

Strategic Plan 2025

A statement of
purpose and a
decision-making
framework through
2030



Josef Korbel School of
Global and Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Frederick S. Pardee Institute
for International Futures

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Executive Summary

At the [Pardee Institute for International Futures](#), we support a global community that tackles today's most consequential issues—from climate and conflict to development and inequality. Through our data, tools, and analysis, we strive to advance the missions of our collaborators and partners in addressing these global challenges, **guided by values of interconnectedness, curiosity, and transparency**. Those same values anchor our long-term vision: **to build a more knowable future**.

We conduct research that looks to our past to learn about our future, where new knowledge drives informed decisions. **We believe that applying an understanding of enduring long-term trends leads to smarter policy decisions and more effective planning**. This perspective grounds our mission and underscores the value we aim to deliver.

This past year marked the conclusion of our last five-year strategic plan, released in 2020, prompting a revisit and refresh of our strategic plan. A renewed and focused collective sense of purpose emerged from those efforts, initiated earlier this year, and forms the foundation of our 2025 Strategic Plan, which will guide us over the next five years.

We entered this planning cycle by returning to core questions: What is our purpose? Who do we serve? How do we know we are making an impact? These reflections helped us strengthen our value system and build a framework to deliver our mission and achieve our vision amid uncertainty.

The new plan builds on the foundation of our [2020 strategy](#), honoring the continuing core of the Institute and staying rooted in what makes our work distinctive and useful, while adapting to a more dynamic framework. Four high-level, interdependent goals form the pillars of our 2025 Strategic Plan. They focus on the accessibility, rigor, utility, and visibility of our work to inspire deeper engagement with those who share our vision. These goals are broad by design, mission-aligned, and built to adapt. These goals serve not just as benchmarks but as milestones for growth and purpose.

With this plan, we look ahead to the next five years with clarity, aligning our purpose, practices, and partnerships with core values to help global leaders navigate complexity and make informed, future-focused decisions.

Pardee Institute 2025 Strategic Plan

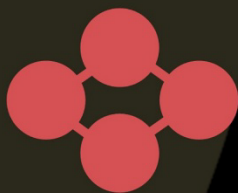
MISSION

To understand the long-term dynamics of durability and change using an open-source, integrated macrosystems approach to develop data, tools, and strategies for people seeking understanding about the global future

VISION

A more knowable future

VALUES



Interconnectedness

Bringing together ideas and people to build knowledge



Curiosity

Pursuing ideas and knowledge with empathy and initiative



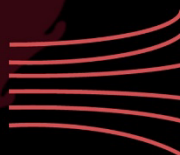
Transparency

Openness in approach and open access to the long-term future

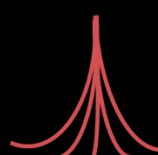
GOALS



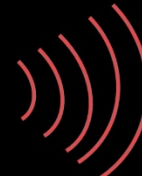
Prepare the next generation of our International Futures modeling platform



Push the frontiers of academic knowledge



Deepen relationships with policy communities



Strategically and effectively communicate our story



Josef Korbel School of
Global and Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

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for International Futures

Introduction

Our motivation

The University of Denver (DU) updates its strategic plan every five years, and our academic home within DU, the Josef Korbel School of Global and Public Affairs, follows suit. We revisit our plan in lockstep with the DU community. While the University's efforts set the cadence for our strategic planning, our primary aims drive our participation in this exercise. As in past cycles, we aim to reflect on our work and purpose, build internal consensus on our future direction, and develop a decision-making framework that keeps us on course.

This is also more than a routine planning cycle—it is an inflection point: this cycle marks a crucial phase in our organization's growth, characterized by maturity, reflection, and a renewed organizational identity, as well as a revitalized commitment to our collective sense of purpose. It is an opportunity to adopt an agile plan that adapts to a complex and changing environment while guiding decision-making in line with our long-term aspirations.

At the Pardee Institute, we often think about certainties and uncertainties in the longer term, filling in the universe of what is knowable to illuminate pathways for progress. Much like how the durability of long-term trends helps build understanding of paths to navigate future uncertainty, a solid strategic plan offers similar contours for decision-making. When done right, a strategic plan offers “eye on the prize” affirmative directional guidance that:

- Steers decision-making in directions that move us closer to where we want to be;
- Helps galvanize our collaborators and others in our community;
- Helps us adapt to change and navigate challenges and opportunities with purpose and consistency; and
- Aligns our day-to-day actions with long-term aspirations.

Our approach: distillation for direction

This planning process was an exercise in distillation—boiling down complex sets of ideas into a practical and purposeful plan. Every word in our 2025 mission, vision, and values earned its place, leaving only the essentials that sharpen focus and set direction.

As a team, we entered this planning cycle by returning to core questions: What is our purpose? Who do we serve? How do we know we are making an impact? These reflections helped us strengthen our value system and build a framework to deliver our mission and achieve our vision amid uncertainty.

