

AJ Plummer: Good evening everyone. And welcome to tonight's annual Cornell College All-Call. My name is AJ Plummer and I work in the Office of Alumni and College Advancement here at Cornell. And I'm going to be serving as your moderator for this evening's call.

Now, before we get going and introduce the others joining me this evening, I'd like to invite you to join the conversation and you can do that by pressing *3 on your phone and that'll put you into the question queue. It's a bit like raising your hand in class. It's not going to interrupt us here on the call, but it will let us know that you have a question. So we hope to answer as many of your questions as possible tonight. So please do join the call using *3. And as always, to be mindful of your time, we will end promptly by 8:00 PM Central. So with that said, I'm going to turn the call over to President Jonathan Brand to introduce himself and the others joining him this evening. Jonathan.

President Jonathan Brand: Well, thank you AJ. And good evening everyone, or good afternoon, or good morning, I suppose, depending on where you might be around the world. So it's great to come to you live from the Hilltop as we've done for the last six or seven years. Really value these All-Calls with our alumni and friends.

As has been my practice in the past, I've often tried to tell a quick, poignant story about Cornell, a student, faculty, some experience, and in fact, tonight, a little bit differently, I'd like to paint a picture for you. So in my mind, there is an elegance to the collegiate schedule, to the pace of college. And I say this particularly for beautiful campuses in the Midwest or on the East Coast that have seasons, that each season brings with it a set of different experiences for our students that they never forget. They will never forget and they never forget, and you probably haven't forgotten.

So the picture I want to paint for you is that it's mid-February. We've had a few weeks where it probably didn't get much above zero. The wind was howling in every direction, but probably primarily from the north. You remember it well. Everyone was hidden for weeks, even months behind jackets, parkas, hats, scarves, balaclavas, mittens. You don't know who's who, but you get the point.

And then imagine, all of a sudden, it goes to 70 degrees and the sun is out. And all of a sudden, everything comes back to life. Smiling students running across the Hilltop, holding hands, frisbees appear, hammocks appear, birds chirping, sand volleyball, students in groups sunning themselves and studying all across campus, people coming out of the theater as they've watched Noises Off, one of our incredible theatrical performances, touch football on the football and lacrosse field.

Suffice it to say that's happiness as we know it, that's college as we know it, and it's something that we're very attached to. And if there's one thing that we learned after COVID, students were clamoring to get back to campus, not just at Cornell, but across the country.

And this story that I'm telling you isn't fictitious, this has really been the last couple of weeks on our campus. And it has been incredibly inspiring and motivating. And it tells us exactly why we are where we are and we do what we do when you see students enjoying exactly why they are on their campus, our campus all together.

And things can change, but let me tell you one thing that's never going to change at Cornell, that our students love being together. I hope that never changes. Now, in telling you this story, of course, it's only appropriate irony. It's probably not even that ironic that I should say this, 70 degrees, it's going to snow tomorrow. And tomorrow the high is going to be 27 degrees. So now, you know that I am in fact Jonathan Brand calling from the Cornell College Hilltop when I can tell you what the weather's going to be like over a 24-hour period.

So with that, I'm going to turn it back to AJ and we can get into questions. And I suppose also, it would be appropriate to give our fearless Provost, Ilene Crawford, class of '92, a moment to say hello, and of course, reintroduce, introduce herself as well.

Ilene Crawford: Okay, good evening everyone. Coming to you live from the Hilltop, hi, I am Ilene Crawford, class of 1992. Very proud to serve in my fourth year as Cornell's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Very happy to be with President Brand on the call tonight. And Jonathan, we have another member of our team on the call with us, yes?

Kelly Flege: Good day everybody. This is Kelly Flege. I am the Vice President for Business and Enterprise Services and Chief Financial Officer. And I've been a part of the Cornell family for just a little bit over a year now. I started in January of 2023, and I am very happy and pleased to be part of the Hilltop family as well. So good day.

AJ Plummer: Well, terrific. We're so glad that all of you're here and we're excited to get your questions tonight. So just a reminder, we're going to kick off here with our first question, but if you've just joined us and you have a question to ask, don't forget that all you have to do is press *3 on your phone to join the queue. We're here to talk to you, and so, we'd love for you to hop into that phone queue and speak with one of our staff and ask a question tonight live on the call. It's not going to interrupt anything we're doing here on the call, but it'll give you a chance to submit your question. So we're going to go to our first question, which is Jack in Lilburn, Georgia. Jack, you're live with the group. Please, ask your question.

Jack: Well, hello, President Brand and Provost Crawford. And welcome to the team, Kelly. So pleased that you're leading us ably there at the college. Last time I was there, I was at King Chapel and the lovely sign wrapping around King Chapel said that King Chapel was to reopen in 2024. This was after the derecho. I was wondering if that is still going to happen this year or if there was an update on the progress of King Chapel's restoration.

