



Cornell University®

Search for the Provost
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY

THE SEARCH

Cornell University seeks a distinguished academic and strategic leader to serve as its next provost at a key moment in the institution's history. The provost, as the chief academic and budgetary officer of the institution, will be charged with advancing impact and academic excellence into the future, leveraging Cornell's distinctive institutional character and its organizational structure that maximizes opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Cornell is a close-knit community of scholars, educators, students, and staff with a set of cherished founding principles; world-class research; and curricula dedicated to influencing students to be well-educated, thoughtful citizens of the world. It is unique among its Ivy League peers as a private university with a land grant mission and several New York State supported colleges. Over the last decade, Cornell has further enhanced its academic distinction by expanding external research expenditures by nearly fifty percent and greater collaboration across the university, as the "One Cornell" initiative helped launch high-impact interdisciplinary programs spanning several academic units in Ithaca and New York City.

In the midst of this great momentum, Cornell also faces many challenges present across higher education, with the weight of increased financial pressures, an increasingly polarized climate, and escalating questions about the role of American higher education in our society. Despite these challenges, Cornell has stayed true to its founding mission and core values. The next provost will play a critical role in navigating these challenges and preserving community with thoughtful dialogue while charting a course to continue the positive momentum of the university's academic enterprise.

The successful provost candidate will have significant administrative leadership experience, familiarity with academic budgeting and planning processes, and the capacity for strategic and well-informed risk-taking. Consistent with Cornell's culture, the next provost will be a collaborative leader committed to the importance of disciplinary strength across the arts, humanities, engineering, social sciences, and sciences. The provost will also support "radical collaborations" and innovative inter- and multi-disciplinary efforts,

which have fueled the university's preeminence. Experience overseeing a complex organization and a sophisticated understanding of financial and operational drivers of performance in a research university is critical.

The next provost will demonstrate an uncompromising commitment to academic excellence and impeccable academic judgment, an unwavering ethical compass, and a commitment to diversity in all its forms. They will bring strategic and entrepreneurial leadership, a global outlook, and an effective and enthusiastic approach to outreach and communication with the university's internal and external communities.

Cornell University has retained Isaacson, Miller to assist with this important recruitment. The search committee is charged with considering candidates who have leadership experience within Cornell University. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

THE ROLE OF THE PROVOST

The provost reports directly to Cornell's president and is a key member of the president's leadership team, working closely with the president, vice presidents, and the other senior officers to ensure the highest academic standards and manage Cornell's resources. As the chief academic officer and intellectual community builder, the provost is broadly responsible for teaching, learning, scholarship, and research across the university, including academic planning, budgeting, and academic facilities for all facets of the university, with the exception of Weill Cornell Medicine. While not having direct oversight of Weill Cornell Medicine, the provost works closely with the provost for medical affairs to foster collaboration and synergy with programs at Weill. The provost is also a key representative for Cornell, engaging external stakeholders in the work of the university through fundraising and building partnerships.

The provost is the leader of the deans and the schools and colleges, encouraging entrepreneurial activity and uniting them in shared aspirations and university-wide endeavors. The provost also ensures the highest academic standards are met in the recruitment, promotion, and retention of faculty.

Beyond the deans, the provost leads a large and diverse portfolio that advances Cornell's academic mission, overseeing the vice president for research and innovation; vice president for budget and planning; the deputy provost; vice provost for academic innovation; vice provost for external education and ECornell; vice provost for engagement and land-grant affairs; vice provost for undergraduate education; vice provost for international affairs; the dean and vice provost for Cornell Tech; the dean of the graduate school and vice provost for graduate education; vice provost for enrollment; university libraries; and the chief information officer for Ithaca and Cornell Tech.