CRITERIA

📌 Identity as the foundation for shaping our strategy

To surface and elevate elements central to our collective identity, we set criteria to focus on a message that is:

- **Relevant** | Reflects current conditions, goals, and challenges
- **Aligned** | Achieves vertical and horizontal organizational alignment
- **Authentic** | Is honest and specific to who we are
- **Actionable** | Offers guidance and direction
- **Meaningful** | Resonates and rallies

📌 A purpose rooted in identity

During group discussions on our collective identity, a secondary list of criteria, or “filters,” emerged to help identify a shared purpose that would guide our future direction:

- **Anchor** directions and impacts within our expertise and our control
- **Elevate** what makes us distinctive and how we add value
- **Lead** with honesty about our limits and with conviction about our potential
- **Choose** phrasing and framing that build a throughline across all three branches of our core research areas.
- **Streamline** language to ensure all messaging is purposeful and accessible
- **Connect** the plan’s components to a broader narrative for cohesion and consistency

APPROACH

This strategic plan emerged from a highly iterative process that included:

- A teamwide evaluation of our progress against our organizational goals and subgoals from the [past strategic planning cycle](#)
- Through prework, asking staff to identify, in their own words, the Institute’s “end goal” and to articulate how their role drives it
- Three teamwide workshops to generate ideas for mission, vision, values, and goals
- Use of digital collaboration tools to solicit and refine ideas through group work
- Internal-to-Pardee leadership discussions of findings and applying them to shape all core components of our 2025 strategic plan
- Strategic planning alignment conversations with the Korbel leadership

We set our strategic direction through a mixed-method, collaborative approach designed to surface a broad range of insights while creating space for clarity, alignment, and cohesion. We began by developing a comprehensive collection of ideas, then narrowed our focus using the [“distillation” criteria](#) presented earlier.

Workshops played a key role in this process, encouraging inclusive participation, fostering cross-functional dialogue, and strengthening team alignment around shared priorities. They enriched the quality of input and gave employees meaningful ownership in shaping our future direction.

Digital collaboration tools complemented these sessions by enabling anonymous contributions and allowing time for thoughtful reflection, capturing ideas that might not emerge in real-time conversations.

Finally, direct and regular engagement with leadership, both within Pardee and with the Korbel School leadership, was critical for refining our narrative, ensuring a shared understanding of our identity, developing strategic goals and priorities from these efforts, and reinforcing our long-term strategic commitments.

This plan builds on the foundation laid in 2020

Beginning in March 2019, the Pardee Institute, then known as the Pardee Center, undertook a comprehensive, first-of-its-kind strategic plan for DU’s 2020 Strategic Planning initiative. The 2019-2020 effort aimed to address questions about the Center’s maturing identity and evolving research agenda, as well as processes for organizational effectiveness and assurance of a robust future for our signature International Futures modeling platform. Co-led by Pardee Center Senior Advisor Janet Dickson and Center Director Jonathan Moyer, this effort yielded a unified, comprehensive strategic plan for the Center, rooted in a shared understanding of our core identity and goals.

Fast forward to 2025, and the core of who we are remains the same. This finding echoed throughout every discussion among contributors, comprising both veterans of Pardee and relative newcomers, who voiced their views on our shared purpose and collective identity. The spirit and sentiment of our [2020 strategic plan](#) often carried over in their answers. This consistency suggests organizational alignment on this fundamental piece of strategic planning.

Returning to core identity themes from our original plan both begs a certain level of fidelity to it in this cycle and eliminates the need for comprehensive, end-to-end identity development through strategic analyses that supported the 2019 effort. We have achieved a level of organizational maturity where we recognize our strengths and weaknesses and can look back on our storied history to anticipate the potential

opportunities and threats that we might face. We understand our core competencies and where we fit within the broader communities of researchers occupying similar spaces.

Maintaining a strong collective sense of who we are allows us to leverage the [2019-2020 foundational work](#) to reflect on and adapt to current opportunities and constraints. This current 2025 effort involved a participatory approach to evaluating and adjusting our 2020 baseline to ensure our new plan remains grounded in:

- Our identity: Who we are **now** (our mission, vision, and values)
- Our “big picture”: Where are we trying to go **now** (our vision)?
- Our goals and priorities: How do we get there?

Our history

These questions about our current identity, purpose, and priorities are deeply embedded in the fabric of our institutional history. The Pardee Institute for International Futures is built on over 45 years of innovative research in global modeling. What began as an academic modeling effort by Dr. Barry Hughes at Case Western Reserve University in the 1970s has evolved into an institute for long-term strategic analysis built upon lasting relationships with global and domestic partners.

OUR FOUNDING AND EARLY YEARS: 1980 TO 2011

In 1980, Dr. Hughes brought his global model to what is today’s Josef Korbel School of Global and Public Affairs, where the [International Futures \(IFs\) system](#) continues to mature and expand.

A key turning point emerged in the early 2000s with the formation of a partnership between Dr. Hughes and Frederick S. Pardee following an initial meeting at RAND in Santa Monica. The partnership led to the establishment of the Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures at the Graduate School of International Studies – soon renamed to the Josef Korbel School – in 2006. The creation of the Pardee Center institutionalized Dr. Hughes’s life’s work and initiated a period of significant enhancements to the IFs system.

Over its first five years, with funding from Mr. Pardee, the Center focused on model development. It published a five-volume series called *Patterns of Potential Human Progress*, using the enhanced IFs system to address five global challenges: reducing poverty, advancing education, improving health, building infrastructure, and strengthening governance.

OUR EXPANSION: 2011 TO 2023

From 2011 to 2023, the Pardee Center experienced a decade of growth, marked by an expanding portfolio of policy-relevant research and deepening strategic partnerships.

Through initiatives like the [Global Trends Reports](#) with the U.S. National Intelligence Council, the [Minerva Research Initiative](#) with the Department of Defense, and the [Diplometrics Project](#), the Center addressed issues ranging from political instability to geopolitical power dynamics.

