



SCHOLARS' CONVOCATION

Grinnell's Strategic Horizon



Strategic Thinking & Action as Institutional Habits

- A Shared Understanding that Strategy is not the same as Operational Effectiveness (which focuses on efficiency, cost, price, etc.)
- Awareness of the external and internal landscape
- Communication of critical and relevant issues and data
- Leadership orientation to a Strategic Outlook
- Execution of Strategic Plan priorities
- Facilitation of strategic conversations
- Skill development
- Commitment to delivering and demonstrating results
- Foundation in accountability and celebration

Four Essentials of Strategy

1. Having a clear Direction of Travel – going several ways at once “create[s] confusion and undermine[s] organizational motivation and focus” while also blurring uniqueness
2. Making choices – choosing what NOT to do (This OR That, i.e. not Both)
3. Deepening position – being distinctive; integrating and connecting many successful activities; communicating institutional identity better internally and externally
4. Strong leadership willing to make choices

Source: Michael E. Porter, “What is Strategy?” Harvard Business Review | *10 Must Reads on Strategy*

The External Landscape

Social: Aggression (immigrants, identities, Constitution), Collapse of (trust in) institutions, Media and Social Media, social isolation, fear

Technological: Rise of AI (coursework, research, entry level knowledge work)

Economic: Tariffs, Trade Wars, Shifting Work Force (unemployment, under employment, expectations), Withdrawal of government support for research and college access

Environmental: Climate Change, Escalating Inequality, Public Infrastructure, Global Conflict

Political: Attacks on Higher Education (DEI, research, international students, etc), Unprecedented Executive Action, Discourse of Vindictiveness, Chaotic Global Position, Ideological Divide

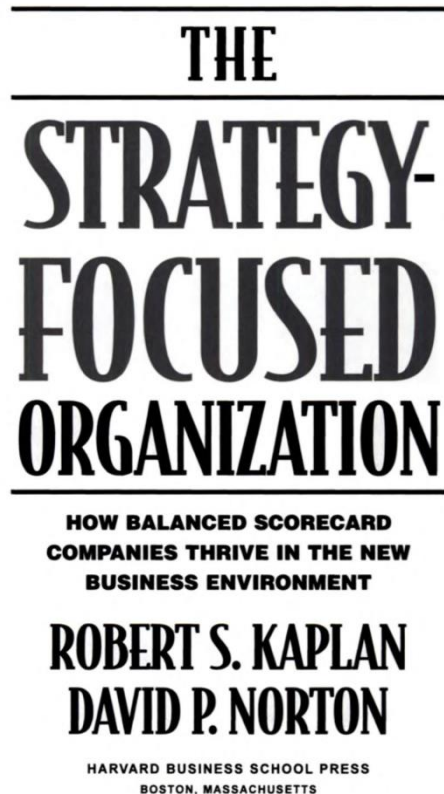
Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy

1. Peer and other U.S. colleges and universities; universities in the English-speaking world outside of the U.S. (e.g. UK and Canada) **[existing competitors]**
2. Students and families **[bargaining power of buyers]**
3. External actors | suppliers: donors; federal and state governments; vendors; the state of "politics" and the "economy" **[bargaining power of suppliers]**
4. New institutions and modes of delivery; Artificial Intelligence **[threat of new entrants]**
5. Alternative credentials **[threat of substitute products or services]**

The strongest competitive force is the most important to strategy formulation. Which of these is strongest for Grinnell?

Source: Michael E. Porter, "The Five Competitive Forces that Shape Strategy" Harvard Business Review | *10 Must Reads on Strategy*

The Internal Landscape



*Only **5%** of employees understand their company's strategy
(**95%** of employees do not understand it)*

***9** out of **10** organizations fail to execute their strategic plan*

Why does this happen at institutions?

Strategy is often top down, confusing, poorly communicated, and perceived as inconsequential to the daily lives and work of faculty, staff, and students. There is weak or no awareness of a shared strategic vision or set of common priorities.

