

Cornell College Alumni All-Call
April 28th 2021

M. Munley:

Good evening everyone. My name is Mickey Munley and it's my pleasure to welcome you to tonight's Cornell College Annual All-Call with alumni and the president. To ask questions tonight, which really drives the program. You need to just press star three on your phone. It's like raising your hand.

M. Munley:

It gets you in a queue, lets us know that you have a question. And we'd like to get to as many of you as possible. So star three at any point during the call, but really we can't get started without first introducing the President, Jonathan Brand. Jonathan it's 10 years now, the show and the floor is yours. Go ahead.

President Jonathan Brand:

Thanks Mickey and thanks everyone. It is a thrill to be on the phone with all of you. It won't surprise you when I say this, I'm in a room with one, two, three, four, five other people, six of us. I don't think that's been the case for 14 months now. So, what can I tell you? We want to get to your question. So I'm going to keep my remarks really short and then I'm going to introduce a really important guest that we have this evening, another Cornellian.

President Jonathan Brand:

So what a year we've had, right? Could any update not begin and end with something about COVID? And what I could say is in a world with COVID, I think at least so far with two weeks left to go before the end of the academic year. We have had as about a... the year has gone about as well as I think anyone could have expected.

President Jonathan Brand:

Right now, we are carrying a 0% student positivity rate and that's incredible and we're moving towards the end and we've even relaxed some of the protocols on campus because frankly, the sacrifices that our students and faculty and staff have made has really converted into a measurable difference on campus. The theme about sacrifices, you're going to hear it this evening. You cannot imagine what everyone has had to do to ensure that we could welcome all of our students back from the beginning of the academic year.

President Jonathan Brand:

And while many schools were struggling with whether to open campus or close campus. That wasn't the question we were asking at Cornell College. The question we were asking was; what do we have to do to make sure that we can invite all of our students back on campus? And two, for those students who are not ready to come back to campus, what can we do to accommodate them?

President Jonathan Brand:

And that's guided us this year and it has worked out beautifully. I will say and I think that some of the success of this year and the hard work of the last 10 plus years is coming together and making what appears to be quite a dramatic difference in our fall enrollment outlook. One, our retention numbers are looking stronger this year than last year at this time. And our deposits May 1, is the national signing day. So we really will have a better sense in just a couple of days. But we are up significantly. And I mean,

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significantly, the national average is hovering for liberal arts college is hovering around 14, 15% where we're more than three times ahead of that right now.

President Jonathan Brand:

And this is really important for us because as you've probably read and heard me say in the past, within a demographic cliff coming in five years, where we will have roughly 10 to 15% fewer high school graduates. It is really important for colleges and universities to be positioned now with the right academic program, with the right culture, the right facilities to weather what's going to be a difficult period for many schools but not for us.

President Jonathan Brand:

The last thing I'll say before I turn it over to someone else. We're in the process right now of working on our next two facilities projects. One is we're renovating College Hall soon to be McLennan College Hall. It's a restoration of our second oldest building, started March 29th, going to be done July 29th, in time for the next academic year.

President Jonathan Brand:

It is going to be beautiful. And when you have one third of your faculty working in that building and it hasn't had air condition ever, it's going to make a huge difference for our students, faculty and staff who work there and live there in some level. And of course the athletic and wellness facility, the Richard and Norma Athletic and Wellness Center is right now undergoing a renovation, will be done in 17 months.

President Jonathan Brand:

A spectacular 19 and a half million dollar project, which is for our student athletes. It's for all of our students, the wellness, the fitness spaces, the group exercise spaces, the locker rooms, all there, all going to be beautiful. If you go online, you can see images. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to our fearless provost and chief academic officer, also a Cornell graduate, married to a Cornell graduate. Parents who are both Cornell graduates. You won't find anybody more Cornell than Ilene Crawford. So with that, I'd like to ask Ilene to take the floor.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Thank you so much Jonathan [inaudible 00:05:04]. (silence)

M. Munley:

Ilene [inaudible 00:05:22] hang on one second.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

[inaudible 00:05:24]. Thanks so much Jonathan, for that kind welcome. It's good to be on the call with everybody tonight. So I am Ilene Crawford. This is just about the 10 month mark May 1st will be 10 months in the saddle as Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs at Cornell. It has been a year like no other as you might imagine, but I am so happy to be here back on the Hilltop.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

I am a graduate of the class of 1992 and she come back to the Hilltop with my husband Robert McGuire, also class of 1992. Has been terrific. On the call tonight, I think arr my parents Jack Crawford, class of

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1969 and Nancy Charleston Crawford also class of 1969. So it is a Cornell family. We're very happy to be back in Mount Vernon. Proud of our success this year. You heard Jonathan say our faculty have worked incredibly hard, our staff have worked incredibly hard to support our students.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Our students have worked incredibly hard. I was in Thomas Commons today meeting students, planning to graduate in a few weeks. Making sure that we pronounce their names correctly as they sail across the stage at commencement. So they are positioned to graduate and head out into the world and coming back to the Hilltop, things are very much the same. But also very different in some ways.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Funny story. I came down to the Scott Alumni house tonight, to see my old room. It used to be Rude house. So I was excited to see my old room. But that portion of the building has actually been removed. So no trip down memory lane for me there, but all kinds of things about Rude were the same. And so that's been a little bit the experience the entire year. Some things a little bit different, lots of things the same including terrific faculty students and staff. So with that, I think that we want to get it turned over to questions so we can get hearing from you and what's on your mind.

