

# PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH PROSPECTUS



Cornell College

**WHEN YOU STEP FOOT** on the tree-lined campus on the Hilltop in Mount Vernon, Iowa you enter a world with a unique rhythm and a meld of historical buildings and modern amenities. This campus runs on a unified daily schedule and One Course At A Time, which lends it a particular sense of purpose, focus, accomplishment, and togetherness. It's a pace that creates space for innovation, thoughtful risk-taking, and reflection in ways that semester systems rarely allow. It's an approach that builds micro-communities where students build each other up and find shared success, rather than compete against one another.

Looking ahead, Cornell is ready to continue to innovate within the liberal arts to enhance the community from which comes the next generations of learners and leaders.



# MISSION AND VALUES IN PRACTICE

Cornell College offers an innovative and rigorous learning community where faculty and staff collaborate with students to develop the intellectual curiosity, creativity, and moral courage necessary for a lifetime of learning and engaged citizenship.

The college is guided by enduring core values:

- \* A liberal education that celebrates discovery and embraces the integration and application of knowledge
- \* Intellectual, moral, and personal growth
- \* Civic and social responsibility
- \* The dignity and worth of each individual in a diverse community

These values are not aspirational slogans; they are tested and have persevered over time through thoughtful action, including moments that required risk, trade-offs, and reconsideration of long-standing assumptions.

Our academic programs are guided by **nine educational priorities and outcomes.**

**KNOWLEDGE**

**INQUIRY**

**REASONING**

**COMMUNICATION**

**INTERCULTURAL LITERACY**

**ETHICAL BEHAVIOR**

**CITIZENSHIP**

**VOCATION**

**WELLBEING**



# COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION

Cornell was the first college west of the Mississippi River to grant women equal rights and privileges to men and, in 1858, became the first Iowa college to graduate a woman. In 1870 the college formally resolved that race and color would not be considered in admissions decisions.

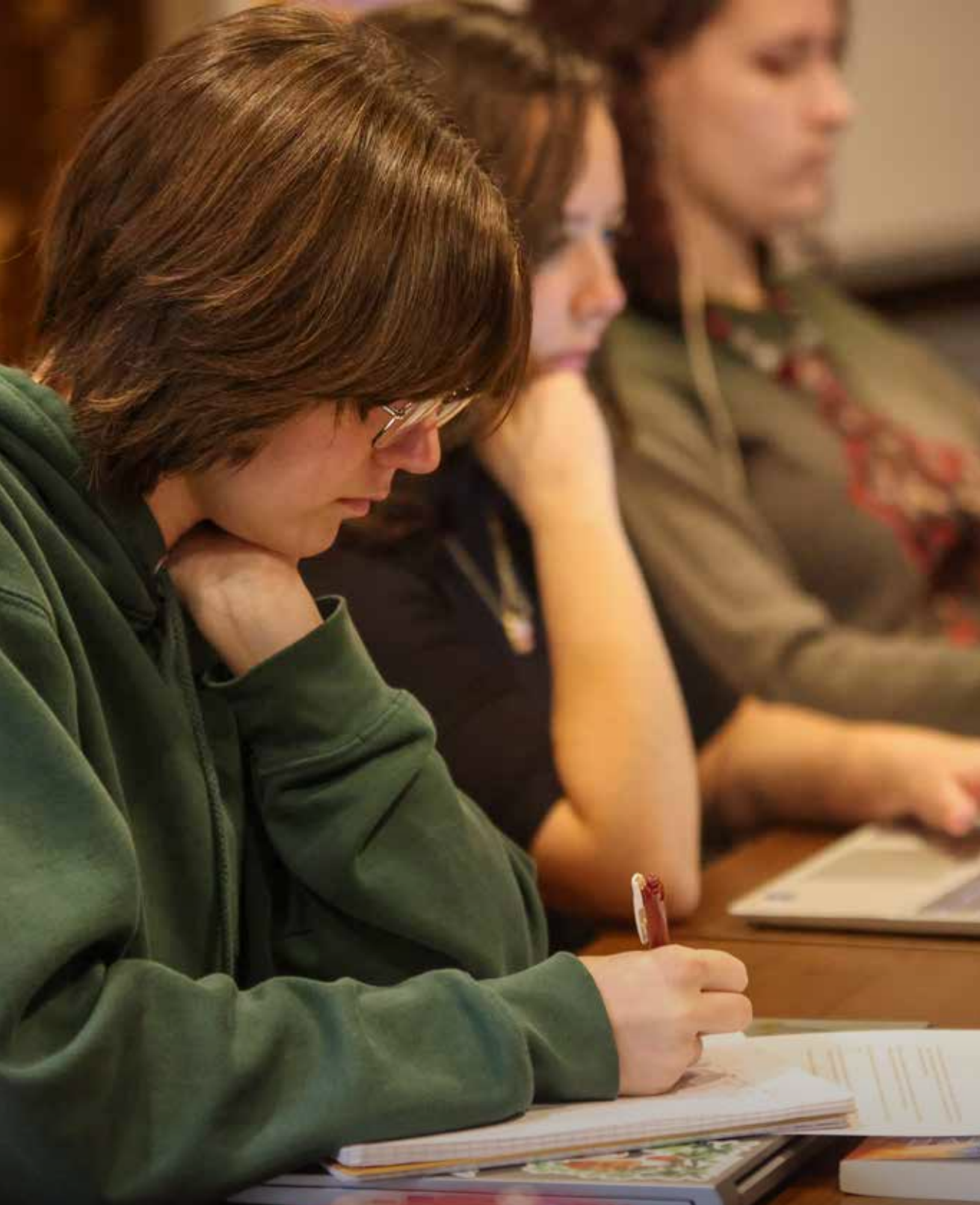
Cornell recognized education as a formal academic discipline in 1872, introduced sociology in 1899, and established Iowa's oldest geology department, with course offerings dating to 1855.