Its collaboration with the Institute for Security Studies and the African Union Development Agency on the African Futures Project during this period helped inform long-term strategic planning across the African continent. The Center also worked with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women on analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), assisting member countries in forecasting progress toward SDG targets. Additionally, it partnered with Action Against Hunger to model the global burdens of Severe Acute Malnutrition in children under five.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Center collaborated with the Inter-American Development Bank and PricewaterhouseCoopers to explore development trends and challenges like the “middle-income trap.” Work with the U.S. Army Future Studies Group provided support for U.S. military foresight, while USAID regional collaborations informed development strategies in countries like Uganda, Ethiopia, Guatemala, and Honduras. These projects, often resulting in joint reports, policy briefs, and peer-reviewed publications, showcased the Center’s ability to bridge rigorous academic research with real-world policy impacts, paving the way for future expansion.

OUR EVOLUTION: 2023 AND ONWARD

In October 2023, recognizing our organizational growth and expanding contributions to the University of Denver’s research efforts, we were officially designated as an Institute, a title conferred to the University’s leading research organizations.

Looking ahead, the foundation of our work remains the IFs system. This open-source, integrated assessment model enables policymakers, researchers, and the public to engage in strategic thinking about global development challenges. Mr. Pardee’s early investment made DU the institutional home of IFs. Now, with nearly \$10 million in new contributions from Mr. Pardee’s estate since 2020, we are well-positioned to grow our portfolio of tools, datasets, and applications, and to strengthen the policy relevance and real-world impact of our expanding body of work. These gifts demand timely, deliberate, and strategic investment, emphasizing the importance of leveraging the 2025 strategic planning mandate to maximize its effect.

Through Mr. Pardee's largesse, we also receive annual endowment support, in addition to continued institutional support from the Korbel School. With an operating budget that exceeds our research expenditures, these additional investments in our infrastructure and capacity enable us to operate as a standalone, mission-driven organization, not defined by a singular partnership or project, but rather by the entirety of our body of work.

From this legacy, and through enduring financial support, we continue to mature as an organization, steady in our pursuit of research excellence and operational discipline to support effective data-driven policy strategies and long-term thinking. We view this trajectory as both a validation of our model and a roadmap for continued growth, always with a focus on delivering strategic insights for a more prepared future.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Introduction

A THREE-LEGGED STOOL FRAMEWORK

In our view, effective mission statements are built upon an organization's core values and steer its day-to-day activities toward its long-term vision. These three components (mission, values, and vision) are both essential and interdependent. Just like a physical three-legged stool, if one leg is missing or weak, the structure becomes unstable and may collapse. Each "leg" in this strategic framework represents a critical pillar that supports the whole.

2025 Values

|| **Interconnectedness** | Bringing together ideas and people to build knowledge

Curiosity | Pursuing ideas and knowledge with empathy and initiative

Transparency | Openness in approach and open access to the long-term future

Our values form the bedrock of our collective identity, upon which we build our strategic direction. They define the core beliefs, ideals, and standards that shape our culture and govern our work. They serve as guiding principles for aligning our actions and decisions with our mission and vision. When rooted in an honest reflection of our collective identity, values not only inspire but also anchor strategy authentically and sustainably:

Our 2025 values build directly on the [foundation laid in 2020](#), with refinements to reflect our continued evolution. **Interconnectedness**, [a value identified in 2020](#), remains unchanged, reaffirming its central role in how we view systems, relationships, and impact.

Curiosity replaces "understanding," a [2020 value](#), sharpening our focus on the importance of context, perspective, and human-centered insight. As a global organization, our work must resonate both globally and locally. This value shift highlights the importance of pairing data with lived experience and perspective, especially when forming policy strategies, to drive meaningful outcomes.

We've also updated "integrity," a [2020 value](#), to **Transparency**, elevating what makes us distinct by emphasizing the open and accessible nature of our tools, data, and methods. While honesty and trustworthiness remain core to who we are and were defining attributes of the [2020 version of this value](#), transparency elevates our commitment to openness and accountability in a world that increasingly demands it.

Far from redefining who we are, these updates bring greater focus to the principles that continue to guide how we work and serve.

2025 Mission

|| To understand the long-term dynamics of durability and change using an open-source, integrated macrosystems approach to develop data, tools, and strategies for people seeking understanding about the global future.

To develop this statement, we drew on widely accepted components of public-service-oriented missions. We aim to bring prominence to **what we do**, **who we do it for**, and **why we are doing it**.

Beyond those components, and consistent with our approach to all elements of our strategic direction, we applied criteria specific to our identity and purpose, as described in [Our Approach](#), to guide the mission-building efforts detailed in this section.

WHAT WE DO

The first part of our mission statement focuses on what we do, specifically, what makes our approach rigorous and unmatched.

EMPIRICALLY GROUNDED IMAGINATION – BETWEEN FORESIGHT AND FORECASTING

There's more than one way to look ahead, though most research tends to fall into two camps: foresight and forecasting. Forecasting focuses on using quantitative models to project what is likely to happen, often using rigorous, data-driven models that estimate probabilities and account for uncertainty. But these methods can't fully capture the complexity of human behavior or the unpredictable nature of open systems. Those who practice foresight accept uncertainty, but they use it as a tool to explore alternative

futures through stories, collaboration, and shared understanding. By imagining what could be, they help shape what eventually becomes possible.

