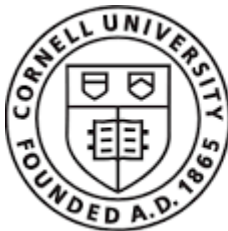


Provost's Committee on the Future of the American University

Preliminary Framework Executive Summary

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Cornell University

Introduction

American higher education has never been more consequential or more contested. The world that forged the American university into a global model and sustained its promise for generations is facing a future of abiding uncertainty. The Provost's Committee on the Future of the American University was charged with assessing not how higher education should react to the current moment, but how we can respond to ongoing challenges grounded in our purpose. Our goal is to understand how the fundamental missions of the American university — undergraduate education, research and scholarship, public impact and community engagement, and graduate and professional education — can transform current disruptions into opportunities to rebuild public confidence, maintain global excellence, and better serve future generations of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and society. The committee was asked to consider the interplay of external forces and institutional transformations at the scale of decades, to be bold and provocative, to intentionally propose solutions that may seem implausible or impractical, and to suggest both long-term possibilities and immediate opportunities. This document offers emerging ideas to solicit feedback from the Cornell community before developing our full report.

The committee was asked to consider three major pressures American universities are navigating:

- The rapid pace of technological change, including artificial intelligence (AI)
- The evolving relationship between universities and the federal government
- The erosion of public trust in higher education

Higher education has rarely faced such an array of challenges pressing upon every dimension of what we do. But our work surfaced a wider set of forces reshaping higher education, including concerns about return on investment given rising tuition prices, a demographic cliff reducing the traditional college-age population, legislative incursions into what universities may teach and research, unprecedented funding pressures, and debates over academic and expressive freedom. While some may argue that today's pressures will dissipate, the challenges we face are neither temporary nor self-correcting. They are manifestations of long-running issues in the relationship between higher education and American society that we can and should address. The core strengths of universities — curiosity, learning, discovery, creativity, and public engagement — are powerful tools for responding to changing conditions in order to flourish and lead in challenging times. The uncertainties confronting higher education are real, significant, and complicated. They also present a historic invitation to reimagine what a university can be and build something better.

It is critical that, in a period of sustained uncertainty, we anchor our institutions in the knowledge of what we are and what we are not. Change must rest in a recommitment to **our core purpose: to steward, impart, generate, and apply reliable knowledge and creative output**. Further, universities are not merely knowledge factories; they are human communities organized around the pursuit and sharing of understanding. Thus, in an age of AI and of increasing transactionalism and dehumanization, universities must remain inextricably and unapologetically human-centered, focusing on what humans need to flourish while addressing societal needs. To do so, a human-centered university must recenter four key academic commitments:

- **Foster discovery, creativity, and innovation**, enabling universities to more rapidly and responsively adapt to changing circumstances without sacrificing stability of core activities.
- **Enable lifelong learning**, instilling faculty, staff, and students with curiosity and confidence to learn, retool, and upskill, and by providing educational opportunities across a lifespan, enabling the institution to respond to changing times, opportunities, and technologies.
- **Promote pluralism** as a lived institutional practice that strengthens academic freedom and democratic capacity through constructive engagement across differences in identity, experience, background, worldview, and values and by navigating conflict with respect.

- **Cultivate judgment**, where the goal of learning is not merely knowledge for its own sake, but the capacity to transform knowledge, creativity, and innovation into purposeful action.

To fulfill the human-centered university's purpose, we identified **five strategic imperatives**:

- **Invest in building thick relationships** beyond the transactional, creating a sense of belonging to something larger than oneself and extending outward into communities.
- **Embrace institutional identity** as a foundation of belonging, built on shared values and sustained by rituals and traditions that give an institution its distinct character.
- **Nurture a university-wide commitment to academic civics** where individuals have an understanding of and commitment to institutional mission and shared governance.
- **Expand our commitment to collaboration** where core missions reinforce and enrich one another by creating a culture and structures that promote efforts to work across silos.
- **Sharpen a global vision**, recognizing that exposure to different backgrounds and perspectives is crucial for cultivating judgment and fostering innovation in a pluralist society.