In 1978 Cornell College became the second institution in the nation to adopt the block plan academic calendar—known as [One Course At A Time](#). In 1996 Cornell was included as one of the original 45 institutions identified as “Colleges That Change Lives” by Loren Pope. In 2017 we determined that test scores weren’t a primary determining predictor of success and chose to be test-optional in our admissions decisions.

In 2020 Cornell turned three years of a Mellon Grant-funded curriculum redesign into the Ingenuity curriculum that pairs with One Course At A Time to create a cohesive academic structure that emphasizes focus, flexibility, and experiential learning.

In 2026 the college is investing in making the best use of the block calendar and unified schedule to create career-building experiences and connections with students to help them find their purpose, know they are doing meaningful work, and thrive as a part of our college community.

**CORNELL COLLEGE** was founded in 1853 by George Bryant Bowman, a Methodist minister from North Carolina with a strong belief in the transformative power of higher education. Today, Cornell College maintains an affiliation with the United Methodist Church while welcoming individuals from all religious traditions and from non-religious perspectives.



# *DESIGNED FOR DEEP ENGAGEMENT*

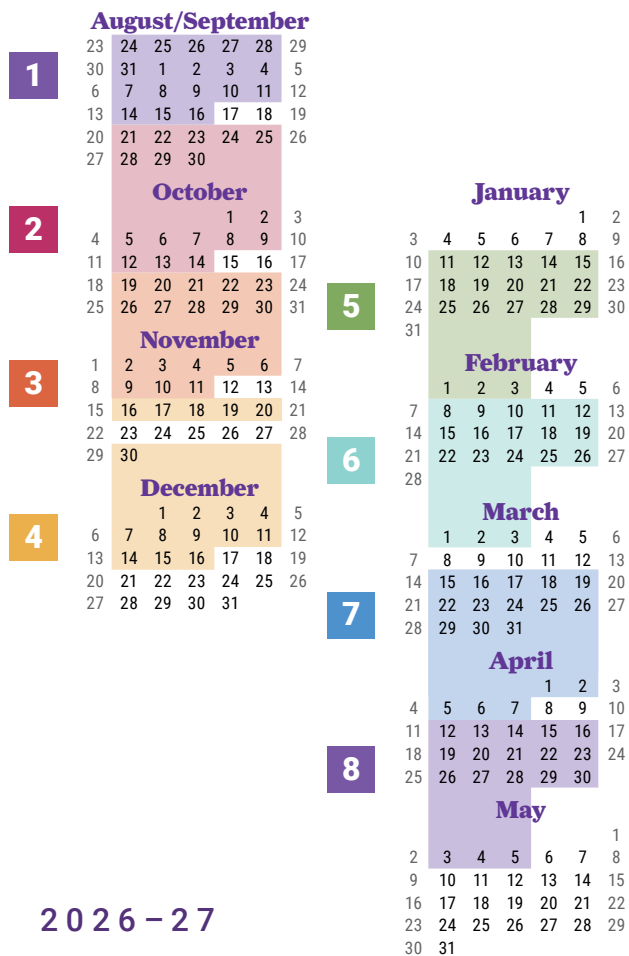
One Course At A Time and the Ingenuity curriculum together create a cohesive academic structure that emphasizes focus, flexibility, and experiential learning.

