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Fun Fact
We pronounce OADI as “wadi,” which is an Arabic/Swahili word that refers to a cool protected passage route/valley through a desert.
ABOUT OADI

The Office of Academic Diversity Initiatives—OADI—is all about inclusion and achievement across the Cornell campus so that students of all backgrounds excel in reaching their academic goals. Our students, who are those who come from backgrounds that have been historically under-represented and those who support them, add tremendously to the educational environment that brings excellence to all fields of study. Without diverse points of view coming from varied life experience and ways of looking at and interpreting the world, all classrooms and research at Cornell would suffer. We seek to ensure a high-quality academic and intellectual experience for all at Cornell.

THE OADI VISION

Ezra Cornell’s revolutionary commitment to “any person... in any study” inspires OADI to cultivate the extraordinary presence of so many talented individuals in so many ground-breaking intellectual, artistic, and technical pursuits in order that every person in every study experiences the full diversity of dynamic and stimulating exchange with each other.

THE OADI MISSION

To ensure that the widest range of life experience, knowledge, creative expression and original thinking is shared across the breadth of Cornell’s students, faculty, staff, and disciplines, particularly by those with backgrounds historically less likely to have been represented on campus.

To support the increased presence, academic success, intellectual achievement, and inclusion across all fields of study of those from these under-represented backgrounds at Cornell.

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OADI Graduate Student Assistants
Left to right: Madison Bondoc, Sharanya Subramony, Anlly Palacios, Mengjia Chen, Xiao Tan, Emily Martin

Not pictured: Ayesha Khan, Blaire Sorenson, Nicholas Cappon, Jaynel Santos, Sanan Zaman
Student Opportunity Programs

Opportunity programs help position students to be successful in their application to the University. Cornell University hosts several opportunity programs, which include, but are not limited to Arthur O. Eve Opportunity Programs (HEOP), and the Posse Scholars program. These programs help provide a broad range of services to students who, because of academic and economic circumstances, would otherwise be unable to attend a postsecondary educational institution.

Prefreshman Summer Program

The Prefreshman Summer Program (PSP) takes place during the summer before students’ first year, and helps prefreshmen begin the process of becoming successful Cornell students. The forty-eight entering EOP/HEOP students and a selected group of additional students participate in a rigorous academic curriculum which prepares them for Cornell classes and helps improve study skills and learning habits. Participating in PSP teaches students how to navigate Cornell; know how to utilize available resources; and understand how to thrive on campus. PSP 2016 was comprised of 181 students.

In addition to exposing students to college coursework, PSP is also oriented toward offering a variety of events and opportunities to introduce entering freshmen to the Cornell campus and the Ithaca community. Program-wide field excursions last summer included trips to the Cornell Botanic Gardens, the Ithaca Farmers’ Market, Taughannock Falls State Park, and the Ithaca Commons. These excursions give students the chance to think about Cornell and Ithaca in a different way. Cate Thompson, Director of PSP, hopes that the excursions “encourage[d] students to think about life outside of the campus and [begin to] understand what makes people excited to live in Ithaca.”

PSP staff regularly host events that encourage students to think about how their social identities can impact their experiences in college. One such activity was a diversity circle, during which students opened up about their identities and had a safe space to reflect on recent national events.

Each August, the program ends with an award ceremony, where selected PSP students are honored for their accomplishments during their time in the program.

Last fall, a group of PSP students gathered again at the PSP Reunion, which was a chance for students to get see the power of the program and receive mentorship from other students.

Chi Alpha Epsilon National Honor Society

Chi Alpha Epsilon is an academic honors society founded on the vision to recognize the academic achievements of students admitted to colleges and universities through non-traditional criteria. Its purposes include promoting high academic standards, fostering increased communication among its members, and honoring academic excellence.

Currently, the society serves OADI Scholars enrolled in McNair, P3, POSSE, and EOP/HEOP. In the fall of 2016, the Zeta Upsilon Chapter of Chi Alpha Epsilon inducted its fourth cohort. To date, the chapter has inducted a total of 70 students and 11 honorary staff. The current membership includes 21 students and 7 honorary staff members.
Posse Scholars Program
Since the Posse 1 Scholars arrived on campus in the fall of 2013, they have been eagerly anticipating the moment when their Posse family would be complete. In that time, Cornell University has gone from having one Posse cohort (with ten students) to four Posse cohorts (with a total of forty students). The marvel of having Posse Scholars ranging from their first year to their senior year provides the Posse family at Cornell the opportunity to reflect on the program and its function on campus. Posse Program manager Carlo Lindo, an alumni of Babson College’s Posse 2 cohort, believes in the “great power in having a full class [because now we have] students at different levels and places in their lives [who are able to] support one another.” Students’ varying experiences will hopefully lead to the formation of a mentoring program across cohorts. This fall, Carlo Lindo and the Scholars will discuss the potential of creating an organic, student-driven mentoring program whereby students with similar interests can get to know one another better and provide advice to each other.

