



CORNELL COLLEGE

STRATEGIC ROADMAP: THINK-TANK REPORT

MOUNT VERNON, IOWA, USA MAY 2023













CORNELL COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLANNING THINK-TANK REPORT

MOUNT VERNON, IOWA MAY 2023

This report summarizes the outcomes of the Cornell College scenario planning work, including the Think-Tank held on April 13, 2023. Approximately 45 members of the Cornell College community participated in the Think-Tank and developed the scenarios presented in this report. This report has been produced as part of the Cornell College Strategic Roadmap project which aims to guide the strategic direction of the college into 2035.

REPORT PREPARED BY:



THINK-TANK HOSTED BY: -











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SNAPSHOT | REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

This report lays out the findings from the future-orientated scenario planning work for Cornell College, in April 2023. This work has identified a preferred future, and highlighted some of the future challenges and opportunities in front of the College.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THIS PLANNING WORK



Cornell College stakeholders see the need to adapt and change

Throughout the planning process, and especially in the Think-Tank deliberations, there was an expressed recognition of the need for Cornell College to adapt and change. Change is not always a comfortable process, but the imperative for Cornell is to reposition in a rapidly changing world. The preferred future identified in this scenario-based planning work has highlighted the desire for change in terms of institutional adaptation, moving to more growth and diversification, and a shift to a more adaptive, future oriented and responsive education environment.



Significant headwinds that will need careful navigation

The survey work highlighted the perception amongst stakeholder that there are some significant headwinds and challenges ahead. It was observed that the educational environment will become much more challenging; there is a changing landscape of students with different expectations and values; and there will be a changing profile of students who are becoming more diverse. In addition, there are deep concerns about the impending 'enrollment cliff' and about the underlying financial strength of the College.



A key challenge will be attracting and retaining quality staff

In the survey results, over 70% of respondents consider it will be harder or much harder to attract and retain quality staff in the future. This has an impact on the adaptability of the organization, and how much depth there is in the talent pool to design and execute change.



Block Plan remains a key point of differentiation

The Block Plan model has been a key point of differentiation for Cornell College. Nearly 70% of survey respondents highlighted this strong point of differentiation and considered that it will become more relevant over the next 10 years. It was also considered that this model is effective in supporting the brand and reputation of Cornell College.

The state of the s

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1.0 | INTRODUCTION

was an opportunity for Cornell College stakeholders to take a 'deep-dive' into an inclusive and thoughtprovoking future-orientated scenario-planning process.

Cornell College is a private liberal arts college located in Mount Vernon, Iowa. With a student population of around 1,000 undergraduate students, the College takes pride in its close knit and academically focused community.

This scenario-based Think-Tank report summarizes the Cornell College Think-Tank planning process that took place during April 2023, culminating in a Think-Tank workshop. The Think-Tank was one of two major stakeholder engagement components delivered by Future iQ, as part of the overall Strategic Planning process that the college is currently undertaking.

CORNELL COLLEGE STRATEGIC ROADMAP DEVELOPMENT

STEP 1: **Explore Perceptions**

Background review / **FUTURECAST (2037)**

Stakeholder Survey #1

APRIL 3 TO 10 [STAKEHOLDER SURVEY]

Step 2: Identify **Key Drivers**

Identify key drivers Rate future impact **Build scenario matrix**

APRIL 3 AND 10

Step 3: Craft **Future Scenarios**

Future Think Tank Craft scenarios Identify Preferred Future

APRIL 13 [SPAG - 'BRAINS TRUST'] [STAKEHOLDER THINK-TANK]

Step 4: Develop **Strategic Roadmap**

Build initial strategic framework

APRIL 14 ONWARD









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2.0 | STAKEHOLDER SURVEY

Outreach for this project began with the distribution of the Strategic Planning Survey to members of the Cornell College community. The purpose of the survey was to gather insights into the community's perceptions of trends influencing Cornell's future, as well as to provide a glimpse into stakeholder aspirations for the future of the College.