M. Munley:

Excellent. Thank you so much Ilene. So questions again, if you've just joined us, if you have a question either for Ilene or Jonathan, please just press star three on your phone. It's like raising your hand, sort of in a high-tech low-tech way. It gets you in a queue, but you won't interrupt us and then we'll get you in that queue and get to as many live questions as we can. So it turns out we already have somebody in the queue from Duluth, Georgia. So Jack from Duluth, Georgia, you're on live with President Brand. Go ahead with your question, please.

Jack Lumanog '96:

Well, thanks for taking my question. I guess I just want to know how things have been going. I'm just going to guess it's been up and down as far as morale with students, faculty and staff. It sounds things are now on the upswing if things are being relaxed for COVID protocols, but just give us a glimpse on as to how everybody's been weathering COVID. And if there's anything that we as alumni can do to support?

President Jonathan Brand:

Well, thank you for this question. It's a... boy, it's been front and center on our minds the entire year. When we started the year, we went probably the first 10 weeks without... boy, fewer than 10 students testing positive. And so we thought that things were generally going well. We believed it. We had put in place very strict protocols. So for example, up until this week students have not been allowed in each other's residence halls.

President Jonathan Brand:

And in fact, we had a certain point in late October when we started to see a dramatic increase and we got worried that we could see a spike that we weren't going to be able to control. So we had to tighten down the restrictions and had to prohibit students from going into each other's residence hall rooms,

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for example. I guess what I'd have to say for the whole year, we've had to be really flexible depending on what the data showed us each week. We have this dashboard that you can look at updated.

President Jonathan Brand:

We're testing three times a week. And so depending on what the results were showing us yeah, we'd have to tighten down students their ability to get to meet in lounge, socialize in lounges together, to congregate in indoor settings.

President Jonathan Brand:

And I will admit, the morale this year it really was something that we had to pay attention to from start to finish. Because everyone has an expectation for what a Cornell College experience is going to be like. And this year in light of COVID, there was just no way that we were going to be able to deliver fully on that experience and the students and the faculty and staff. We all sort of had to commit to it together. Now on balance thankfully, I think by the end of the year we can see it was a worthwhile investment to push through with these sacrifices and with our protocols and rules that everyone really had to embrace together.

President Jonathan Brand:

Otherwise, our students wouldn't have had a collegiate experience and that would have been just disastrous. So in terms of what you or any alum can do as it relates to faculty and staff and students, I'll say this over and over to the extent that anyone has that expression of thanks that you would like to share with all faculty and staff, with individual faculty and staff students. We will communicate those faithfully. I think the words of support actually go a long way to help people see that what we did all collectively was worth it.

M. Munley:

Great. Okay. Thank you so much. So we'll move on. And we actually had a couple questions that came in over the electronic transcend, so to speak. So Provost Crawford, this one was directed to you. It's from Julie in Cedar Rapids class of '88. And she asks, "What have been the biggest challenges and the biggest rewards with the shift to offering classes online and in hybrid formats for both faculty and for students?"

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So thanks for the question, Julie. There have been challenges and there have been rewards. So I'm glad that you see that from both perspectives. I think the biggest challenge has been for our faculty when they're in the position and students, when we're trying to bridge some students that are in person and some students that are remote and that are off campus. So that hybrid space where you have some students that are physically in the classroom and some that are joining that classroom remotely, to be able to bridge those two audiences.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Well, I think we've found effective ways to do that has been the ongoing challenge in this hybrid spaces. On the other hand, there have been some significant rewards and opportunities moving into online and hybrid formats. And so we've got so many faculty that have really taken this as an opportunity to rethink their teaching, to really accelerate into the curve that the pandemic has represented and to really innovate their teaching.

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Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So we have faculty doing more with flipped classrooms, all kinds of innovative uses of breakout rooms in economics classes, engineering classes, language classes. But also the ability to bring in guest speakers, for example. That they just wouldn't have had access to. So international and folks from all over the U.S. being able to join classes, be guest speakers in classes and give students some direct contact.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Some really exciting research and speakers that they otherwise wouldn't have had access to. So I think it's been a mixed blessing in different ways, but faculty are already talking about things that they'll hold onto after this having developed some of this capacity and things that they want to continue after the pandemic.

M. Munley:

Right. Thank you very much. We'll head back to questions from the phone and this is Bruce in see Bruce is in Richmond, Virginia. Bruce you're on live. Please go ahead with your question.

Bruce Hillner '75:

Thank you for taking my call. Been a 40 plus year concern at the college as a first rate academic programs, but has a third rate endowment and it doesn't seem to change. Is there any hope for having that as a resource that can cover more of the institution's needs going forward?

President Jonathan Brand:

Thank you, Bruce. I think that's a... thank you, that's a great question. And obviously a question front and center for the trustees and for the college. When I look out to the future of higher education, I think really the future for many colleges and universities will be strained and difficult into the future. And the schools that are going to not just survive, but thrive into the future.

President Jonathan Brand:

One, they're going to be creative and willing to take bold risks. Two, they will have strong financial foundations and that is the endowment to your point and three, they're going to have an inspired alumni base. Those are to me, the three characteristics of the schools that are going to do well into the future. So the board has an investment committee. They are singularly focused on wise investing and frankly wide, wise usage of the endowment.

