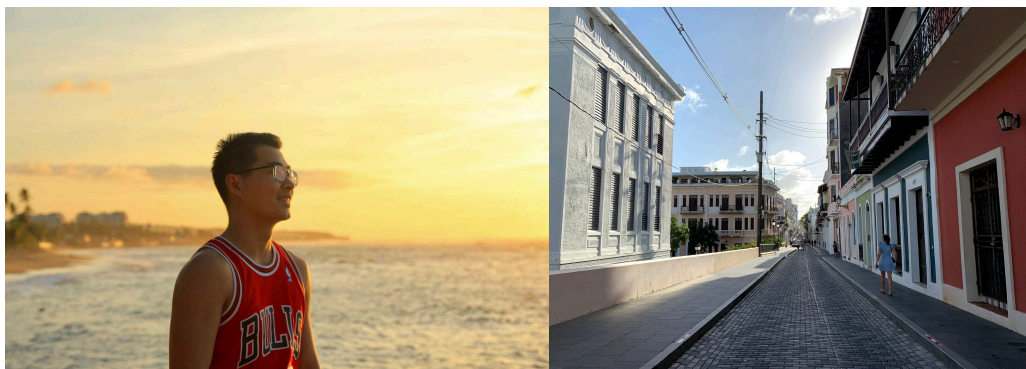
I also went on multiple trips to New York City, which was accessible by bus. The bus trips lasted 4-5 hours, but it was worth it to travel to the city that never sleeps. New York City is a great place to take a break or enjoy some time off, because there are so many attractions and tourist spots that you will practically never run out of them. I went to the modern art museum MOMA, watched a basketball game at the city's Madison Square Garden, walked around Times Square and ate huge amounts of good food. New York City is practically unmissable if you go on exchange to Cornell.

March 2019



March was when assignments, midterms and classes picked up pace. I took interesting courses including Python. It was challenging because I never learnt programming before, but I was able to learn a lot. To work on assignments, study or spend time in between classes, me and my friends chose Mann Library as the most frequent location because it was the closest to Warren Hall (where a lot of business classes were held). On the right you can see my friend taking a nap after a long day – the libraries were equipped with comfortable seats and there were small cafes in some of them - you can comfortably spend entire days in them!

April 2019



For spring break, me and my friends decided to go to Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico is an extremely convenient option because as a US territory, you do not need to make an additional visa to enter. In addition, it is also quite a safe place to go especially if you are travelling with others. Within Puerto Rico, we went to serene beaches which were untouched by pollution, cities reminiscent of Puerto Rico's Spanish history and even climbed a rainforest trail. I would really recommend Puerto Rico as a place to go if you have the chance.

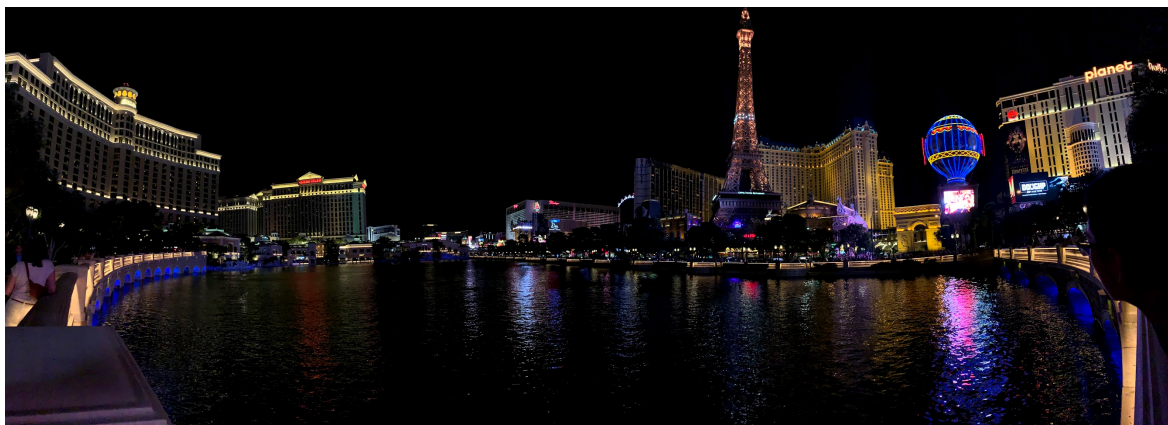


Libe Slope, a massive slope facing the West side of Cornell, is a very nice place just to sit down and bring some food to eat while watching the sunset. A lot of people like gathering here and just chilling out, and it's also close to the clock tower, which is probably Cornell's most famous location. Cornell also invites music artists to perform every year after the end of classes during the semester, with Steve Aoki being the main highlight this year.

May 2019



As the semester ended in May, it was time for many goodbyes with friends that I've met for only a few months. However, I would say that the most valuable things I could take away from my exchange semester are these friendships that I built, with people from around the world. Australia, Italy, France, Luxembourg, Portugal, Korea, Sweden, Bulgaria, UK and more. It's a shame I probably won't see them again for a long time, but being so far away from home, they helped to make the adjustment process so much easier.