At the Pardee Institute, we work at the intersection of these approaches. We creatively imagine and answer “What if?” questions about our world. Our work sits somewhere in between the strict empiricism, systems thinking, and creativity that define these disciplines. We build long-term, integrated forecasts that recognize the deep uncertainty of the future while still acknowledging that some outcomes are more likely than others. We don’t claim to predict the future, but we do aim to build understanding—to provide the most empirically grounded view we can of how global systems might evolve over time. Our International Futures (IFs) model brings together data, system dynamics, and human insight to explore “aggressive but reasonable” scenarios—futures that are both possible and plausible.

We share the foresight community’s respect for narrative and the integrated assessment modeling (IAM) community’s commitment to rigorous modeling, integrating practices from both fields into our research. What’s more, we do this across more interconnected macro issue areas than any other. That’s what makes the Pardee Institute’s approach globally distinct. Our work bridges disciplines, methods, and philosophies—linking the empirical and the theoretical—to help decision-makers understand not just what could happen, but what is most likely to unfold, and how we might shape it for the better.

OUR TOOLS

We are an interdisciplinary research institute that is housed within academia. We host [International Futures \(IFs\)](#), the only open-source integrated assessment platform and forecasting tool that, in combination, (a) uses a hybrid approach of systems dynamics, econometrics, and other quantitative techniques; (b) incorporates and leverages over 5,000 historical series to analyze and forecast hundreds of interconnected, macro-level variables across human, social, and natural systems; (c) includes forecasts for 188 countries in one-year time steps from 2022 through the end of this century and beyond.

IFs forecasts across 11 dynamically connected submodules: agriculture, demographics, economics, education, energy, environment, governance, health, human development, infrastructure, and international relations. By integrating these systems, IFs can simulate how changes in one system may ripple through all systems.

We believe that the true value of models lies not in predicting outcomes, but in shaping how we think about and understand the future. Long-term integrated models help us identify and analyze the fundamental forces driving change over the coming decades. They also provide a structured way to navigate uncertainty, allowing scenario-based

analysis that informs forward-looking policy decisions and facilitates more resilient planning.

By including historical data series from 1960 onwards, we can examine past trends to anchor our understanding of our current trajectory, of how human, social, and environmental systems interact over time, and of how we think about and address the “grand challenges” awaiting the global community. This is at the core of our approach to **building a more knowable future**.

We also seek to better understand and measure bilateral and multilateral state relationships by gathering data, building analytical tools, and conducting analysis. This area of our research identifies international interactions that measure the depth and breadth of political, diplomatic, economic, security, and cultural ties between countries. Parts of this workstream are integrated with IFs, while others stand alone as entirely separate datasets and tools.

OUR APPROACH

Our research approach is grounded in empirical evidence. It is designed to study the structural drivers of change and durability, particularly in the context of development, climate change, and international relations. We are committed to **transparency** because we believe in democratizing access to knowledge about the long-term future, making it available to everyone, not hidden behind paywalls or other barriers to understanding. We recognize that the complexity of our model presents practical barriers to entry, and this plan aims to address some of them.

In addition to access, **transparency** supports a core tenet of academic rigor: reproducibility. This openness enables broader scrutiny, collaboration, and application across both scientific and policy communities, reinforcing the credibility and utility of our work.

We build scenarios grounded in an understanding of the **interconnectedness** among the relationships represented in our model. This sets us apart from others in the field: IFs forecasts are integrated across various issues, rather than focusing on each issue in isolation. Additionally, we can broaden or narrow our long-term forecasts to encompass global, regional, and country-level perspectives.

We have three **interconnected** research workstreams: **development analysis** (also called sustainable development), geopolitical analysis, and **model development**. Through development analysis, we model scenarios across a range of cross-cutting issue areas, including education, health, infrastructure, and poverty. Likewise, geopolitics is heavily influenced by interconnected systems and intersecting levels of analysis, which are reflected in our data building and scenario work, including how development trends

may affect national power and influence. Our work enhancing the IFs model, which involves both substantive subject-area model development and user-related systems development, powers these research activities.

We evaluate policy alternatives in a world where resources are constrained and policy objectives sometimes conflict. We develop policy strategies that are grounded in this reality, guided by **curiosity** (a core value) about experiences and impacts, and shaped by the needs and perspectives of those we serve and their constituencies.

WHO WE SERVE

Since our founding, individuals and organizations looking to build understanding about the future have consistently turned to us for our data, tools, and strategic insights. IFs is designed to help users understand dynamics within and across global systems and to think systematically about potential trends, development goals, and targets. **People invested in our global future are at the heart of who we serve.**

We wrote about this in our [2020 mission statement](#), identifying “policymakers, academics, and others seeking to improve the ways we contemplate and plan for the global future” as our core group of stakeholders. Our 2025 mission statement streamlines the language while expanding our reach to all people who approach decision-making with a forward-looking mindset.

WHY WE DO IT

With IFs, we aim to enhance the mental models that underpin pivotal decisions influencing sustainable human and social development worldwide. We support a global community tackling today’s most consequential issues—from climate and conflict to development and security. Through our data, tools, and analysis, we aim to amplify the missions of our collaborators and partners who address these challenges.

Aside from our targeted collaborations with intergovernmental organizations, governments, nonprofits, and others in our sponsored research portfolio, we also use our discretionary funds—provided by Mr. Pardee’s generosity and a separate research flowback revenue stream—to expand and enhance our research and tools that are accessible to the general public. While academics and policymakers play key roles on the front lines in shaping our future, they are not the only ones who are invested in it. With IFs, we offer any forward-thinking individual actionable knowledge to help influence future global, long-term outcomes.