This understanding is grounded in an intensive engagement process with more than 2,100 stakeholders across over 200 meetings and events. Those stakeholders included students, staff, faculty, administrators, trustees, parents, and alumni; as well as federal, state, and local officials; journalists; peer institution leaders; and outside experts. The aim was not to gather opinions but to expand our collective understanding — to surface and reflect on a range of perspectives on what higher education is for and what it should become by engaging with our supporters and critics.

There is a productive ambiguity in the committee's charge between contemplating the future of Cornell and that of American universities as seen from Cornell. We have sought to do both. Cornell's unique structure — public and private, Ivy and land-grant, rural and urban, national and international — makes it a distinctive and appropriate site for experimentation and innovation. Moreover, historian Frederick Rudolph named Cornell the “first American university” because of the widespread adoption of its then-radical vision of “any person” and “any study,” which emphasized access and inclusion — with students admitted regardless of gender, race, religion, nationality, or wealth — as well as academic freedom and an openness to practical fields of study and new and emerging disciplines. Our mandate now is to build on these founding values to envision what Cornell — and the American university — can become for the coming decades.

This document focuses specifically on the committee's current understanding of the core purpose of the university and its core missions. Our future full report will comprehensively describe stakeholder feedback, analyze the three key disruptors, and address emerging cross-cutting issues. These include aligning the structure and incentivization of faculty and staff work with university missions, improving faculty-staff relations, addressing academic freedom, finding best paths forward for inclusion, reducing the weight of bureaucracy, promoting strategic coordination across university units, making appropriate room for religious expression, and addressing concerns around the institutional effects of a narrowing ideological diversity among faculty. The full report will also consider contested contemporary debates, such as whether core curricula are needed, which intellectual traditions should anchor the university, academic rigor, and alternative grade systems. In the face of a future defined by uncertainty, the committee brings this **preliminary framework to our community** with gratitude and intellectual humility. We do not know what the future will bring, but we know that higher education cannot stand still. We offer this framework to further catalyze a conversation with our Cornell community before we produce our report. That report will be used by a follow-on committee, Shaping Our Future, to develop a strategic plan for Cornell. We invite you to explore our accompanying detailed mission frameworks; each is summarized below. Your feedback will inform our report and can be submitted via [online survey](#) or to fau@cornell.edu.

Undergraduate Education

There have historically been many possible purposes for undergraduate education, including moral formation, the development of an educated citizenry, the acceleration of social mobility, the development of a strong workforce, racial and ethnic integration, and economic security for graduates. In recent years, students, parents, employers, alumni, policymakers, and other stakeholders have framed the purpose of highly selective universities around a particularly private vision: the university selects the most talented individuals from a highly competitive pool, these individuals pay as much as their family can afford, and they are rewarded with a degree leading to a high-paying job. Stakeholders referred to this concept repeatedly as return on investment (ROI).

Certainly, education should provide students with clear benefit. But a narrow, transactional understanding of this return falters in an unstable external economic environment, when faced with workforce disruption from artificial intelligence (AI), and in the face of questions about public trust in universities.

- Students and parents feel that American higher education is **not preparing students sufficiently to secure employment**.
- Employers feel that higher education is **not equipping students with critical professional capacities**.
- Many stakeholders feel that higher education is **not concerned with civic contribution**.

Moreover, a narrow understanding of ROI at a time of economic insecurity has produced **a sense of financial pressure on students that inhibits learning** and an **overly competitive student culture** that creates isolation and lack of belonging.

The problem of ROI is not what it seems. While students seek more vocational skills to increase employability, employers report needing something different from American graduates. They value not simply specialized knowledge and competencies but a broader fluency with knowledge, prudent judgment, and ability to work well with others that enables graduates to integrate human and artificial intelligence in the solving of complex problems.

