



AMBITION AND OPPORTUNITY

Strategic Vision For
Columbia Arts and Sciences



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Arts and Sciences

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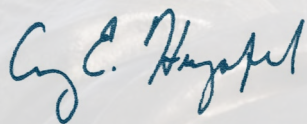
MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

The Arts and Sciences Strategic Vision is a framework to guide the essential teaching and research at the heart of our academic mission. The culmination of more than a year of engagement with over 200 of our faculty members, our strategic vision embodies the ideas, aspirations, and excitement of our community to build on our remarkable legacy of educational and scholarly achievement, and to magnify our impact over the next five years.

Our strategic vision is anchored by five overarching priorities, each supported by a set of related goals and strategies shaped by key insights from our visioning discussions and grounded in our fundamental values. Guided by our strategic vision, we will pursue hard questions across disciplines. We will seek new ways to support student and faculty success. We will continue to build the foundations of human knowledge and drive understanding of our complex society. And we will accelerate our reach and impact in frontier areas of science, as we have done for centuries.

As we seize these new opportunities, we will also foster improvements to our operations, and lead in areas fundamental to who we are. We thank the many faculty who contributed their time and ideas to the vision. Their commitment to our students, and the pathbreaking teaching and research we are known for throughout the world, is the bedrock upon which this vision stands and from which the Arts and Sciences will continue to thrive in the years ahead.

Yours,



Amy E. Hungerford
Dean and Executive Vice President
Faculty of Arts and Sciences

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

OUR MISSION

Columbia Arts & Sciences' mission is to pursue research and teaching at the highest level of ambition in a broad range of fields, in the context of an intergenerational and international community rooted in the city of New York.

OUR VISION

We seek to build the foundations of human knowledge and form people who will learn and innovate for their whole lives, in service to the world's communities.

OUR FUNDAMENTAL VALUES AND COMMITMENTS

- Always center our work in our core mission
- Fulfill our role as a great university by pursuing goals that transcend the current moment
- Attract and cultivate talent from the broadest range of human communities
- Compete tenaciously where it counts most
- Attend to the well-being of our people
- Reflect the value of community through spaces fit for use
- Steward our resources to serve our highest priorities
- Constantly learn and evolve, as we have for centuries

STRATEGIC VISION OVERVIEW

Two Cross-Cutting Fundamentals

We will seek and achieve operational excellence

We will lead with academic freedom, civil discourse,
and effective shared governance



Five Overarching Priorities

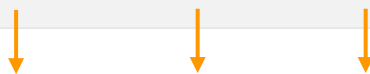
1. Pursue hard questions affecting multiple disciplines

2. Invest in students' experience

3. Build the foundations of human knowledge

4. Drive understanding of society
through new approaches

5. Prioritize frontier areas of science
where Columbia can lead



Supporting Strategies

Our strategies for achieving the five priorities will evolve over time and include a variety of initiatives, programs, and interdisciplinary collaborations

KEY INSIGHTS

Five areas of distinctive strength were identified by faculty during our strategic visioning discussions, presenting new opportunities for growth and ambition

- **RESEARCH EXCELLENCE:** A&S has exceptional research capacity; we should advance it further in cross-cutting areas and locate it more centrally in undergraduate education.
- **STUDENT EXPERIENCE:** Our undergraduate and graduate programs are best-in-class and attract exceptional students. We must continue to innovate in key areas to offer an even higher level of student experience.
- **GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT:** Columbia is a global institution in a global city. We must connect our students' education to their aspirations in life; connect our research to global and local challenges; and leverage our strengths in languages and the arts to engage global thought and culture.
- **OUTWARD LOOKING:** We have a long history of public figures in the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and arts who speak broadly to society. Our influence in the public sphere should be celebrated and extended.
- **SERVICE TO THE WORLD:** We must lead in remaking the relationship between higher education and society – to build trust, solve problems that matter, and contribute to a better world.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY #1

Prioritize the Pursuit of Hard Questions Affecting Multiple Disciplines and Global Issues

GOAL: We will prioritize the hard questions within and across our disciplines, to enable new breakthroughs and to better understand the world's complexity.