Strategic Thinking is the most exciting thing about strategic planning. Lots of people want to join in. Perspective and ideas come from every corner of the College. No expertise in strategy is required.

Strategic Building is tedious and less immediately satisfying. Leaders and champions need to be identified, selected, and rewarded. Individual capacity for strategy needs to be developed.

Strategic Action is time consuming, requires resources, demands focus and accountability, and assumes faith that there will be a pay off in the future. Operational structures need to be flexible.

Implementing Change at a strategic level requires execution that integrates multiple initiatives into the lives of faculty, staff, and students across the institution.

Crisis Lurching diverts attention and drains energy away from strategy, replacing the urgency of long-term thinking with the immediacy (and satisfaction) of resolving today's challenges

A photograph of a Grinnell College campus. In the background is a large, multi-story red brick building with many windows. In the foreground, four students are dancing on a green lawn. One student is wearing a rainbow shirt and a yellow beanie, another is wearing a black shirt and a purple skirt, and a third is wearing a blue shirt and light blue pants. The fourth student is partially visible. The text "KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR GRINNELL COLLEGE, 2023-2030" is overlaid in white, sans-serif, all-caps font across the center of the image.

KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR GRINNELL COLLEGE, 2023-2030

VISION

That the College be an agent of civic trust, moving knowledge into action for a more just and equitable society.

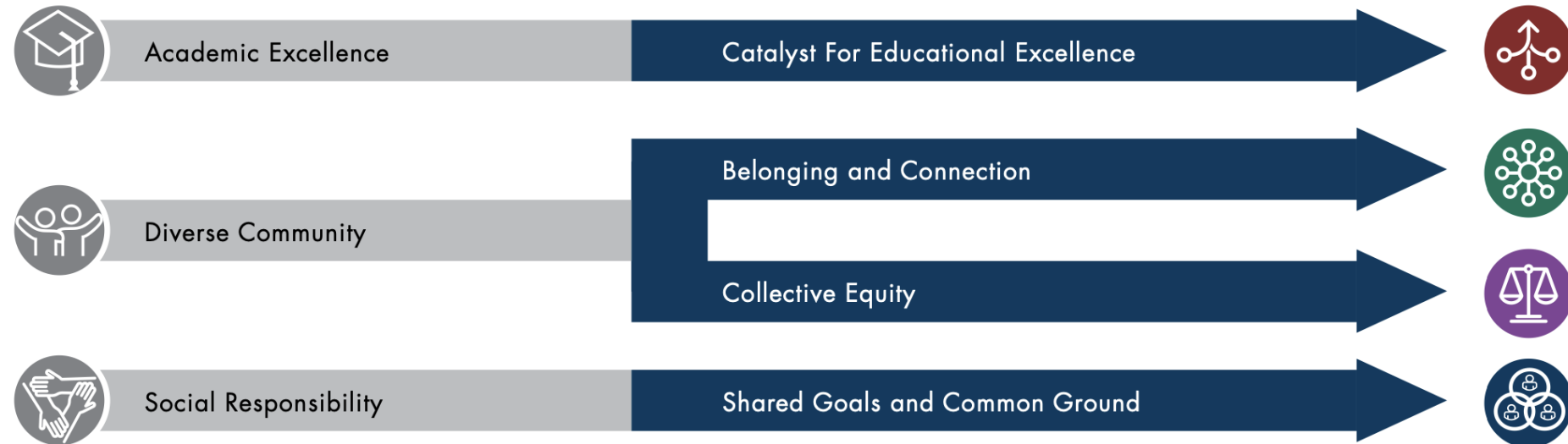
How the mission drives the vision



Moving knowledge into action for a more just and equitable society

VALUES

Educational excellence, diverse community, and social responsibility



KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION

A STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR GRINNELL COLLEGE
2023–2030

AY 2025-26 actions

- Faculty workload
- Culture of recognition
- Planning for sustainable enrollment and student success
- The intersection of CERA (Conard Environmental Research Area), Environmental Studies, and climate change