President Jonathan Brand:

It's sort of axiomatic for colleges and universities to not spend more than 5% of an average of the endowment. And we've had years in the past... over the past, over decades where we were spending more than 5%. Well, that's not sustainable long-term for an institution. And so the board has addressed that and we're addressing that on campus and wise investing and recognizing that over the course of time and philanthropy, which is a part of the current campaign that we are in right now.

President Jonathan Brand:

Those three together, wise investing not spending more than an organization should permissibly spend and really powerful philanthropy focused on the endowment. Those three together, that's how

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endowments grow. And so the board is... we're all focused on that. We've got to do that and that's not a one or two year play. That's a multi-year commitment that we all are making.

M. Munley:

Right. Thank you so much. So let's go ahead and move to another question on the phone. Again, star three if you'd like to ask your question. We're going to head to South Carolina to Jane. Jane from South Carolina. You're on with the provost and the president. Please go ahead with your question.

Jane Welgos Sidwell '69:

Thank you this is Jane from the class of '69. And I can go on and on to alums and potential students about then and now and how wonderful the Cornell experience is. But can you give me the short answer to what is really setting Cornell apart to make it the Cornell experience. And what I'm hearing and what to be able to communicate to others is how Cornell is so unique as well as sustainable over time.

President Jonathan Brand:

Well thank you, Jane. And it is great to hear your voice. I wish we were in the same room together. So my one sentence or two sentences all together, I would say thanks to one course at a time and to the culture of this college. We offer our students teaching and learning the way students want to learn, an education on a student's terms.

President Jonathan Brand:

Experiential learning, flexible, agile. We know that students want to curate their own educational experience. And again, with our culture and our one course at a time methodology, it is possible here in a way that it's not possible anywhere else.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Jane I would echo that. I would also say that there is nothing like the one course at a time model and with its immersiveness that better replicates what real life working conditions are. So in terms of preparing students for everything that comes after their Cornell experience, we're really positioning them to be successful in that way.

M. Munley:

Right. That's awesome. Thanks so much. And let's head out west now. Let's go to Justin in Denver. Justin, you're on live, please go ahead with your question.

Justin Futrell '16:

Mr. President, good evening.

President Jonathan Brand:

How are you?

Justin Futrell '16:

Doing well. Hey, here's my question. You talk about going from survive to thrive. I think about virtual classes and I'm curious how you see that playing into Cornell and one course at a time in the future.

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President Jonathan Brand:

Yeah. Wow Justin, this is an incredible question. And I do think that if there are any elements of COVID that I would characterize as silver linings. I think that any hesitation that we have had in higher ed to embrace technology, I think we've blown right past it at this point. So I think technology and how it relates to the in-person experience, it's here to stay.

President Jonathan Brand:

And so I think our epiphany when we think about virtual learning is; one, after COVID and I choose to believe that we are coming out of COVID at this point. Students are across the country, are rushing back to colleges and universities. They are desperate to have that return to the experience they want to be together, they want to be in a room. But by the same token, there is no doubt that technology is one going to allow us to expand what our students are learning and where they're learning and how they're learning.

President Jonathan Brand:

So I wouldn't be surprised if in... many of our classes have technological components. I teach them in politics on campus and in my class, I have guests visiting all the time, Cornell graduates. We have one, a federal judge in Nashville who has joined my class every year. That will continue and expand, the other piece of this that we've learned this year. And this is a technological, an insight related to technology, which is the platforms and the software that exists in higher education related for students has historically been relatively clunky and not user-friendly in the same way that that technology has been for our students in their personal lives or in their social lives.

President Jonathan Brand:

And so the recognition, the realization this year is as we move forward, all of the technology that we offer our students sort of as a wraparound, the in-class experience, it's got to be as user-friendly and as enjoyable as the platforms and the software that they're using in their lives out of the classroom. And so I think that's where we're headed at Cornell is we're really are going to think about how technology dovetails with the classroom experience, expands it, makes it more possible, makes active learning in the classroom even more possible, even though I will say that is really how our classes are run right now. And then to use technology to sort of support student success around each and every student.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Justin, I would say that there are also ways that technology is going to extend the Cornell experience to new audiences. And even now, we've recently launched our MFA program that was initially conceptualized as an on-ground program. Launching it during the pandemic, we made the decision to launch that remotely and that was very successful. So that ability to move that into a hybrid space as well has been pretty exciting for us and present some new opportunities for Cornell in the future.

President Jonathan Brand:

And Justin, if I can add one last thing and this is really more related to you all as alumni and to parents. Which is, I don't think historically we've been very good at ensuring that all of our activities are available online. Athletic events for sure, but convocations and guest speakers and colloquia.

President Jonathan Brand:

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And again, I think thanks to COVID, we've just sort of blown right past that. I think that's going to be an expectation for every campus event at this point that it's going to be available to people wherever they are. I just think we have to expect that of ourselves and we know that you all and parents and students who might not be on campus, They want that also.

M. Munley:

Okay. Thank you again. That's star three, to ask a question. We'll come back. We'll go to Illinois now to Park Ridge and Dr. Fredrickson, hang on one sec I clicked the wrong button. All right, Dr. Fredrickson from Park Ridge you're on live. Now, go ahead with your question.