POSSE+ Retreat 2016
In the spring of 2016, the Posse Foundation and Cornell University faculty, staff, and students gathered for Cornell’s third annual PossePlus Retreat, which provides attendees the unique opportunity to come together and participate in powerful conversations about relevant social justice topics. The theme was “Sticks and Stones: Language and Speech in a Diverse Society.” The conference was attended by approximately 50 students and 5 faculty and staff members.

Throughout the weekend, attendees discussed the power that language has in our society, ranging from topics such as political correctness, trigger warnings, microaggressions, and free speech. Participants left the retreat with new perspectives to consider and a broader understanding of others’ lived experiences. Ari Boltax, Cornell Vet School Student and returning Posse Plus Retreat participant, enjoys attending the retreat because of the “open, kind, accepting, safe atmosphere that the retreat consistently conveys. Nowhere else have I been able to find such a safe space before. It is truly remarkable to be a member of such a community for just a weekend.”
Student Success Programs

OADI supports student engagement in dynamic research and critical discourse to foster academic diversity and cultural inclusion in multiple intellectual communities on and off campus, during their college careers and beyond. OADI’s Student Success Programs are comprised of our Scholar-Leader Initiatives (Pre-Professional Programs, OADI Research Scholars and McNair Scholars Program) as well as Community Development & Social Justice Programming and Non-Traditional Student Resources.

McNair Scholars Program

The McNair Scholars Program, entering its 5th year at Cornell, serves to prepare low-income, first-generation and under-represented undergraduate students for success in doctoral study.

Fifteen Cornell McNair scholars had the opportunity to attend the annual McNair National Research Conference hosted at the University of Maryland. The purpose of the conference was to provide exciting learning opportunities for McNair Scholars and other undergraduate researchers to share their research experiences and results with their peers and other scholars in their discipline; to provide opportunities for students to discuss their academic profiles with various research university representatives; and to provide opportunities for McNair Scholars to initiate face-to-face dialogue with prospective graduate school faculty.

In addition, the Summer Research Experience allowed students to participate in 40 hours of research per week under a faculty mentor, GRE training classes, and graduate school preparatory workshops. One scholar, Connie Cuevas, did her research with the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) and said of the McNair program and research, “I discovered the amount of work and knowledge base that needs to be gained in order to really delve into the core of research. I realized that I love learning! I’m always very enthusiastic about gaining knowledge so taking on something like a project on the LHC was perfect for me because of the quantity of knowledge you need and have available to gain.” The McNair Scholars program continues to be a great resource to its students.
Pre-Professional Programs

The Pre-Professional Programs (P3) is an initiative geared toward preparing and graduating under-represented, economically disadvantaged, or first-generation students to the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and licensed professional fields. P3 now has 175 members. In the past year, P3 has hosted events that have helped students learn about dining etiquette, social media networking, and how to dress professionally on a budget.

Kristin Dade is now serving as P3’s Program Manager. Kristin is excited to create strong relationships with and implement new initiatives for P3 students. In her new role, Dade hopes to attract more students interested in business to the program. She also hopes to provide P3 students with additional opportunities to gather throughout the semester outside of required meetings. Through such meetings, Dade is confident that students will learn how to communicate with people outside of their respective fields, which will be useful for success in their future careers.

Recently, P3 staff have become increasingly involved in helping to fund and organize the annual Black Biomedical and Technical Association’s (BBMTA) annual conference. Thus, pre-medical students involved in P3 can attend this conference as an opportunity to gain access to under-represented people who have pursued a career in the medical field. P3 and STEP were two of the conference’s sponsors.

The theme for 2016 was “Disparities in the Distribution and Access to Healthcare.” At the conference, students attended a keynote, workshops, and panels facilitated by Cornell alumni representing fields ranging from medicine, public health, doctorates in medicine, and osteopathic medicine.

Community Development and Social Justice

CDSJ provides programs that allow students to become more engaged in their communities.