CATALYST FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Enhancing Academic Advising
Supporting High-Impact Practices
Staff Development
Diversity in Admission

COLLECTIVE EQUITY

Aligning Educational Excellence
and Technology
Reducing Endowment Dependence (RED)
Cultural Centers
Equitable Interventions

BELONGING AND CONNECTION

Reinventing the Residential Experience
Athletic Culture and Identity

SHARED GOALS AND COMMON GROUND

Community-Building through
Renfrow Hall
Mapping Community Partnerships

2023-2025
On-Going
Initiatives

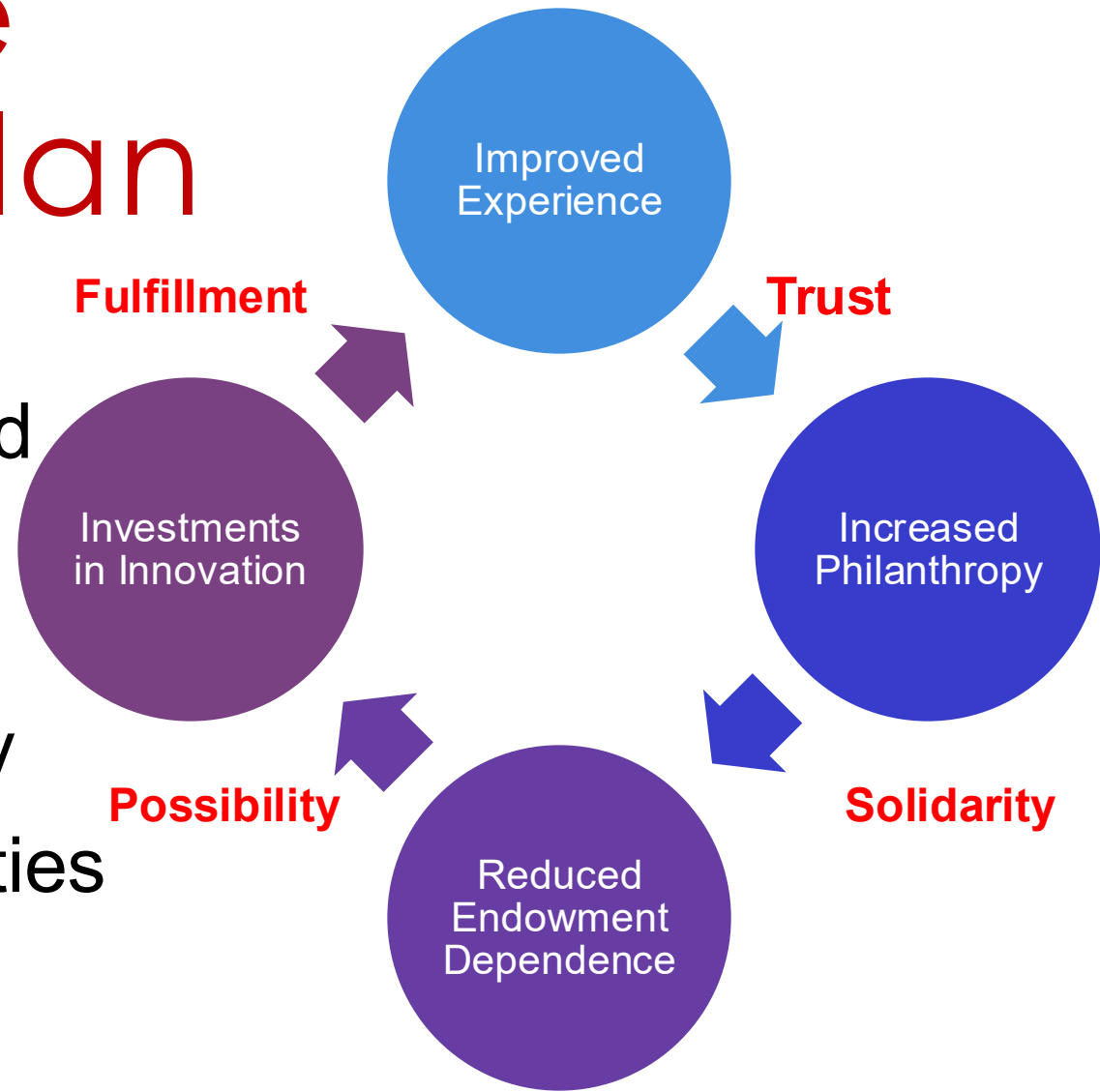
For detailed updates, please visit:



grinnell.edu/strategicplan

The virtuous cycle of the strategic plan

- Create more equitable outcomes and positive experiences
- Safeguard inter-generational equity
- Ensure financial health and solvency
- Enable investment in strategic priorities



Philanthropy

Philanthropy remains **THE** critical opportunity for Grinnell College

- As indicator of positive/improving experience
- As engagement of alumni, friends, and foundations
- As driver of financial sustainability, support for mission and endowment
- As challenge to overcome to be competitive with our peers

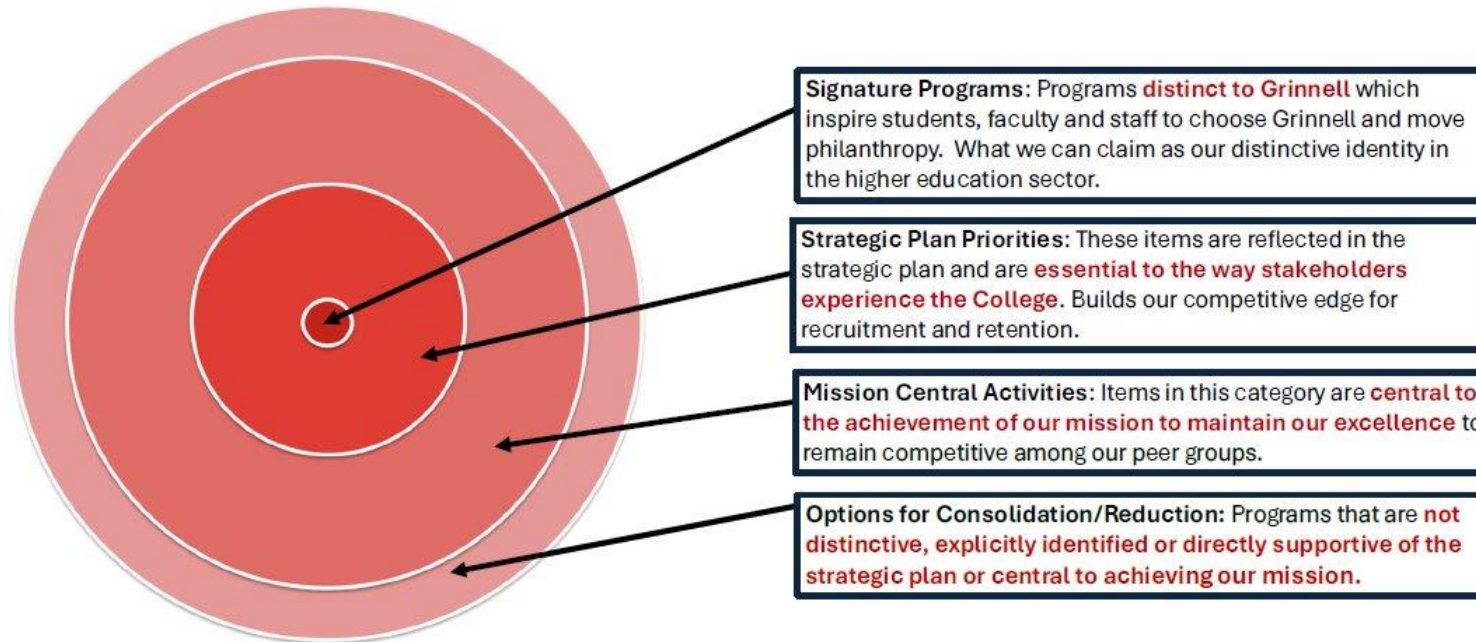
Focus on next two years:

- Connections to strategic plan
- Campaign preparation
- Donor/trustee cultivation
- Faculty, staff, student participation
- Strategy for private foundations



FRAMEWORK FOR THE WORK AHEAD

Financial Sustainability Framework



Towards a Sustainable Future

- Continue to accumulate \$10M in cost-savings and revenue by FY34 (marathon not a sprint)
- Building on the \$5M accumulated thus far

Financial Sustainability Decision-Making Framework

- Maintaining and evolving our outstanding academic programs and high-impact practices
- Sustaining our financial aid (need-blind, no loan, and meeting 100% of demonstrated need)
- Increasing philanthropy
- Providing competitive wages and benefits
- Acting on initiatives in *Knowledge into Action*
- Ensuring long-term financial sustainability

Enrollment and Persistence



Sustainable enrollment in volatile conditions

- Address domestic student decline
- Protect international student engagement
- New marketing campaign (Simpson Scarborough)
- Work through demographic cliff, economic downturn, and socio-political situations
- Government relations on issues that impact the College
- Weingart Civic Innovation Pavilion in Renfrow Hall

Institutional responses supporting operational responses

- Meeting and fostering curricular interests
- Global Grinnell + CLS (Careers, Life, and Service)
- H.I.P.S. (high impact practices – AAC&U acronym)
- G-CORE (Grinnell College Residential Experience)
- RSVP (Retention Student Success, Validation and Progression) - pilot for first-year students

Addressing Workload/Work-Rest Balance

Focus on Students

- Continue to deepen the residential experience
- Further connections with alumni
- Articulate academic well-being

Focus on Faculty

- Continue to lift the administrative burden
- Discuss governance and workload dynamic
- Continue conversion of term to tenure lines

Focus on Staff

- Centralize processes for clarity
- Study workspaces for coordination
- Discern process efficiencies for ease of work



Academic Experience and Leadership

Academic Experience

- AI at Grinnell College
- Thriving enrollments across the divisions
- Continue faculty discussions/retreats on liberal arts
- Fundraise for endowed chairs
- Continue to learn from findings of the Higher Learning Commission Academic Advising Quality Initiative work
- Civic education and innovation @ Weingart Civic Innovation Pavilion in Renfrow Hall and beyond
 - e.g. Social Innovator in Residence; Map the System

Leadership

- Thought leadership: op-eds and media appearances
- Sustain research in light of impact on grants
- Use partnerships to advocate for Grinnell (College/IA)



Institutional Priorities and Imperatives

- ✓ **Strategic Plan**, “Knowledge into Action”
- ✓ **Financial Sustainability Framework**: Signature Programs, Strategic Plan Priorities, Mission Central Activities, Options for Consolidation/Reduction
- ✓ **Response Groups**: Academic Mission; Iowa and Federal Legislative Landscape; Financial; Endowment Tax
- ✓ **Campus Forums**: FERPA and Student Information; Academic Freedom and Free Expression; Immigration; Americans with Disabilities; Title IX and Title VI
- ✓ **Scenario Planning** to champion the Academic Mission

Activating Strategy at Grinnell

- Making **Strategy a Habit**
- Responding to external, **Competitive Forces**
- Sharing a High-level **Strategic Outlook**
- Selecting a Limited Number of **Annual Objectives**
- Defining **Goals** and **Assigning Priorities**
- Generating **Transformative Ideas**
- Building and Executing **Initiatives** with Strategic Clarity
- Ongoing **Communication** and **Consultation**

A large group of students is sitting on a green lawn in front of a multi-story red brick building with arched windows and doorways. The students are arranged in several small groups, some sitting in a circle. The building has a classic collegiate architectural style with dormer windows on the roof. A semi-transparent white banner with the text "THANK YOU!" is overlaid across the middle of the image.

THANK YOU!



DISCUSSION

What will most contribute to student thriving?

What is your highest priority for change?

What is your top priority for philanthropy?

Where are you "bumping into" the strategic plan?