Kelly Flege: Sure, Jack. This is Kelly. I'm happy to provide you a response to that. I'm sad to tell you that it will not open in 2024, but I am pleased to tell you we are very much in the planning for the degree of restoration. I actually have a meeting tomorrow where we are

meeting with our contractors and engineers. We are looking for a project that is going to be somewhere in the 18 to 24-month timeframe as we determine all of those details. We've just recently been able to wrap up conversations with our insurer, and so, we are very much looking forward to beginning that restoration process as soon as the students are off campus, quite frankly.

President Jonathan Brand: So Jack, this is Jonathan. And great to hear your voice and thrilled that you're on the call. And I thought I would just add to what Kelly had said, which is, after 3 1/2 years, we know it's taken much longer than anyone would've wanted. Finally, we're at a point where we're seeing progress and we're seeing our way through it. And I am optimistic that once we begin construction, as Kelly mentioned, this summer, that we will not end until the building is restored and ready to reopen to faculty, to students, to staff, to the community. It's amazing to think, as you note in your question, implicitly in your question, that we have students who have never been inside King Chapel, and that's a real sadness. But finally, the moment is upon us where I think the board will have to approve it this May, and then, we'll be able to, we hope, move forward with the project beginning this summer.

AJ Plummer: Thank you for that question, Jack. We're going to hop over to Kay from Loveland, Colorado. Kay, you are live with the group. Please, ask your question.

Kay: Hello there. Nice to talk with all of you.

AJ Plummer: Nice to speak with you too.

Kay: I'm sorry.

AJ Plummer: Just said it's nice to speak with you too. Go ahead with your question.

Kay: Oh, okay. I thought you had the question in front of you. Okay, there might be two questions. One is, what is the status of the elementary education major department and how many graduates are you getting in elementary education? The second question is what is the status of the grant that was awarded to the geology department as far as renovating the geology building?

Ilene Crawford: Well, hi. Good evening. It's wonderful to get your question. Let me talk about the elementary education program first and then maybe Jonathan can continue with your question about the geology building. So we do have a thriving elementary education program right now. So we've currently got 22 majors that are enrolled in their K-12 education certification program. So we're really, really pleased to see that after the pandemic, those numbers picking up. So that's the program that we're excited to see continue. And Jonathan might have some news and updates regarding your question about the geology grant.

President Jonathan Brand: That's right. And actually, Kelly, if you're willing, if you could address Kay's question, that would be great.

Kelly Flege: Sure, absolutely. I believe, Kay, that you're referring to the Sherman Fairchild grant that created opportunities to make some classroom upgrades. And I'm pleased to say that those

updates were made last summer and have been in place this whole academic year for the students. And that did also include actually being able to add some air conditioning in that space because Norton is one of our academic buildings that has very limited air conditioning. So we were able to do that as well with previous generosity from other alumni, we were able to replace the roof on that building as well. And so, we were able to do those projects in tandem with one another.

Ilene Crawford: Yeah, and this is Ilene. I can affirm that faculty and students are definitely enjoying these new spaces. And as that grant continues, we've got some more plans upcoming for other opportunities for our students to work in the geology building. So thanks for your question.

AJ Plummer: Okay. Thanks so much everybody who's participated. Just a reminder, it's real easy to get in the question queue, it's just *3. And we're here to talk with you, so please, hop in and ask a question live. We'd love to chat with you. We're going to go to Jalel in Canton, Michigan. Jalel, you're on live. Please, ask your question.

Jalel: Hi, good evening everyone. Thank you for taking my question here. President Brand, I had a question regarding the white paper that you had sent out. I believe it was June of 2023, the Advancing Greater Well-being at Cornell. And I just wanted to find out if any of the initiatives that were outlined or some of the questions and concerns that were brought up in that paper have been able to be addressed or at least looked at yet and if there were any updates to that specifically. And for those that haven't seen that white paper, it'd be worth your time to take a look at it. It did give some good insights and observations from both student/faculty with regard to what's taking place on campus with regard to students and their ideas and expectations around, I guess, "busyness" in their workloads and in their daily lives. So I'll put it back on mute and appreciate hearing some feedback.

President Jonathan Brand: So Jalel, great to hear your voice. Thank you for this question. Yes, consistent with that white paper that I wrote, well, not quite a year ago, but I suppose, at the end of the last academic year, this is an area of huge importance for all of us on campus. So a couple of things have happened since then, all positive, as it relates to our students. So the first thing that we did, and as you probably know, it's no surprise, everything that we do at Cornell revolves around the academic experience, what happens in the classroom, faculty and our students.

So last spring, our faculty approved a change in their course schedules in that they approved posting their schedules before the start of the academic year so that when students started a block, a class, they would know with precision when they would be in class versus when they wouldn't be in class, thus giving them greater ability to predict when they would not be in class to schedule other appointments, to have other meetings, to schedule time with friends, time to study, whatever it is that they wanted to do. Because what we heard from students is that they wanted more agency in their lives, which is very consistent with what we see and what we hear

from students nationwide, prospective students, that they're interested in a school that cares about their wellbeing and that gives them maximum agency.