We can therefore align what students need, employers demand, and society requires of American universities: **socially connected, emotionally resilient, and civically minded graduates who can navigate uncertainty, leveraging knowledge and judgment to produce constructive solutions. Graduates should have the social and emotional skills to engage with others across differences in identity, experience, worldview, and values, and the capacities and dispositions needed to lead responsibly and navigate conflict.**

To do so, we must make explicit and more central a role universities have long played, but a transactional approach has been diminishing: not only transmitting knowledge, but cultivating the whole person. Universities already possess the capacity and infrastructure to provide a transformative education, honing moral and intellectual judgment through direct engagement with other students and rigorous thinkers in their respective fields, while offering a unique opportunity to build deep social connections through residential life. What this moment demands is not a wholesale rejection of the American university, but a principled re-orientation that builds new capacities needed for the coming decades while re-enlivening some historical values of the university. We refer to this orientation as **human-centered education**.

Effective human-centered education builds on five **core principles**:

- Cultivate constructive engagement with uncertainty.
- Foster the capacity for pluralism.

- Promote civic-mindedness.
- Develop the whole person.
- Educate through intentional development of human relationships and presence.

These five core principles support the **primary goals of education** in a human-centered framework. Human-centered universities should develop:

- **Intellectual capacities** to think constructively, critically, affirmatively, rigorously, and with sound judgment.
- **Interpersonal capacities** for deep connection, collaborating and communicating across differences, and leadership with integrity.
- **Personal capacities** for resiliency, flexibility, courage, and meaning-making.

Fostering these capacities requires appropriate **methods of education**. Universities should:

- **Ensure faculty model intellectual and interpersonal capacities** that students are intended to develop, both in and out of the classroom.
- **Align goals across curricular and co-curricular activities**, teaching the whole student by better integrating academics and student and campus life.
- **Complement practical education with liberal arts** to cultivate well-roundedness.
- **Provide hands-on, project-based, AI-resilient education** at a human scale through dynamic classes, small classes, and experiential learning.
- **Intentionally leverage use and non-use of technology**.
- **Promote intercultural learning** to foster growth through exposure to new perspectives and experiences.

It also requires an appropriate **infrastructure for education**. Universities should:

- **Rethink teaching supports and incentives** to make it easier and structurally rewarding for tenure-track and teaching faculty to provide human-centered education.
- **Design spaces and artifacts for human-centered education**.
- **Model the intellectual, interpersonal, and personal capacities we aim to engender** in students in the actions of the whole community, including faculty, staff, and leadership.

Human-centered universities must also address the two largest barriers to public trust:

- **Rethink high cost and opaque pricing** that erode trust and inhibit human-centered education.
- **Reform opaque admissions processes** that erode trust and incentivize credentialism.

Cornell has plentiful resources to build on in developing human-centered education, including our institutional heritage and numerous initiatives, centers, programs, and courses. Making Cornell a human-centered university does not require a wholesale reinvention, but an intentional focus on and integration of human-centered principles and strategies throughout our undergraduate experience. Some **example next steps** include:

- **De-silo our institution** to allow students meaningful engagement across disciplines, degree programs, and colleges.
- **Create default teaching policies that align with human-centered goals**.
- **Realign tenure-track and teaching faculty expectations and evaluation**.
- **Catalogue and build out existing human-centered initiatives**.
- **Integrate societal implications and ethics across the curriculum**.

Research and Scholarship

Research and scholarship activities in the university reflect a deep commitment to discovery and innovation, and there is a long-standing ethos in the academy that research and teaching are two sides of the same intellectual coin, fueling and strengthening each other. Research and scholarship have also been inextricably linked to advancing the public good since the inception of the research university. However, eroding public trust in higher education; the pace of technological change, notably artificial intelligence; and shifting university-government relations present challenges.

There is no substitute for the American research university in simultaneously producing fundamental discoveries, creative output, and economic and translational impact while training the next generation. External funding for this enterprise creates accountability and generates competitive pressure that reduces insularity. Over-reliance on any single funding source, whether it be government in the sciences or foundations in the arts and humanities, leaves universities vulnerable and less empowered to define their own priorities. That said, while diversifying external sources is important, it comes with its own challenges. To the extent that the university can raise unrestricted funds, the establishment of internal, competitive funding sources may sustain research and innovation programs in areas where external support wanes, enabling the university to foster its desired pace and direction.