The opportunity to travel was also a valuable takeaway from exchange, meeting different people along the way and exploring different cultures, while opening my mind to how people all the way around the world interact. Before I eventually went home from the US, I was able to go to Las Vegas and close out my exchange semester with a wonderful trip.

## Part 2: General Exchange Information

### Visa Procedures

Applying for the US visa was not an easy task, but both HKUST and Cornell were very helpful in the process. I suggest completing all the administrative tasks and visiting the necessary embassies as early as possible (for spring semester, try finishing it before December or in early December), so that no complications occur before you leave Hong Kong. If you ever have any questions about US visa requirements, Cornell will be glad to help with anything. My name was mistyped for the I-20 form that was needed to apply for the required F1 visa (for exchange students that do not have an American passport), but after I pointed out the issue, they were very quick to help and repair the issue.

### Orientation Activities

It is required for exchange students to go to the orientation activities that Cornell planned, with Cornell students also holding group activities for students to get to know each other before the semester. Try not to miss these, because this is where you will meet students that are in the same boat as you are (in a different country, only here for one semester, looking to make new friends, etc.) and this is the best way to ask questions to the Cornell students if you have any (they could have taken the courses that you are planning to take!)

### International Services & Activities

Cornell's ISSO, a part of their Office of Global Learning, provides many International Services including for exchange students. They hold trips and gathering events. As an Indonesian, I was able to get hold of the Indonesian student society's contact information and made friends with people from my home country. There are various international student societies that you can contact in Cornell who will be extremely welcoming, and often hold events where you can eat their national dishes, enjoy cultural performances, etc.

### Accommodations

On-campus accommodation should not be available for exchange students or should be extremely limited. While you will most likely end up staying off-campus, there are several options to choose from. You can choose to search for your own accommodation or stay in Collegetown Terrace (where I stayed), an off-campus housing that has a partnership with Cornell. Members from the ISSO will contact you regarding your interest in staying there, which will cost you USD 1300 per month. For the price that you pay however, I feel like it was extremely worth it. You have access to a 24-hour gym that is included in the cost and will stay in a two-to-three-bedroom flat which is extremely spacious, with each flat containing their own kitchen, living room, laundry machine and dryer (extremely convenient features). There is a shuttle bus provided for Collegetown Terrace students, and the public bus going around Ithaca stops quite close to Collegetown Terrace as well. I would most definitely recommend Collegetown Terrace to save time and energy searching for a house.

## Courses Registration

Course registration is quite simple and done on a website whose system is very similar to HKUST, making it easy to adjust. However, instead of the two-week add-drop period that HKUST has, you can choose to drop a course midway through the semester. That way, you can see if you will do well in the assignments or even midterms before you choose to drop a course. You can even choose to add a course after the deadline if you fill up a form and get approval from its teacher (but you need a valid reason to enter the course). I changed up my courses a lot through the registration period, going to different classes and seeing if I liked it or not. I would recommend trying out as many courses as possible before choosing what you eventually want to take, to make sure you make the most of the experience here.

## Teaching & Assessment Methods

For the courses that I took, they were lecture-based. Some courses had discussions and/or labs as well, in which you have the opportunity to gain participation points or finish tasks with the help of the TAs. There are definitely more homework assignments than in HKUST, so you have to take that into account when you are choosing your courses or how many courses you are taking. A lot of students ask questions in the lectures here, it seems to be part of the culture to ask if you ever have any problems so don't be afraid to ask questions. Some courses also have "required readings"; your professor will tell you if they expect you to keep up with these or if these are simply supplementary. Do keep up with the readings if they want you to, because your classmates most certainly will.

## Sports & Recreation Facilities

If you choose to stay in Collegetown Terrace, there are two free gyms to choose from. One of the gyms is larger but is more crowded, being equipped with weights and a wider array of machines. The other is smaller and less crowded but only has treadmills and a limited amount of other activities for you to choose from. In the beginning of the spring semester, barely anyone plays sports outside because it's so cold. However, you can play sports inside one of the sports facilities such as Noyes, which has a basketball court. There are also swimming pools, football fields, etc. if you are interested.

## Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

The currency used here is US Dollars, and I made a debit card to deposit cash and receive transfers or pay others. The most accessible bank on campus is called Tompkins Trust, which has a branch in The Cornell Store (the souvenir store), which is in the middle of the campus and is very easy to access. Other major banks have ATMs on campus, but do not have any staff members to help setup cards, etc.

## Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There is a major society exhibition near the beginning of the semester, which has an extremely vast range of clubs depending on your interests. No matter if your interests lie in sports, environment, arts, culture or any other area, there will most certainly be a society that will interest you. Some of my friends who were also on exchange were able to enter into a

school fraternity, so if that interests you definitely don't be afraid to try it out. However, it requires quite a level of commitment both to enter and while you are a fraternity member so keep that in mind.