So that was the first major step that we took. And when we surveyed our students in the fall, in October, so it would've been, or the end of September, it was the beginning of block two, students overwhelmingly said how much they appreciated having their schedules posted in their classes, a huge step forward.

At that time, the faculty, we also collected more data about our students' interest in a more fixed daily schedule in having devoted time during the week when students wouldn't be in class, for example, so that they could tend to their matters. So this is still an active deliberation on our campus, and stay tuned, I'll have more to report on that in the near term, but what I can say is that first step that the faculty took was a huge step forward for us on campus, not just because it was what students were asking for, but it was also recognition that we were going to be driven by what students are telling us they need.

Now, at a more micro level, it won't surprise you when I say this because students come to Cornell because of the relationships that they build with faculty, with staff, with each other. We are hypersensitive to what our students say they want and they need, and so, we're always making adjustments as we learn. And a year later, what I can say is our students and students nationwide still really care about attending a school that cares about their wellbeing. So I think that there's more to come.

And it won't surprise you when I say this that we're on the block system, we're on the One Course At A Time methodology or philosophy. And the key is for us always to use it in a way that leverages its full capacity because we can do things that no other school can do, and that's what we're focused on and excited about. So some progress already that we've heard from students, and I'm thankful to the faculty in particular for their work. And there's more that we're talking about. So stay tuned. So I hope that's responsive, Jalel. Thanks.

AJ Plummer: Okay, our next question is going to be from Anne in Parkville. Anne, you're on live with the group. Go ahead and ask your question.

Anne: Hello everyone. I worked in academia as an academic librarian for over 40 years. And I know that upcoming, and I think you all have addressed this, but I'd like to see how the college is planning for basically the census drop off that we anticipate happening in the next several years as the basic supply of 18 to 22-year-olds is going to be dropping off a cliff. And what's the college's response to this? Thank you.

President Jonathan Brand: So Anne, this is Jonathan again. And I think this is a great question. And this is probably the big question and the one that we're all preparing for. And I suppose, if it's okay, I'd like to offer an answer in two parts, which is sort of a short-term response and also a long-term response.

So even though the demographic cliff... And so everybody knows what Anne is talking about, in 2026, we are going to see a predicted, projected drop of about 15% in the number of high school graduates because in 2008, when the economic recession hit, the great recession, people stopped having babies. And so, fast-forward 18 years and you get to 2026 and you have that drop in college age children and based on birth rates through 2022, we now know that that drop will largely continue until at least 2039. So this is not a one or a two-year blip, this is at least a 20-year period here, well, 15 years, but this is a generational blip that we have to be prepared for.

And even though the diminution in college aged students hasn't quite happened yet, it's already very competitive in terms of attracting and recruiting students. So let me give you a short-term solution and a long-term solution. So the short-term solution is multifaceted, and the first one is leaning into that which we do distinctively well. And that is for us to really maximize the benefits of our One Course At A Time methodology.

Based on everything that I have heard from our admissions team, we increasingly see that students are less interested in a school that is not vibrant and active and fun. So we think that part of what we have to do all while leveraging the One Course At A Time calendar and the block system and the unique benefits that it has, we also have to do what it takes to ensure a vibrant, active, joyful campus for our students, that's what they want.

We know that when students look at a college, there are four things that they look for primarily, which is, one, they want to go to a school that cares about their mental health and their wellbeing. That goes to the joyfulness and the active and vibrant nature and the happiness factor or quotient of the campus.

Two, they're looking for a school that cares about diversity, equity, and inclusion, and doesn't just care about it, but will live it with them. It can't just be for show, but it has to be legitimate and real.

Three, they want to go to a school where they can graduate with little to no debt. So financial aid is an important part of the equation. And our financial aid budget has grown by \$8 million up to \$35 million, \$8 million over three years, up to \$35 million. And I don't foresee that dropping in any way.

And then, the fourth item that students and their families look at when they choose a school, and this is a new one, they want to know that a school is financially viable, that it's going to be around in 10, 20 and 30 years.

So in the short-term, we're paying attention, in particular, to those first three items. I'll come to the viability question in a second, and making the most of the block system in preparing our students for life after graduation. I'll give you an example. Students want to know that they are walking their path, that they're finding their path while they walk it, while they're in college. And

on the block system, our students, we require them and we fund it, their ability to have experiences out of the classroom. In fact, they have to have no fewer than two in order to graduate. And each student has available, on average, \$4,000 to direct to these out of the classroom experiences. That is so our students can start finding their path while walking it.

And at other schools where it's hard for a student to leave for a semester, our students, for a block, can travel four times over the course of their four years, whether it's to India or to England or to South Africa or to France or to the Boundary Waters or to the Western United States with their classes. So that's what we're doing in the short-term.

