The Cornell Daily Sun

Opinion Columnist Application

Fall 2025

Due Friday, September 19th, 2025 at 11:59 p.m. EST

In order to complete this application please do the following:

1. Save this document as a Word file (File → Download → Microsoft Word (.docx))
2. Fill in your responses

Once you have completed the application, please follow these instructions to submit your application successfully:

1. Name the file "**LAST NAME - Columnist Application 25"**
2. Email the file to associate-editor@cornellsun.com with the subject line being "**LAST NAME-Columnist Application Fall 25"** along with a resume/Curriculum Vitae where you disclose your full name, graduation year, area(s) of study, and your college.

You may also attach any additional, supplemental materials you think would help your application to your email. This includes, but is not limited to, video essays, previously published works, essay samples, etc. Not attaching any additional materials will not be used against your application.

If you have any questions, please send us an email at associate-editor@cornellsun.com.

Dear applicant,

Thank you for your interest in applying to be an opinion columnist for The Cornell Daily Sun. Millions of current students, faculty, staff, alumni and more from every corner of the world tune into our platform to hear what we, as Cornellians, have to say about student life, contemporary issues, socio-political topics, University relations, and more. As a columnist you have the opportunity to decide what topics need to be addressed — here on the hilltop and around the world. Every other week, a single page will be devoted to your thoughts. Your ideas, or ideas you believe should be questioned, will be read by many hoping to learn, question and explore.

As an opinion columnist, you will work very closely with the associate editor and opinion editor. They will discuss potential topics with you, pitch ideas, give feedback on your pitches and review your work before publishing. Together, you will bring your work to life for hundreds of thousands of weekly readers. It's a powerful platform, and it's one that needs precision like attention to detail, innovative ideas, and a diversity of new conversations to be introduced.

Columns will be grounded on an issue, topic, or idea that is relevant to the Cornell and/or Ithaca communities. You must take a stance in your writing, and claims must be supported with factually correct, relevant writing. You'll learn invaluable skills in academic research, reporting, and delving into the history of a topic.

As your editors, our main priority will be to assist you into producing strong, moving, and meaningful conversations into life. We will work with you every step of the way to make sure that the final product is not only powerful, but also true to your voice. Once accepted as a columnist, you will have a column attached to your name from the moment you join, to the moment you graduate. It's a big responsibility, but a fulfilling one that will give you skills and connections in various fields in the time that follows.

We know this application is a bit on the longer side. Thus we recommend taking your time with this application and exercising your creative voice. We strongly recommend checking out the columns on our website to get a sense for what we publish — and what we have yet to talk about.

We look forward to hearing what you have to say. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at associate-editor@cornellsun.com. Happy writing!

"I think writers are the most important members of society, not just potentially but actually."
- Kurt Vonnegut '43, Novelist, former opinion columnist & associate editor

Best of luck,

Eric Han '26
Ilana Livshits '27
Sophia Dasser '28

Tell Us About Yourself

a. What is your story? Columnists in the past have relied on their life experiences — past and present — to influence their topic of writing and their writing style. This can be anything from a major life event to a daily routine you find significant. (maximum 300 words)

b. What other clubs/organizations are you involved in? Why did you choose to get involved in them? (maximum 300 words)

c. What is the most memorable piece of writing that you have read recently? Why? (Maximum 300 words)

Take a Stance

Below are a few brief opinionated questions — CHOOSE ONE to answer. **We'll be evaluating the novelty of your view and the substantive basis of your argument**, not whether we agree with you. Respond to ONE question below in 300-400 words each. We're hoping to get a sense of your style and your voice from your answers so please be creative and be honest, but do so according to proper academic writing style to the best of your ability.