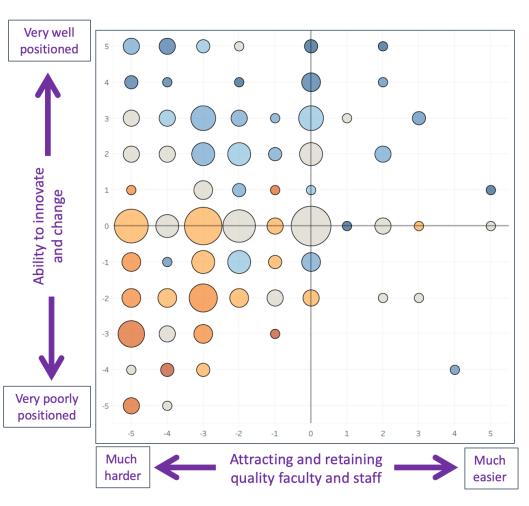
The survey asked focused, narrowly constructed questions with the intent to gather information that would help inform the Think-Tank axes. The results of the survey can be viewed on the Cornell College Strategic Planning portal at lab2.future-iq.com/cornell-college-strategic-roadmap-development/. The results are shown using an interactive data visualization platform that allows the viewer to explore the data set and to filter the data by cohort to see what different groups of stakeholders think about different topics. Below is an example of data visualization of three survey questions.

Key to effective
engagement is building
momentum around a plan
as it is created. The Strategic
Planning survey was an initial
catalyst for the enthusiasm
generated for the Cornell
College Scenario-Based
Think-Tank workshop.

Appetite and Ability to change

- X axis is 'ATTRACTING and RETAINING QUALITY FACULTY and STAFF'
- Y axis is 'ABILITY TO INNOVATE and CHANGE'
- Color is 'APPETITE and CULTURE OF CHANGE'







- The community survey contained 17 questions, took on average 15- 20 minutes to complete, and was available in an online format. 334 people completed the stakeholder survey.
- In terms of affiliation with Cornell College, 17% of respondents were faculty, 35% were staff, and 34% were students. Most participants (52%) had been associated with Cornell between 0-5 years.







3.0 | SCENARIO PLANNING APPROACH

The six-hour Cornell College scenario-based Think-Tank was held April 13, 2023. Approximately 45 people attended this workshop that included College staff, faculty, and students. The Think-Tank was held at the College. The Think-Tank was intended to build coherency around a vision for future planning for Cornell that will guide the College looking out to 2035.

The scenario
planning process
allowed Cornell
stakeholders to examine
the implications of choices
about future direction
for the College.

The scenario planning process provides a method to explore plausible futures and consider the implications of various future scenarios. The Think-Tank workshop aimed to:

- Deepen the understanding and examination of how external events and local conditions could shape decision-making
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends, and dynamics that will shape the college looking out to 2035
- Create and describe four plausible long-term scenarios for Cornell
- Explore Expected, Least Desired, and Preferred Futures
- Deepen the understanding of how the blending of multiple drivers and trends impact the developed futures
- Explore alignment around a shared future vision for Cornell

The scenarios developed during the scenario planning process and outlined in this report are important to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications for planning for Cornell. In addition, the Think-Tank deliberations can assist in identifying key actions for the College and in exploring how various groups might collaborate to best contribute to the future.

Think-Tank participants were guided through a scenario planning process to develop four plausible scenarios. The process involved development of a scenario matrix defining four plausible scenario spaces for the future and the development of descriptive narratives for each scenario. The event concluded with discussion of the scenarios and the selection of a preferred scenario for the future of Cornell.











>>>>> 4.0 | CREATING THE SCENARIO FRAMEWORK

The scenario framework was developed in several stages involving extensive input from a range of key stakeholders. Key to this process was the Strategic Planning Action Group (SPAG) which convened numerous times to help develop and frame the survey and the scenario framework. Key stakeholder engagement steps included:



Strategic Planning Advisory Group (SPAG)

This group convened to help build on previous work conducted during the FUTURECAST 2037 event held in 2022. This group was a cross section of representative voices from faculty, staff, and students. They acted as the 'brains trust' for the planning process. They helped synthesize data from the survey, explored key drivers and helped create the scenario matrix.