And the long-term, I will say, enrollment is obviously a short-term solution, but enrollment alone is not going to be the long-term solution, that's where the endowment, the financial strength of the college is what is going to carry the day for us over the decades and decades and decades. It is not uncommon for the board of trustees to ask me, "What is it going to take to ensure that Cornell is thriving in another 170 years?"

And we're fortunate because over the last 30, 40, 50 decades, our enrollment has been incredibly stable, hovering around 1,040, 1,050. This last year we were up at about 1,077, I believe. And so, we're up and we've been up over the last couple of years. Long-term though, adding 5, 10, 15 students, that's not what's really going to carry the day for us. What's going to carry the day for us is having an enrollment, having an endowment that makes us financially impregnable. And so, we all know, trustees, the Office of Advancement, college advancement, and alumni, we all know that growing the endowment is really what we have to focus on for the long-term success and thriving of the school. A little long-winded, but I hope that is largely responsive. And thanks for the question.

AJ Plummer: Wonderful. Well, we're getting some great questions, if you have been holding on to one, we'd love to chat with you. So just a reminder, it's *3 to get into the question queue. And we see that there are a few people in here as well, so we're going to work on getting to everybody's question tonight. But *3 is your chance to ask a question. And we'd love to hear from you. The next question is going to be from Linda. Linda, you are live with the group. Please, go ahead.

Linda: Well, good evening, Hilltop. This is not such a lofty subject, but I'm really curious to know where the college as a whole is able to gather when you don't have King Chapel.

Ilene Crawford: Hi Linda, this is Ilene. I'll be happy to take your question. So without King Chapel in active use right now, our theater and our music faculty have been very creative in how they're using spaces. So for our theater and music programs, they are sharing space in Armstrong and Kimmel right now. We did a sound abatement project that would allow multiple spaces in those buildings to be used at the same time.

I'm really pleased too that our music faculty have used this as an opportunity to seek out off-campus venues to partner with as well. So we have active partnerships with area schools and

churches, and that includes a beautiful auditorium at Mount Vernon High School, the United Methodist Church, right downtown, where different practice and performances are happening.

And this has been an opportunity too for our visiting music faculty that our music faculty have brought in to be able to work with local high school students as well. So our music faculty have really, really stepped up and done some creative work there.

I would note that for other larger gatherings, we had a beautiful commencement ceremony in the SAW, in the Athletic and Wellness Center in the spring. So we're getting used to being able to use some of those spaces for large events as well.

And we're looking forward, with the music faculty, to a partnership with Anamosa High School next year. So we have been making good use of local partnership building opportunities as King Chapel plans progress. Thank you so much for your question.

AJ Plummer: Thanks again to everybody who's asked questions. A reminder, it's a *3. Jonathan, I think you had one thing you wanted to clarify on a previous comment.

President Jonathan Brand: Yeah, so believe it or not, Anne, I want to go back to your question, which I think is such a great question. And there's one other piece that I just wanted to touch on. And I think in higher ed, and maybe after the fact, after this call, if you have observations, feel free to email me and we can continue the conversation.

I think that one of the elements of ensuring that Cornell thrives in the future, that any school thrives in the future is also paying a lot of attention to how our faculty and staff are doing, which is to say, if you really want students to have a great experience, you really have to make sure that faculty and staff are having a great experience. And it won't come as a surprise, you probably know this yourself acutely that, coming out of COVID, our faculty and staff, we're tired. This has been a really unsettling and difficult period of time.

So I think this is where a focus on culture and wellbeing, not just of the students, but actually, of faculty and staff, is also really going to determine which schools do well going forward versus don't do well. And as I said, I don't think enough schools, a lot of schools are thinking about growth and success in that way. And if there's one school that can do that and do that well, it is a school like Cornell where our faculty and staff are all so connected to our students.

So that was just one further observation I wanted to make on that question, so thanks AJ for letting me go back to that.

AJ Plummer: Of course, absolutely. Just a reminder, *3 to get into the queue. We see some folks in there, so we're looking forward to it, to answering your questions, *3. The next question is going to be from John in Cedar Rapids. John, you're live with the group. Go ahead and ask your question.

John: I'd like to know what we can look forward to in terms of exciting initiatives that are in the planning phase.

President Jonathan Brand: John, great to hear your voice. I hope you and Med are doing well. Thank you for this question. So there are several initiatives that we are very excited about, and no surprise when I say this, there are multiple initiatives that we're working on.

So at one level, as I'd mentioned in my white paper and earlier, we're in active discussions about a different daily schedule. I'm very excited about that. I think that has the possibility of being a real game changer in terms of our students' experiences on campus.

Part of our path forward is also exciting alternative revenue programs or partnerships. And there's one that... I'm going to leave it there as a little teaser, and Provost Crawford is going to take that up in just one minute to talk to you about that exciting initiative. I think she and I, the executive team, we're all very excited about this as a possibility.

