



Welcoming and Orienting Employees to Cornell: A Supervisor's Guide



Cornell University
Division of Human Resources

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What is Onboarding?

Onboarding is the process of welcoming new employees to the University and their unit, helping them understand job expectations and how their position aligns with the University's mission, and quickly equipping them with the knowledge, skills and key relationships to be successful in their new job. At Cornell, the onboarding process begins during recruitment and continues through the first year of employment. Successful onboarding requires a partnership between the hiring manager, local human resources and central human resources staff. **This guide will focus specifically on the supervisor's role during the first 90 days of employment.**

Why is Onboarding Important?

- It helps with building a strong sense of **belonging and engagement** from the beginning;
- Helps new staff members **fully contribute more quickly**;
- Improves overall **job satisfaction**;
- Builds a more **cohesive** team and raises team **productivity**;
- Helps increase new employee **retention**; and
- Reduces high **turnover costs**.

What is the Supervisor's Role in Onboarding?

Best practices and survey data demonstrate supervisors play a critical role in a new employee's experience and success. **As a supervisor, your role is to facilitate the process from start to finish.** Included in this document you will find tools and best practices to help you:

- **Prepare and plan** for the first 90 days of your new employee's experience at Cornell
- Bring your newly hired employee **up to speed** with the policies, processes, culture, key relationships, expectations, and day-to-day responsibilities of your department/unit.
- Ensure new employees feel **welcomed and engaged**; confirm why they joined your department/unit and Cornell University.

Onboarding Your New Employee At-A-Glance

When	Objective	Summary of Activities
Pre-Hire	Create a strong first impression. Ensure the employee has all the tools to perform their job and all administrative requirements are completed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up workspace • Communicate about new hire • Plan welcome events • Develop Onboarding Plan • Schedule training
First Day	Welcome the employee and complete administrative tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce to colleagues • Meet to review expectations and Onboarding Plan • Provide tour of workspace/unit • Share mission and organization of University and Unit • Plan for new hire lunch
First Few Weeks	Assist employee with learning about their job, their unit and the University.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share policies, practices and procedures • Share unwritten policies and practices of the unit • Expand network or resources • Provide training
First 90 days	Establish regular communication channels and communicate expectations and requirements. Help the employee feel part of the larger unit, college, University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule regular one on one meetings • Provide feedback on performance and progress • Continue introductions of partners and stakeholders

The Case for Great Onboarding at Cornell

In a 2014 study of Cornell new hires, there was a strong correlation between employees reporting people in their workgroup "helped bring them up to speed in their job" and "helped to navigate how to get things done at Cornell" and their reported feelings of "belonging at Cornell," their willingness to "recommend Cornell to a friend" as well as their "seeing themselves still at Cornell two years from now."

Eighteen months later, those who had reported they had an effective department orientation were significantly more likely to have been promoted and those who had reported they did not "see themselves at Cornell two years from now" were significantly more likely to have left Cornell.



Tips for Successful Onboarding

You have spent a lot of time and money to recruit your top candidate but you are not done yet. The recruitment process continues well into their first few months on the job. In fact, studies have shown that new employees (87 percent of them according to a study by the Aberdeen Group) are not fully committed to the new job for the first six months. So while your new hire is still evaluating if they made the right decision, be sure to follow these tips for success.

- 1. Be There:** Schedule your new employee to start work on a day/week you know you will be available (i.e., not on vacation, traveling on business, week of back-to-back meetings).
- 2. Arrival:** Make sure there is someone there to meet the new employee as they arrive on their first day.
- 3. Work Area:** Have an assigned work area ready for them and a place for them to put their personal belongings.
- 4. Ready for Work:** Make sure you have all supplies/tools/equipment (i.e., computer, phone, etc.) ready and working.
- 5. Lunch:** Make plans so the employee will not have to eat lunch alone for their first day(s).
- 6. Notice Message:** Sending a notice out before the new employee arrives to inform co-workers and other key people of their hire and their job responsibilities. (See the Appendix A for sample letter to send out.)
- 7. Introductions:** Show the new employee their office/space and introduce them to coworkers. Also helps to assign them a buddy/mentor.
- 8. Time for Training:** If you plan to have a co-worker train the new employee, ensure the person has the focused time to spend properly training the person.
- 9. Assign a Guide:** Assign the new employee to someone in your department who is a positive, engaged person.
- 10. Meaningful Work:** Provide the new employee with real and meaningful work from their first day on. Being able to have even a small accomplishment in the first week of work is very motivating for a new hire.



