

Cornell University at its Sesquicentennial

A STRATEGIC PLAN
2010–2015

SUMMARY



Cornell University

The full plan is available at <http://www.cornell.edu/strategicplan>

One Cornell

*A unique institution.
A unique opportunity.*

Cornell has been described as the “first American university,” broad in scope, open and accessible to all. From the beginning, Cornell developed a curriculum that transcended the traditional restrictions of learning to classical education; just as it transcended social barriers of the time.

Cornell today is a comprehensive research university that interweaves the main elements of an Ivy League university with an unusually strong public service mission—one of the most distinguished institutions of higher education in the nation and world.

Why a strategic plan?

This planning process was initiated by the president and provost of Cornell University in the summer of 2009 amid the changing environment for higher education and Cornell. The effort was organized around four questions:

- Who are we as an institution?
- Where do we want to go?
- How can we get there?
- How will we tell if we have?

The answers to these four questions define the path toward the objective of this plan: to advance Cornell University as a single entity, One Cornell, that attracts the best and brightest faculty and students who are motivated by a commitment to make transformative contributions to the world.

To reach the aspiration of being indisputably among the top ten research universities in the world and being a model university for public engagement and impact, will require more focus

and stronger connections among and between Cornell’s academic units.

Moreover, achieving this ambition requires the willingness to measure our progress toward our purpose. Hence, **One Cornell**, **excellence**, and **assessment** are three elements this plan.

Our highest priority proposed for the next five years is to sustain and enhance **faculty excellence**, with special emphasis given to promoting and recognizing excellence and leadership in *research, scholarship, creativity, and graduate education*.

Nourishing the distinction of Cornell’s research and graduate education is critical for ensuring a place among the top-ten research universities in the world. Excellence in teaching is an integral component of faculty excellence.

The quality and success of the student experience at Cornell, in essence, is an ultimate barometer of what this plan achieves, an academic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts that nourishes what so many Cornellians cherish.

What follows is our path for the next five years as **One Cornell**.

“I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study.”

– Ezra Cornell, 1868



Cornell's Enduring Commitments

Our Mission

Learning. Discovery. Engagement.

Cornell is a private, Ivy League university and the land grant university for New York State. Cornell's mission is to discover, preserve, and disseminate knowledge; produce creative work; and promote a culture of broad inquiry throughout and beyond the Cornell community. Cornell also aims, through public service, to enhance the lives and livelihoods of our students, the people of New York, and others around the world.

At Our Core

The nature and implicit values of Cornell University were the theme of President Skorton's "State of the University" address on October 23, 2009. He argued that Cornell University is supported by four fundamental pillars:

Classical and contemporary inquiry, "shaped by the founder's commitment to liberal and practical education."

"Thinking otherwise," Cornell's faculty members have a history of being intellectually diverse and entrepreneurial.

Student access, which expresses a central principle of Ezra Cornell's original vision.

Public engagement, which expresses the university's commitment to search for knowledge-based solutions to societal and world problems.

These four pillars of Cornell imply the core values that stand at the center of Cornell as an institution.

- Seek knowledge
- Support free and open intellectual inquiry and expression
- Sustain excellence in teaching, research, and public engagement
- Use knowledge to enlighten ourselves and benefit the world
- Reward and recognize merit, creativity, and innovation
- Treat all individuals with dignity, respect, and fairness
- Embrace difference and diversity
- Promote cross-cultural and cross-national understanding
- Be a collaborative, collegial, and caring community
- Be accessible and affordable to all who meet high academic standards



We Aspire

Cornell University will be widely recognized as a top-ten research university in the world, and a model university for the interweaving of liberal education and fundamental knowledge with practical education and impact on societal and world problems.

Overarching Goals

Timeless and enduring.

1 Enroll, educate, and graduate the most deserving, promising, and diverse student body possible. Provide all students (undergraduate, graduate, professional) with an education that is innovative, distinctive, and of the highest quality, and that inspires in them a zest for learning.

2 Achieve world pre-eminence in research, scholarship, and creativity.

3 Recruit, nurture, and retain a diverse faculty who are outstanding scholars and teachers and an excellent, diverse staff who provide outstanding support to faculty and students.



