

# A Shared Vision For Our Future

**President Cornwell reflects on the College's new strategic framework, the initial instances of its implementation, and the power of a shared direction.**

**Q: Why are you such a proponent of the strategic planning process?**

**A:** Strategic planning boils down to one thing and that's getting better. First, we want to get better at delivering on the promises of our mission. In our mission statement, we promise to provide students with a liberal arts education that equips them to become global citizens and responsible leaders who are empowered to have meaningful lives and productive careers. That's a very robust set of promises. We do very well at delivering on those promises, but we can always do better. In very specific ways, what should we be doing differently to better equip our students to be global citizens? What should we be doing differently to help them have productive careers? The plan includes a number of initiatives that are designed to yield better outcomes for our students. The second meaning of getting better is becoming more competitive in a fiercely competitive market. We want to have, and be seen as having, an even higher value proposition than we already do. Any strategic initiative should achieve both those things. It should make us better at delivering on our promises, and it should make us more competitive for the best students.

**Q: You were very intentional about including the entire college community in this effort. Why was that important?**

**A:** I don't believe a college can retain a confidence and an enthusiasm about its future from top-down leadership. My job is to harness the ideas and energy of the faculty, staff, alumni, trustees,

and students to craft a common vision of our future. The reason the process was so inclusive, so complex, and so transparent is because I really do believe in the power of crowdsourcing. Our community came up with better ideas than I ever could have sitting in my office. It is also critical that our entire community shares a common vision. We can't make real progress if there are competing visions, if we haven't worked out an understanding of the values, mission, and aspirations for the college, because then we're working in different directions and people don't feel like they're part of a common enterprise. Actually, the most powerful thing about having a shared direction is everyone feels like they're part of a common project—that's more powerful than the actual things that you do.

**Q: In June, we saw the first wave of the strategic framework go into effect with a large-scale reorganization of campus. What were the proceeds of that endeavor?**

**A:** This gives me a lot of hope for Rollins, because there is not a resistance to change here. Instead, there is an eagerness to build momentum and forward progress. Over a long weekend, 67 people moved their offices. That sounds a little crazy. Why did we do that? Because in the process of our research and listening, we realized that we had several work units operating in silos. It was simply inefficient, and it was frustrating to students, staff, and faculty. This mass migration enabled us to create interdisciplinary work units where people working toward a

common goal could bring together their different expertise through co-location. So, for example, all of our co-curricular programs in community engagement, civic engagement, and service learning were housed in the Mills building. Meanwhile, the Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship Hub was located across campus, and in another space all together, we had this really dynamic major, social entrepreneurship and business. By co-locating this academic program with these co-curricular programs in Mills, we've created this hive of activity and innovation. Now, all of these people who are working towards similar goals and want to engage students in the same kind of learning are working side by side. It's very interesting because all of those programs are focused on creating the conditions for social innovation, and by bringing them together we have created the conditions for innovation within the programs themselves. It's very cool, actually.

**Q: What's next?**

**A:** The strategic framework outlines nearly 50 initiatives, and many of those are already under way. But I don't see strategic planning as an episodic process. I see it as a continuous process. We've started something that isn't going to stop. As soon as we implement initiatives, we will be testing their effectiveness, measuring their impact, and changing direction if necessary. Before too long, I'll be asking the community again, 'What didn't we do? What else is out there that we need to pay attention to?'

## Making Tomorrow Happen

"I think it is important to remain mindful that our work here together is a social investment into the future, not just of our students, but of global civil society. This is why we are gathered here. It is why Rollins College was founded in 1885 and why it exists today. Though we have a variety of roles in this undertaking, we are each here to engage in this noble work."  
— President Cornwell, addressing first-year students and the larger Rollins community at Convocation. Read the full address at [rollins.edu/2017convocation](http://rollins.edu/2017convocation).