2025 Vision

|| A more knowable future

To develop our vision statement, we considered widely accepted components of public-service-oriented vision statements: **where we want to be in the future, what will be different about that future, and how we will know when we have arrived**. We generated ideas to fit these components and applied additional [criteria](#) for distillation.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

We conduct research that looks to our past to learn about our future, where planning, action, and decision-making are driven by knowledge. While this aligns with [our 2020 vision](#) of “increased knowledge for future wellbeing,” it reflects a significant evolution. We’ve shifted the focus from knowledge-building alone to fostering **a deeper commitment to thinking and acting with the future in mind**.

In refining our vision—and in alignment with our core value of **transparency**—we’ve brought greater clarity to our sphere of influence: empowering people to use knowledge with intention. This means understanding the likely **interconnected** outcomes that follow from action and approaching them with **curiosity** about direct and downstream impacts. It’s a more focused expression of our outlook—one rooted in purpose, responsibility, and awareness.

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT

Our core work—developing data, tools, and analysis—builds knowledge that drives decisions and outcomes. It equips people with knowledge that we hope enables **more intentional** action today and more effective planning for tomorrow. The consistency of long-term trends reinforces a critical point: there are elements of the future that we can anticipate and prepare for. These dependable trends provide structure and clarity, offering guardrails and illumination as we navigate possible future paths.

HOW WE WILL KNOW WHEN WE ARRIVE

While we aspire to improve human wellbeing, the open-source nature of our work means we can’t dictate how our insights are applied. What we can observe—and measure—is **engagement with our work**, which signals a readiness to act on the knowledge we’re building. This is where our impact begins.

Strategic goals

Introduction

At the Pardee Institute, **our commitment to building a more knowable future is not just a vision; it's a mandate embedded in how we operate and in the values we share.** We fulfill our mission by supporting a global network of individuals and institutions seeking deeper insight into the forces shaping our collective future. Expanding our footprint within this community—and increasing the accessibility and impact of our work—is central to achieving that vision. This is our guiding principle.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS: A VALUE AND A STRATEGIC REALITY

In our approach to strategic planning, our mission and values define our purpose. Our strategic goals define our path. While our mission and values remain constant, our strategic goals are dynamic—time-bound, outcome-driven, and designed to translate aspiration into action. They serve as the engine that powers progress from purpose toward realizing our vision.

Four priority themes emerged from the exercises that guided this strategic planning cycle. They are: (1) the IFs model and its user community; (2) academic leadership; (3) policy engagement; and (4) knowledge sharing. Together, they form the essential scaffolding for building focused strategic goals.

Just as our mission, vision, and values are **interconnected**, so too are our strategic goals. Each goal reinforces the others. Together, they form a cohesive framework, interdependent and essential, consistent with our earlier three-legged stool metaphor, like the four legs of a table. Remove one, and the structure weakens. For example, policy engagement relies on academic excellence, the usability and usefulness of IFs, and knowledge of our research as a resource. Likewise, academic excellence hinges on the strength of our model, lending it credibility and inviting knowledge sharing.

Each strategic goal is essential, and collectively they make sure our work reaches and supports those tackling the greatest challenges of our time.

SUCCESS ON PAST PRIORITIES ENABLES PROGRESS ON FUTURE ONES

In our previous planning cycle, we prioritized organizational maturity by establishing strategic goals centered on foundational capabilities, including sustainable operations, business development, and institutional service. That work has paid off. Today, those

once-aspirational practices are embedded in our daily functioning, forming the operational backbone of the Institute.

As we look to 2030, we are not setting those priorities aside; we are standing on them. We now have the infrastructure, experience, and institutional grounding to treat activities such as talent development, programming, and sponsor relations not as ends in themselves, but as strategies to advance the higher-level goals outlined in this new plan.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OVER STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

We designed this strategic plan to sharpen our organizational focus, align our resources with purpose, and chart pathways toward our vision of a more informed and future-ready world. In line with a key motivation for this strategic planning cycle, **our 2025 Strategic Plan is a disciplined framework that connects clarity of purpose to action**, building agility for adaptive implementation in the face of inevitable volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.

For this planning cycle, we have intentionally chosen not to define a fixed set of strategic initiatives. Strategic goals articulate what we must achieve. They are durable, directional, and aligned with our mission. Strategic initiatives, by contrast, are the mechanisms through which we pursue those goals; they operationalize action from direction.

In place of initiatives, we focus on exploring known priority areas and potential activities within them that can advance our goals, while also leaving room for unanticipated and emerging fronts that may shape our future direction. This emphasis is intentional: by first focusing on our priorities and reaching agreement on how to advance them, we can then develop initiatives to operationalize them in ways that are actionable, targeted, and designed to meet the moment.

Goals overview

Goal 1 | Prepare the next generation of IFs

International Futures (IFs) is the beating heart of our institution; it underpins our founding and nearly all of our research, teaching, and engagement with global policy and academic communities. Its comprehensiveness sets us apart from others in the modeling community and anchors our institutional identity. In this cycle, we aim to expand our modeling capabilities and our ability to communicate assumptions and structure.

Engaging more users with IFs is essential to realizing our **vision of a more knowable future**. While IFs is designed to democratize access to the long-term future, we also

recognize that there are many areas where we can improve usability. It is **open-access** by virtue of being online, free of paywalls, and offering publicly available research results. However, the platform has a steep learning curve, which creates barriers to entry. Continuing to focus on removing these barriers through targeted, user-friendly enhancements helps us pursue our vision.