4 Strengthen the public engagement of the university's education, research, and clinical programs with local, national, and international communities, consonant with its stature as an academically distinguished private university with a public mission.

5 Sustain organizational structures and processes that promote and support academic excellence.



Objectives

FACULTY EXCELLENCE

Anticipated retirements over the next ten to fifteen years offer a unique opportunity to renew the faculty ranks. It is essential to keep abreast of and deal with intense competition for faculty, reduce losses of valued faculty through enhanced retention efforts, and take advantage of an historic opportunity to increase the diversity of the faculty as a whole.

Our objectives are to:

- Increase the size and quality of faculty in strategically important academic areas.
- Broaden the diversity of faculty through new hires and enhanced retention efforts.
- Ensure competitive faculty compensation.
- Develop and implement policies to retain highly valued faculty.
- Devise and implement new mechanisms or policies for rewarding outstanding faculty and for continually assessing faculty performance as scholars and teachers.
- Foster an exciting intellectual environment by providing opportunities for more dialogue and engagement.
- Develop ways to enable faculty to focus their time on being highly productive in their core academic activities (research, scholarship, and creativity; teaching; public engagement).

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Cornell's emphasis is on the excellence of faculty teaching, international and public engagement aspects of education, and the health and well-being of students. While we maintain and nurture the existing strengths of Cornell's student experience, improving teaching, enhancing the diversity of the student body, and nurturing student health and well-being are priorities.

Our objectives are to:

- Create and sustain a culture that supports teaching excellence in all academic units.
- Strengthen institutional structures that promote pedagogical innovations both centrally and within colleges and programs.
- Provide a more unified and shared educational experience for Cornell undergraduates.
- Strengthen the educational impact of international opportunities and experiences for students.
- Promote the health and well-being of students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) as a foundation for academic and life success.
- Strengthen efforts to attract and educate an excellent and diverse body of undergraduate students.
- Strengthen the capacity of graduate and professional programs to recruit and educate a diverse body of the very best students.

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND CREATIVITY

Cornell recognizes the importance of raising the quality and stature of select departments to a position of academic leadership and of providing support for research, scholarship, and creativity in a careful, strategic, and cost-effective way.

Our objectives are to:

- Increase the number of Cornell departments or graduate fields that have achieved world leadership in their areas.
- Build and maintain world leadership in a select set of departments within the following broad areas: humanities and the arts; life sciences and agricultural sciences; physical sciences and engineering; social sciences; and professional schools and programs.
- Strengthen support for and recognition of important interdisciplinary areas, while ensuring excellence in disciplines as a foundation.
- Strengthen institution-wide services for the administration and support of research grants (including government, foundation, and industry funding).
- Maintain and selectively strengthen in cost-effective ways the core infrastructures for research, scholarship, and creativity, including in particular libraries and shared research facilities.
- Encourage productive, mutually beneficial collaborations between faculty and students in Ithaca-based programs and faculty and students at Weill Cornell Medical College and Graduate School.

EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Cornell's faculty, staff, and students make meaningful contributions to local, societal, and global issues (e.g., problems of environmental sustainability, health, and poverty), from participating in public discourse or the performing arts to applied research and formal extension programs.

Our objectives are to:

- Make public engagement a distinctive feature of education at Cornell.
- Construct a unified concept and vision for the university's public engagement mission.
- Develop rigorous, systematic evaluations of all outreach and extension programs.
- Strengthen the connection between public engagement and on-campus research and educational strengths.
- Promote stronger collaborations and partnerships between the university and stakeholders that can make use of and strengthen Cornell's research (e.g., business, K-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, government).