STRATEGIES

- Encourage and support ambitious grant and fellowship proposals to bring resources and raise the profile of faculty and students' most impactful ideas.
- Build a culture of mentorship in which students and scholars are supported to take the risk of pursuing truly ambitious projects.
- Seek opportunities for cluster and area-specific hiring that would power major intellectual work.
- Collaborate with foundations, industry and government programs in areas where a consensus is building to address hard questions
- Strategically use seed funding, fellowships, and visitor positions to foster new ideas
- Collaborate with centers, institutes, departments and schools to create competitive funding opportunities to support both major projects; prioritize seed funding for cutting edge ideas.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. How do organisms change their environment; how does environment change organisms?
2. How can we revitalize civil discourse, democratic governance, and the bonds of community over time, and at distances both close and far?
3. What is the fundamental composition of the universe? How can new understandings be harnessed to create new possibilities?
4. In a time of ever-more-available data and more sophisticated correlation analysis, how can causation be studied at scale and across subjects?
5. How can our scholarship across disciplines contribute to a more peaceful world and reduce global conflict?
6. How can we best equip people to learn across their whole lives? Are there insights from neuroscience, cognitive science, and psychology, from history, literature, and the arts that should be guiding us?

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY #2

Invest in Students' Experience in Educational Programs to Make These the Best of Their Kind

GOAL: We will launch new initiatives to ensure Columbia's long tradition of excellence in liberal arts education is stronger than ever, meets the needs of today's students, and prepares them for careers of the future.

STRATEGIES

- Transform undergraduate offerings in our largest majors to drive improvements at scale.
- Create a Computer Science Learning Center in collaboration with SEAS.
- Increase connections between students and faculty early in undergraduate programs and in Masters' programs. Develop a series of creative capstones and MA theses that connect students to each other and the world and build post-graduation skills.
- Significantly invest in the campus infrastructure for our educational mission and social connection.
- Reimagine PhD programs in a changed environment.
- Identify new topics and programs of high interest to students and prioritize faculty recruitments to support these.
- Develop new tools to better understand student perspectives on learning and professional advancement; reimagine advising to ensure their continued growth.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE



Large Majors Pilot Initiative

Launched in Fall 2024, the Large Majors Pilot Initiative invites A&S departments and programs that serve students in our largest majors to undertake a two-year transformation of their undergraduate offerings, with a focus on improving key elements of the undergraduate experience.

A student's major is central to their Columbia experience; it shapes their academic trajectory, provides an important sense of belonging, and deepens their connections to our faculty and alumni.

Through the Large Majors Pilot Initiative, participating departments will identify innovative ways to enhance their majors. This includes designing an integrated undergraduate offering that will strengthen student-faculty relationships earlier, improve opportunities for mentorship, allow students to cultivate more research experiences within the context of their coursework, foster greater social and intellectual community, and connect students to alumni in their majors to build peer and professional networks.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY #3

Build the Foundations of Human Knowledge to Form People Who Will Learn Their Entire Lives

GOAL: We will lift up the humanities in new ways: learning from the past, the unfamiliar, from writing and the arts, to form people who will learn and innovate for their whole lives.

STRATEGIES

- Embrace the Core Curriculum as a defining strength of Columbia, made even more relevant to our students through ongoing evolution and faculty investment.
- Look to NYC for new or enhanced collaborations with the greatest and most innovative cultural institutions.
- Writing is at the heart of intellectual and cultural work. Undertake a new assessment of undergraduate writing instruction, especially in the face of generative AI.
- What is the task of human creativity? Bring the critical and the creative closer together through innovative programs across schools and units.
- Study the role of language multiplicity, language learning, cultural archives, and translation (by both machines and people) in today's world to create a modern strategy and identify priority areas for both research excellence and students' educational formation in the humanities and beyond.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE



Elevating Less Commonly Taught Languages

The study of languages – their origins, traditions, literatures, and cultures – is a long-standing strength of the Arts and Sciences. Students can take classes in more than 50 languages, including well-known languages spoken around the world, and less commonly taught languages that are nevertheless sources of vibrant, enduring culture, living history, and illuminating scholarship.