As chief budget officer, the provost has significant fiscal responsibility and works closely with the chief financial officer to manage the academic budget in addition to operational and capital planning initiatives

in a modified responsibility centered management (RCM) system to ensure resource allocations optimally serve the institution's mission and priorities. Capital planning and expenditures are critical to the future of the university and must be carefully balanced with other strategic priorities. In this role, the provost also oversees the budgets of the colleges and schools and interacts with the respective deans and the senior leadership team to set university-wide priorities, link them to capital campaigns, and align administrative services with academic needs.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PROVOST

Provide strategic leadership and vision for the future of Cornell

The next provost will work with the president, senior leadership team, deans, faculty, staff, trustees, students, and alumni to shape a vision for Cornell's next chapter through Cornell's 2026 presidential transition and beyond. At a time when social issues and societal discourse have profoundly impacted higher education, the provost will need to be creative and adaptive in leading the university community with the goal of enhancing Cornell's distinction, academic excellence, international reputation, and commitment to innovation in teaching and learning at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The provost should be a highly visible academic leader who is firmly committed to shared governance, academic freedom, and respectful dialogue. The provost leads interactions with key faculty committees and must demonstrate deep intellectual curiosity and an appreciation for contributions across a wide array of fields. The provost also plays an important role as an external ambassador, an advocate for Cornell, and a visible and accessible leader to its many constituent groups.

Lead and support the deans and guide interdisciplinary collaboration

The provost convenes the strong cadre of deans regularly and promotes a team culture among them. The provost must understand the broad academic and financial consequences of major initiatives in each of the schools and colleges and provide oversight and guidance on the most consequential issues with honesty, clarity, and accuracy.

In addition, the provost will seize the recent momentum of collaborations with Weill Cornell Medicine, working closely with the provost for medical affairs to reduce barriers and find mutually beneficial partnerships that serve the university.

As an advocate for the university as a whole, the provost must lead the deans in building both their own distinguished enterprises and an ever stronger and more eminent university. The provost must have the intellectual breadth and curiosity to engage academic units across the disciplinary and professional spectrum, from the liberal arts to the sciences to the professions, and ensure that their plans are aligned with the overall university vision.

Strategically manage resources

The provost oversees a \$3.37 billion annual operating budget, working with the president, CFO, deans, and unit heads. The provost will be responsible for effectively connecting Cornell's resources to its academic missions and aspirations in a challenging financial landscape as the costs of recruiting talent, supporting research, and funding financial aid continue to rise. Cornell must continue to expand its efforts to reduce costs and create efficiencies across the university while identifying new ways to generate additional revenue in a manner consistent with its commitment to academic excellence.

Through the budget process, the provost will identify investible resources, including reallocations and careful choices of priorities. They may also assess the financial model's incentives and structures to ensure the model keeps pace with the evolution of the university's complex organizational structure. The provost will steward entrepreneurial initiatives aimed at generating new resources to support Cornell's ambitions and value input, transparency, and communication in budgetary decisions.

Support and advance the research mission

The provost will provide strong leadership to continue and enhance Cornell's cutting-edge research and scholarship across disciplines and fields. Working closely with the vice president for research and innovation, the provost will facilitate collaboration across the breadth of Cornell's academic enterprise. The provost will also lead efforts to review, promote, and support the advancement of infrastructure relevant to the research goals of the university, including information technologies, library resources, and classroom and laboratory facilities.

Recruit and retain an eminent faculty

In partnership with the deans, the provost plays an essential role in building the quality and reputation of Cornell's faculty, especially with regard to recruitment across schools and colleges and disciplinary boundaries with Cornell's Radical Collaboration initiative. The provost must demonstrate breadth and be able to recognize and assess scholarly eminence and high standards in teaching across disciplines, ensuring Cornell's faculty personnel processes are principled and rigorous.

Champion diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging

The next provost must be a leader in Cornell's long-held commitment to being an inclusive institution and fostering a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion across the entire community of students, faculty, and staff. The provost will be a vocal and energetic champion of the university's values, supporting diversity and inclusive excellence and efforts that continue to expand access and broad representation while also ensuring that structures and programs are in place to help all Cornell community members thrive. The

provost will support cross-university initiatives as well as efforts in each of the schools and colleges to launch and advance programs that support a diverse community flourishing.