For the next generation of IFs, we aspire to **build more knowledge about the future across a broader range of areas that are increasingly critical to understand**, such as artificial intelligence and networks of interaction within the international system. Additionally, we will maintain our commitment to regularly update the model over time, providing a timely resource to students, researchers, members of the policy community, and the public. Enhancing the user experience is key, and we intend to create a more intuitive and engaging environment for analysts, including through online training courses. Ultimately, we aim to enhance our model calibration capabilities, thereby improving our understanding of how projections align with historical data and expanding our capacity to discuss uncertainty further into the future.

WHERE WE ARE

IFs is a cornerstone of the Pardee Institute's mission to explore, analyze, and communicate long-term dynamics of global change and durability. Over the past planning cycle, our team focused on both strengthening the platform's core systems and expanding its capabilities into new analytic territory.

Over the past five years, we have made extensive improvements across many areas of the model, including its platform, data quality, and capabilities. We have expanded our bilateral modeling by refining our trade, migration, and geopolitical models, which has led to new publication opportunities. We advanced model development by considering the effects of climate change over long-time horizons, incorporating both model structure enhancements and research output. Our education model expanded its schooling flow model to represent grade-by-grade enrollment and graduation, while also incorporating a representation of educational quality. We enhanced our economic model to better represent changes in capital, trade, and labor flows, allowing for more resistance to be included that slows equilibration processes. We added new representations of solar, wind, and geothermal energy to better understand patterns of sustainable energy development.

Together, these efforts form the foundation for building the next generation of IFs.

PLATFORM STABILIZATION AND MODERNIZATION

We **transitioned IFs codebase from Visual Basic to VB.NET**, a critical step to maintaining its long-term viability and moving to the eighth generation of model development. From there, we invested heavily in improving the platform's performance and reliability. We addressed multi-threading issues and improved computational efficiency through targeted performance enhancements. We made **numerous fixes to the Graphical User Interface (GUI)** and added a new session-clearing tool to streamline the user experience. We updated the Help system interface to make the platform more accessible and easier to navigate, especially for new users.

STRENGTHENING DATA AND SUBSTANTIVE MODEL COMPONENTS

To maintain alignment with current global conditions and best practices, we made **significant updates to the data backbone and core model structures**. We rebased economic values from 2011 to 2017 Constant Dollars, and we are in the process of updating them to 2021 dollars. We updated the full data library with new historical series and indicators across sectors. IFs growth projections now integrate poverty data from the World Bank's Poverty and Inequality Platform (PIP), using the new poverty limits corresponding to more recent dollar values.

EXPANDING MODELING FRONTIERS

↘ Bilateral forecasting

After nearly a decade of foundational work, **IFs now simulates bilateral country-to-country interactions**, enabling forecasts across more than 35,000 country-pair relationships annually in areas such as trade, aid, diplomacy, and geopolitical influence.

The bilateral model structure in IFs is unique among modeling efforts because it nests country-year development within a framework that dynamically relates each country's outcomes to those of other countries in discrete pairs. This feature advances our capacity to incorporate network characteristics into our modeling framework.

↘ Greater granularity in our energy module

In partnership with UNDP and Octopus Energy, the IFs energy module has been significantly enhanced. **Renewable energy, once modeled as a single category, is now disaggregated into hydro, solar, wind, and geothermal**. These sit alongside fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal) and nuclear energy in a fully integrated energy forecast framework.

This extension enables detailed analysis of different pathways in renewable energy transitions, investment needs, and technology-specific cost dynamics.

DOCUMENTATION AND TRANSPARENCY

As the model continues to grow in complexity and capability, so does the need for **clear, up-to-date documentation**. IFs serves three core audiences:

1. Power users/analysts who rely on IFs-based analysis
2. Casual users/explorers across the globe
3. Students who rely on the model as part of their studies

To meet their needs, we maintain two interrelated forms of documentation:

1. Model documentation, which is usually in charge of the modeler who designed/implemented the specific area
2. Interface documentation, which Research Aides usually maintain

We continue to bring documentation in line with the model's current structure, and this year, we made significant inroads by updating documentation of the economic model, which sits at the core of IFs' interactions.

📌 Wiki Modernization

To enhance the accessibility and coherence of IFs documentation, **we launched the Pardee Wiki Project to address outdated content and inconsistent style across the [International Futures Wiki page](#)**, an online repository of instructions, documentation, and notices for using IFs. This project is designed to improve the relevance, clarity, and usability of the IFs Wiki page for a diverse user base, including analysts, students, and casual users. This project promotes long-term transparency by ensuring that documentation evolves in tandem with the model. It also establishes a sustainable framework for future cohorts to maintain and expand the IFs Wiki page, reinforcing IFs as a transparent and accessible public good.

Other priorities include detailed documentation for newly developed bilateral models beyond trade and agriculture, particularly those related to nutrition and development policy.

📌 GitHub usability

GitHub is a central hub for website development—hosting issue tracking, version control, and shared repositories for core code, data tools, and related visualization or backend

utilities. Our GitHub group serves as the central hub for IFs development, used predominantly for:

1. **Version control** | It helps us keep track of all changes to our code, model, and GUI, so we know when and who made those changes.
2. **Issue tracking** | We also use it to document issues with our modeling and interface, and it helps us keep track of priorities and the team members involved.
3. **Sharing resources** | We share other non-IFs tools, such as our Network Diagram, which is [detailed in the following subsection](#).

Importantly, the documentation process itself has been improved: the procedures for generating and updating GitHub files are now streamlined and formally recorded, supporting long-term transparency and replicability.