Given this context, we define three **core principles** of research and scholarship:

- **Learning through discovery and creativity are at the heart of the university:** Human interactions and flourishing must be prioritized; both disciplinary focus and trans-disciplinarity are critical for the dual ideals of preservation and progress; and fundamental research, creative practice, and applied innovation are mutually reinforcing.
- **Scholarship must be anchored in rigor, accountability, and responsibility:** Scholarship must be open and rigorous, integrity and academic civics are of paramount importance, and mentorship and teaching are core values of the research and scholarship enterprise.
- **Public engagement is a pillar of the research and scholarship enterprise:** Public trust in scholarship matters, bidirectional engagement with the public must be promoted and incentivized, and reciprocity with our local and global community is crucial.

To instantiate these core principles, we suggest below a sampling of **example next steps**:

- **Create nimble structures and mechanisms to promote the entire scholarship ecosystem,** such as “creativity hubs” for bold ideas and initiatives that advance fundamental knowledge, encourage novel human expressions, and/or solve pressing concerns; a center for innovative and responsible use of AI; a large research and innovation foundation operating on dedicated investment vehicles; and structures that empower coordination across colleges to achieve shared goals.
- **Support, incentivize, and integrate public engagement** into faculty life by creating named public engagement professorships and fellowships and related supportive structures in each college; tenure and promotion criteria that directly value and reward public engagement and impact activities; and opportunities for graduate students across disciplines to learn through practicums about community engagement and impact.
- **Better connect the public to campus** through centrally coordinated opportunities such as a monthly “Cornell Day” when each college welcomes the public for tours and exhibits highlighting research; funding regular, accessible public talks and events; and an “ask a researcher” platform that connects the public, near and far, with Cornell scholars.

- **More deeply integrate research into the undergraduate experience** by requiring research-oriented courses in every undergraduate major, in which students get exposed to cutting-edge scholarship at Cornell including research lab visits, as well as ethical and societal implications; and significantly expanding research opportunities through resources that support students and mentors (e.g., Provost's Award for Summer Research).

Finally, we identify five **cross-cutting issues** that merit further discussion:

- **Research integrity:** Some disciplines report a reproducibility crisis, fueled by the “publish or perish” mentality, predatory journals, ideologically driven research design, and data manipulation, thus compromising trust. One possible solution is “adversarial collaboration,” in which opposing theories are rigorously tested by scholars with contradictory hypotheses. This spirit of intellectual humility could be systematized.
- **Research funding setup:** Alternative strategies for funding in an uncertain future:
 - **Research institutes similar to focused research organizations (FROs)**, which may require re-imagining department structures and tenure processes.
 - **Large research/innovation endowments** (dedicated investment vehicles) to fund discovery, technology development, and commercialization.
 - **A consortium of research universities** that solicit proposals and make awards, as opposed to completely internal mechanisms, to prevent insularity.
- **Tenure:** The tenure system enables open inquiry characterized by risk-taking, experimentation, and creativity that is central to discovery and innovation. It is important to note, though, that at a time when few workers have long-term job security, tenure can appear to some like academic exceptionalism. A compelling explanation free of academic jargon is needed to be convincing to the public of why tenure is both sensible and valuable. There is broad agreement that the current system for tenure and promotion can be too focused on quantitative metrics, does not adequately value community engagement and public impact including patents and start-ups, disincentivizes collaboration and a kind of faculty life that is deeply integrated across the different university missions, and therefore would benefit from realignment with the core principles stated above. Criticism of the current tenure system also includes that it disenfranchises currently non-tenured teaching-focused faculty, which is discussed in the framework document.
- **Department structure:** Academic departments have structural constraints that can restrict adaptability and promote redundancy. They are rarely terminated or merged, creating hiring rigidity in an evolving research landscape. However, departments offer stable leadership structures to define priorities and provide curricula that align with national or global academic standards. Two models that maintain departments but shift scholarship from an individualistic mentality to a collaborative mindset:
 - **Centrally invest more in collaborative hubs** to promote cross-fertilization leading to creative synergy and innovation, and update tenure expectations accordingly.
 - **Hire research teams based on thematic areas**, which would require new decision-making structures for hiring, funding, space allocation, and revenue flow.
- **Academic publishing:** A few publishers dominate the market and limit positive public spillovers of research. Faculty freely provide publishers with content and services, but publishers require exorbitant fees to publish, creating stress on faculty, departments, and academic libraries. Alternatives have gained popularity but are often flooded with papers and have limited vetting capacity. One model that reduces the market power of publishing oligopolies would create a consortium of research universities that utilize well-supported university presses with capacity to scale. Other models, including those that lean into society journals, also merit further discussion.