**Ingenuity** was developed to preserve what faculty value most—depth, coherence, and the freedom to teach ambitiously—while also giving students clarity and ownership of their course progression.

In students' first two years on campus, Ingenuity guides them through the building blocks they need to excel in their studies at the college level and introduces them to the strengths of a liberal arts education. Students select their preferred courses that complete a framework of Foundations, Explorations, and Building Essential Abilities that starts in Block 1 as they develop the rhythm of learning on the block system through a common First-Year Seminar.



# INNOVATION INFORMS EFFICIENCY



In 2016 one of Cornell's engineering faculty, Brian Johns, took on an efficiency analysis of One Course At A Time and how it eliminates excessive movement and delay by exhibiting three major time-saving qualities:

- \* No transfer of rooms to attend multiple daily courses.
- \* No time spent waiting after one class for a different class to begin later in the day.
- \* Each Cornell College course is allocated an exclusive classroom—so no need to deconstruct/ move a project or lab setup at the end of the day.

Professor Johns summarized that One Course At A Time eradicates the daily 45 minutes of swapping classrooms, resetting workstations, and waiting between classes. As a result, each Cornell College student retains an additional 120 hours per academic year (three standard work weeks) compared to the regular college student.

In addition, the block plan outperforms the semester schedule when comparing process flow. The semester schedule repeatedly disrupts flow by forcing the students to transition between subjects. Eliminating the pausing and daily transitioning between subjects and classes streamlines student attention. This also facilitates uninterrupted student focus from start to finish. The enhanced flow of One Course At A Time enables the depth, engagement, and immersion that are the cornerstones of the Cornell College education.

For Cornell, efficiency has never been an end in itself, but a way to restore attention to ideas, relationships, and learning.



# *ENABLING STUDENT EXPERIENCES*

**Ingenuity in Action** is the experiential learning component of Ingenuity and uses endowed funds to ensure that students have access to and complete a graduation requirement of two hands-on experiences selected from research, off-campus study, internships, or other approved activities that often focus on campus leadership and civic engagement.

Ingenuity in Action helps students translate what they learn in the classroom into real-world impact on the job, in a research project, or in exploring other cultures. At the end of the experiences, students have tangible results to use for job interviews and graduate school applications to help them secure placements that match their skills and interests.

**90%**

OF THE CLASS OF 2025 COMPLETED UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

**44%**

STUDIED OFF-CAMPUS FOR A BLOCK OR LONGER

**26%**

COMPLETED INTERNSHIPS FOR ACADEMIC CREDIT



**Cornell's Summer Research Institute** is an eight-week program that starts about one week after the spring semester ends and is a faculty-student partnership where students do full-time, real-world research on a daily basis and culminates in poster presentations of their findings. Some projects are short-term individual investigations, while others contribute to larger studies and research projects that span years and multiple campuses.



