

The Learning Strategies Center



# ANNUAL REPORT

Fall 2018-Spring 2019



Cornell University

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**Learning Strategies Center**

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## Student Spotlight: Ariana Otto '19, Human Biology, Health and Society

Ariana has made terrific contributions to the Learning Strategies Center during her time at Cornell—both as a student using LSC services and as an academic peer mentor helping her fellow students succeed:

<b>2015 Summer</b>	PSP Student
<b>2015-2016</b>	Student in LSC general Chemistry support
<b>2016-2017</b>	Course assistant and peer mentor in LSC general chemistry support and student in LSC organic chemistry support
<b>2017-2019</b>	LSC organic chemistry tutor and student in tutor training class (ALS 2400)



### What were Ariana's experiences with the LSC like?

"I was a Prefreshman Summer Program student who struggled through the chemistry material. In that program it's easy to believe that this is how you'll feel all 4 years at Cornell, but Dr. J [LSC Chemistry Instructor] made sure that was not the case for myself and many other students. He was kind and patient and made general chemistry do-able. Working alongside him as a tutor was no different. Through his work you could tell that he truly cares about his students, outside of just academics.

I used the chemistry 1057/1058 office hours religiously. Jane is one of the most selfless and humble people I know. She goes above and beyond for her organic chemistry students and I think anyone that has come into contact with her will tell you the same thing. Working alongside her as a tutor made me a stronger individual. I grew so much from my role as a tutor and the wide range of students that I came in contact with in office hours. Additionally, my relationship with Jane flourished, which I was grateful for. Each week I looked forward to our check-in chats and for her supportive words of encouragement. Thank you Mama Jane for everything!

And that's what the LSC offers. It's not only a safe space that people feel free to come and ask questions for their specific courses, but also one where the faculty truly care beyond their job description and go above and beyond to see you succeed. It's a place that you can truly grow as a student and person with a strong support network surrounding you inside and out of the classroom. I am grateful for the LSC for their support throughout my 4 years."

"My desire to tutor really came from my struggle as a student and how I was able to overcome my self-doubt and lack of understanding to perform better in class...I am [an LSC tutor] because someone spent the time and effort to help me when I was struggling and I want to pay it forward. I feel like there's no better feeling than being understood and knowing you're not alone. I think that's something I am able to give students that walk into my office hours."



## Prefreshman Summer Program: Learning to Belong

In 2018, nearly 200 students completed the Prefreshman Summer Program (PSP) prior to their first semester at Cornell. PSP provides incoming students the opportunity to become familiar with academic expectations, support that is available at Cornell, and the requirements and culture of their college. This is accomplished by students taking an array of classes and participating in numerous college and program activities. Prefreshmen start their first year already knowing how to navigate the campus and with a social network in place.



**PSP student staff** are the heart of the program. They work with students in the residence hall and the classroom providing support, mentoring, and an understanding ear to the Prefreshmen as they make the transition from successful high school students to successful Cornell students. Many of the student staff participated in the program themselves, and the advice they are able to provide is invaluable.

“The student staff understood what we were going through and assured us there was a light at the end of the tunnel. ~PSP Student

“College is challenging, it’s normal for the transition to feel hard, and it gets easier over time.” This is an integral component of the social belonging message students in the program hear, and it’s especially important that this message comes from peers.

### Why do students choose to spend their summers helping their peers transition to Cornell?

“This is such a phenomenal program that will change these students’ lives. I am so proud to have been able to experience this.



*PSP Chem course assistants preparing for their upcoming office hours*

“I love helping the Prefreshmen find their identity and feel at home at Cornell.

[It’s important] to motivate incoming freshmen and tell them your story so that they know there’s a way.

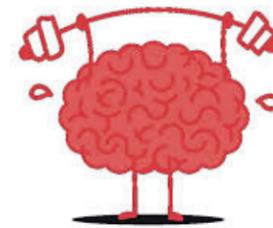
I loved helping the students adjust to the campus and supporting their growth as individuals.