Dr. Marilyn Connors Frederiksen '70:

I have a question as to whether or not you're going to require vaccination of your students as they return to Cornell in the fall.

President Jonathan Brand:

Thank you, Dr. Fredrickson. Another great question and one that we are still considering, I will say there are a couple of factors. Which is one, if you believe the science it would suggest that reaching herd immunity is going to require people to get vaccinated. We've had a good year this year, not just because people will follow the protocols, but we're close to if not over 50% of our faculty and staff are now fully vaccinated. And that's really made an enormous difference.

President Jonathan Brand:

So I can say personally, I'm very supportive of it. But there are some other aspects to this calculus that we have to consider. Which is one, there are communities and students who come from marginalized communities who are suspicious of vaccinations. And so we have to pay attention to the fact that there are some who are really resistant to it and don't want to get vaccinated.

President Jonathan Brand:

I will also say despite all of our best efforts, one way or the other and we know in an optimal world our plan be to make a decision by June 1 for the fall. Right now the Iowa Legislature is entertaining a bill that actually would prohibit us from requiring any students to be vaccinated. So if that passes and many people as far as I can tell are petitioning and speaking up against, in opposition.

President Jonathan Brand:

But I think it stands a reasonable chance of passing in which case, no matter what we want to do we won't have a choice. Our hands will be tied. If that does pass, actually it still won't address whether or not we require employees to be vaccinated. And that, we also have to consider the fact that right now the vaccinations they all have emergency use authorization. I understand that there's a possibility that at least Pfizer and Moderna will both gain permanent authorization over the course of the summer, that would even help a little bit more. I'm in support of it. The question is whether we'll be in a position legally to implement it. So I hope that helps.

M. Munley:

Okay. Thank you. Moving on, we'll stay in Illinois to Mardel in... excuse me, Elk Grove Mardel in Elk Grove you're on live. Go ahead with your question, please.

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Mardell Koop Schumacher '54:

Yes, I was a graduate in 1954. So my time at Cornell was in the early 50s. And back then Cornell was a good Christian college of about 650 students. Now at the beginning of the program, Dr. Brand remarked about the number of people who will be coming back and that we seem to have a good picture of what that will be and we're in pretty good shape. But I would like to know what is the actual population right now at Cornell? And what do you anticipate that it will be next year?

President Jonathan Brand:

Right. So we started this academic year just over a thousand students. And interestingly, our incoming class was about 3% larger in the fall than it was the year before. And based on the strategic planning work that we're doing and what we're modeling right now, we anticipate probably being in the thousand 30 to 1,050. And our plans are to slowly and incrementally, methodically grow to about 1200. That's sort of the next level that we're looking at, is to grow to about 1200 students. I think that is of high strategic importance for this school.

President Jonathan Brand:

Interestingly again, in a world where you look at a declining population of high school graduates. If you survey them and ask, "What's a small college?" They'll say under 2,500 is a small college. So we know that we need to comprehensively grow the institution. And of course the key, anytime an institution grows is you have to do it in a manner that doesn't denude or harm the personalized nature of it. Our 20 year average is about 1,048, I think. So we're just a hair below that, but our plans over the next couple of years, we will grow.

M. Munley:

Okay. Let's head to Belmont, Ohio to Dr. Bush. Dr. Bush, You're on live. Go ahead with your question, please.

Judith Burroughs Bush '63:

Hi, thank you. This is Judith Bush. Before I start, I wanted to quickly share with Ilene and you President Brand that my mother graduated in '36. I'm from the class of '63 and her parents went to Cornell and her mother graduated I think it was 1913 and my mother and I both lived at Rude house. I just thought to share that.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Fantastic. Well, you've got me beat that's for sure. Thanks for your call tonight.

Judith Burroughs Bush '63:

Sure. My question is about international education, which has been a big passion of mine in my own post Cornell academic journey. And I just wondered in what ways the pandemic has affected it, if it sat it all down? Whether there are any international students? Or whether there are any study abroad programs that are even possible during the pandemic? [crosstalk 00:28:01].

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Well, as you can imagine. COVID has had a dramatic impact both on our outbound students and our inbound students. So outbound this year, we haven't had study abroad programs, but we do plan to

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offer those again next year. So faculty and students are busy planning to go abroad next year and getting pretty excited about that. In terms of inbound students, as you can imagine also with COVID, we've had a lot of our international students that haven't been able to get to campus this year.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So they've been studying remotely. So when I answered Julie's question a little bit earlier about what some of the biggest challenges for our faculty have been, that's also included. Teaching to students that are in times zones around the world. So when they're doing in-person synchronous learning with their students and sometimes their students have been in China and I've talked with some of our students in China. Early in the morning here, when it's late at night they're getting ready to log into the class and participate in class.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So technology has helped, but we are really looking forward to welcoming our international students back to campus. And are hoping that things will be easier for them to get access next year, certainly as vaccines become more available and as some of these travel restrictions lift. But my commitment to international education is like yours. And we have a long-term plan to continue to cultivate those students and to welcome more international students to campus.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

We also continue to have an active partnership with Beihua University particularly serving our engineering program. So we have some faculty that are delivering courses in partnership with Beihua University. This is university in Northeast China. Some of those students matriculate to Cornell after finishing their Beihua program. So that's a particular group of students that we're invested in and we'll continue that partnership in the years to come. That's been very successful for us.