**Off-Campus Study** opportunities at Cornell are greatly expanded over other institutions because of One Course At A Time. Each year numerous Cornell courses spend a month or more in locations ranging from Chicago and New York to New Zealand, Japan, and Europe. Many courses also stay closer to home and do day trips to local ecological sites, art museums, or work on-site with local nonprofits in business and sociology courses. Students can also pursue independent studies or semester-long programs abroad.



**The Berry Career Institute** is the primary office on campus that prepares students for Life After Cornell. This office is supported by staff and peer consultants who help students explore and identify career pathways of interest, capture internship opportunities and apply for Ingenuity in Action funding, complete graduate school testing prep and applications, and practice interviewing skills.

# *AN INTENTIONALLY SCALED ACADEMIC COMMUNITY*

Cornell's academic landscape is intentionally sized to sustain access, mentoring, and rigor—at a scale that allows faculty to know students well and where students can take intellectual risks.

- \* Cornell offers 44 majors, 32 minors, 2 certifications, support for 7 combined/cooperative degree programs, and the option to create an individualized major or degree program.
- \* A 14:1 student-faculty ratio
- \* Average class size of 16
- \* 95% of the Class of 2025 who sought employment or graduate study are employed or pursuing further education
- \* Acceptance rates for medical and law schools significantly exceed national averages

One Course At A Time not only offers a unique educational opportunity for students, but also for faculty who are also teaching a single course every block. They find increased opportunities for classroom innovation and collaboration with students, as well as fewer restrictions on their time in the classroom or even the location of their classroom. Professors can take students off-campus for a day, a week, or an entire block without interfering with other course schedules.

## ACCREDITATIONS:



**UNIVERSITY SENATE**  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Accreditation  
Board for  
Engineering and  
Technology





# CORNELL FACULTY

Close faculty-student relationships are a defining feature of the Cornell experience. Faculty serve not only as instructors, but as academic advisors, research collaborators, and long-term mentors, often working with students across multiple years and settings. Engagement often starts early, when faculty meet with prospective students and their families during the recruitment process and participate in campus visits and admitted student events. Cornell's faculty body includes active scholars, artists, and practitioners whose work advances knowledge and enriches teaching, frequently engaging students as partners in research and creative activity.

Faculty play the central role in curricular design, academic policy, and discussions regarding pedagogy on our distinctive calendar, and they participate in program review and strategic planning in collaboration with college leadership. This shared governance tradition reflects Cornell's commitment to collective responsibility and thoughtful decision-making, and a cross-institution task force is currently clarifying definitions and responsibilities within shared governance to enhance decision-making processes moving forward.

# 100%

OF TENURE-TRACK FACULTY HOLD  
TERMINAL DEGREES

# 13

ACADEMIC HONOR SOCIETIES  
ADVISED BY FACULTY

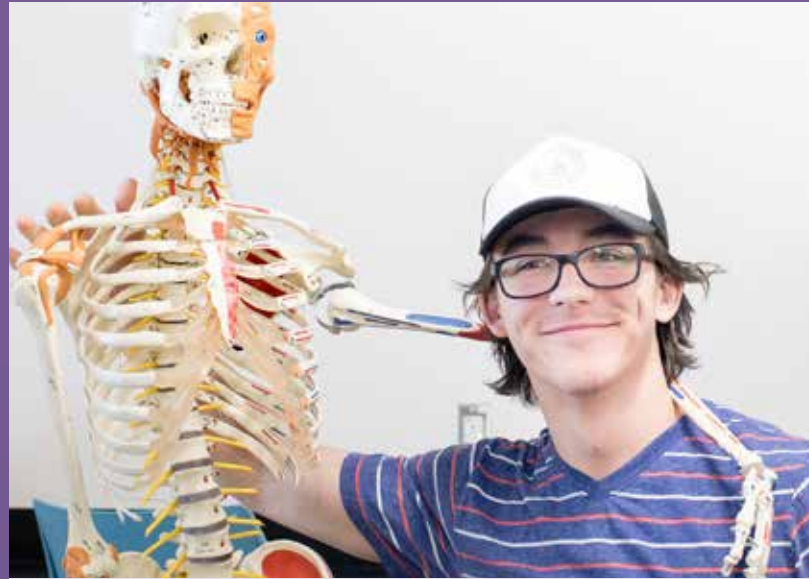
# 44

STUDENTS WORKED WITH FACULTY ON  
2025 SUMMER RESEARCH PROJECTS

# ACADEMIC SUPPORT



The **Center for Teaching and Learning** is housed in Cornell's expansive Cole Library and offers extensive help with writing, math, and multimedia projects. The Center is staffed by friendly, knowledgeable staff and peer consultants and includes The Quantitative Reasoning Studio, The Dungy Writing Studio, and The Academic Technology Studio.



