

Cornell College: Innovating the College Experience

At Cornell College, students participate in a block plan system, taking One Course At A Time, becoming experts in subjects, and building meaningful connections.

CEDAR RAPIDS, IA, UNITED STATES, March 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Jonathan Brand, president of Mount Vernon's [Cornell College](#), believes the best way for any institution to succeed is by identifying and leaning into its strengths. For Cornell, that means a curriculum that uniquely prepares students for work, a vibrant community, and generous [financial aid](#) offered through a highly distinctive schedule.



Cornell College

Many of these advantages can be attributed to the private liberal arts institution's innovative block plan system, which was implemented in 1978. For 18 days, students take only one course at a time and professors only teach one course at a time, allowing everyone to focus fully on one subject. Because the curriculum is at a faster pace, Brand says, students are ready for the tempo set by the workforce. Students are committed to only one academic subject at a time, so professors have the flexibility to incorporate field trips and study abroad opportunities (without conflicting with other [academics](#)). The One Course calendar allows students with typically busy schedules, like college athletes, mock trial competitors, and fine arts performers, to participate in these meaningful opportunities without missing other opportunities.

"Our block system allows students to become experts on a subject," says Brand. "We're always asking ourselves, 'How do we take this incredible methodology and make it even better?' We want our approach to continue to benefit all our students as their needs continue to evolve with the times."

Cornell's block system allows students to build strong relationships on and off campus. Whether

they're pursuing a business, health, or arts degree—or a combination that works best for them—students can pursue internships in their desired field entirely during one of their blocks rather than a few hours each week. This allows them to focus solely on their professional experience and fully integrate with their employer's team.

Class sizes average 16 students per class, and faculty are only teaching one class per block, which allows students to build meaningful relationships with their professors. Brand, who teaches political science classes himself, notes that this rapport is incredibly beneficial when it comes to more personalized advising and providing professional recommendations.

As a liberal arts institution, Cornell not only provides hands-on education that translates to real-world careers but also prepares students for life in other ways. Classes are designed to encourage collaboration amongst students, inspire innovative problem-solving, and instill confidence through competency.

"There's nothing better than watching students grow in their confidence over their four years with us," says Brand. "We want them to graduate ready to be incredible employees in whatever areas they choose—to be leaders in their communities. And, most importantly, we want them to be able to ask questions about everything, come up with creative solutions easily, and work well with the people around them."

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