And then, I'll just say one other thing before turning it over to Provost Crawford. This might not sound exciting or sexy to everyone, but I dream of the day when I can go to sleep knowing that our endowment has hit a billion dollars. And so, as we... Right, others in the room with me are looking at me laughing like, "That's wonderful. Okay, let's dream big." Well, let's dream big in fact.

And as we prepare for our next campaign and hopefully, focus on the endowment, focusing on the endowment, for me, John, is a very exciting initiative because as our board chair says, "Don't let the urgent get in the way of the important." And we've been putting out a lot of fires, necessarily, over years and years and decades. And once we're in a position where we actually can fight, we can focus on the important, and that's the endowment and our financial strength. That to me is very exciting. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Provost Crawford for the reveal about this one alternative revenue program that we're very excited about, this one partnership.

Ilene Crawford: Well, Jonathan, you've really, really built that up. So John, it is wonderful, wonderful to hear your voice. And thank you for your question. So those of you who know me, and perhaps have mentioned this on All-Calls in the past that it's long been an ambition of mine to be able to connect the dots to nursing and create some opportunities for our students to pursue their interests in nursing.

So we are in the exploratory stages of a potential partnership with an institution here in Iowa that would have the possibility of bringing a dual degree program to Cornell, where students would enroll at Cornell, remain with us for all four years, be able to work with the partner institution on their nursing degree and major in a subject at Cornell and graduate in four years with two degrees, an accelerated BSN, and a BA from Cornell. So this is the early stages, but explorations are moving in a positive direction and we hope to have some more details to share about that in the coming months.

We know that we need to continue to prepare our graduates for the 21st century, and there'll continue to be huge opportunities in healthcare as that space continues to grow and proliferate career opportunities for students. So this would be a wonderful addition to our already very, very strong offerings in STEM and something that I'm looking forward to pursuing. So John, I hope to have some more details for you soon. Thank you for your question.

AJ Plummer: Well, we're about halfway through the call and while our speakers take a quick swig of water here, I'm going to share just a couple quick announcements with you. Just a reminder that it's *3 on your phone is the way you get into the question queue, but there's two important things, upcoming dates that I wanted to share with you first.

Our day of giving is Color It Purple and it's fast approaching one month from today on March 27th. And we're hoping for a strong show of participation from alumni and friends like you this year. So we hope you can participate in that.

And second, please do mark your calendars for homecoming this fall on October 4-6. In addition to homecoming, we're hosting a number of upcoming regional events for alumni across the country. If you'd like to learn more information about those events, please visit the alumni website at alumni.cornellcollege.edu for more information.

So it looks like we have our next question ready and we're going to go to Richard from Kansas City. Richard, you're on live with the group. Go ahead and ask your question.

Richard D.: Hello, can you hear me?

AJ Plummer: We sure can. Go ahead.

Richard D.: Okay, so most college students, they choose to go to college because one of two reasons. I think they either think that they will have a lot of great experiences, and you've talked about that that's a big deal about going to Cornell. Another is that because they see a value proposition in getting a degree and leveraging that for their future.

Do you see any challenges, going forward, with students or potential students choosing to go to college either because they lack funding to go to college through changes in the availability of student loans or because students see a difference in the value of going to college, maybe they see that they can get the education at lower cost or they see that the degree does not get them the value that they hoped?

Ilene Crawford: Hi, Richard. This is Ilene. Thanks very much for your question. We absolutely share these concerns and your observations in recognizing that, in this environment... And this goes along with some of the pressures we're already experiencing from the demographic cliff that our previous caller was questioning us about. These forces combined make this a very competitive environment for small liberal arts colleges like ours.

And I think in days past, it might've been easier to talk to parents and families and students that are prospective degree seekers about the long-term value and benefits of a liberal arts degree. And we recognize there has to be a much more immediate experience of that return on investment.

So we're very careful with our placement rate and really proud of that and being able to demonstrate that 97% of the students that graduated this past year, within six months of graduation, that they are employed in an area relevant to their degree or that they're in graduate school if they were seeking a graduate school placement. So we feel like we can make that case.

We also feel that our Berry Career Center, which really helps students along the way with different internship placements and different support for graduate school applications is really part of that path to success.

We also feel like, through the curriculum, giving them early experiences with experiential learning. So we've talked about our Ingenuity in Action program and these two hands-on learning experiences that we fund students to be able to pursue during their time at Cornell.

So we think that all these things really show prospective parents and students what the value, the immediate and the ongoing value of a Cornell degree is, and recognize that students have many, many, many options right now. So what is something that will compel a student to choose us?

So I hope that provides some answers to your questions. Jonathan, you might have a few more things to say?