Strategic Planning Survey

An extensive survey was completed by by 334 Cornell College stakeholders including faculty, students, staff, Trustees, and select community leaders. The survey endeavored to understand stakeholder perspectives on current trends for Cornell College as well as the broader trends in higher education. This survey help shape the scenario matrix. The results from the survey can be viewed at the project portal: lab2.future-iq.com/cornell-college-strategic-roadmap-development/.



Scenario-Based Think-Tank Workshop

The scenario-based Think-Tank workshop, held on April 13, 2023, provided an important opportunity to engage Cornell College stakeholders in a critical dialogue about the future and the impacts of changing dynamics for the College. This was followed the next day by an indepth strategic planning workshop.







4.1 | KEY DRIVERS SHAPING THE FUTURE

The SPAG spent two workshops developing and ranking the key drivers most important for the future of the Cornell College. Key drivers were defined as events, trends, developments, catalysts, or forces that actively influence or cause change. Key Drivers were identified and synthesized in workshop discussions and with input from the SPAG and project team. The list of key drivers is as follows:

The list of
18 key drivers
represents a
comprehensive
assembly of future
shaping factors
and trends.

- 1. ENROLLMENT CLIFF: Impending enrollment cliff.
- 2. INCREASING INEQUALITY: Growing income inequality and decreasing social mobility.
- 3. INCREASING DIVERSITY: US population becoming more diverse (e.g., ethnicity, sexual identity, immigration)
- 4. MASS URBANIZATION: Increasing urbanization into larger cities.
- 5. EXPONENTIAL TECHNOLOGIES: Game-changing technologies such as Artificial Intelligence which increase the trajectory and velocity of change.
- DECLINING INTERACTION: Decline in faceto-face interaction and resulting impact on shared human experience.
- 7. CLIMATE CHANGE: Impact of climate change.
- 8. OPERATIONAL COSTS: Increased cost of operating the College.
- SKILLS-BASED TRAINING: Increased demand for pre-professional (e.g., business, engineering, nursing, computer science, law) training.

- 10. GROWING HEALTHCARE: Growing importance of the health care sector.
- 11. HEALTH & WELLBEING: Awareness of and increased emphasis on wellbeing and health.
- 12. POLITICAL POLARIZATION: Increasing political polarization, specifically in Iowa.
- 13. SHIFTING VALUES: Changing perceptions of the value of higher education and the liberal arts.
- 14. INSTITUTIONAL COMPETITION: Increased competition between institutions due to capacity (supply) exceeding demand (students).
- 15. UNDERPAID STAFF: Below market pay levels for faculty and staff.
- HIGHER EXPECTATIONS: Higher student expectations of college experience and return on investment (ROI).
- 17. REALITY GAP: Increasing gap between students' perceptions and reality.
- 18. LIFE-LONG LEARNING: Increased demand for non-traditional and life-long learning opportunities.





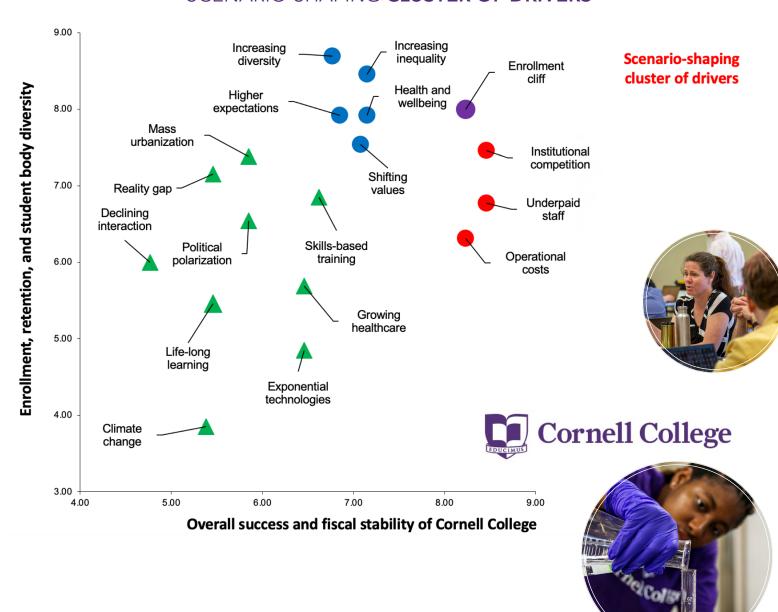




4.2 | FUTURE-SPLITTING CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS

The SPAG rated each of the drivers based on likely **future impacts** on Cornell College. They were rated on a scale of 1 = Low relative future impact; 10 = Very high relative future impact. The two main dimensions were 'Overall success and fiscal stability of Cornell College' and 'Enrollment, retention, and student body diversity'.