The Social Justice Roundtable Series provides members of the Cornell and Ithaca communities with an opportunity to discuss social justice issues affecting both our campus and community. Recent roundtables have included topics such as decreasing barriers to health care for Cornell’s diverse populations, reproductive justice and healthcare services, and environmental justice and sustainability in Ithaca.

2016 MLK Day of Commemoration

In January 2016, Cornell University, Ithaca College, and Ithaca community members came together to celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Events included luncheons, breakfast, celebratory concerts, educational workshops, and a spoken word event. Over 100 students, faculty, and staff attended OADI’s signature spoken word poetry event featuring Sister Outsider Poetry, an award-winning duo who perform spoken word as a tool for social change.
Second Annual IVYG Conference

IvyG, a student network that connects first-generation college students within the Ivy League, hosted its second annual conference at Harvard College in the spring of 2016. The conference, whose theme was “More than a Moment: The first generation student experience and defining an agenda for change,” was attended by over 350 students, staff and administrators throughout the Ivy League. Of this number, 23 students and 3 staff from OADI attended the conference. The three-day conference featured guests including author Paul Tough and sociologist Dr. Prudence Carter.

Among the attendees were OADI students Victoria Hathaway ’16 and Sofia Da Silva ’18. Sofia served as one of Cornell’s Mobilizers, who take action to improve the experiences of first-generation students on campus. She enjoyed getting to know other first-generation students who were “working for their own communities and showing that we can be successful.” Memorable workshops addressed structural exclusion and food insecurity at elite institutions; the experiences of undocumented students in the academy; first-generation students’ experiences studying abroad; and personal branding.

“I have never felt more comfortable around a group of people until this conference. I felt that my experiences being first-generation and low-income were affirmed and echoed throughout the entire conference.” Sofia Da Silva ’18

OADI Women’s Group

In December 2015, staff members Kristin Dade and Gizzel Edmond came together to create the OADI Women’s Group, which offers women in OADI’s opportunity programs a safe space for open dialogue, community building, and mentorship. To date, there are eight members, with students participating in the Pre-Professional Program and/or the H/EOP program. The program prides itself on its student-run nature - students decide everything from the topics of conversation and activities to the food for the meetings. Once per month, students and staff meet to discuss topics that are relevant to the students, ranging from the gender and racial climate at Cornell University to professional goals and development. Activities to date have included creating vision boards and bowling.

Now that the program has successfully completed its pilot run during the spring of 2016, Kristin plans to continue hosting monthly meetings. Interested women in either the Posse Program, Pre-Professional Program, or H/EOP are welcome to join future meetings.
Latoya Erskine ’18  
Biology  
P3 Student  
My goal from a young age has been to help people, which I hope to do through medicine. I study biology because of my passion for science, English because I have a passion for writing, and Spanish because I intend to use the language to bridge the communication barrier between Latinos and health care. OADI and P3 have opened many amazing doors for me, both within and outside my field of study. I’ve been able to connect with people I normally wouldn’t have, attended health conferences, and have been provided with the resources to explore my field of study in depth. When my ambitions have seemed more than I can handle, the people of OADI, my second family, have shown me how truly capable I am of achieving my goals.

Tredarin Crumbley ’18  
China Asia-Pacific Studies  
Posse Scholar  
In the beginning of freshman year, I suffered a devastating femur injury that negatively impacted my chances of being a CAPS major and prohibited me from participating in athletic activity. My fellow scholars have been a blessing to me as all members and faculty of Cornell Posse, literally, helped me get back on my feet. From that experience, I am more motivated than ever to continue pursuing my passions of learning Mandarin, Chinese culture, working in and playing sports. In the future, I hope to facilitate strengthening US-China relations through athletics and own a business overseas.

Ida Adjivon ’17  
Biology and Society  
HEOP Student  
After Cornell, I plan to attend graduate school and become a Pediatric Occupational Therapist. I was born in Togo, West Africa, and saw firsthand how poverty affects the family. I believe my purpose is to provide help for them in any way that I can. On campus, I am involved in a number of extracurricular activities and am the founder of an organization called I, AFRICA™. With I, AFRICA™, I work with an amazing group of people who share my love of the African continent and who would love to see it become politically safe and economically profitable for its citizens. Our goal is to portray a more holistic Africa and challenge our audience to actively learn about the continent, rather than simply accept the media’s biased depiction. I love that each group of which I am part has its individual characteristics. I get to work with different personalities and in the process learn more about myself. But none of these would be possible had it not been for HEOP. The HEOP program has helped me both financially and in getting adjusted to life at Cornell. I am beyond grateful to have the privilege of being a member of this family who genuinely care about their students’ personal growth and evolution.