*PSP student staff work on problem-solving skills*

## Study Skills: Learning How to Learn

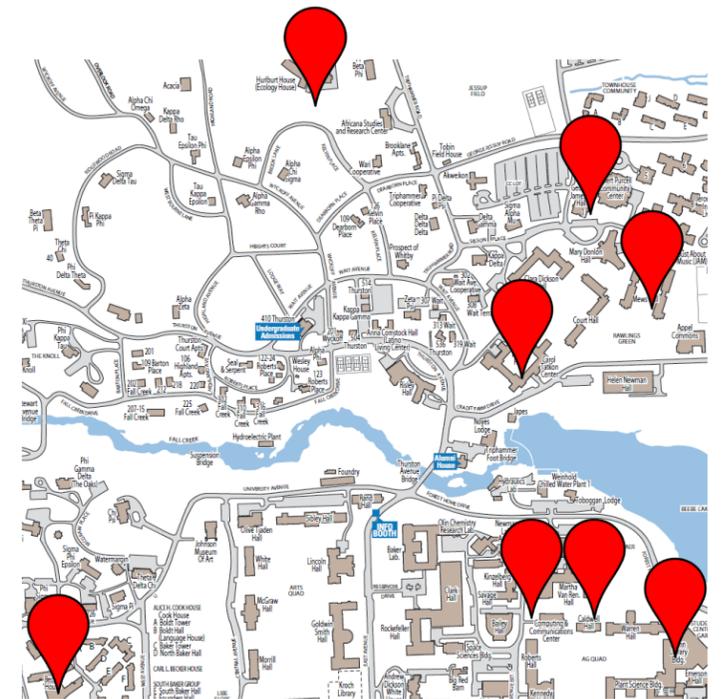
Helping students learn how to learn is core to the Learning Strategies Center’s work. Our Study Skills supports include everything from coordinated peer-facilitated workshops, study skills bulletin boards, and tutoring sessions to our essential course, HE1115: Critical Reading and Thinking, offered every fall and spring semester. Students learn about the Cornell Note-Taking System and other ways to organize information, the basics of stress management, and effective exam strategies, among many other study skills. Our team works to reach out to students with a variety of opportunities to help them be more organized, productive, and efficient learners. Study skills and academic success skills are built into all our offerings.



**121** students took LSC’s study skills class

More than **1700** students attended workshops

About **200** study skills consultations



*Peer-Facilitated Workshops happened all over campus!*

The **Peer Facilitated Study Skills Workshops** are led by undergraduate students on study skills topics such as time management, staying organized, studying for final exams, health and mental well-being, and overcoming procrastination. The peer facilitators offered more than 10 workshops to 130+ undergraduate students across campus visiting Balch Hall, Jameson Hall, Mews Hall, and the Eco House on North campus, Becker House on West Campus, and Mann Library, the Computing & Communications Center, and Caldwell Hall on Central Campus. We partnered with Cornell Minds Matter, the McNair Scholars, the Office of Academic Diversity Initiatives, West Campus Housing System, residential staff, and the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program.

## Supplemental Courses: Learning to Understand

In 2018-2019, the LSC offered **21** supplemental courses in Biology, Chemistry, Economics, Math, and Physics. Through our supplemental courses, thousands of students receive personal in-depth course clarification, assistance with problem analysis, and prelim preparation. Students can enroll in supplemental courses, and are also able to “drop-in” whenever needed.