SCENARIO-SHAPING CLUSTER OF DRIVERS







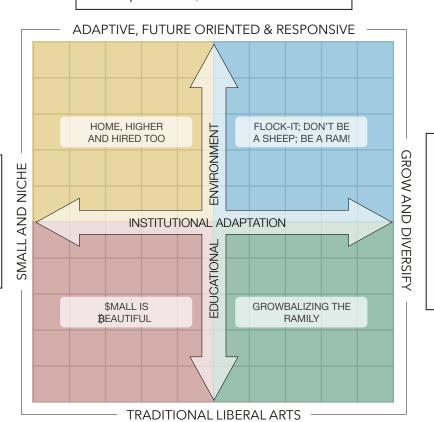
>>>>> 5.0 | VIEWS OF THE FUTURE - FOUR **PLAUSIBLE SCENARIOS**

Based on the Strategic Planning survey responses, the key drivers, and discussions with the SPAG committee, two main themes were identified to become the basis for axes on the scenario matrix. The two axes identified were Institutional Adaption and Educational Environment. Think-Tank participants were presented with the scenario matrix. Brief descriptions were also attached to the end points of each driver axes, to create continuums. Participants were divided into four groups to develop a narrative for each scenario. Each group was asked to describe the characteristics of Cornell College in 2035 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given and devise major events or headlines using the years 2025, 2030, and 2035. They also gave their scenario a descriptive name, intended to represent the description of the scenario in the form of a short title. Narratives, descriptions, and names of each scenario as developed by the workshop participants are included in the following sections.

PLAUSIBLE SCENARIO MATRIX 'FUTURE-GAZING' 2035

The Think-Tank workshop participants developed scenario narratives and created scenario names. All scenarios were considered plausible.

- · Emerging skills and technology innovation
- · Pre-professional, more market driven



- · Higher enrollment
- · More diverse, non-traditional. student base
- · Invest to grow market share
- · Globally networked

- · Close knit, supportive educational environment
- · Broad skills curriculum
- · Community focused, immersive experience



Lower

discount rate

· Selective and

discerning

Residential

focused



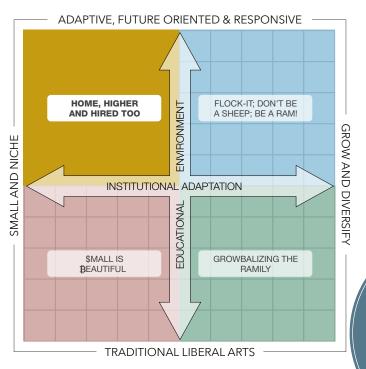


5.1 | SCENARIO A: HOME, HIGHER AND HIRED TOO

This scenario forecasts a future where Cornell College leans into the contemporary demands of the employment market.

It continues to focus on the liberal arts core but focuses further on developing a common technical skillset for students. In pursuing this scenario, Cornell will impart greater resources on building connections with those in the market to provide opportunities for Cornell students. This scenario would see a core group of faculty teaching the liberal arts courses along with faculty who are technical experts in their field. The College would see the introduction of potential graduate programs with the goal of having graduate students reside on campus.





The 'Home,
Higher, and Hired too,"
scenario promotes a future
more closely aligned with
market conditions and needs,
preparing students for a more
skill-based employment
arrangement founded on
the liberal arts.





SCENARIO A CHARACTERISTICS IN 2035: 'HOME, HIGHER AND HIRED TOO'

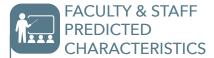
The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where the focus is on adjusting to the employment needs of the market. This includes offering new courses related to teaching needed skills, bringing on practitioner faculty to complement the core faculty at the college, and shifting resources to ensure students are employable postgraduation. This scenario includes the establishment of graduate programs and envisions graduate students living and teaching on campus.