Two language programs – Tibetan and Yiddish – are models for how language instruction at Columbia can create life-changing experiences for our students, connecting the past to the present while allowing access to important historical archives. The Tibetan Language Program – the first to include a focus on Modern Tibet – integrates the study of language, religion, history, and philosophy, spanning multiple disciplines, departments, and linguistic traditions. The Yiddish Language Program uses the laboratory of New York City to teach students about Yiddish art, culture and history through an innovative pedagogy, digital tools, and extensive exploration of historic sites in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Both are among the most recognized programs in the country and reflect our commitment to elevate language instruction in critical but understudied areas of scholarship and student interest.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY #4

Drive Understanding of Society with New Approaches for an Increasingly Complex World

GOAL: We will bring new approaches to the study of our interconnected world – leveraging our historic strengths in social science research and education to deepen understanding of our society.

STRATEGIES

- Build on strength of research institutes and centers to bring their cross-cutting, outward-looking approaches more centrally into research, education, and faculty and graduate-student recruitment.
- Build our faculty strength in Causal Inference to revolutionize our understanding of the interplay between cause and effect, for the benefit of discovery, policymaking and the social good.
- Establish a frontier program connecting the study of climate change with economics, to position Columbia as a leader in understanding climate-related impacts on human society and their potential solutions.
- Bring questions of social belonging more deeply into social sciences' remit with innovative social-science-based Asian American Initiative that builds on Columbia's long-term eminence in the study of Asia and its global diaspora.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVES

Asian American Initiative

The Asian American Initiative (AAI) will stimulate new evidenced-based research and interdisciplinary dialogue on the experiences of Asian Americans in the United States. Among its elements, AAI will include a new research institute to anchor Asian American Studies at Columbia, new faculty and courses, new research grants and student internships, high-profile speakers, and public-facing programs and partnerships. Leading with data and research, AAI aims to reshape public perceptions of Asian Americans and make the narratives of Asian Americans central to our understanding of America.



Trust Collaboratory

As a new interdisciplinary center within the Incite Institute at Columbia, the Trust Collaboratory is one of the first institutions in the nation dedicated to illuminating the social dynamics of trust. In 2024, it launched the Listening Tables, a campaign to create new forms of dialogue and understanding on Columbia's campus – by bringing together students, faculty, and staff to talk, listen, and engage in challenging discussions with openness and mutual respect.

Social Study of Disappearance Lab

The Social Study of Disappearance Lab unites students, faculty, and collaborators in a collective effort to understand the social, political, and economic dimensions of the forced disappearance of people around the world, with a particular focus on Mexico. Using the tools of research, digital ethnography, and historical analysis, the lab seeks to deepen understanding of disappeared people, inform public policy, and support impacted communities.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

In view of the enormous challenges and opportunities presented by artificial intelligence within higher education and society more broadly, Arts and Sciences has created a new position – Vice Dean for AI Initiatives – to coordinate our efforts around this transformative technology.