M. Munley:

Okay. Thank you so much. Let's move down to South Carolina to Dr. Dean. Dr. Dean you're on live. Go ahead with your question, which I believe is for the provost. Go ahead with your question, Dr. Dean.

Dr. John Dean '58:

Having gone through an academic career, a selection of faculty is always a very important part in the development of an institution and programs in the institution. One, I would like to first put a plot it on the fellows program. My wife and I sponsor a fellow in the class of 58 has been very active [inaudible 00:30:46] that an output of that is that when we come back in the fall in my class, such as we are now comes back every year.

Dr. John Dean '58:

And one of the things that they do is, we meet for lunch with the current fellow that goes to the coast of South Carolina. And that interaction is a terrific impact on them and on us. And so that's... we are a big supporters of the fellows program and what its output is. But the question I want to ask is recruitment of faculty, how's it going? Is it difficult? Do you have any advantages?

Provost Ilene Crawford:

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So thank you so much for your support of the fellows program. That's such an important opportunity for our students, they benefit so much from that. In terms of faculty recruitments, the higher ed right now, there are a lot of challenges. Many institutions are not hiring right now. So we look forward to being able to welcome some new faculty to the Hilltop that process is very important. It's a way for us to grow our programs, to sustain the programs that we have. So this is new in my role.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So I've been here for about 10 months now and one of the things that can really make an impact as you know, since you've been in a similar position is your ability to hire and bring new faculty to the institution. They will shape what academic programming happens in the future. They will set the tone and the environment, the kinds of relationships that they can have with students. It's important that our faculty reflect our body.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So as we go forward with hires in the future. We'll have an increasing eye as our student body diversifies, making sure that our faculty is diverse in the same way. So thanks so much for your question.

M. Munley:

Okay. Excuse me. Okay, great. So now let's go to Scott. Scott, I'm not sure where you are, but I know you want to talk about athletics. So you're on live, go ahead with your question.

C. Scott Ririe '79:

Yeah. So Scott [inaudible 00:33:10] I'm in St. Louis. And I just would like to find out when kids that are looking at Cornell versus other small schools to play athletics, are they seeing the renderings of what's going to happen at Cornell? And they get excited about that and then does the general population who can go there for a wellness center and get themselves healthier by going there, are they excited about the future changes that are coming?

President Jonathan Brand:

Scott? It's great to hear your voice, just terrific then say hello to my fearless St. Louis. So the answer is yes to every single one of your questions. So first of all, the project is under construction. So you actually couldn't miss it, but there are images on the outside along the street and along the parking lot. And we have images inside the building. The coaches have reached out to all of their... spoken to all their current students, shared images with all prospective students.

President Jonathan Brand:

On campus we talk about it all the time. We talk about what the project contains, what it includes, the timeline which is very exciting because it's going to be done in basically 17 months, which means the beginning of the next academic... one year after this academic year. So when we're talking to prospective students, prospective student athletes, prospective students, we of course lead with the culture of excellence. If we're focused, if we're talking about athletics, we talk about the culture.

President Jonathan Brand:

First, the student focus and the culture of excellence, the drive to win. And we lead with... and we talk about how the coaches and the buildings and the outdoor spaces make that all possible. Yeah. We're

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talking about it everywhere and it is generating an enormous amount of excitement. It's really incredible how it is negating something that has been holding us back for some time.

M. Munley:

Okay, great. Thanks so much. Now let's head out to the far west to California Chula Vista, Dr. Zhou. Dr. Zhou you're on live, please go ahead with your question.

Dr. Dixon Xu '13:

Oh, hi. Thanks for taking my call. This is Dixon my graduating class of 2013 and noticed that since I graduated, the college started to offer more career oriented degree programs such as nursing or engineering. I'm just wondering, do you guys see like a positive impact on like students body enrollments interest from prospective students in these programs. And is there like a plan for the college to offer similar degree tracks in the future?

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Oh, thanks for your question. You're right. The engineering program is a great example of some of our new program offerings, been really popular with students. That program was just recently accredited by [inaudible 00:36:16]. So we're very proud of that. Just one of a few handful of programs in Iowa with that accreditation.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

We think that we have something very special to offer to be able to do an engineering program in an intentionally liberal arts environment, where students get to do engineering in a very interdisciplinary way and get to, think about the ethics of some of the decisions that they're making in that field. So we see interest in more types of professional programs like that. So we're looking at what our new program offerings might be. We have some things under consideration. For example, data science is a very exciting, very evolving field right now.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Things like that also within a liberal arts environment create a really special experience for students where they can have that immersive interdisciplinary experience and really address something like digital science in a liberal arts context. So we're taking a careful look at what some of the skills our faculty have and some of the interests they have and how that aligns with where we see a student needs and interests are going and we'll continue to evolve and refresh our program offerings accordingly. But the engineering program is a great example of that. Thanks for your question.

M. Munley:

Okay. So let's go over to John in Las Vegas. John in Las Vegas you're live, please go ahead with your question.

John Delibos '73:

Good evening, Dr. Brand. It's nice to speak with you again.

M. Munley:

Great to hear your voice, John.