STAFF EXCELLENCE

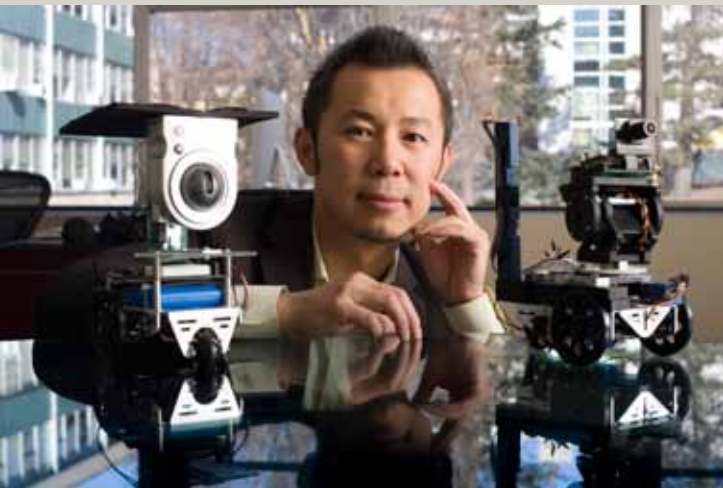
Staff excellence is a critical component in virtually all of the university's academic and nonacademic activities, and attracting a diverse staff is critical to our success. Cornell's core values suggest the creation and maintenance of a workplace that provides respect, dignity, and fairness to all employees across all job classifications and units. The university values, as a result, constructive relations with its academic and nonacademic staff, as reflected in its commitment to a fair and humane workplace. Coming out of a period of budgetary and staff reductions and heightened levels of uncertainty, our objectives are to:

- Retain highly qualified staff in valued positions even as the university reorganizes to address budgetary constraints.
- Attract a talented and diverse workforce.
- Be an exemplary employer across the entire spectrum of staff.
- Provide job skill training to staff in a variety of venues.
- Sustain and, wherever possible, enhance flexibility in the workplace and workforce.
- Work with the local community to keep Ithaca and Tompkins County vibrant places to live and work.



Seven Strategic Initiatives for 2010-2015

For the next five years, faculty excellence is our highest priority. This is the principal pathway for sustaining and building the pre-eminence of Cornell University.



1 Faculty renewal in the context of academic priorities and substantial retirements. Identify strategically important departments where the age distribution will result in a significant loss of reputation over the next ten years and develop multi-year hiring plans giving priority to recruiting new Ph.D.s and “rising stars.” Use pre-fills of retirements, internal reallocation, and fund-raising to generate necessary resources.

2 Identify a few departments or fields of critical importance to the university and move them into a position of world leadership while working to prevent others from losing such stature. Identify departments on the cusp of leadership or on the verge of losing it and make proactive efforts to generate or preserve that leadership.

3 Create a culture in support of teaching in every department across campus. Improve assessments of teaching and learning and enhance the importance of teaching excellence through the allocation of resources to departments, programs, and faculty.

Identify good models for promoting a culture in support of teaching and use these as benchmarks to assess and improve teaching in other units.

4 **Develop stronger connections across colleges to enhance educational opportunities for students and the quality and stature of disciplines or fields.** Develop policies that encourage students in one college or campus to take courses in another, and devise new mechanisms of coordination and connectivity across academic disciplines or across colleges within a given academic discipline.

5 **Implement strategically focused, cost-effective enhancements to the infrastructure in support of research, scholarship, and creativity.** This includes in particular the university libraries, shared research facilities in the sciences and social sciences, and administrative support for faculty applying for or managing research grants.

6 **Make significant progress toward a more diverse faculty, student body, and staff in terms of gender and race and ethnicity.** Establish explicit and ambitious goals, considering appropriate pipelines and the importance of “critical mass”; enhance recruitment and retention processes; and ensure that mechanisms holding units accountable are effective.

7 **Strengthen the connection between outreach and public engagement and Cornell’s areas of strength in research, scholarship, and education.** Broadly redefine the outreach mission as public engagement and impact, extend it across campus, and develop approaches appropriate to different academic disciplines or fields; strengthen opportunities for students to “engage the world” as part of their academic work.

Excellence in Organizational Stewardship

Adaptable and efficient.

Our focus is on three resource areas: budget and finance; capital projects and physical facilities; and information technology. We will strive to:

- Affirm general guidelines for organizational stewardship
- Make continual improvements in the stewardship of financial resources
- Promote effective stewardship of the built and natural environment
- Provide cost effective infrastructures for information technology



Cornell at its Sesquicentennial

A plan for ongoing change.