- **Politics and Culture:** In recent months, the Trump administration has frozen more than $1 billion in federal funding for Cornell amid Title VI investigations, halting dozens of research projects in fields ranging from cybersecurity to health. While Columbia, Penn and Brown have already reached settlements — agreeing to policy changes and, in some cases, financial concessions — Cornell is reportedly nearing a deal of up to $100 million to restore its funding. At the same time, the University has doubled down on federal lobbying, spending record sums to influence policy and regulatory decisions in Washington. Should Cornell follow peer institutions in striking a settlement with the federal government, even if it means making concessions on admissions, athletics, or diversity programs? What responsibilities does the University have to protect its researchers and students who rely on federal grants now under freeze? Is settling with the government a pragmatic compromise, or a form of complicity that undermines Cornell's values? Finally, how should Cornell balance its role as a leading research institution with its increasingly aggressive federal lobbying efforts?
- **Law**: In August 2024, over 1,000 Cornell workers went on strike, demanding higher wages, better working conditions and free parking. The strike, which disrupted campus operations during move-in week and the first week of classes, followed stalled negotiations between the University and UAW Local 2300. Do you believe that the success of the strike indicates a shift in labor power within higher education (many strikes followed in the footsteps of UAW), or does it set a precedent that could strain university finances in the longer term? Do you believe that universities should be held to higher ethical labor standards given their role as centers of social progress, or should they operate with the same financial pragmatism as their corporate counterparts?
- **Science**: With the recent developments of artificial intelligence and open AI software, many professors have implemented a complete prohibition of its use in the academic setting. How would you describe the new wave of AI development? Should it be banned from the classroom?
- **Literature:** A 2024 article in The Atlantic highlighted that many students at elite universities struggle to read entire books, a skill often underdeveloped during their high school years. Unlike some elite universities that require applicants to demonstrate a deep engagement with literature (Columbia, Oxford, etc), the Cornell admissions process does not assess whether students are well-read beyond standard high school courses. Does Cornell's lack of emphasis on literary engagement contribute to a student body less prepared for analytical reading? Should elite universities require demonstrated literary competence (beyond the SAT), or does this risk privileging certain educational backgrounds over others?
- **Economics:** Over the last few years, student interest in the social impact of business has soared. Even before the pandemic, business schools were offering initiatives and program concentrations with names like "Conscientious Capitalism" and "Sustainable Business." Should a business school's role be to "reimagine capitalism?"

Please include your answers to the previous prompt below:

Ideas and Conversations

If you're hired as a columnist, every two weeks, a page of The Cornell Daily Sun will be devoted to your writing for millions of readers to access. It's an exciting prospect, but we don't toss around pages lightly, so we want you to take it seriously and seize the opportunity for your words to reach millions of people. And remember, you are applying to be an opinion columnist! So, take a stand, make an argument, make a claim.

Please share five ideas you have for columns:
(You may actually use these if accepted, so put some thought into it!)
Note: by "idea," we mean your argument, thesis statement, main point, etc. It should be an opinion. Think "Spinach is the best salad base," not "Leafy greens."

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Finally, please write one sample column.

Your column should be **750 words** at most, and should include a catchy **headline (title)**. Please proofread your column carefully. If selected as a columnist, this sample column may be run. And if we are impressed with your work but you're not selected, we may still run your column as a guest submission throughout the semester.

To write an effective column, we recommend you:

1. Develop a point you want to make.
2. Gather evidence and decide how you want to defend your point.
    a. Your evidence can include thorough research, personal anecdotes and interviews (talk to people who know something about the topic, and gather quotes and alternate viewpoints to present or dispute).
3. Consult columns or op-eds in other papers to pick out effective argumentative techniques or prose styles other authors deploy.

Your column can be on *a topic of your choice*, so long as it **ties back to Cornell or Ithaca in the end.** Again, please look at other opinion pieces from the past year for inspiration. Column ideas can come from anywhere so keep your eyes open! **Don't worry about writing "the hottest take,"** we would prefer that you write about something that you actually care about rather than something that is controversial for the sake of writing about it. We're truly looking for a diverse set of writers. So it doesn't matter what you stand for as long you can defend it well. **Remember this isn't about whether or not we agree with your column, we just want to see how you write, the creativity of your arguments, and how you support them.**

So take a risk, challenge assumptions, and write something that matters to you.

Please include your answer to the previous prompt below:

Congrats! You finished our application! We can't wait to read it. Please reference the first page on how to submit your application. If there are any questions, remember that you can reach us at **associate-editor@cornellsun.com.** You'll hear from us soon!