“My ultimate goal was, and still is, to essentially give back to my parents and my community.”  
~Oscar Barraza ’19
Oscar Barraza ’19  
Computer Science  
Posse Scholar

Coming from such a close knit community in my high school, I have always wanted to give back. I had a ton of support while in high school, and I am seeing that same level of support coming from the OADI community. After I was accepted into Cornell as both a Posse scholar and a Gates Millennium Scholar (GMS), I felt a huge sense of accomplishment. I knew that my parents were no longer going to have worry too much about having to help pay for my tuition; however, I was not done. My ultimate goal was, and still is, to essentially give back to my parents and my community. Through the help of Posse cohorts, staff, & mentors and GMS, I have been able to stay on top of everything. If I have questions about anything, I know I can ask for help and either get the help or be directed to someone who can aid me. For that, I always try my best to give back by volunteering for any Posse event that Carlo may mention to our group. Currently, I am studying computer science in the hopes of making a difference in the technology community.

Sagar Chapagain ’17  
Biological Sciences  
P3 Student

I transferred to Cornell from a community college in Maryland. While at community college, I was a full-time student and worked multiple jobs so I could pay for college and also help my family. While I was thinking that a four-year college was not an option for me because of high tuition, I was surprised to learn that I was a recipient of the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship, a prestigious award for low-income, high-achieving students. This generous scholarship opened the doors of Cornell for me. As I climbed up the slope from the West Campus every morning for my classes in the beautiful fall weather, I was incredibly excited for my new identity: a proud Cornellian. I was thankful for the opportunity given to me.

“**My fellow scholars have been a blessing to me as all members and faculty of Cornell Posse literally helped me get back on my feet.**”

~Tredarin Crumbley ‘18

Did you know?

OADI averages approximately 2,000 students, who frequent the office ~21,000 times a year.
Where in the World is OADI?

Mariela Garcia ‘16 doing fieldwork in Intag, Ecuador
With help from OADI grants, [I was given the opportunity] to work with an environmental conservation NGO and travel to the community of Intag, Ecuador to provide the community with the tools necessary to pursue sustainable development efforts over copper mining in their Cloud Forest home. […] I learned the importance of communication between individuals with expertise in different fields for the success of international projects like these. Most importantly, I witnessed the strong efforts of a number of small communities in Intag and how their strength, determination, involvement, and love for their land built and maintained a fiery wave of resistance against exploitive mining for years. I will forever hold the stories of these people’s experiences in my heart.

Marlana Zink ‘17 at the Colosseum in Rome, Italy
My semester abroad made me so much more aware and appreciative of my upbringing in an environment where I was exposed to and encouraged to befriend people different from me […]. There were also many times I felt uncomfortable with being a woman of color in Europe, but looking back, accepting this discomfort challenged me to become more confident in my blackness and served as an important lesson in empathy for people who live outside of their home country and feel this every day. […] Overall, not every day will feel like a whimsical vacation, but you will gain a greater sense of adventure, independence, and confidence in your ability to handle yourself in a foreign setting. Most importantly, you will truly see how big of a world there is out there.

Anthony Halmon ‘17 in Salamanca, Spain
Through my involvement in the McNair Scholars Program, I learned about the Keith Sherin Global Scholars program, which allows 15 TRiO students to spend 29 days in Salamanca, Spain. I applied to the program excited at the opportunity to take three classes in Spanish, immerse myself in the Spanish culture, stay with a host family, and meet new people. […] I had a wonderful time, and I would encourage anyone that’s thinking about studying abroad to go for it; your only regret will be not doing so when you had the chance.
Where in the World is OADI?

Miguel Martinez ‘18 at the Peña de Francia Mountain in Salamanca, Spain
Growing up as a first generation low-income student, I never imagined I would be able to study abroad. As I embarked on my almost 5-week study abroad experience in Salamanca, Spain, I couldn’t help but to think about the immense privilege I had to be able to study in a different country. Visiting Salamanca helped me broaden my perspective of the world. I was no longer reading about Spain and its features, rather I was living its history, culture, and people through my presence. [...] Overall, as international relations minor and a student who seeks to empower marginalized groups around the world, this experience made the world smaller, broadened my knowledge of other cultures around the world, and contributed to my ambition to be a global citizen.