STUDENT BODY **PREDICTED CHARACTERISTICS**

The sensitivity to market conditions and skill needs drive changes to the student experience.

- Skills based learning (i.e., STEM) encourages new types of students.
- Maintain current student body population.
- · Possibility of new graduate programs geared towards market needs.



The faculty and staff reflect the changing needs of global market demands.

- · Maintain core faculty with technical practitioners teaching market-based skills.
- Work cooperatively with private sector to provide unique opportunities to students.
- · Utilize graduate students to teach courses.



Intentional focus on market conditions force adjustments to curriculum and resource allocation.

- · New course offerings require shifting resources for the College to niche programs.
- · The block plan adjusts to accommodate the addition of new programs.
- · By 2035, there will be fewer colleges competing with Cornell.

2025 Headline News

"Cornell drops majors to adapt to a changing world!"



2030 Headline News

"Experts in the house: Graduate assistants in the residence halls."



2035 Headline News

"Cornell students see boost in employability."



In the 'Home. Higher and Hired Too' scenario, the contemporary market conditions play a more significant role in shaping the college experience for students, staff, faculty, and the institution writ large.



future>iQ°





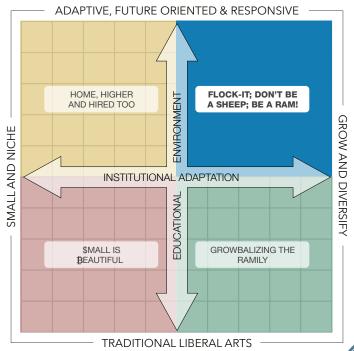


>>>>>> 5.2 | SCENARIO B: FLOCK-IT: DON'T BE A SHEEP, BE A RAM

This scenario forecasts a future where the College diversifies to include a greater number of non-traditional students.

This includes offering new online courses that are built into the curriculum or lead to new certifications or credentialing. It would include greater use of part time faculty and non-residential faculty to provide these new educational opportunities. This scenario builds on global partnerships to draw in international students and faculty to encourage a greater diversity of thought within the College's internal culture.





The 'Flock it:
Don't be a sheep, be
a Ram' scenario paints a
future where a greater degree
of diversity is built in many areas
of the College. This includes new
types of educational offerings, new
pathways for students to join
the Cornell community, and
a larger catchment area
for the College.

SCENARIO B CHARACTERISTICS IN 2035: 'FLOCK IT: DON'T BE A SHEEP, BE A RAM'

The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where Cornell grows by diversifying the educational opportunities for students across a more national and global community. The inclusion of new non-traditional delivery tools expands the student, staff, and faculty population while simultaneously allowing Cornell to compete with other institutions in this space.



New opportunities grow the student population between 20-50%. New students enhance on campus experience.

- · More non-traditional students both on and off campus.
- Integration of online and virtual student communities into Cornell's physical space.
- · Larger student catchment area from national and global sources.



The inclusion of new programs and partnerships broaden the need for new types of faculty and staff.

- · More part-time and nonresidential faculty.
- · Potential for greater faculty turnover and less stability.
- · International partnerships lead to a more diversified faculty and staff pool.



Broadening all areas of the institution leads to rethinking of internal culture. Potential opportunities to compete in new spaces.

- · Economies of scale and new educational opportunities improve financial conditions.
- · New Cornell community members diversify institutional culture.
- Recruitment plays a larger role in campus priorities.

2025 Headline News "Cornell College announces new partnerships with international universities."



2030 Headline News "Cornell announces record enrollment of transfer, commuter and international students."



2035 Headline News

"Flexibility is the key to Growth and Balance." *Cartoon of a Ram doing yoqa*



In the 'Flock it: Don't be a sheep, be a Ram," scenario, Cornell works to balance the need for broad diversified growth, adaptation to the market, and adjust to competitors in new spaces.