New Employee Success Plan

Documenting and sharing pre-established goals and success points for the first 90 days will create a foundation for success for your new hire.

Name _____ Today's Date _____

Position _____ Start Date _____

TOP 4 POSITION-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Use additional pages if there are more than 4 of these to focus on in the first 90 days.

FIRST 30 DAYS

Success looks like... (What will the new employee have learned or done?)

Others or I will help our new employee achieve success by...

FIRST 60 DAYS

Success looks like... (What will the new employee have learned or done?)

Others or I will help our new employee achieve success by...

FIRST 90 DAYS

Success looks like... (What will the new employee have learned or done?)

Others or I will help our new employee achieve success by...

ADDITIONAL GOALS AND TRAINING

Other goals for the new employee include...

Others or I will help our new employee achieve success with these goals by...

Specific training needs or action plans to achieve the goals are...



Pre-hire Checklist

The checklist below will guide you through key tasks to complete **prior to the new hire’s first day**. This is a valuable list to review in partnership with others such as your HR representative and department administrative manager.

PREPARING FOR THE NEW HIRE:

Administrative:

- Create a transition plan** for the new employee and those currently handling the tasks of the position. Define a timeline for how each task will transition to the new employee, who will be responsible for training, and who will communicate the plan to departments and colleagues across campus. A clear plan will set the expectations for the employee and assist them in being successful.
- Add new employee to Outlook Calendars** in the work group as needed
- Update internal communications**, distribution lists, and email lists with the employee’s contact info

Tech:

- Telephone/line** request and long distance capability if required
- Personal computer** set-up. Best to order computer as soon as position is posted.
- Establish computer system and security accounts** needed to perform the job

Workspace:

- Order keys and security codes** if relevant
- Order nameplate, nametag, and/or business cards** if appropriate
- Prepare workspace:** set-up, neat, clean, and organized

Supplies:

- Request procurement card and Travel and Meal Card** if relevant
- Order uniforms** if applicable
- Accommodations:** If the employee has requested workplace accommodations, arrange for them in advance, if possible

Work Assignments:

- Plan initial assignments:** As the supervisor, be sure the new hire has the tools and information to complete their first assignment successfully; this will set the tone for productive supervisory-employee interactions to come.

Staffing:

- Identify “buddy”/someone** in the college/unit to serve as an orientation guide to answers questions and inform person of the responsibility (work with HR)

Welcome Plan:

- Plan a welcoming get-together** appropriate to your work group (i.e. coffee break meet and greet)
- Plan the new hire’s first lunch**, including who will participate
- Plan your schedule** so on the new hire’s first day you can spend time with them at the beginning of the day and the end of the day

Communications:

- Call the employee** a day or two before arrival to answer immediate questions and invite them to call with new questions
- Send out an announcement** to welcome new hire into the organization, briefly describe their role in the organization (see appendix for sample)

Other:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



First Day Checklist

The following checklist contains key tasks to help with your employee's first day acclimation. You may want to ask others on your team to help with some of these responsibilities.

FIRST DAY OF WORK:

Introductions

- Greet the employee**, show them their workspace/office, and where to put personal belongings.
- Introduce them to others** in the department/work area including their assigned "buddy".
- Lunch**: If planned, have lunch with scheduled participants; if not, make sure new employee knows where they can go for lunch and what others generally do for lunch.

Workplace Orientation

- Confirm workspace is ready**: Ensure they have all the equipment and tools needed to do their job.
- Give a tour of the office and building**, point out key locations (copier, mailroom, fax machine, office supplies, restrooms, break areas, emergency exits, fire extinguishers, vending machines, Human Resources office, etc.).
- Provide them with facility information** such as keys and security codes.
- Provide an orientation to computer systems**; include log-on, email, security, and calendaring.
- Review phones & copiers**: phone system and usage, fax, scanning, and copying procedures.
- Review office procedures** and guidelines (time away from work reporting requirements, personal phone calls, lunch breaks, office coverage, etc.).
- If there is a dress code**, review it with the employee. If the position requires a uniform, make sure they have the right sizes, etc.

Administrative Onboarding

- University Onboarding**: Ensure they have an appointment scheduled and a way to get to the East Hill Office Building, 395 Pine Tree Road, if they have not already attended in advance of their first day.
- Complete additional forms** specific to the department or position, (i.e. confidentiality agreements.)
- Required training**: Schedule any Right-to-Know or other required training as needed.