**Dimensions Program for Health Professions** prepares students for the health professions using an integrated approach. It supports interdisciplinary coursework, coordinates internship and job shadowing opportunities, workshops, seminars, and student/faculty research, and helps students prepare for the MCAT. The program emphasizes the cultural contexts of healthcare, scientific problem-solving, communication, individual initiative, and interdisciplinary collaboration.



**Pre-law Program & Mock Trial** supports students interested in law and receive advising support designed to maximize their chances for success in law school and beyond. Cornell's Mock Trial team has multiple squads that regularly participate in national competitions and have a full-time coach.



# THE CORNELL COMMUNITY

Cornell College enrolls approximately 1,000 students representing nearly all 50 states and more than two dozen countries. Ninety-two percent of students reside on campus. The student population identifies as 49% male, 43% female, and 8% undeclared, with 29% U.S. students of color and 3% international students.

We have proudly welcomed Posse cohorts into our student body since 2021. Posse is a program that brings high-achieving student-leaders from high schools across the United States and Puerto Rico to partner campuses. The Posse organization says its scholars are students who may be missed by the traditional college selection process and come from a variety of backgrounds. These highly engaged students enrich the campus community in profound ways.

Alumni give back. The Beta Omicron Distinguished Alumni Visitors Program provides an opportunity for accomplished Cornell College alumni to share their professional expertise and life journeys to help prepare students to become leaders of tomorrow. They regularly return to campus to teach, present, and mentor students. The alumni network often supports new grads as they secure a job after graduation.

**1,000**  
STUDENTS

**320**  
EMPLOYEES

**17,000**  
LIVING ALUMNI

# *STUDENT LIFE AND WELLBEING—INTENTIONALLY INTEGRATED*

Cornell's model rejects false choices between academics, community, extracurriculars, and wellbeing. The daily unified schedule and block calendar maintain consistency in an environment that can often create overwhelm for college students.

Classes run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a midday break for lunch and student activities. Each block there's a common afternoon with no academic or administrative activities that students can use to plan for personal appointments or downtime. After 3 p.m. our students' schedules are their own to pursue athletics, extracurricular activities, part-time employment, study, and relaxation.

Cornell has over 40 active clubs and group involvement opportunities. The student-run Programming And Activities Council (PAAC) provides frequent entertainment, bringing in bands, comedians, hypnotists, game shows, Casino Night, and craft programs. They also spearhead a Homecoming court and other Homecoming activities. Cornell's Late Night Breakfasts, Culture Show, and The Big Event (national entertainer brought in by students) are among the most popular student events of the year.

Wellbeing is central to the Cornell experience. The Ebersole Center for Health and Wellbeing integrates physical health, mental health, prevention, and wellness education, and campus facilities are intentionally designed to support the entire community.

**19%**

OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATE  
IN INTRAMURAL SPORTS

**17%**

OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATE  
IN THE FINE ARTS

**11**

LOCAL GREEK  
ORGANIZATIONS



# CORNELL RAMS ATHLETICS

Approximately half of Cornell students participate in Division III varsity athletics as members of the Midwest Conference. The Cornell Rams play 21 varsity sports plus esports and competitive Cheer and Dance. The athletics program prides itself on balancing athletic excellence with student success—a balance that is particularly supported on the block plan. Student-athletes can take advantage of block-long off-campus study courses offered in their off-seasons, and it's easier to coordinate missing class time for conference travel with one professor rather than three or four.