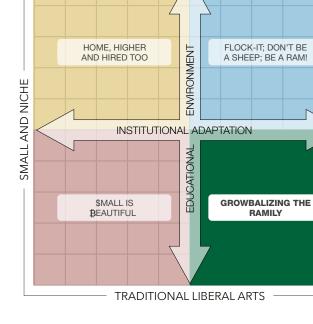


>>>>>> 5.3 | SCENARIO C: GROBALIZING THE RAMILY

This scenario forecasts a future where Cornell leans into an expansion model for the college.

The goal of this scenario is to expand the student population by at least 50% and would see that accomplished through a variety of targeted approaches. The acceptance rate and type of programs offered would be adjusted to accommodate the need for this expansion. Faculty and staff would be focused on their one particular area to maximize the potential for growth but potentially impacting the value of a traditional collaborative environment. The institution's position in the market changes to include less selectivity of students and more housing and classrooms for the expanded student body.

ADAPTIVE, FUTURE ORIENTED & RESPONSIVE





The 'Growbalizing the Ramily' scenario paints a future where Cornell is hyper focused on building a larger student population with the consequences of needing additional institutional resources to accommodate.





GROW AND DIVERSIFY

RAMILY

SCENARIO C CHARACTERISTICS IN 2035: 'GROWBALIZING THE RAMILY'

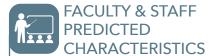
The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where Cornell sets the goal of adding 50% to the student population by 2035. This is done by pursuing new categories of students and maximizing the buildout of those efforts. New faculty and staff would be needed to service these students along with new physical space requirements. The institution itself would shift its market position to accommodate the new strategy and make new physical and virtual investments to build capacity.



STUDENT BODY PREDICTED **CHARACTERISTICS**

The student population expands quickly and considerably.

- 1500 is the new student population at Cornell College.
- Higher acceptance of students.
- · Online, international, underprepared, ESL, and other students are the focus.



Targeted and maximized growth for new faculty and staff.

- Separate faculty for new specialties.
- · New training to build capacity for new types of students.
- · Stratification of compensation based on different education offerings (is. Online vs. in person teaching).



Cornell becomes less selective as an institution. More investments to facilitate growth.

- Less student selectivity changes Cornell's institutional perception in the market.
- Larger investments in physical and virtual space to accommodate growth.
- · Increased fundraising and new innovative ways to achieve financial goals of the institution.

2025 Headline News

"Cornell College launches innovative program preparing students for college."



2030 Headline News

"Cornell College breaks ground on residential hall."



2035 Headline News

"Cornell College hits record student enrollment."



In playing out the long-term implications of the 'Growbalzing the Ramily,' scenario, Cornell impacts the perception of the college in the wider higher education market.





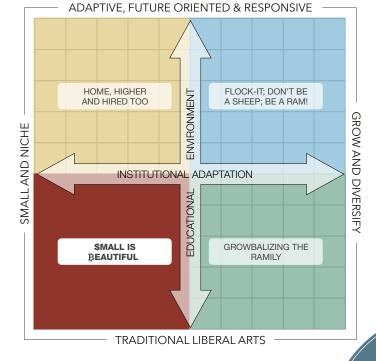




>>>>> 5.4 | SCENARIO D: \$MALL IS **B**EAUTIFUL

This scenario forecasts a future where Cornell maintains a small student population that generally comes from urban students with some degree of familial affluence.

The college continues to remain a tight knit community built around the traditional liberal arts core. There remains an adaptable and multi-tooled staff to adjust to campus needs along with a core faculty able to work across disciplines to accommodate the learning environment. The perception of the institution remains selective with students receiving high levels of attention to their academic growth and pursuits.





The '\$mall is Beautiful'
scenario paints a future
where Cornell focuses on
remaining a small tight knit
academic community. Its position
in the market and perception
remains selective and highly
attentive to the needs of each
individual student.





20000 SCENARIO D CHARACTERISTICS IN 2035: '\$MALL IS ellaEAUTIFUL'

The characteristics of this scenario paint a future where Cornell is focused on maintaining its small and selective student and faculty population. Emphasis on skilled and multi-disciplined faculty coupled with high achieving students, creates a unique and academically supportive campus environment. Supporting students through a significant tuition discount along with maintaining a strong institutional identity helps Cornell retain its market position and perception.



