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Cornell launches Milstein Program in Technology and Humanity



The Milstein Program in Technology and Humanity, a collaboration between the College of Arts and Sciences and Cornell Tech, will pioneer a new approach to liberal arts education for the digital age.

A \$20 million gift from the Milstein family will launch the new Milstein Program in Technology and Humanity, a collaboration between the College of Arts and Sciences and Cornell Tech that will pioneer a new approach to developing 21st century leaders and innovators.

The program bridges two campuses to deliver a unique multidisciplinary curriculum to a cohort of 100 students with the potential to be extraordinary leaders – combining an outstanding liberal arts and sciences education from Cornell University, access to the thinking and network of Cornell Tech from the start of their university careers, and a strong community of peers.

“The new Milstein Program in Technology and Humanity will provide not only a foundation for students to develop the technical, intellectual and organizational skills they need to drive progress in the digital age, but also a context and ethical framework that will equip them to shape society for the better,” said Cornell President Martha E. Pollack. “Thanks to the Milsteins, we are able to create a truly distinctive experience for undergraduates in Arts and Sciences. I believe this program will be a model for our other Ithaca-based colleges and schools seeking creative partnerships with Cornell Tech to meet student and societal needs.”

The Milstein Program reinforces the importance of a broad liberal arts education for leaders in all fields. The vision for the program came from Howard Milstein '73 and Michael Milstein '11, both A&S graduates, who collaborated with Gretchen Ritter '83, the Harold Tanner Dean of Arts and Sciences, and Dan Huttenlocher, the Jack and Rilla Neafsey Dean of Cornell Tech, to develop the idea in a way that would have maximum impact for A&S students, Cornell broadly, New York and the world.

“The American private sector is the most powerful force for progress in the world, and today the tech economy is the most productive part of the private sector,” said Howard Milstein. “It is of the utmost importance to imbue that activity and progress with the core culture and disciplines of the humanities and social sciences.”

“Technology is increasingly vital to all aspects of our society. Our leaders require a broader base of knowledge and context than ever before to succeed in this new reality,” said Michael Milstein. “Our tech leaders need to be able to communicate, understand and maximize the societal benefit of their work while leaders across all industries need the technical foundation to drive progress in every facet of our lives. I’m thrilled that Cornell is taking the lead in addressing this challenge.”

Students in the Milstein Program will select a major among those offered by the College of Arts and Sciences, but will also have access to a specialized curriculum that will develop their proficiency in computer science during the school year in Ithaca, while spending summers together in New York City immersed in the innovation economy, with access to speakers, mentors and summer internship opportunities.

“Soon after Michael Milstein graduated, Cornell won the bid to build a tech campus in New York City. He realized early on how students and faculty could benefit from combining the uncommon breadth and depth that an Arts and Sciences education provides with the promise that the Cornell Tech campus would bring to imagine and innovate for the future,” said Ritter. “Our society needs innovative problem solvers who have the vision and background to think creatively and broadly about ways to address our greatest challenges. It is thrilling to imagine the potential of the Milstein Program and how it will influence the future of higher education in the context of our global economy and digital age.”

The announcement of the Milstein Program comes on the heels of the opening of Cornell Tech’s permanent campus on Roosevelt Island. The program is the first to leverage the new graduate campus as a platform for multidisciplinary innovation for Cornell undergraduates, extending Cornell Tech’s mission to reach future leaders at an even earlier stage.

“The Milstein Program is a terrific example of Cornell Tech reaching beyond its core graduate research and education mission,” said Huttenlocher. “The combination of technological and humanistic education is increasingly important in modern society, and this program will be a magnet for outstanding undergraduates who understand the importance of combining these areas together. We are committed to creating a broad pipeline of tech talent, and that means reaching students at every stage of their education.”

The program and gift are an extension of the Milstein family’s vital contributions to commerce and technology and to the state and city of New York. The Milsteins’ philanthropic footprint touches many of New York’s most important institutions, ensuring that universities, libraries, hospitals, museums and cultural institutions receive the support they need to benefit society. The Milstein family has also demonstrated a deep commitment to growing a vibrant tech economy and ecosystem in New York. Through its Circle Ventures initiative, the Milsteins are supporting many of New York’s most exciting startups, while Michael Milstein, co-founder of Grand Central Tech, has helped create an environment that nurtures innovation.

The first group of students accepted into the Milstein Program will be selected from this year’s pool of applicants to the College of Arts and Sciences and will enter as first-year students in the fall of 2018. The Milsteins’ gift will support a cohort of 100 students – 25 per class – that over time will come to represent a substantial group of elite leaders with a unique bond and network. The program will select promising students from a diverse set of backgrounds and opportunity sets, reflecting the diversity of leadership that is needed to maximize the program’s potential. Applicants interested in being considered for the Milstein Program can contact the Arts and Sciences Admissions Office at as_admissions@cornell.edu. More details on the program are forthcoming at <http://as.cornell.edu>.