How will Cornell University change over the next five to ten years? Will the university have done a more effective job of renewing the faculty ranks than other Ivy or comparable institutions of higher education? Will the teaching of faculty reach a standard of excellence that few, if any, other research universities can match? Will the university achieve a stronger position among its peer institutions and be even more successful at attracting exceptional students and faculty? Will it become even more widely known and recognized for its constructive impact on the world, from local to global communities? Will this public, worldwide impact be more widely and integrally a part of the student experience at Cornell? If the answer to each of these questions is “yes,” it will be a tribute to the dedication and collaborative work of the broader Cornell University community. Creating a strategic plan is the first step of an ongoing planning process. Mobilizing effort and consensus around its main themes and deciding what to do with it—that is, implementation—is the next step. This plan must be treated as a living document, changeable and adaptable in the course of implementation and further planning.



Assessing Progress

A framework for success.

Our plan includes a general approach to guide the development and use of metrics and qualitative indicators for assessing progress on plan goals, objectives, and strategic initiatives. This is intended to be a starting point from which appropriate groups of administrators, faculty, and staff can develop and further refine the appropriate metrics and qualitative indicators.

Approach

- Focus on university-wide (aggregated) metrics and qualitative indicators but include, where appropriate, unit-level ones.
- Organize metrics and qualitative indicators around goals and priorities.
- Include both quantitative and qualitative indicators.
- Have multiple indicators for each goal, given the complexity of the assessment, but as few as possible to enhance focus.
- Make the metrics flexible and adaptable to be useful across a wide range of academic areas or units.
- Consider the need to minimize the amount of staff time or additional staff to implement the metrics.
- Use existing sources of data and information whenever possible.

Core metrics

Tracked over the next five years, our core metrics reflect the plan's strategic priorities and initiatives.

Amount and nature of faculty hiring and retention

Number of hires/year; rank distribution of hires; tracking of changes in faculty size; yearly assessment of faculty exits.

Age distribution of the faculty

Percent of faculty 55 and above; 60 and above (university-wide and by unit).

Diversity of faculty, students, and staff

Percent women and underrepresented minorities. For faculty, comparison to specific goals of 20% or pipeline percent (whichever is higher). Set comparable goals for students and staff.

Number of top-ranked departments and programs

Select appropriate NRC criteria; discipline-specific rankings; regular program reviews.

Sponsored research

Total expenditures; expenditures per faculty member.

Student learning outcomes and health

College assessments of learning outcomes based on core competencies (see Appendix C of the full plan); data from Gannett on student mental and physical health.

Faculty and staff compensation

Compare salaries and fringe benefits to peer institutions (faculty) or appropriate markets (staff).

Student access

Cost of Cornell education by family income quintile.

Student surveys (undergraduate, graduate, and professional)

Satisfaction with teaching; satisfaction with research opportunities and training; perceptions of international and public engagement opportunities; ease of taking courses across boundaries and administrative/bureaucratic barriers; perceptions of living-learning environment at Cornell.

Library rankings

Compare to research university libraries, using appropriate measures from the ARL (Association of Research Libraries).

Faculty and staff surveys

Conduct surveys on a regular schedule.

Ithaca-Weill interactions

Joint research grants; collaborative teaching programs; and cross-usage of core facilities.

Stature of university

Institutional reputation based on appropriate high-quality rankings of research universities (e.g., based on NRC data and criteria); use of select metrics from above list (e.g., faculty quality, student quality; external research funding; library rankings including collections).

The plan also includes detailed qualitative and quantitative indicators for each objective.

Membership of Strategic Planning
Advisory Council

Lance Collins, Mechanical
and Aerospace Engineering

Jonathan Culler, English

Sandra Greene, History

Martha Haynes, Astronomy

Katherine Hajjar, Cell and Development
Biology, Weill Cornell Medical College

Edward Lawler, Organizational Behavior,
ILR School (Advisory Council Chair)

Susan McCouch, Plant Breeding
and Genetics

Michael Waldman, Economics, Johnson
Graduate School of Management

In addition, four working groups
consisting of a total of 54 faculty,
students, and staff, each focused on
one of the following areas: Education;
Research, Scholarship, and Creativity;
Public Engagement; and Organizational
Stewardship.

The full version of the strategic plan
is available at [http://www.cornell.edu/
strategicplan](http://www.cornell.edu/strategicplan)