PREDICTED CHARACTERISTICS

Preservation of a selective student body from an urban and affluent background.

- Students are likely connected to a population of privilege.
- Accelerated changes creates mental health vulnerabilities.
- · Student backgrounds are mostly from regional urban cores.



Maintain a small interdisciplinary faculty and multi-skilled staff supporting students.

- · Adaptable, multi-disciplinary, and skilled are all common traits.
- · Willingness to engage with the campus community and be a voice in it.
- · Able and well prepared to retool and change when needed.



Focus on doing what Cornell has done well in the past. Reinforce institutional identity and nurturing campus environment.

- · Reinforce institutional identity by maintaining a small community.
- · Extended timeline for learning and adoption of the block plan.
- Institutional connections with a tight knit group of successful professionals.

2025 Headline News

"Lowest new student enrollment in five years!"



2030 Headline News

"Cornell College endowment tops \$1 billion!"



2035 Headline News

"Alumni happy, prepared for the future world by Cornell College!"



In the '\$mall is Beautiful' scenario, **Cornell maintains** its current path. The question is whether this path creates enough competitive advantage be sustainable.





6.0 | LEAST DESIRED, EXPECTED, **AND PREFERRED FUTURES**

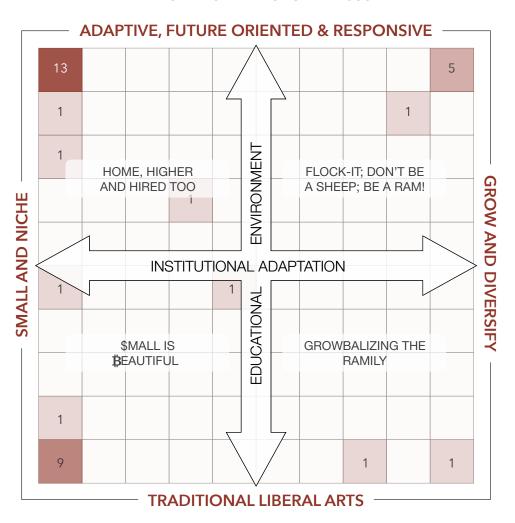
6.1 | LEAST DESIRED FUTURE

The Least Desirable Future is defined as the future that is thought will be most undesirable (or least optimal or least desired) for the future of Cornell College in 2035.

The least desired future is one where Cornell College stakeholders have said, 'We don't want that.' This provides leadership a mandate to change the trajectory of the college to avoid this avoidable scenario.

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LEAST DESIRED FUTURE - 2035









FutureInsight

- The data of the least desired future shows a general concentration in the corners some of the scenario matrix. The corners represent points of the more extreme versions of the scenarios.
- · The data suggests a wariness of amplified change, or status quo. When viewed with the Preferred Future data (section 6.3), it suggests participants desire a nuanced amount or thoughtful change, as opposed to extreme change.



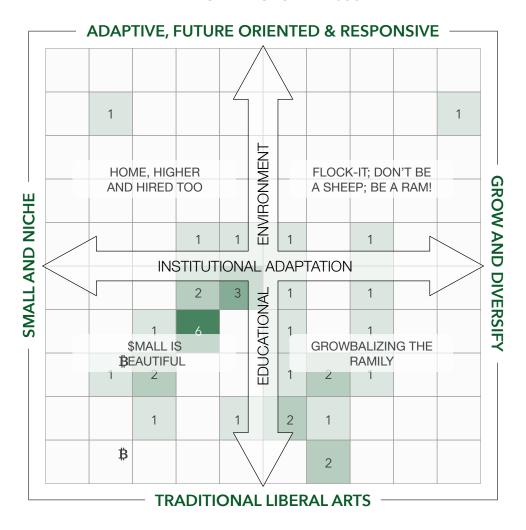
6.2 | EXPECTED FUTURE

The expected future is one deemed most likely to happen if there is no change in the current trajectory of Cornell College. Workshop participants generally indicated that Scenario D, '\$mall is Beautiful' is the scenario they believed most represented the expected future for Cornell College, looking out to 2035.