QUALIFICATIONS AND STRENGTHS

The ideal candidate for provost will possess these essential qualifications and strengths:

- An uncompromising commitment to academic excellence, impeccable academic judgment, and academic credentials and experience that qualify for appointment as a full professor with tenure in one or more of Cornell's schools.
- A strategic and entrepreneurial leader with a proven ability to advance Cornell's commitment to innovative understanding and discovery while serving as a close partner to the president and a key member of the university's senior leadership team.
- An interdisciplinary thinker committed to realizing Cornell's unique opportunities to advance the integration of knowledge through collaborative activities across traditional scholarly and institutional boundaries.
- Strong management, planning, and financial skills; an astute understanding of university finances and resource allocation; and the ability to manage competing priorities.
- The ability to make difficult decisions, coupled with courtesy and a delicate touch. Demonstrated ability to address challenges with a positive, constructive outlook.
- A clear commitment to undergraduate and graduate education with a commitment to innovative teaching, student success, wellness, and outcomes.
- An accessible and empathetic administrator with the ability to manage a broad and diverse workforce and recognize and value contributions across diverse disciplines and varied staff and faculty roles.
- A commitment to diversity in its broadest sense with evidence of being eager and able to lead, recruit, retain, and support a diverse and eminent faculty, student body, and staff.
- An articulate, enthusiastic, and effective communicator with the highest aspirations for Cornell's standing and reputation and the ability to inspire and engage others to support the vision for the university through philanthropy and other means.
- A steadfast and unwavering ethical compass.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent to Isaacson, Miller via email to kmcphe dran@imsearch.com.

Kate Barry, Partner
Karen McPhedran, Managing Associate
Isaacson, Miller

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Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, and we do not tolerate discrimination based on any protected characteristic, including race, ethnic or national origin, citizenship and immigration status, color, sex/gender, pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions, age, creed, religion, actual or perceived disability (including persons associated with such a person), arrest and/or conviction record, military or veteran status, sexual orientation, gender expression and/or identity, an individual's genetic information, domestic violence victim status, familial status, marital status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local law. We also recognize a lawful preference in employment practices for Native Americans living on or near Indian reservations in accordance with applicable law.

Cornell University embraces diversity and seeks candidates who will contribute to a climate that supports students, faculty, and staff to all identities and backgrounds. We strongly encourage individuals from underrepresented and/or marginalized identities to apply.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1865, Cornell holds true to its founding principles, including Ezra Cornell’s ambition to “found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study.” Its faculty and students believe in the critical importance of knowledge—both theoretical and applied—as a means of improving the human condition and solving the world’s problems. It embraces traditional liberal arts education, the practical applications of knowledge, and interdisciplinary and collaborative approaches to research and teaching. It champions free and open intellectual expression, and academic freedom, treats all individuals with dignity and respect, celebrates difference and diversity of viewpoints and social identities, and promotes accessibility.

Today, Cornell consists of 16 schools and colleges. Across the main Ithaca campus, the Weill Cornell Medicine campuses in New York City and Qatar, Cornell Tech in New York City, and Cornell AgriTech in Geneva, NY, the University enrolls over 16,000 undergraduates and over 10,000 graduate and professional students. Twenty percent of these students are international in origin, representing over 130 countries. Cornell has more than 250,000 alumni around the globe who contribute to the university through volunteerism, advocacy, and financial support. Cornell employs approximately 8,700 staff, 1,700 professorial faculty members, 1,300 research, teaching, and extension faculty in Ithaca and at Cornell Tech, and an additional 5,000 staff and 1,600 faculty members at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City. Cornell also oversees the Cornell Cooperative Extension System, which has full-time staff in every county of New York state.

Cornell’s FY25 operating budget is approximately \$6.4 billion, of which 52 percent supports the Ithaca campus, and 48 percent supports Weill Cornell Medical College. The University’s investment portfolio was valued at just over \$10 billion as of fall 2023. New York State provides direct funding of approximately \$137 million a year, as well as other substantial support for the contract colleges, which also function as part of the State University of New York. Cornell expects to receive over \$1.1 billion in sponsored research funding, of which \$506 million will support research on the Ithaca campus and \$588 million at Weill Cornell Medicine.

The university’s research enterprise has historically been among the best in the world and has been on a particularly impressive trajectory in recent years, capitalizing on an institutional culture that truly values interdisciplinary collaborations to fuel discovery and scholarship to improve the lives of individuals and communities at home and around the world. Over 150 research centers and institutes play important roles in helping academic units recruit and retain outstanding faculty, maintain state-of-the-art infrastructure, catalyze cutting-edge, multidisciplinary research and academic programs, and serve as springboards for partnerships. These span the physical, natural, applied, social, and biomedical sciences, engineering, and the arts and humanities. Together, they further the university’s instructional, research, and public service missions in ways that push the boundaries of traditional academic structures.