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John Delibos '73:

Yes. My question Dr. Bran has to do with perhaps some residual or additional benefits that the pandemic has created in the line of online learning. Has the college considered offering online courses to students or alumni, for as a way of expanding the enrollment without really burdening the facility?

President Jonathan Brand:

So John, that is a great question. The high level answer is yes. But I'm going to turn it over to our fearless provost, Ilene Crawford. Because I think she'll be able to give you an even more textured answer

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

[crosstalk 00:38:43] Yep, John. No, I'm happy to take that question. So interestingly with our incoming students, current students this year, we have had approximately 15% of our students studying remotely. So they've been able to be off campus and still access their Cornell classes and have their Cornell experience in that way. Going forward, we're not seeing as much of an interest in online classes.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So there will be a handful of a hundred percent online courses that we do offer next year. And in some ways that's an opportunity for faculty that are remote to us, to be able to bring them to campus in ways that we otherwise wouldn't be able to meet some student needs, but really open to that idea going forward.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

And certainly as I said to one of our earlier callers, all kinds of components of individual classes, we'll also continue to make use of some of those online capacities that we've developed. And I think the MFA program again, is a great example of a hybrid model of learning where students will be doing some online classes for sure.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

And then some in-person experiences with their residencies on campus. So I think it's really important that we continue to explore those opportunities and to recognize that one way that we can really extend the Cornell experience, is through online learning and seeing opportunities that we have to do.

M. Munley:

Okay, great. So now let's come back to Minnesota to Sue in Dyna. Sue you're on live, please go ahead with your question.

Sue Petrosky '70:

Thank you. I'm with the present speaking tonight and one of the topics will be pre junior college. I am wondering how Cornell is going to position itself to attract people to a four year college?

President Jonathan Brand:

Well, I think it. Thank you for the great question. I mean, this is the million dollar, \$64,000 question. I mean, I really think it all comes down to the value proposition. I mean, students are looking at schools

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and they're asking, how is this institution, how is this educational experience going to set me up for personal and professional success?

President Jonathan Brand:

And so I think we know that we've got to really pay attention to the experiences and the education that our students are telling us they want. We know that they need, that plays to what we do that no other school can do. So that's one part of it, which is really the value proposition. And I have to say we undertook a study earlier this year and got a sense from our students who had inquired about Cornell college, what they're looking for in a college.

President Jonathan Brand:

And one of the areas for example, where we are now requiring students to have these experiences, we know that students overwhelmingly want internships and they want to study abroad and thanks to ingenuity, our core curriculum, our new core curriculum, we will require all of our students to have no fewer than two of these experiences and we're going to make it financially possible for them to do it.

President Jonathan Brand:

So the value proposition is one part of this is one other part of this that I think is really important, which is if you ask a student another area that is that students and families think about it's debt. It's how much in debt am I going to be at the end of my four years? And that ties in directly to the value proposition. So the other part of this that we're working on is, developing some programs where we can say the students, we will ensure that at the end of your four years, you will graduate with no more than you pick the number.

President Jonathan Brand:

The national average right now is about \$30,000 in student debt at the end of four years, we're right around that national average, that's not good enough. And so we've got to bring that number down for our students because they are scared of having debt when they graduate, because they see it restricts their future possibilities and opportunities. And this is an area where as we go out and we're fundraising with our alumni and friends of the college, you're going to hear more about the ever greater importance of financial aid, because we want students to graduate with as little debt as is possible.

M. Munley:

Okay. So now let's go to Beth in St. Cloud. Beth in St. Cloud you're on live. Please go ahead with your question.

Beth Becker '83:

Thank you. This is Beth, class of 1983. And first of all, I would like to say, congratulations on so many positive things I'm hearing tonight. It's just so exciting to hear all the things that Cornell has been doing to deal with this incredibly difficult situation. One group that I think especially deserves some kudos would be the admissions staff, because this has got to have been a recruiting year like no other with no on-sites and so forth. So much of what's important in having students connect with Cornell. With that said, I'm wondering what you can tell us about the characteristics of the incoming class for this fall a little bit about them?

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President Jonathan Brand:

So what I know about our current incoming class. Well, first of all, it is compared to the last 15 years plus it is a large class that we are attracting this year. That's the first thing. Based on at least the enrollment funnel that I saw this morning, we're looking at a gender mix of about 50, 50, which is good. It looked to me as of this morning that 27% of our students are students of color. That's good.

President Jonathan Brand:

The academic qualifications of this class are very similar to past years. And even Ilene, as I say that she's looking at, I mean, she's pointing like, no they're even a little higher, so that's good. So every school ones to attract an academically qualified and diverse student body and at the moment, and a healthy goodly number of students and based on everything we're seeing right now, that's exactly what were attracted and seeing in our funnel.

President Jonathan Brand:

And the only other thing that I will add Beth, in my answer is, students who come to Cornell, one of the key elements and aspects about Cornell students, they know why they're here. Like they literally see themselves on this campus. And so the number of students whom I'm meeting prospective students to positive students who are excited about being here, you just, you can feel that energy. So I also would say qualitatively, it's a very engaged class that we're attracting right now. They're excited for college next year. No surprise.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Yeah, I would echo all of that. I would also say that we had an event for accepted students on campus, such as a couple Saturdays ago, was a beautiful day. So we had many out of 99 prospective students accepted students that had RSVP. We had over 90 of them show up with their families, that we were able to welcome them.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

They were able to get some socially distanced, but face-to-face time with faculty members be able to look at campus and it was just a great day of energy for the campus to really see their engagement. And I think we really need to give a shout out to our new vice president for enrollment management, Wendy Beckemeyer. So Wendy arrived just a few months after I did. She's been a great partner to work with and we're really excited to see some of the results that she and her great team are getting already.