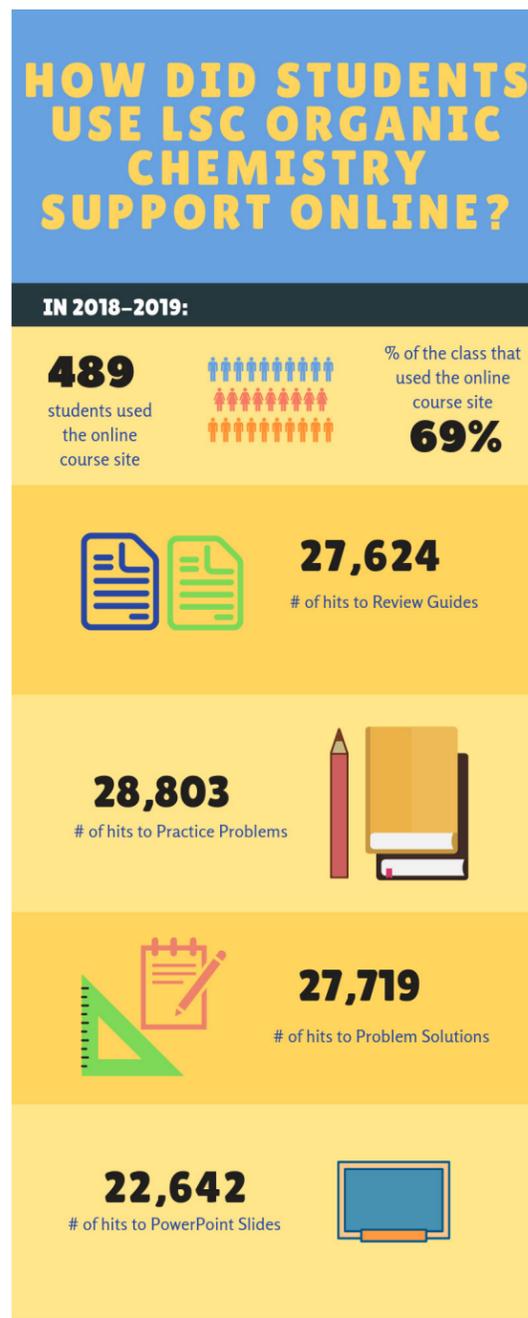


The LSC offers weekly reviews, problem-solving sessions, and tutorials and instructor office hours to support the CHEM 3570-3580 sequence. In-person help is available six days a week, and on-line help is available 24/7: Jane Walcott's online course site (see graphic to the right) is widely used by the entire class, with tens of thousands of hits each semester to access Jane's practice problems and review guides.

Jane also provides office hours support to students in other organic chemistry courses (CHEM 1570 and 3530). Jane attends the parent courses' lectures and has a deep understanding of where students get stuck--and where they could use some extra encouragement. She challenges and supports students to do their best.

“Jane's work has been nothing short of amazing! Jane has been a hugely effective representative of the Learning Strategies Center, and her efforts have had an extraordinary impact on organic chemistry students. In the classroom, she shares her enthusiasm for chemistry and inspires students to learn through hard work and perseverance.

Bruce Ganem  
Franz and Elisabeth Roessler Professor of  
Chemistry and Chemical Biology



Organic chemistry tutoring is available six days a week. Walk-in tutoring allows students to hear other students' questions, and is offered by tutors who are skilled group facilitators as well as organic chemistry experts. The tutors are an enthusiastic group of students that are dedicated to supporting their peers learn the challenging course material.

Jane keeps her tutors up to date about the issues students struggle with in class. Many organic chemistry tutors used organic chemistry tutoring themselves when they took the class. They understand how much hard work it takes to succeed in the course, and how much encouragement students need. Many tutors return to work with Jane from the time they finish the course until they graduate.

## Students say:

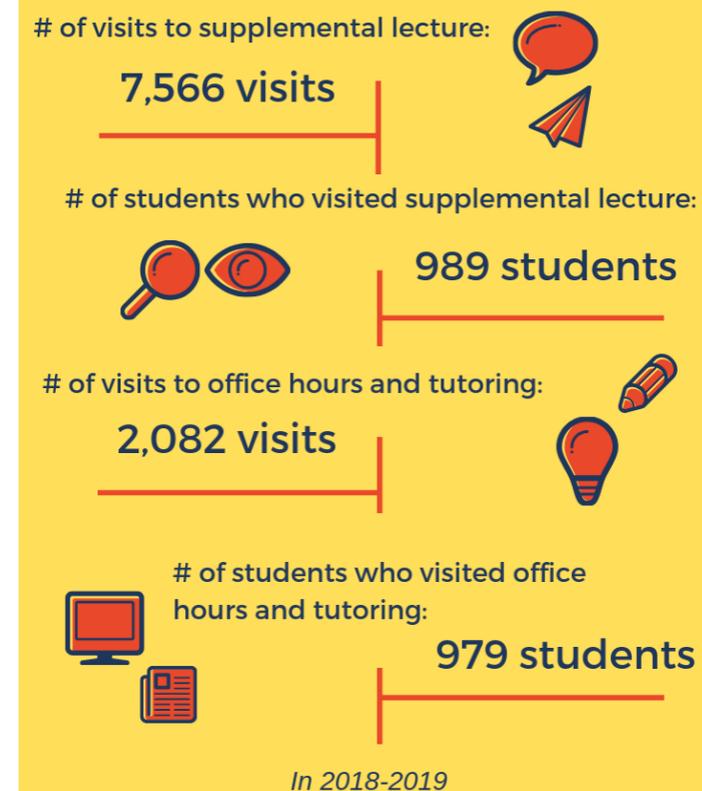
“This class is an excellent resource that I would recommend to others.

The office hours were very helpful! The tutors and Jane helped me understand the material better.



Jane Walcott, LSC Chemistry Instructor

## Students' use of LSC Organic Chemistry Support



“Jane explained material in a different way which helped me understand and remember it.

JANE IS THE BEST

I just want to say thank you. I am a senior and struggled my early years at Cornell. I appreciate how Jane believes students can change and excel. I'm going from a “B” in sophomore Orgo 3570 to an “A” largely because of this class.