USER-CENTERED DESIGN

📌 Flex display redesign for improved accessibility and transparency

The Flex Display in IFs is a flexible, customizable visualization and analysis tool that allows users to explore key variables and indicators across the model's modules. It is designed to help users:

- Graph and compare data across countries, regions, and time periods
- Enable flexible analysis of relationships, trends, and scenario outcomes within the model
- Access definitions and formulas tied to variables, helping users understand what each indicator measures and how it's calculated
- Analyze trends and relationships by selecting specific variables and viewing their historical and forecasted trajectories

We recently redesigned this tool to be more intuitive and aligned with other IFs components (like the Network Diagram), improving clarity for both expert users and newcomers. It also added new formulas and began integrating historical analogues to enhance the depth and usability of the data. Future work will assess the viability of historical data integration and continue aligning the Flex Display with other IFs tools.

📌 Enhancing transparency through the IFs network diagram

We enhanced the IFs Network Diagram to increase transparency and facilitate **a clearer understanding of the IFs model's complex internal logic**. This tool visualizes the relationships between variables and parameters across IFs modules, enabling users to trace causal pathways and explore system dynamics. These targeted improvements were

designed to help users navigate and interpret our models with greater confidence and insight.

Core objectives guided the effort, which included: enabling draggable nodes, distinguishing in-flows and out-flows, simplifying shortest-path analysis, resolving diagram bugs, improving the user interface, and fixing general issues. We met these objectives, adding several new features, including:

- Tooltips that display variable relationships and module segments,
- Advanced filtering and search options,
- Enhanced nearest-neighbor views, and
- A loading screen and exportable views for improved usability.

We are finalizing the code and documentation for the IFs network diagram, which the Pardee team will implement. Next steps include syncing variables with the Flex Display project, updating instructional content, and preparing for future enhancements with additional development support.

This priority enhances IFs as a transparent and user-friendly platform, supporting the Institute's commitment to **open and accessible modeling tools**.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

Through platform stabilization, model expansion, and commitment to transparent documentation, IFs has entered a new era. It is better at representing global complexity, more open to user exploration, and more trusted as a tool for policy and academic insight.

We remain committed to making IFs not only a leading platform for long-term global forecasting but also a public good that remains responsive to evolving needs and ready **to help shape more informed, inclusive, and sustainable futures**.

As we prepare IFs for the next era of policy insight and systems thinking, we must continue to evolve both our platform and our institutional strategy. Below, we highlight several strategic priorities to strengthen the tool's technical foundations, broaden its accessibility, and position **IFs as a resilient, future-ready resource for global forecasting**.

INTEGRATING GENERATIVE AI FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INSIGHT

📌 Prototyping

Generative AI presents a transformative opportunity to accelerate IFs development. Tools like GitHub Copilot can enhance productivity by reducing reliance on specialized coders

through rapid prototyping and structural experimentation. This lowers the barrier to entry for new developers and shortens the cycle from concept to implementation.

📌 Help systems

Importantly, we're embedding generative AI into the user experience itself. **AI-powered help systems will provide live, contextual guidance**, helping users understand model causality, variable relationships, and system dynamics through dynamic visual explanations. This shift would make IFs not just more powerful, but also more transparent and easier to teach, explore, and critique.

ENABLING NATURAL LANGUAGE INTERACTION WITH THE MODEL

By linking generative AI directly to IFs code and Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), we can dramatically broaden who can interact with the model. Analysts, students, and policymakers, regardless of coding background, could describe desired experiments or changes in natural language. **AI could translate user instructions into executable actions**, making the platform more inclusive and accelerating experimentation.

This priority seeks to shift from a specialized tool to a platform for exploration, allowing more people to interact directly with the system's structure and logic, and broadening the ways IFs can be used in teaching, research, and decision-making.

ASSESSING PLATFORM DISTRIBUTION

IFs is available in two formats: a desktop version for in-depth analysis and a web-based version for more basic analysis.

The web-based version broadens accessibility, enabling easier sharing, collaboration, and use in settings where security restrictions make installing the full version more difficult. The desktop application offers superior performance for power users.

As we modernize and expand our user base, we should carefully study engagement with these platform distribution models and pursue strategies that responsively direct our resources to both attract prospective users and support the needs and interests of our growing user community.

EXPANDING DEVELOPER CAPACITY AND MODERNIZING VETTING

We're actively growing our internal capacity by training a new generation of model developers—fellows, students, and staff—who can contribute to the platform's evolution.

At the same time, we're revisiting our vetting and quality assurance practices to improve the speed, reliability, and transparency of updates.

The goal is to support core developers with a stronger team and more transparent processes, enabling us to iterate faster while maintaining rigor and trust in model outputs.

MICROCERTIFICATIONS AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

We are developing microcertification programs to formalize engagement with IFs across campus and beyond. These short, focused credentials validate proficiency with the tool while **seeding a broader learning ecosystem**. They will also help faculty identify IFs-literate students for research and teaching roles, deepening integration with programs like those at DU's Korbel School.

Over time, these certifications could support global training programs and capacity-building efforts, thereby establishing IFs as a cornerstone in professional and academic communities worldwide.

DIVERSIFYING FUNDING AND OUTSIDE SUPPORT

To sustain these innovations, we must expand our funding strategy beyond traditional policy-oriented research grants. That means cultivating new relationships—with foundations, philanthropic organizations, and strategic partners—who recognize the value of IFs as a public good.