M. Munley:

All right. Let's head down to Houston. To Dr. Fox in Houston. For Dr. Fox's question you're on live. Go ahead with your question, Dr. Fox.

Dr. Donna Fox '48:

Hi Jonathan. It's if you remember me, I'm very old lady. I was the class X class of 47. I'm still here and I wanted to hear what you... I didn't hear anything much about the arts what's happened to the theater and the speech program and the music program, which was so well known during my day. I also lived at Rood and the last time I was there, my old room was still the attic where we had stayed for several years?

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President Jonathan Brand:

So Dr. Fox, it's great to hear your voice. I have to tell you, we are actually coming to you live from the attic.

Dr. Donna Fox '48:

Oh no.

President Jonathan Brand:

Yeah. So if you tell me what corner of the attic is your room, we'll just go sort of pay a little tribute to that corner of it. Yeah. We're in the crow's nest right now.

Dr. Donna Fox '48:

Oh, how funny. Well, we had the whole floor, there were three of us that shared that as a room.

President Jonathan Brand:

Okay. Well, we already had the whole [crosstalk 00:47:44] we're there right now. We are sharing the floor.

Dr. Donna Fox '48:

That is so funny.

President Jonathan Brand:

So well, it's great to hear your voice and yes, I definitely remember you. Let me if you don't mind, I'm going to turn this over to Dr. Crawford Ilene, who will be able to give you again, probably the best response possible.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Yeah, well, so our arts and music programs, our fine arts programs, performing arts programs are something that we've always been tremendously proud of it at Cornell. Things that have changed since I left campus include quite the hall being renovated. So the fine art department, the art history department has moved down into McWethy Hall and it's just such a beautiful renovation. So really pleased to see the artists, art historians in that space.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

We're looking forward to getting students back into their studios, getting our ceramicist back onto their pottery wheels and the kilns going and seeing all that really thrive again in the coming year. Our music program, we had a concert outside today and I will say that between that and a steel drum performance that we had last weekend that was really marking return to normalcy for us on campus to be able to enjoy musical performances and to be able to enjoy each other's company in that way again.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So those have been real promising turning points for us as a campus. Our theater, if you've not been able to catch some of our theater productions this year, our theater faculty, really brilliantly, worked very hard with our students to develop and deliver some remote performances this year. So you're able

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to log on and see those online and they did some wonderfully creative work and their last production is going to be coming up in the next couple of weeks.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So you can certainly access the website to see how you can stream that when it's released but just truly innovative work that they've done and tip of the hat to all of those faculty who really had to adapt to COVID conditions in order to keep playing music, making art and performing and creating great theater for us.

M. Munley:

Okay. Let's head to Paul. I'm not sure where you are Paul, but you're Paul in the 757 area code you're on live. Please go ahead with your question.

Paul Hedges '83:

Yes. Good evening. Thank you for taking my call. I'm in Virginia class of 83 and my brother of 82 and many of my friends, of course, like all of us have a lot of Cornell friends. And my mother was class of 55. Anyways my thought tonight and I don't really know, I was also adjunct professor in 06' and 08'. And I haven't been back on campus in a while. We hear so many negative things about the climate on campuses across the country, in terms of diversity of thought and opinion. My experience at Cornell was wonderfully diverse and I felt quite comfortable.

Paul Hedges '83:

I came out of a background of McCarthy for president campaign and the riots in Chicago. So I had a certain point of view when I got there, but I'll never forget my experience there. It was wonderful. There was room for a lot of different opinion and thought and there was kind of a free environment as far as I experienced it, I don't know, because I haven't been there, but you would know better than anyone. What are we doing or what can we do or what do we do, to make sure it's a place where people can feel comfortable and explore different points of view?

President Jonathan Brand:

Thank you. It's a great question. And it's one that we think about all the time, because if we're not an institution where students and faculty and staff can courageously share their thoughts and agree to disagree or disagree and try to convince each other of the rightfulness or the legitimacy of their positions, then we're probably not the academic institution that we aspire to be.

President Jonathan Brand:

I think this is one of those areas where frankly, relying on data is the most important thing that we can do. So every three years we do a student satisfaction inventory. And one of the questions that we ask our students is their perceptions about whether they are confronted with people, have an opportunity to interact and talk with people who share different viewpoints than their own.

President Jonathan Brand:

And overwhelmingly each time that we've done this survey in the last, at least nine years, it is emerge the students say, yes, this is an area where I feel like I am being exposed to viewpoints that are different

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than my own. So I would say at least qualitatively, it's helpful at least from our students to hear that, that's their perception and their feeling of their Cornell experience.

President Jonathan Brand:

Now, there is no doubt there is a tension in any institution because you want everyone to be able to share their thoughts across literally almost an infinite spectrum of ideas and views and viewpoints and political views. And we also want everyone on our campus to know that they have a place on this campus that they belong on this campus. I mean, we're very student centered. We want every single student to know and to feel like they belong here. And so just in how I've said that you can see how there can be moments of conflict.