Public Impact and Community Engagement

As the only land-grant institution in the Ivy League, Cornell University is uniquely positioned to offer a model for American higher education through its integration of knowledge, teaching, and discovery with extensive public impact. Public impact comprises the myriad ways that universities engage with the world, including community engagement, development of new and revolutionary technologies, translation of research to non-academic audiences, influence on policy, and work with external organizations.

Research universities already apply many of these strategies in their dissemination of new knowledge. Land-grant universities have an even more robust and explicit commitment to public impact that includes direct and meaningful engagement with external stakeholders to advance a range of outcomes for communities, families, and individuals. Cornell's dual status as a research university and land-grant institution means it has a complex and demanding responsibility to the public as well as a unique advantage in delivering on this core mission.

Despite the erosion of public trust in institutions of higher education and their shifting relationship with the government, trust in the public mission of universities remains high. Viewed in this light, universities' public impact mission is an antidote to the broader loss of confidence in higher education's societal role. Research universities should lean into this source of support from the public and use it as a means of adopting best practices in other areas as to how to engage with the public in trust-enhancing ways.

Cornell should build on its tradition to serve as the “Land Grant to the World” by placing the public mission on equal footing with its commitment to research and education.

Academic excellence and public impact are not competing values. We do not view public impact and community engagement as a binary or categorical set of efforts, but instead as a continuum that spans from light-touch, unidirectional interactions to deeply reciprocal, co-creative partnerships. Recognizing this continuum allows all members of the university community to contribute to its public impact mission, regardless of their role or discipline.

Hindering public impact efforts are three **strategic barriers**:

- Perceived separation between contract and endowed colleges in terms of contributions to the public impact mission.
- Persistent perceptions of outreach work as secondary to research and teaching.
- A need for better recognition and acknowledgment of public impact contributions as a competitive advantage for the university.

...and five **structural barriers**:

- Limited coordination and interaction across outreach and extension units.
- A decentralized system of standalone centers and institutes, sometimes operating in similar or overlapping areas, which limits the ability to capitalize on emergent opportunities and leaves value on the table.
- Incentive structures, systems, and recognition that privilege research and on-campus teaching over public impact.
- Poor integration of research expertise with public impact infrastructure.
- Difficulty aggregating impact across the range of activities, efforts, and initiatives.

Our recommendations stem from the **core principle** that **having a positive impact on the public beyond our campuses is central to the future success of the American university** in an era of abiding uncertainty. This overarching principle of university-level commitment to impact gives rise to **six specific imperatives**, each addressing a distinct dimension of what it will take to realize our public impact mission:

- **Invest in translating and disseminating research and scholarship into public impact** through structures that, for example, emphasize research-to-practice translation, incubate impactful companies and non-profits, create educational materials for K-12 educators, and incentivize partnerships between researchers and external organizations to achieve concrete outcomes beyond traditional white papers and policy briefs.
- **Foster a bidirectional relationship between universities and the public** by shifting from the assumption that expertise resides solely in universities to recognizing that communities, organizations, and individuals possess deep knowledge that should inform research agendas, creating a true partnership where scholarly inquiry is driven by academic advances and real-world problems identified by external stakeholders.
- **Increase public impact coordination, integration, and effectiveness across the university** by creating structures that maintain unit autonomy while enabling cross-university collaboration, expanding on existing successful models, integrating extension more broadly, and incentivizing work that cuts across centers and units.
- **Recognize, reward, and expect external public engagement** by restructuring incentive systems to elevate public impact in faculty recruitment, evaluation, and tenure decisions and by creating pathways that help faculty generate impact aligned with their expertise.
- **Define, conceptualize, and measure impact thoughtfully and robustly** by developing tools to capture and track concrete outcomes like healthier communities and better-trained workers, creating collective priorities for impact measurement across units.
- **Leverage public impact infrastructure to address emerging societal needs**, such as navigating the opportunities and challenges posed by AI, by using existing extension infrastructure to advance AI literacy, and partnering with state agencies to prepare the workforce for effective AI use in public service.