### Health & Safety

While Cornell will have vaccination requirements for you, you can obtain the required vaccinations in the campus Health Center. I was not able to get some of the vaccinations on time before I left, so I was able to get a few vaccines there in the first few weeks of my arrival. You just simply have to set up an appointment and tell them the vaccines you need.

### Food

You have several options to choose from when it comes to eating - meal plans, school canteens, restaurants or to cook yourself. The school's canteens are of very good quality and have a pretty good variety of food, including burritos, quesadillas, Asian food, pasta, salad and burgers. There are also a wide range of canteens, and Cornell is often ranked among the best schools in the US when it comes to food. Outside of the school though, the restaurants are pretty decent. There are restaurants that offer wings, Subway, Poke bowls, bubble tea, Thai, Vietnamese, Indian, Japanese and Korean food. If you are willing to go on a 15-to-20-minute bus ride there are also bigger restaurant chains like Five Guys and Chipotle, which are pretty good. Cooking yourself or with your flat mates is also an option, as you can purchase ingredients quite affordably from Walmart, Target or Wegmans (accessible by bus). There is an Asian mart if you want to purchase sauces and condiments.

### Transportation

To travel around Ithaca, we used the public bus transportation system (named TCAT) or Uber a lot. There is an app that allows you to look at the TCAT times and when they reach the stops around town, which is extremely convenient when you want to get to class or a location at a certain time. The TCAT is free for exchange students; you just need to tap your ID card on the scanner to enter and you're done. To go outside of Ithaca is quite an issue. You would need to get a bus ticket from one of the companies such as Greyhound, Ourbus or Megabus to go to New York City or Philadelphia. Alternatively, you can also rent a car with others. New York City and Philadelphia have the biggest airports, which you will usually fly from to get to other cities around the US. There are also airports in Ithaca or nearby Syracuse, but they will have less flights and are generally more expensive.

### Climate

Extremely cold, do not underestimate the temperatures! In snowstorms temperatures dropped below -20 degrees Celsius, and throughout the semester (from January to April) temperatures would generally hover near the 0 mark. I remember it snowing for two days even in May, so always be prepared and bring your winter clothes i.e. gloves, sweater, hats, etc. Because of this, winter boots would really help to walk around the area because it can be quite thick in many parts of the campus. Also be careful because the streets will be extremely slippery after snow, this is another reason why boots will help.



## Communication

English is the language of instruction and communication around the country, and people are extremely friendly so even if you think people may not understand you, don't worry. They will definitely try their best to help if you have any questions and generally will not reject a conversation with you. If people strike up a conversation, don't be surprised, it can and will happen at least once! In terms of mobile communication, I used a plan by AT&T which was easy to get in one of the supermarkets i.e. Walmart. Wi-Fi is also available throughout campus and in Collegetown Terrace, so you should have minimal problems communicating.

## Cautionary Measures

It is always safe to wear more layers than to wear too little, to avoid getting sick. If there are clear warnings against frostbite in for example, a snowstorm, then heed it. Do not go outside in those situations at any cost, because it will most certainly ruin a huge part of your semester. School will also cancel classes if they feel like the weather is too bad, but this did not happen to me in the semester when I went (the most severe snowstorm happened in the week before the semester started). Going out late at night is mostly safe with Ithaca being a friendly smaller town but try to travel with a friend in late night times (especially when you are walking). Uber drivers were all very friendly while I was there but once again try and travel with friends whenever possible.

### Part 3: Items to Bring

Don't forget to bring these items:

- Winter clothing
  - Jacket
  - Hoodie
  - Hat/Beanie
  - Gloves
  - Winter Boots
- Other clothes
  - Including those that can be used for sports activities, hiking, etc. (for summer in May, spring break, hiking trails around Ithaca)
  - Semi-formal clothes for potential presentations, business events (if you are interested) and other formal occasions
- Cash (US Dollars) and credit card in case
- Identification documents (passport, US visa, health history records, and all other necessary exchange documents)
- Phone
- Laptop
- Adaptor for US sockets, universal adaptor is the most effective and safe option – for charging your phone, laptop, etc.
- Notebook(s) and other stationery for study (can be expensive in Cornell)
- Medicine
- Pillows, bedsheets, etc. (can buy in Walmart)

## Part 4: Useful Links and Contacts

Course Roster for Fall and Spring 2019:

<https://classes.cornell.edu/browse/roster/FA19>

<https://classes.cornell.edu/browse/roster/SP19>

ISSO (International Services from the Office of Global Learning):

<https://international.globallearning.cornell.edu/>

Cornell Student Essentials (you can access the Student Center, enroll in classes, check the exam schedule and academic calendar, order your transcript, access your bursar for any charges from Cornell, update your personal information, etc.):

<https://studentessentials.cornell.edu/>

Collegetown Terrace:

<http://collegetownterraceithaca.com/>

Ithaca's TCAT bus (including schedules, trackers, etc.):

<https://www.tcatbus.com/>

Cornell Health:

<https://health.cornell.edu/>