President Jonathan Brand: Yeah, so thank you Provost Crawford. One, I completely agree with everything you've said. And Richard, I think this is another really powerful question. And I want to own something here on this call, which is to say, for as long as I've been at Cornell, and I know on this call we've got several trustees and life trustees and former trustees, I might spend some time going into a meeting saying, "Oh, the external environment is really challenging. Students don't want to pay for college. There are fewer students, they don't want to go into a lot of debt. They're not interested in being in Iowa. The block system doesn't interest them."

And it hit me over the course of the last year or too that, focusing, we need to know about the external environment, obviously, because we'll be influenced by it, but frankly, to rely on it is just an excuse. There are plenty of students out there for Cornell College, provided we are offering them what they need and what they want.

And so, everything that Provost Crawford has just mentioned is, I hope, to give you assurance that we are, in a very honest way, looking at what we do, that we can offer, that no other school can offer, in a setting that no other school can offer, I mean, there's only one Cornell Hilltop and that it reflects what we understand our students are telling us they need and what they want.

And any school that isn't willing to be honest about letting go of things that they're doing that aren't making a difference for our students, those are the schools that are really going to struggle going forward. So as a part of what we're doing, we're also learning that there are things we've done for decades that maybe we don't need to keep doing. And I think that's also a part of operating a really strong institution, any institution.

But just to say, I think we are trying to be very honest about this, and you mentioned this and it's worth noting, we're not so much competing with other schools as much now as competing with students, their interest in going to college at all. And that is a huge, new threat for higher education.

And for some of you, probably all of you who have read about the delay in the FAFSA and the financial aid form that students have to submit, that is just delaying the awarding of financial aid that any college or university in the USA can make to a student. And the threat isn't between the schools, the threat is that there'll be students who say, "If it's going to be that complicated, maybe I just won't go to college." So that is in fact a real threat that we have to be aware of. It's nothing. We can overcome it for sure. Provided we are relevant, we will endure. And that's what we're committed to and that's what I hope you heard also in Provost Crawford's response.

AJ Plummer: Well, great. We're getting some great questions here and we really appreciate everybody's engagement. Again, it's *3 to get into the question queue. If you have a burning question here before the end of the call, please, hop into that queue now, don't wait. We're going to go to another Richard who has a question about off-campus study programs. Go ahead, Richard, you're on live with the group.

Richard S. : Participate this evening. I am a 1973 graduate of Cornell and spent a semester in Germany as a junior, in the semester abroad program. Experimented in international living at that time. Subsequently, I was awarded a Fulbright scholarship and studied for another year in Europe post Cornell. I was wondering about the status of the study abroad programs that might be available to Cornell folks these days and also any international education initiatives and bringing international students and their diversity to campus. Thank you.

Ilene Crawford: Hi, Richard. It's Ilene. Thank you very much for your question. As a fellow Fulbrighter, I can share with you really, really powerful experiences of being abroad myself and how those shaped just my way of thinking and being in the world. So I mean, this is something I'm very excited about, the ways that we provide opportunities for Cornell students to study abroad.

So as you might expect, during the pandemic, we were not sending students abroad for the first couple of years I was here in this role. And I am proud and happy to say that study abroad is back. We have a lot of students that rather than pursuing the type of semester-long program that you're talking about, really, really enjoy working with their faculty members and going abroad for a block. So, we've had some successful relaunches of our block courses abroad last year and this year.

We do have a group of students that are in India right now. I'm particularly proud of that, because the pandemic delayed that for a couple of years. So, there are students who are seniors now who really, really thought that they were going to get to go on that trip as sophomores and signed up for that class sophomore year, and we had to cancel it junior year. We had to cancel it, and now we're there in India having that experience. It's a marvelous public health course with one of our faculty members there.

We've sent students back to China this year as well. So we were able to restart an economics class there. So we are sending students around the globe. We're also exploring some partnerships with some institutions internationally that are adopting the block plan. Stay tuned for some more details about that where we hope that there'll be some opportunities for students in Australia to do blockly or longer exchanges as part of their Cornell experience and with the partner institution.

So that's just a taste of what we're doing in the study abroad space, but completely agree with you that the benefits that it gives to students who travel outbound, but also the opportunities for students that are inbound. So we do have an active community of international students here as well that come and spend one or more years with us and they're really, really treasured and important part of our campus community. So thanks for your question, Richard.

AJ Plummer: Thanks Provost Crawford. We have a question that was submitted to us online and we want to make sure to engage some of our online alums as well. This is from Melissa in Lancaster. She has asked the panel here, she says, "I would like to hear more about the Student Success Center. I've heard a little bit about it and know it exists, but don't know exactly how it works or what it offers to students. It sounds like a great idea." We agree.

Ilene Crawford: Hi, so this is Ilene again. Melissa, thank you for your question. I'm happy to talk to you about our Student Success Center. So this is part of a strategic plan initiative we launched a couple of years ago. We recognize that the first year that students are with us and specifically their point of entry this summer, before they arrive, all the way through the point where they declare their major, that is the time where to be able to get them rooted in our community makes it much more likely that we'll be successful in retaining those students. So our Student Success Center is really part of a broader retention initiative that we have at the college.