Jane is wonderful and always has the students' best interest in mind

## Tutoring: Learning From Teaching

Peer to peer learning is an essential component of the LSC's work. Peer tutors offer students a low-stress, easy-entry source of academic support. Students who attend LSC's walk-in group tutoring often find that other students ask questions they didn't know they had yet. It's important that students see, first-hand in the tutoring room, that they are not the only ones with questions.

# 99

**LSC tutors** provide walk-in group tutoring for more than **30 classes** each semester.

LSC tutoring covered courses such as: BIOG 1440, BIOMG 1350, BIOMG 2800, CHEM 1560/1570, CHEM 2070/2080, CHEM 3570/3580, ECON 1110/1120, MATH 1101/1110/1120/2210, and introductory Physics and Statistics courses.

## Why do students use LSC tutoring?

Because it's useful!

“ I attended physics tutoring tonight and the tutor was incredibly thorough, patient, and considerate. He answered my questions without giving me the answer and understood which components I was having trouble with. Much appreciated!

“ (The tutor) was always so eager to help me with any questions I had, and never had a problem with taking the time to explain a concept or mechanism to me multiple times until I understood it.

“ He learns every student's name!



Jeremy Yong, LSC organic chemistry tutor (pictured above), was nominated by both students and peers for the LSC's Outstanding Tutor Award. Congratulations, Jeremy!

**New in Spring 2019!**

**Language Tutoring!** The LSC offered language tutoring in Introductory French, Italian, and Spanish.



"Tutoring has made me more comfortable with giving and receiving help. Tutoring makes it seem normal to need help sometimes (which IS normal), now I'm more comfortable asking for help too."



"When I was a freshman, I struggled in general chemistry, so I can relate to the frustration students feel. Since then, I have learned the study skills and mindset necessary to perform better as a student and tutor."

## WHY DO STUDENTS TUTOR FOR THE LSC?

Because they want to be helpful and to continue learning and growing!

"Having been tutored myself...I hope to give back to the community that has helped me succeed."



"Tutoring has helped me a lot with my people skills. I have become much more comfortable with talking with new people and engaging with people in meaningful ways. I am no longer as anxious and worried around larger groups of people (note the "as" in that sentence – it's a learning process) and I actually enjoy talking with the students about school and their goals. I believe my tutoring practice was a big factor in this growth."

It's important that LSC tutors are prepared not just in the subject they're working in, but also are confident with themselves as educators. 57 LSC tutors have now gone through the enhanced tutor training piloted in Fall 2017 and expanded into a class starting Fall 2018 (ALS 2400: Developing a Reflective Tutoring Practice).

One of the most challenging skills LSC tutors develop in ALS 2400 is helping students when they don't know the answer to the question the student is asking—perhaps they took the class with a different professor, or maybe it's just been a while since they've seen that material. Tutors are trained not to bluster their way through, but to access their humility and use the moment to show students how they figure things out. This is a powerful learning opportunity for the tutors!

“ My most successful tutoring session was when I could not help a student with a very difficult problem. She came back the next week specifically to my office hours! When I asked her why, she said she appreciated my willingness to figure things out with her...

That moment really touched me because I thought I had completely disappointed her last session.



## LSC Scholarships: Supporting Additional Learning Opportunities

Learning Strategies Center Scholarships allow students with financial and academic need to meet timely graduation goals by providing tuition funding for Winter and Summer Session courses. LSC Scholarships also support students' participation in a broad range of academic enrichment opportunities provided by Cornell. **281** students from across undergraduate colleges at Cornell received funding from the Learning Strategies Center to take Winter or Summer courses in 2018.

Students took a variety of courses such as **Business Management, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Calculus, Linear Algebra, Government, Communications, Computer Science, and Economics**. Students also participated in special programs through courses such as the Practicing Medicine course in New York City, Imagining Rome: Art Studio and Creative Writing Workshops in Italy, Experiential Writing in the Yucatán, Perspectives on Spain in Madrid, Cornell in Washington Summer Program, and the Shoals Marine Laboratory on Appledore Island, Maine.

“ I really enjoyed taking classes during the summer. It is nice to just focus in-depth on one or two subjects instead of juggling five classes plus extracurriculars (which is common during the semester). I am so thankful for being granted this opportunity which has made a positive impact in my Cornell career.