While there are multiple ways to push our public impact agenda forward, it is critical that we do so with an urgency and enthusiasm for a path that at once reconnects us to our past and prepares us for an uncertain future. We suggest **example next steps** for universities (and Cornell) to better advance a public impact mission in the near-term.

- **Extend tenure standards** to include public impact pathways.
- **Revisit rewards and recognition** associated with public impact work.
- **Establish a coordination mechanism for public impact and engagement** to connect units, build capacity, and accelerate community-engaged research and teaching.
- **Create a public impact advisory council** to work with and advise leadership.
- **Conduct an internal impact inventory** to better understand the breadth and depth of work.
- **Leverage cooperative extension infrastructure and programs** to develop AI training for a range of communities and groups affected by this technological disruption.
- **Utilize corporate engagement** to support public impact infrastructure.

Graduate and Professional Education

Graduate and professional education in American research universities is entering a period of sustained disruption. The three main disruptors that the committee is analyzing are harbingers of an extended era of uncertainty that will define the conditions for post-baccalaureate education for years to come. These forces compound longer-standing pressures: concerns over cost and return on investment, the proliferation of master's programs outpacing demand, shifting Ph.D. career pathways, and a looming demographic cliff in the pool of prospective students. Meeting these challenges will require an openness to experimentation with everything from programs and credentials to structures and modes of delivery: not reckless risk-taking, but deliberate action, a willingness to learn from failure, and the intellectual honesty to treat both as necessary conditions for meaningful innovation.

The highly diverse fields of advanced study have long been shaped by entrepreneurialism — well-managed locally but underlaid at the institutional level, making agreement on core principles, much less a strategic agenda, elusive. In alignment with the committee's overarching vision, the **cultivation of judgment** must serve as a central organizing principle for graduate and professional education in an uncertain future. Judgment is not one thing — it is a composite capacity, analytic and imaginative, critical and creative, that equips experts not just to decide better but to see more fully and act with both wisdom and invention. Judgment flourishes in settings where **collaboration works to resist intellectual silos**, where encounters with a **global community** expand understanding, and where commitments to both stewardship and experimentation **ensure scholarly independence**. Post-baccalaureate education remains the primary site where deep expertise is formed, shaped by a **sensitive attunement to wider societal needs**. But the pace of social, economic, and technological change makes it clear that education must become more elastic, stretching across **a lifetime of learning**, with the university serving as a permanent intellectual home rather than a one-time credentialing stop.

Each of the principles outlined above points toward transformative actions that give practical expression to the committee's framework for graduate and professional education:

- **Ensure scholarly independence:** Universities must protect vital research even when it runs against current trends, while actively encouraging programs to experiment. An openness to experimentation will require cultural and structural change as graduate education has often been seen as resistant to pedagogical innovation. Rigorous assessment and strategic clarity make both stewardship and invention possible.
- **Provide a sensitive barometer of public needs:** Responsiveness to public priorities and scholarly independence are complementary obligations, expressed through affordable tuition, high-touch learning experiences, and training in both pedagogy and public communication as core competencies. Knowledge is a public good whose value extends well beyond near-term earnings. Post-baccalaureate education must equip students to demonstrate that value to publics, practitioners, and policymakers alike.
- **Expand global reach:** With 53% of international graduate students at U.S. institutions drawn from just two countries, universities must deliberately extend engagement to a wider array of nations. Doing so would both enrich the intellectual environment and build the resilience that comes from diverse, distributed partnerships. Experts formed in dialogue with the full complexity of the world are better equipped to navigate it.
- **Center advanced learning on the cultivation of judgment:** Program design should foster judgment through cross-campus integration and a commitment to pluralism. Disciplines should be invited to rethink capstone requirements, embracing new forms of knowledge production without sacrificing the depth that expertise demands.