Tenzin Wangmo ‘17 at the Dunnotar Castle in Scotland, UK
In my months of making cultural faux pas, I came to terms with the fact that it’s okay to make mistakes, to get lost in a new city at odd times of the day and to make choices that will seem foolish in hindsight. Because in my time at Edinburgh and while traveling, I realized that there is nothing so irreparable as to make me regret my decision to study abroad. [...] In my five months abroad, I was able to explore over eighteen cities and countries, spanning across Europe from Dublin and Brussels to Poland and Austria. I understood that although the expanse of the world was so vast that I couldn’t possibly experience everything, I was able to make my list just a little bit shorter because of my time abroad.

Alana Siqueria ‘17 in Prague, Czech Republic
Never had I imagined that I would be granted the unique opportunity to study in [Prague]. [...] The program at the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague was perfect for me. It offered a film production study track with hands on film experience and ultimately allowed me to create a short film in a group of four students. Crafting a film in Prague was truly a learning experience. From weeklong lighting seminars to learning how to pitch a film, I was exposed to new aspects of filmmaking and the process behind it. One of the most valuable aspects of my study abroad experience was traveling with the new friends that I made in the program, and discovering these wonderful cultures with a group of people who were equally excited and passionate to explore, as I was. Studying abroad not only made me unafraid to try new things on my own, but it also made me realize to be more open to the environment that is around me, never being afraid to explore.

“Studying abroad not only made me unafraid to try new things…but it also made me realize to be more open to the environment that is around me, never being afraid to explore.”
～Alana Siqueria ‘17
OADI Honors and Diversity in Scholarship and Engagement Symposium

Each year, OADI recognizes the outstanding achievements of its members during its annual OADI Honors Reception and Diversity in Scholarship and Engagement (DSE) Symposium. Both events, held in May, gathered the OADI community—over 150 students, staff, faculty, and alumni—for a series of awards, presentations, and keynote speeches to honor OADI’s spirit of excellence.

The Diversity in Scholarship and Engagement (DSE) Symposium features student scholars across all OADI Programs to present their OADI-sponsored research, community engagement, or academic and professional development opportunities to the wider Cornell community.

Approximately 30 student scholars shared their research on topics including “Unlicensed by Law: Employment Discrimination on the Basis of Criminal Records,” and “Barriers and Limitations in Preventative Care for Women with Disabilities: Implications for Health Policy.” Eight OADI Research Scholars not only presented on their research, but also incorporated dialogue on their journey from the idea, to the hypothesis and finally their full-fledged projects. With opportunities to share professional development experiences, DSE has become a great way for the Cornell and OADI communities and beyond to come together to celebrate the achievements of these up and coming scholars.
OADI held its third annual OADI Honors Awards Ceremony last May. The ten award winners were selected based on nominations made by the Cornell community in recognition of outstanding students, faculty, staff, alumni, administrators, or local community partners who have demonstrated outstanding leadership, high academic achievement, and strong community engagement and commitment.

Ginger So ’79, Trustee at Cornell University and former COSEP student served as the event’s keynote speaker. Misha Inniss-Thompson ’16, McNair Scholar and P3 student, was the student speaker. Ginger discussed the impact that community support, self-efficacy opportunities, and access to resources have on students throughout their Cornell experience, while Misha spoke about her own experience and educational journey as a McNair Scholar. A former recipient of the Jerome Holland Award for Outstanding OADI Scholar-Leaders, Misha shared the value and impact that offices such as OADI have on under-represented students who have access to valuable resources and gain valuable professional development experiences thanks to the resources OADI provides.

The event continues to be a success, recognizing current notable OADI community members as well as inspiring OADI students to continue to push their own boundaries.

“OADI programs and staff members were integral to my success at Cornell. My participation as a student assistant for the Posse Program, a McNair Scholar, and a P3 student gave me the chance to develop professional skills, prepare for doctoral studies, and seek support from encouraging staff…. I am a different person now than I ever dreamed of being when I first entered college, and I have OADI to thank for my success.”

~ Misha Inniss-Thompson ’16
OADI Co-Sponsorships

First-Generation Student Union (FGSU) – Graduation Ceremony
Ivy League Veteran's Council
Woman of Color Coalition
Latinx Ivy League Conference
Minority ILR Student Organization (MILRSO)
Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities
Les Femmes de Substance
Prefreshman Summer Program
Latino Studies Program
Black Students United
Office of Engagement Initiatives
ILR Labor Roundtable
Association for Students of Color
Undergraduate Veterans Association
MLK Commemoration Event – Rosa Clemente
Latin Beats & Global Issues: Bilingual Hip-hop and Social Change
ILR Union Days
Cornell Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
The Cornell Graduate School’s Office of Inclusion and Student Engagement