The Expected Future represents the future that is most likely to happen if Cornell College does nothing to change direction or trajectory.

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EXPECTED FUTURE - 2035









- The expected future may be familiar and comfortable, but Think-Tank participants have shown a clear desire to move away from the status quo to the preferred future.
- The expected future as seen by Think-Tank participants will not see significant evolution of Cornell College.





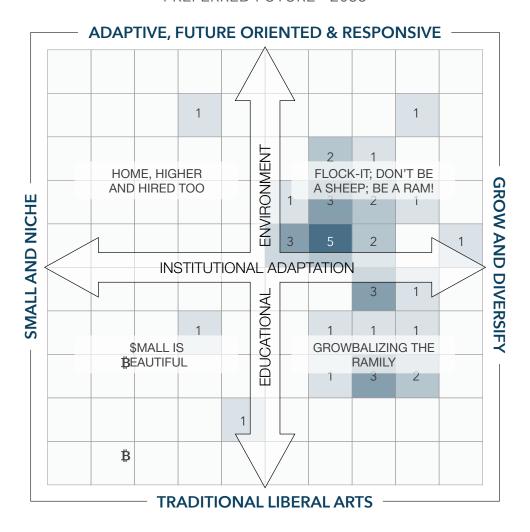
>>>>> 6.3 | PREFERRED FUTURE

Think-Tank participants expressed a strong preference for Scenario B, 'Flock-it: Don't be a sheep, be a ram' as the Preferred Future for Cornell College in 2035. In this future Cornell grows by diversifying the educational opportunities for students across a more national and global community. The inclusion of new nontraditional delivery tools expands the student, staff, and faculty population while simultaneously allowing Cornell to compete with other institutions in this space.

Working towards diversified educational opportunities for students with the inclusion of new nontraditional delivery tools will enable Cornell College to remain relevant and competitive.

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PREFERRED FUTURE - 2035









- The data of the Preferred future shows shared desire for change.
- The move to a 'grow and diversity approach recognized the challenges in the enrolment trends, and the needs to take bold action to succeed as an institution.



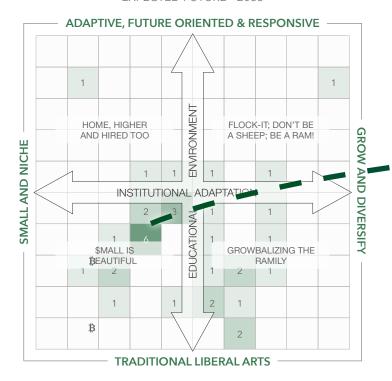


>>>>>> 6.4 | GETTING TO THE PREFERRED FUTURE

There was overwhelming alignment among Think-Tank participants that Scenario B, "Flock-it: Don't be a Sheep, Be a Ram" represented the preferred 2035 future for Cornell College. The wishes of the Cornell College stakeholders have been heard via the Strategic Planning survey and Think-Tank participation.

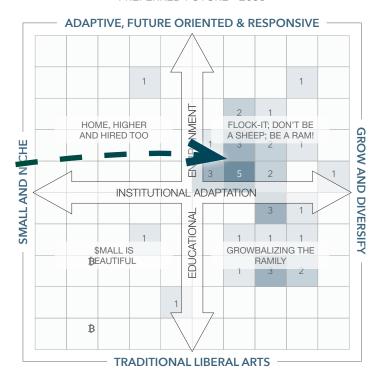
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EXPECTED FUTURE - 2035



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PREFERRED FUTURE - 2035







Because of the longterm nature of the Scenario Planning methodology, stakeholders often see the 'distant future vision (2035)' as unattainable and unrealistic. However, this underestimates the progress that can be made during the next 7 years, and the cumulative positive impacts of change.



- · Arriving at a point of consensus amongst stakeholders is very important to the planning process as it serves to provide a sense of cohesion and balanced solutions going forward.
- This alignment and the direction of change helps lay the foundations for the rest of the strategic planning work.









7.0 | FOR MORE INFORMATION

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STRATEGIC ROADMAP: THINK-TANK REPORT

MOUNT VERNON, IOWA, USA
MAY 2023