And it's a one-stop center located just off the Orange Carpet in the Thomas Commons to support students academically and socially in all dimensions of their success. So we have some success coaches that work with staff there and students could access a range of services there. Perhaps they have a disability accommodation, and so, they can work with our disability coordinator to arrange those accommodations with their faculty members. Perhaps they're seeking extra academic support for their course, so they can arrange for a content tutor and make a study plan with our coordinator for academic support, or talk about advising questions, study skills, time management, and ways to connect with other resources on campus as well. And we have one of our success coaches that works specifically with our athletes and helps

them to make the connections to have them get stable social relationships on campus. So this has been a really great initiative to see come to life in the Thomas Commons just off of the Orange Carpet. And thanks very much for your question.

AJ Plummer: Okay, we have time for a few more questions here. If you still have a burning question, now is your chance. It's *3 to get into that queue. We're going to take a couple more questions here. We're going to go to Craig in Fargo. Craig, you are on live with the group. Go ahead and ask your question.

Craig: Well, I wanted to bring up an issue when we're talking about continuing the size of the college, sometimes, you need a partner. I was a 1975 grad and went on to the University of Iowa Medical School. And I had the wonderful opportunity by a 1956 grad, Bob Replogle, who was head of cardiovascular surgery at University of Chicago, and he sponsored myself and my roommate, Bruce Hillner, to go and work in his lab at [inaudible 00:44:37] Chicago at the University of Chicago Hospital. And it was a wonderful opportunity, and I think it was the springboard for my career in cardiology. And as a country, we're about 50% below every other western country in having doctors per capita.

And my question is, is there an opportunity for Cornell to partner with universities that have medical schools? And I've been working with the University of Iowa trying to get them to increase their enrollment to get doctors for our country. Is there a way that we can amp that up? I think it would also be an opportunity to increase donorship by former Cornell grads. So just a question. Is there opportunity there? Thank you.

Ilene Crawford: Hi Craig, this is Ilene. Thank you very much for your question. I'll start, I might pass things over to President Brand as well. I think you know, and certainly, yourself can speak to a long, proud tradition at Cornell of successfully sending our graduates to medical school. We have many, many students who come to Cornell because of our success. And some of our most popular majors, our majors were students that are intending to go to medical school. We have a health promotions committee that's in place to support students in the application process as well. So we're very serious about continuing to support students who are on that path.

So you were talking about a particular partnership with the University of Iowa, of course, we are always open to those opportunities, so I appreciate the suggestion very much for a specific connection there. We do have some students currently that are able to do some internships and some summer work at the University of Iowa and several of our faculty have some active partnerships there, but certainly, our students benefit from. President Brand, is there anything else that you would want to add to that?

President Jonathan Brand: Well, Craig, thank you very much for the question. Of course, part of the question was whether there's some possibility down the road that Cornellians with medical degrees might be interested in endowing a fund. Well, I think that's an interesting possibility. And as we explore the elements of our next campaign and growing the endowment, that's something that we'll take into consideration. And as you know, we have several very

promising partnerships already with the University of Iowa and are very fortunate, of course, to have such a fine medical school, medical program just down the road from us. So I appreciate this question and I appreciate what Provost Crawford had to say about it as well. So thank you. And great to hear your voice also.

AJ Plummer: Okay. We're going to go to Beth in St. Cloud. Beth, you're on the call with the group. Go ahead and go live.

Beth: Hi everyone. I was very excited to hear about the potential new nursing partnership. I think that's great. And it got me to thinking, are there any new partnerships in the experiential learning area that are on the horizon at Cornell?

Ilene Crawford: Well, hi Beth. It's Ilene. Thank you very much for your call. I'm glad you're excited about the nursing partnership, so are we. We're certainly pursuing other opportunities. You heard me mention the possibility of a partnership with other institutions abroad that have adopted the block plan to give our students some additional study abroad opportunities. So that is something that we are pretty focused on right now, and being able to continue to grow the number of students that are able to participate in study abroad.

I think our Berry Career Center has also done an outstanding job of being able to extend and develop the types of internship and fellowship opportunities that our students are enjoying. And that includes partnerships with Children's Hospital in Colorado at the Mayo Clinic. So these are sought after internships that our students pursue and take advantage of during the summer.

We're also trying to expand our Cornell Summer Research Institute. Last year we had 60 students that were here over the course of the summer for eight weeks pursuing research with their faculty members on some pretty exciting projects. And some of those students have gone on to do some national conference presentations just in the last few weeks presenting some of the gains of their summer research. And we have some students that are actively participating with faculty on National Science Foundation grants and pursuing research in that way. So we're really looking to continue to deepen, expand some of those opportunities.