- **Provide skills and training over an extended career:** Universities must offer multiple on- and off-ramps, embrace intermediate credentials like the M.Phil., and reconceive graduate education as an elastic relationship stretching across a lifetime rather than concluding at commencement.
- **Create thick lifelong relationships with students:** Universities must move beyond transactional credentialing toward a vision of the university as a permanent intellectual home — building durable, trust-based relationships with learners that extend well beyond any single degree and that deepen rather than depreciate over time.

Our most ambitious structural proposal is the promotion of strategic coordination through units that can ensure the quality, rigor, and coherence of all post-baccalaureate education. The case for enhanced strategic coordination rests on three convergent arguments: the scale of the disruptions ahead, the shared need to cultivate judgment across all forms of graduate and professional education, and the ambition to build thick, enduring relationships with students across a lifetime of learning. The empirical foundation is striking: our analysis of learning outcomes across 84 Cornell graduate fields reveals that communication skills, research competence, professional ethics, and teaching abilities are already recognized as shared priorities by 55–85% of programs — yet are currently pursued independently across fragmented administrative units at significant cost in coherence and depth. A more robust coordinating infrastructure would cultivate these shared learning outcomes as campus-wide priorities. Beyond developing shared learning outcomes, strategic integration of graduate and professional degrees with continuing education and online post-baccalaureate credentials would assemble the current diverse array of advanced degree programs into a unified learning commons. This commons would allow universities to preserve the distinctive commitment of professional schools, master's programs, and doctoral training to deep expertise while developing a coordinated strategic vision for the future of post-baccalaureate education. This coordination need not mean constraint. A single institutional interlocutor would reduce the bureaucratic friction that currently slows innovation, returning meaningful autonomy to programs and fields, particularly interdisciplinary ones whose initiatives must currently navigate multiple competing administrative jurisdictions. The benefits of a unified structure for post-baccalaureate education would extend well beyond graduate education itself, enriching undergraduate learning, strengthening the research enterprise, and providing a coherent vehicle for the university's public engagement missions. In each case, the goal is the same: to bring the full strength of the institution to bear on a future that no single program, however excellent, is positioned to navigate alone.

Graduate and professional education has always been the place where universities make their most consequential investments in the future, training the experts, researchers, and professionals whose judgment will shape the world for decades to come. That mission has never been more important, or more contested. The disruptions now bearing down on higher education demand a university capable of responding with commensurate ambition. The framework for post-baccalaureate education in this report is offered in the conviction that universities which embrace this moment with a willingness to experiment, a commitment to building thick and lasting relationships with their students, and the courage to center advanced education on the cultivation of judgment will not merely survive the disruptions ahead. They will emerge from them better equipped to fulfill the university's most enduring purpose: human-centered learning nourished by a commitment to discovery and creativity and sustained across a lifetime of engagement with knowledge in, and of, the world.

Provost's Committee on the Future of the American University

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Provost's Committee on the Future of the American University Stakeholder Engagement

The committee extends its gratitude to the more than 2,100 stakeholders who shared their time, expertise, guidance, and perspectives on higher education. These include faculty, staff, students, alumni, and trustees, as well as parents, experts, and leaders from the federal government, state government, and peer institutions. We especially thank the individuals, groups, and communities listed below for their ongoing input.

Institutional Assemblies and Governance Bodies

- Board of Trustees
- Employee Assembly
- Faculty Senate
- Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
- Student Assembly
- University Assembly

Employee Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of the American University

- Zora Blitz, Administrative Manager, Computational Biology, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- Bethany Dixon, Academic Human Resources Business Partner, College of Arts and Sciences
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- Jeramy Kruser, Systems Administrator, Cornell Information Technologies
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Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of the American University

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