President Jonathan Brand:

And so we have a diversity and inclusion statement that places at the very top prioritizes the freedom to express yourself broadly expansively and right behind it, we have an expectation that people will respect each other and that they will interact with each other thoughtfully and generously.

President Jonathan Brand:

And so we do the best that we can to live those values. And again, I think what's important all more than anything is our students are telling us that they feel that they're being exposed to viewpoints that are different from their own in and out of the classroom. And to me, that would sort of be a cynic Quando. In terms of an indicator, that to me would be the most important one.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

I would echo that. And I would say that the kind of work that our students do are also a great demonstration of that. We had a really special day on campus last Saturday. It was our symposium. So this is our one day a year where students showcase the academic work that they've accomplished throughout the year. And that really represented it just a great diversity of work that students were undertaking.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

And it ranged from work that they had been doing internationally to things that they've been doing locally. So we had one student he's a double major computer science and art history that was able, because he's on the block plan to go up to Minneapolis and to be able to observe and analyze some of the public art installations around the Jurors Floyd Memorial.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

And just the perspective that he was able to bring back the kind of analysis and to turn that into an academic project very moving and very engaging for the audience and to be able to engage an audience of faculty and students and other parents that were able to participate in that event. So we think that's also a good evidence that students are getting the liberal arts experience that we want them to have, which includes engagement with multiple points of view.

M. Munley:

Okay, great. So let's set out to Colorado, to Dr. Dungy. Dr. Dungy has a question that relate to weather. So Dr. Dungy you're on live, please go ahead with your question.

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Dr. Madgetta Thornton Dungy '64:

Thank you for taking my call. I'm from the class of 64 and has so many memories of a beautiful campus. So I'm wondering if someone can explain what has happened as a result of the massive storm that you had coming through Iowa last summer I think it was?

President Jonathan Brand:

August 10th, 2020. Oh, boy.

Dr. Madgetta Thornton Dungy '64:

Yes.

President Jonathan Brand:

And let me say Dr. Dungy, it is great to hear your voice. And I don't know if you saw, I think there was a Facebook post today or yesterday honoring you. Yeah. If you go look on the Cornell college Facebook site, you'll see it. It's awesome. It made me smile. So yes, August 10th 2020, derailed show, an inland hurricane blew through town, really with no advanced warning.

President Jonathan Brand:

And we had sustained winds. They say something North of 120 miles per hour. So I'll start with the good news. Nobody was hurt. And our buildings largely sustained exterior cosmetic damage. That said, the campus was a war zone was really decimated by the storm. We have about 1700 trees on campus, I mean, you've all been on campus. It's on the national historic register for a reason it's called Mount Vernon for a reason, the trees, we lost 170 of our 1700 trees.

President Jonathan Brand:

So we had to remove them another 170 have been damaged outside the gardener president's house is the oldest Gingko tree in the state of Iowa. And the tree looks, I mean, the tree is fine. The tree is going to make it, but boy it looks very different than it did 10 months ago. So the campus has been cleaned up. It was a full community effort.

President Jonathan Brand:

And we're now that winter is over, we're back to cleaning up campus and by cleaning up, I mean we're starting to put down seed and grow the grass. And we will over the course of the next year, two years be planting trees left and right. For anyone who's never been on campus, they'll walk across campus and say, it's beautiful. For anyone who's been on campus, you will see thinned out areas that, I mean, you'll notice groves stands of trees that are no longer here.

President Jonathan Brand:

I mean, it was really pretty traumatic and this was just as students were coming back to campus. So thank you for the question, Dr. Dungy.

M. Munley:

All right. Thank you. So I realize there are more questions, but I also just glance down at the time and see that we're about it an hour and are so grateful for all of you joining us tonight for your questions. I

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apologize to those of you whose questions we were not able to get to, but in the interest of respecting your time, obviously we're going to... I want to draw this to a close here, but there are certainly plenty of opportunities to stay engaged with Cornell, and we hope you do in many ways beyond tonight, all calls. So to wrap things up, I'm going to toss it first to our provost. Provost Crawford, the floor is yours.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

Thank you so much for calling in tonight. It was great to get a chance to hear your questions and talk to everyone. Just as we're looking towards commencement and beyond, just a reminder that we have a block nine and a block 10 this year. So we have been experimenting with summer classes. We've got 135 students registered for summer classes that will be online.

Provost Ilene Crawford '92:

So it gets a little bit back to John's question earlier tonight about ways that we're looking to extend the Cornell experience to an online one. So that will give students an opportunity to continue to be with us off campus and doing work and other things that they want to engage in this summer. But also continue their Cornell experience and take some courses with us. So we're looking forward to a busy summer. Once we get past commencement and I will toss it over to president Brand to say a final farewell.

President Jonathan Brand:

I'll make it quick. Thank you everyone. It is. I love having these all calls when we can be together and answer questions and encourage you as you can start coming back to campus. And I hope you can see we are on a really good path right now and I encourage you to, stay in touch and to pay it to see what's happening and to jump in and join us.

President Jonathan Brand:

I mean, we've got lots of things we're doing. And as I said at the beginning, I think schools that are really going to have their brightest futures are the ones where the alumni and friends are jumping in and inspired to participate in the life of the college. So thank you really a thrill for us to have this time together.