Other:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Once these items are completed, move on to the next set of recommended activities for the first weeks and first 90 days.



First Few Weeks Checklist

WORKPLACE-RELATED INFORMATION:

Functions

- Supplies:** Provide information and instructions on office supplies and equipment.
- Safety:** Provide safety and emergency information and share how to report hazards where applicable.
- Finances:** Provide budget, finance, purchasing procedures if needed, including policies and rules for use and information on training.
- Meetings & Events:** Provide information about meetings and other events on the employee's calendar (purpose, attendees, what to expect, the employee's role); debrief with employee following these experiences to answer questions and provide additional information.

Culture

- Share unwritten rules, nuances, and traditions** with employee (such as how to address faculty, jeans on Friday, birthday celebrations, etc.)
- Culture:** Discuss your management style and the organization's culture.
- Consider developing a glossary** of terms and acronyms as a reference guide.

Role

- Set up for success:** Assign the employee something they can accomplish relatively quickly and easily to help build an initial sense of contribution and success.
- Set priorities.** Discuss what is important to overall objectives. This will help the new employee prioritize tasks since they are new to the organization.
- Introduce the employee to partners** external to the college/unit who will work with them on projects or tasks.

Policies

- Review Policy 6.9, Time Away from Work,** share unit process for requesting time off.
- Explain confidentiality** in the workplace, what can and can't be shared, and how confidential documents are stored.

- HR Policies:** Provide information and time for the new employee to review HR policies, HR philosophy, Campus Code of Conduct, Computer Rights and Responsibilities, Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Minds Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, Respect at Cornell.
- University Policies:** Review University policies such as Policy 4.14, Conflict of Interest and Commitment, Policy 4.6, Standards of Ethical Conduct, Data Stewardship and Custodianship, Policy 6.4, Prohibited Bias. Show where policy info is located and answer questions.

CAREER-RELATED INFORMATION:

Career Development

- Expectations:** Determine mutual performance standards by reviewing position responsibilities, setting performance expectations, success measures, and clarify the new employee understands expectations. Review Skills for Success and print poster.
- Training:** Identify training resources and opportunities for the employee and set a realistic plan of action.
- Professional Development:** Introduce the employee to resources such as the professional development workshops and educational benefits.

Connect With Big Picture

- Organization and university mission:** Review your organizational chart and explain how the individual's work connects to Cornell's mission of education, research and outreach. The broader pictures will help link their efforts to larger goals and avoid looking at a single set of tasks.

Other:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



First 90 Days Checklist

- Provide regular feedback** during the first 90 days and beyond.
- Non-Exempt & Bargaining Unit Staff:** Provide formal feedback for non-exempt and bargaining unit staff at the end of their 90-day probationary period.
- Training:** Review and direct the employee to training opportunities.
- Flex Options:** If applicable to the position and department's needs, provide guidance on identifying appropriate flexible work options to assist the employee's effectiveness and efficiency.
- Foster Belonging:** Check if the employee is fully engaged and sees themselves as a valued contributor. See questions below for prompts to help facilitate this conversation.

Questions to Ask During New Hire Check-in Meetings

- How is your job going?
- Is it what you expected when hired?
- Any surprises? If yes, what...
- Has the training been helpful?
- What training would you add?
- Has your buddy been helpful?
- Any changes you would suggest for the buddy program?
- Do you have all the work tools/resources you need?
- Do you know where you stand in terms of your progress since you started work?
- How are your relationships with your co-workers?
- Is there room for improvement in the department?
- Are you making connections in the local community (for new hires who have relocated)?
- Are you aware of the resources available to support your family members' adjustment (for new hires who have relocated with families – refer to Cornell Work/Life)?
- Do you feel you have been able to manage your work/life needs since starting this job?
- Was your Onboarding appointment helpful? Is everything OK with your benefits and pay?
- Any questions/anything unclear?

Appendix

SAMPLE DEPARTMENT INTRODUCTION EMAIL

Hi Everyone -

I am very pleased to share with you that (name) has accepted the position of (title) in (department), filling the position previously held by (incumbent name). We are very excited that (first name)'s first day working with us will be on (date).

Provide brief background including where they are currently working, title, a bit of background on the type of work they are currently doing and information about educational background. Provide information on any unique knowledge, skills, or experience the person will be bringing to the team.

Please join me in welcoming (first name) to (department name)!

Thank you,

(Supervisor Name)