Cornell student-athletes were recognized with 241 Academic All-Midwest Conference awards in 16 sports for the 2024–25 season (3.33 GPA). In addition, Cornell's men's and women's lacrosse programs were recognized with 25 Scholar-Athlete Awards in the Northern Athletics Collegiate Conference for the 2025 spring season. The Rams won 20 conference team championships in the past decade, and 11 teams have qualified for the MWC tournament in their respective sports since 2019. In 2026, senior Isaac vanWestrienen claimed a national title in the 10000-meter run at the NCAA Championships.

The recently renovated Norma and Richard Small Athletic and Wellness Center, nicknamed the SAW, underscores Cornell's commitment to health, performance, and whole-person development for students, faculty, and staff.

## COACHES PARTNER WITH ADMISSION COUNSELORS

Housing Athletics and Admission within the same division reflects Cornell's understanding that recruitment, advising, and academic success are interconnected. This has created an unparalleled alignment between athletic coaches and athletic-focused admission counselors who identify and support student-athletes in their college search.

## WOMEN'S SPORTS

- BASKETBALL
- CROSS-COUNTRY
- LACROSSE
- SOCCER
- SOFTBALL
- TENNIS
- TRACK AND FIELD
- VOLLEYBALL
- WRESTLING
- FLAG FOOTBALL

## MEN'S SPORTS

- BASEBALL
- BASKETBALL
- CROSS-COUNTRY
- FOOTBALL
- LACROSSE
- SOCCER
- TENNIS
- TRACK AND FIELD
- WRESTLING



# *HOME ON THE HILLTOP*

Cornell College is located in [Mount Vernon, Iowa](#), on a wooded hilltop overlooking the town's historic main street. The main campus includes 68 buildings across 120 acres and is listed in its entirety on the National Register of Historic Places, reflecting a longstanding commitment to preservation even as facilities are modernized.

Russell D. Cole Library serves as both the Cornell College Library and the official public library for the City of Mount Vernon, a rare shared model that supports both the campus and the broader community.

The main street of Mount Vernon is just a short walk from campus and a [vibrant source of activity](#) year round. [The Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Development Group](#) is an energetic organization that creates a full annual schedule of community events that engage the town and the college community. Students are welcomed into the school district and participate in emergency services as volunteers, as well as finding employment in local businesses.

For larger services, shopping, and entertainment options, both [Cedar Rapids](#) and [Iowa City](#) are within a half-hour drive of campus, and many faculty and staff live in those communities as well.



# *FINANCIAL PROFILE AND PHILANTHROPY*

The college's financial decisions have been guided by a desire to preserve academic freedom, student access, and long-term institutional independence. Cornell College has an operating budget of approximately \$38 million and an endowment of roughly \$133 million.

The college is currently in the quiet phase of a comprehensive campaign focused on growing the endowment beyond \$200 million to enhance long-term financial resilience and expand opportunities for students.

Cornell enrolls a largely residential student body, and 99% of students receive institutional financial assistance. The college has demonstrated a strong commitment to transparency and access through innovative financial aid programs, including guaranteed scholarships and affordability initiatives.



# *THE ROLE*

As the chief executive officer of the college and a member of the **Board of Trustees**, the president leads the affairs of the college and reports to the Board. The president also directs an executive team, directly overseeing the following campus leaders:

- \* Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- \* Vice President for Finance, Chief Financial Officer, and Treasurer
- \* Vice President for Enrollment Management
- \* Vice President for Alumni and College Advancement
- \* Vice President for Student Life and Strategic Initiatives
- \* Executive Assistant to the President/Secretary to the Board of Trustees



# PRIORITIES

Cornell College's sixteenth president will have an opportunity to work collaboratively with the campus community to develop a shared purpose for the college's future, building on the strengths of what makes the 173-year-old institution unique in higher education.

In addition to the daily responsibilities of running the college, the president will focus on the following priorities:

## LEADING STRATEGICALLY

- \* Work closely with the Board of Trustees to identify the college's strategic priorities.
- \* Articulate a compelling strategic vision that leverages Cornell College's distinctive advantages;
- \* Inspire academic excellence in teaching, research, and learning;
- \* Support the enhancement of the student experience inside of the classroom, on campus, and beyond;
- \* Strengthen enrollment, retention, and graduation rates;
- \* Make informed decisions based on data; and
- \* Build mutually beneficial partnerships that enhance the college's offerings, academic standards, and reputation.