AJ Plummer: Thanks Provost Crawford. So we're coming up to our last few minutes here. *3 is to get into the question queue. If you'd like to ask a question, that's how you do so, *3. We'd love to chat with you. We had another question come in online that we wanted to get to. So Marta asked, "What is the college doing to boost retention?" The question of the hour.

Ilene Crawford: Question of the hour. So Marta, it's Ilene. Thank you very much for your question. I'll start off on this and then I'll invite President Brand to chime in if he wishes to. You just heard me talking about the Student Success Center, so that is really one way in which we're focused on retention and particularly where students are most vulnerable during their first year with us, where we really want them to establish academic relationships and the social relationships that are going to be important for their success.

So you've heard me talk a little bit about some of the services and opportunities that are available for them at the Student Success Center. I should also say that our staff and the Center interface with our faculty very frequently. And if a faculty member has a concern about a student, about their performance in class, perhaps they missed a class session, that's another place where they can connect with the faculty and staff and the Student Success Center to be able to follow up with that student and get them back on track and get a success plan.

Really, academic advising is something we're quite focused on as something that really makes a difference in retention as well. There's nothing like high quality academic advising that helps the student stay on track to graduation, but also get an early direction and purpose to their study. So that is something that we're actively looking at right now in terms of the type of academic advising that we offer. So I think those are a couple of things that are happening right now that are supporting retention.

I really appreciate this question. Many, many institutions focus on enrollment. We've got a terrific enrollment team that work really, really hard to bring in the class for us every year, and it's very, very important that as a campus we're also focused around retaining that class and keeping the students that we're able to attract to the Hilltop. So it is really a shared partnership between enrollment and retention.

AJ Plummer: Thanks so much, Provost Crawford. Kelly, I wonder if you might just be open to sharing a brief update here towards the end of the call. What gives you hope and optimism for Cornell? How do you see Cornell positioned in the marketplace? What are some bright spots that you see happening at Cornell financially and in terms of what we're accomplishing as an institution?

Kelly Flege: Yeah, wow. There's a lot in that question, AJ. Thank you very much. I am very excited about, I will first say, the team that we have at Cornell, and so that starts at the top with the executive team and the leadership team and all of the individual teams then that we have across campus in all of our respective areas.

There is a great enthusiasm and really, excitement, frankly, because one of the initiatives that we're doing is really looking at how can we do things differently. And reflecting back on some of the comments that Jonathan made earlier about how our staff and faculty feel as well as how our students feel and so much emphasis on them, and so, part of that is really looking at how can we do things differently so that we are doing things efficiently and doing what's most important. So I am really excited about some of that procedural work, that really excites me as an operations person.

I'm also really excited about how we are making... from a financial perspective, we know that lots of the questions during this call have been on retention and the concern about students and are there students who still want to attend college? And we know that there are. And as Jonathan said, there are lots of students out there that Cornell is absolutely the right place for them.

But at the same time, higher ed is still very much... There's a lot of challenges in higher ed and you read about them in the papers every day, and that means financially as well. And at Cornell, we've been really focusing on continuing to strengthen our overall operations and our financial position. And so that, as a finance person, makes me really excited as well.

We've spent some real efforts to continue to reduce our long-term debt, and so that continues to improve our overall financial position and that gives me a lot of encouragement for how we can continue to improve those results in the years to come. Is that the kind of feedback you were looking for, AJ?

AJ Plummer: I think it's great, Kelly. Thanks.

President Jonathan Brand: So Kelly, as a colleague and a teammate of yours, I just want to make an observation to everyone on this call, when the provost speaks, your provost, your president speaks, and then, your CFO speaks and says she's excited, you should be most excited about what she just said more than what we just said. Everyone likes an excited CFO, folks.

Ilene Crawford: Absolutely. I would second and third that comment. So a happy CFO is very, very important. So appreciate the comments, Kelly.

President Jonathan Brand: Yeah.

Kelly Flege: Thanks.

AJ Plummer: Well, thank you to everyone who joined us for the call. I'm mindful of the time, we're coming here to the top of the hour. And so many of you asked great questions. And I know there's many of you still in the queue who we just didn't have time to get to. And we are sorry we didn't have time to get to everybody, but we so appreciate your engagement. We appreciate you joining us. For those who submitted questions online.

Thank you to President Brand, Provost Crawford, Vice President Flege for joining us this evening. And of course, thank you to each of you for listening at home and for your participation. As I said, I'm really sorry we didn't get a chance to get to everybody's question tonight, but please do know that if you are already in the queue, your question has been recorded and our staff will be following up with you in the coming days.

If you have a question that you didn't ask or weren't brave enough to ask that you haven't already shared, you can stay on the line after the call is finished and you'll be able to leave a voicemail with your question. And again, we'll be following up with all those questions that have been submitted.

So thank you again for joining us this evening. And from all of us here on the Hilltop, we wish you a very pleasant rest of your evening. Have a great night.