Llarsania Galloza, ILR

“ This program is valuable to students... who experience unique challenges during their pursuit of higher education. The undergraduate experience is a sensitive time full of new adventures and sometimes, complete isolation and independence from anything familiar. Asking for help is hard, but knowing that it is there and accessible when it is needed opened a horizon of possibilities to me when I felt trapped by illness and overwhelming stress. I have a deep gratitude for the opportunity the LSC scholarship gave me to pursue the highest degree of learning, to prove my ability, and in turn to lay the foundations for me to make a positive impact.

Emily Sullivan, CALS

“ This scholarship has allowed me to get closer to being on track to graduate. I appreciate it because I work twenty hours a week and was dealing with mental health issues, so it made it difficult to stay on track.

Jasiya Thompson, Dyson

“ [The LSC Scholarship] helped me become a stronger, more confident writer. Writing had always been a skill I dreaded using because I felt that I was not up to Cornell standards.

Chuka Okoro, HE

Scholarships

## Student Spotlight: Supporting Student Veterans at Cornell

The Learning Strategies Center is proud to be part of Cornell University's commitment to supporting student veterans. In summer 2018, LSC offered newly accepted Cornell students from different branches of the armed services a college readiness/academic success course. In addition to coursework, students attended workshops that introduced them to services on campus such as the Cornell Libraries and Academic Technologies. For their final project, students presented their well-researched suggestions for enhancing veterans' academic support on campus, which was used to inform future plans. Cornell's student veterans participate in LSC courses, workshops, and scholarship programs.

“ I arrived at Cornell as a transfer student changing not only universities but also degree paths. This meant that I had two difficult tasks: Attain 60 credits required for residency and complete all my newly required degree path courses. Those are things any college student must do. So, what made my path hard? I only had two academic years' worth of GI Bill funding left.

This left me with 4 semesters averaging 15 hours filled mostly with dense core requirement classes. Combine this with the elevation in expectations from my old university to Cornell and I did not do well. I had to drop some classes.

I had never heard of the Learning Strategies Center much less its summer scholarship program. When my advisor pointed it out as an option, all I could say was yes. The LSC Scholarship provided me a way to ease the course load of my remaining semesters by off-loading some distribution requirements to the summer sessions. This had the added benefit of keeping me on track to not lose my funding.

I discovered, much to my surprise, that taking these courses in the summer allowed me to have a much more engaged experience. Without the stress of core courses and mountains of assignments, I was able to participate more and enjoy my learning experience. I aced both classes I took. I feel like that summer session was the moment I stopped feeling like I was just keeping up and started feeling in control of my Cornell education. I'm so glad that I did it.

Adam Klier, AAP 2019



Adam Klier, Bailey Hall

“ I'm a senior student veteran. The class I took... lowered the number of units I had to take during my final semester...I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the class fills my time during the long winter layoff. Having something I'm working on dramatically improves my symptoms.

Patrick O'Neal, CALS  
LSC Scholarship Recipient

**Thank you for your service!**

## From the Director

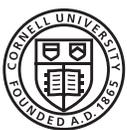
**At the Learning Strategies Center (LSC), we work to ensure every student, no matter what high school they attended... no matter their socioeconomic background or their personal life experience... is equipped to fully take advantage of the outstanding educational opportunities available to them here at Cornell.**



Cornell has extremely high academic standards and transitioning to the college learning environment presents challenges to many students. Through peer support, study skills sessions, tutoring, supplemental courses, and scholarships, the LSC provides numerous opportunities for students to find whatever additional support they need to do their best here at Cornell. Every step of the way, the LSC strives to not just help students develop the skills they need to be successful in a particular course, but to help them grow as independent learners so that they can be successful in all of their classes.

We know that learning doesn't happen in a vacuum, and we address the needs of students holistically, helping them connect with their peers and learn effective habits so that they can be engaged, healthy, and motivated learners. I cannot emphasize enough how impressed I am with the dedication of our staff and the amount of support they are able to provide to thousands of students each semester. I am constantly reminded of how valuable the work of the LSC is when I hear students talking about how our offerings instill a mindset where they feel that with hard work and some help, they can master the challenging material in their courses.

The LSC serves a vital and transformative role for all the students at Cornell, as well as for the university as a whole. I'm excited to help guide our collaborative efforts to support the academic success of Cornell's increasingly diverse student body. We are constantly evaluating how to best support students in the evolving educational landscape, and this year we are undertaking an academic program review to explore how we support students, our place in the dynamic educational landscape, and our community connections at Cornell and beyond.



Cornell University

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy M. Godert".

Amy M. Godert Ph.D.,  
Director, LSC