## RAISING VISIBILITY AND RESOURCES

- \* Strengthen the college's long-term financial sustainability by leading ambitious fundraising efforts and prioritizing the growth of the endowment;
- \* Serve as an active civic leader in Mount Vernon, in the state of Iowa, and as a representative of the college both regionally and nationally;
- \* Encourage the engagement of alumni expertise and resources to strengthen the college's present and future;
- \* Work with foundations, corporations, and other grant-making entities to augment fundraising efforts; and
- \* Experiment with innovative programs and ideas that make the college more attractive to students and their families.



# PRIORITIES

## COMMUNICATING TRANSPARENTLY

- \* Share updates openly with the campus community about opportunities, challenges, and pragmatic solutions;
- \* Create a culture of collaboration between the president, staff, faculty, and other campus constituents;
- \* Foster institutional pride and a culture of belonging;
- \* Connect with campus constituents in an approachable empathic manner by becoming an integral part of the campus and local community;
- \* Serve as a model in promoting civil and open discourse, free speech, and academic freedom;
- \* Foster a culture of respect for all; and
- \* Work with relevant constituencies to develop and respect principles of shared governance.

## NURTURING A POSITIVE CAMPUS CULTURE

- \* Recruit, develop, and retain a talented faculty, administration, and staff and support a positive working environment;
- \* Promote the international composition of the College's student body and study abroad;
- \* Enhance a culture of academic and co-curricular excellence;
- \* Promote the athletics program and its role in shaping student development;
- \* Honor the college's historic affiliation with the Methodist Church; and
- \* Direct a strong senior leadership team and empower talented faculty and staff.

# QUALIFICATIONS

Cornell College seeks a successful and innovative leader with proven communication and collaborative strengths to engage its community by building on its many distinctive qualities and supporting its core values.

The president will lead with an appreciation of Cornell College's singular place in higher education and its high standards in teaching, scholarship, and student engagement. Candidates should hold the credentials needed to inspire an academic community, including a terminal degree and an appreciation of teaching and scholarship.

Strong candidates are also expected to demonstrate excellence in most of the following areas:

- \* Demonstrating a commitment to the enduring values of a liberal arts college;
- \* Bringing strong financial acumen, including an understanding of higher education financial models and cost drivers;
- \* Leading transformational, innovative initiatives in higher education that drive strategic breakthroughs;
- \* Achieving a track record of successful growth in enrollment, fundraising, and endowment building;
- \* Supporting the appropriate use of technology, including artificial intelligence, to advance the mission of the College;



# QUALIFICATIONS

- \* Advancing an institution's profile and reputation locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally;
- \* Engaging in local and national public policy issues that serve the mission of the college;
- \* Working for a diverse student body and supporting faculty, staff, and administrators to advance the institution;
- \* Collaborating with a Board of Trustees, faculty, alumni, students, staff, and the local community;
- \* Making difficult choices when needed after consulting with the relevant constituents whenever possible;
- \* Engaging across the college with transparency and integrity;
- \* Using data to make informed decisions;
- \* Demonstrating a deep understanding of student culture, post-COVID learning, and mental health needs;
- \* Inspiring students to pursue social, professional, and intellectual growth and development;
- \* Hiring talented faculty, administrators, and staff; and
- \* Leading the college with energy, passion, empathy, and kindness.





## CONTACT

Nominations, inquiries, and expressions of interest should be sent to: [cornellcollege@russellreynolds.com](mailto:cornellcollege@russellreynolds.com)

**CORNELL COLLEGE** is an equal opportunity employer and encourages applications from underrepresented groups. Cornell complies with Iowa's Smoke-free Air Act.

This employer is required to notify all applicants of their rights pursuant to federal employment laws. For further information, please review the **Know Your Rights** notice from the Department of Labor.