A growing array of initiatives will shape our AI strategy and approach in the coming years, led by inaugural Vice Dean Matthew Connelly. These efforts include:

- New courses and curricular innovation to support students in learning how to use AI ethically and effectively – to keep Columbia at the forefront in preparing undergraduate students to be leaders and citizens in an AI-saturated world;
- New research on how students are using and engaging AI in the classroom, with an initial focus on Columbia’s Core Curriculum, as well as new research on the ethics and effectiveness of using generative AI in higher education;
- A new collaboration with the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science on “AI and Society” that will include a new interdisciplinary course and new research on understanding the future of AI in our society.
- Active participation in new University-wide efforts, such as Empire AI and other important collaborations.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY #5

Accelerate our Reach and Impact in Areas of Science Where Columbia Can Innovate and Lead

GOAL: We will leverage our eminence in the sciences to pursue new interdisciplinary projects, expand collaborations in the New York City area, and build the infrastructure to enable new scientific discovery

STRATEGIES

- Leverage our historic strengths in biology, chemistry, and earth and environmental sciences to build a new interdisciplinary focus on biochemistry, genomics, ecology and climate.
- Look beyond A&S to fuel basic science through collaborations with the most innovative applied fields rooted and arising in the NYC science community.
- Transform key spaces and seed key projects for science that will move us forward beyond the single investigator—core facilities; cross-school institutes; center grants.
- Launch a broad-based, A&S-led initiative on computation, data, and machine learning in the basic sciences.
- Develop seed grants for high-risk, high-reward ideas at early stages of research.
- Complete the last mile of our investments in quantum physics.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE



Science of the Future

In 2025, a newly renovated Arts and Sciences core facility will open to faculty and researchers across the University. The Precision Biomolecular Characterization Facility (PBCF) will provide a range of cutting-edge equipment and instruments, including a new high-precision microscope, to enable new advances in biophysical and biochemical research and spur new discoveries into the structure and behavior of some of the smallest components of life. It is a model for the kind of ambitious science we will pursue through shared facilities, advanced technology, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

CROSS-CUTTING FUNDAMENTALS

TOOL #1

Lead With Academic Freedom, Shared Governance, Civil Discourse, and Mutual Understanding

STRATEGIES

- Sustain a curriculum and research program that engages our own history and values (Slavery Seminar, SHIFT study, “History of the Present” seminars, and other areas).
- Bring shared governance to the next level: revitalize engagement with the Senate; cultivate newer Policy and Planning Committee functions; build department chairs as a body of elected leaders; cultivate faculty partnership in resource decisions.
- Develop structures to help us learn from, and work with, those we disagree with.
- Review existing governance committees; consider where they should evolve.
- Contribute to the university in new ways through the renewed presence of A&S leaders in university leadership settings.
- Thoughtfully consider work-load, representativeness, redundancy, and ideal size for all committees.

CROSS-CUTTING FUNDAMENTALS

TOOL #2

Foster Operational Excellence to Support Research and Learning

STRATEGIES

- Reimagine administrative support structures to improve delivery of services and establish new training opportunities for administrators around budgetary and hiring practices.
- Launch a new effort to identify operational efficiencies within departments through annual meetings with chairs, focused on data-driven analysis of instructional and curricular work, graduate mentoring, monitoring, and adjustment.
- Establish a new grants support office to provide more centralized guidance, best practices, and support to faculty and departments seeking large-scale government and foundation grants.
- Explore areas where centralization of functions could realize efficiencies, lower costs, and reduce bottlenecks.
- Partner with University leadership to reimagine the budget model supporting A&S, internally and within the university.

IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

In keeping with our two cross-cutting fundamentals, implementation will succeed best as a partnership between Arts and Sciences faculty governance and decanal leadership.

STRATEGIES

- Identify “owners” for each priority, tasked with planning a coordinated effort to develop and advance strategies for making progress over time.
- In partnership with faculty leadership, develop and prioritize the first strategies for progress.
- Create timelines and a rhythm of reporting to the faculty on progress and initiatives arising from these priorities.
- Mount programming and communications to raise the profile of the work in the five priorities and two fundamental areas, and to attract new partners.
- Use the priorities to guide and focus fundraising strategies.
- Use the priorities routinely in moments of significant decision-making within A&S, to maintain focus on the important as well as the urgent, in times of constraint and in times of plenty.

TIMELINE





 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Arts and Sciences