We consider dedicating staff time to developing this strategy and identifying funders with priorities aligned with ours, such as AI integration, platform migration, and open-access engagement tools. This is essential for **preserving IFs' independence, utility, and capacity to serve as a global forecasting and learning platform**.

CONCLUSION

IFs is already a world-class system for long-term scenario analysis. Progress along these fronts and emerging priority areas described above will ensure it also becomes a model of **accessibility, transparency**, and innovation. By updating our technology, growing our team, and expanding our reach, we will position IFs to meet the challenges of the next five years—and **empower a much broader community to shape the future**.

Goal 2 | Push the frontiers of academic knowledge

Advance the Pardee Institute's role as a global leader in future-oriented scholarship by advancing interdisciplinary research and expanding the Institute's academic and policy influence.

Grounded in systems-based science and anchored by the International Futures platform, the Institute should focus on areas where the IFs tool can add value to academic discourse within and across multiple disciplines. IFs was developed in an academic environment and it rests on decades of empirical research into the complex interactions within and across human, social, and natural systems. **This academic foundation has always been central to our mission, and it remains a strategic goal that endures.**

Strategic priorities include investing in research capacity, increasing scholarly output, fostering deeper intellectual partnerships across academic and scientific communities, and ensuring our work is both visible and valued within these communities. By embedding academic rigor into sponsored research and amplifying its presence in global forums, the Institute can shape discourse on long-term global trends and inform real-world decision-making.

This strategy is grounded in the belief that academic rigor and scenario-based modeling are mutually reinforcing. By bridging these domains, we not only elevate the relevance of our work but also **position the Institute as a first-call resource for scholars, educators, and institutions engaged in futures thinking and global systems analysis.**

WHERE WE ARE

Our [2020 strategic plan](#) outlined a series of subgoals to strengthen the Pardee Institute's reputation as a trusted authority in integrated assessment modeling and future-oriented scholarship. Those priorities remain as relevant today as they were then, and we're pleased to share some highlights from the scholarly strides our team has achieved over recent years, advancing global foresight while deepening our academic impact. Below is a curated overview of our top contributions, grounded in rigorous, interdisciplinary scholarship and rooted in the strength of the International Futures platform.

Over the past five years, we have published extensively, averaging 5.6 peer-reviewed publications per year. The outlets for these publications were largely Q1-ranked journals, including *Nature Climate Change*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *One Earth*, *World Development*, and *Scientific Reports*.

Below are examples of academic publications for each of the past five years:

- **2020** | Jonathan Moyer's and Steve Hedden's *World Development* article, "[Are we on the right path to achieve the sustainable development goals?](#)", was published in 2020 and has since been cited nearly 500 times.
- **2021** | The Institute's [Diplomatic Representation dataset](#), published in the Journal of Peace Research, became the first dataset from our Diplometrics research program to be formally introduced into the peer-reviewed literature.
- **2022** | A "big tent" collaboration between Jonathan D. Moyer, Willem Verhagen, Brendan Mapes, David K. Bohl, Yutang Xiong, Vivian Yang, Kaylin McNeil, José Solórzano, Mohammad Irfan, Cade Carter, and Barry B. Hughes, answering the question "[How many people is the COVID-19 pandemic pushing into poverty?](#)" in *PLoS*, has been cited nearly 60 times since its publication.
- **2023** | Jonathan Moyer's "[Blessed are the peacemakers: The future burden of intrastate conflict on poverty](#)" was published in *World Development*, Volume 165, cited 26 times to date. It has also fostered collaboration with international peace researchers, which will soon manifest in a forthcoming book chapter.
- **2024** | "[Sustainable Development Goal Attainment in the Wake of COVID-19: Simulating an Ambitious Policy Push](#)," authored by Taylor Hanna and others on the Institute's sustainable development team, was published in *Sustainability* and is an exemplar of translating sponsor-facing research into a peer-reviewed publication.
- **2025** | Pardee's long-running [Country and Organization Leader Travel project](#) made its academic debut with [an introductory article in *International Studies Quarterly*](#), a top international relations journal, and in a collaborative forum article in *International Studies Perspectives*.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

As we look ahead, our challenge and opportunity are not only to sustain this intellectual foundation of leadership but also to amplify and evolve it.

To achieve this, we are pursuing a strategy that invests in people, publications, and partnerships and places academic excellence at the center of our research and engagement model.

SCALE TALENT AND CAPACITY FOR ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

People are at the heart of this strategy. Advancing interdisciplinary futures scholarship requires **expanding our intellectual bench through deliberate investments in senior scientists, postdoctoral researchers, and faculty**. These individuals can bring both

disciplinary depth and cross-domain fluency and are critical to deepening our scholarly engagement with the questions that matter most in today's complex global environment.

Over the next five years, and following progress on other strategic priorities that would enable resourcing and further focus on talent development needs, we may prioritize new activities to strengthen our human resource base, such as:

- Hiring faculty and postdocs whose work aligns with key domains of IFs—climate systems, political transitions, technology, demography, energy, and global equity
- Freeing up internal research time for key staff to develop academic manuscripts, conceptual papers, and methodological contributions
- Rebalancing internal effort toward publications that extend the reach and recognition of our empirical modeling work across disciplinary communities

We recognize that academic output takes time and that funding structures often prioritize policy deliverables. Therefore, we will explore internal mechanisms—including the use of unrestricted or endowment-based resources—as well as untapped external sources to create protected time and space for scholarship.

GENERATE HIGH-IMPACT SCHOLARSHIP

We aim not just to increase output, but to **produce visible, field-shaping research that drives new conversations and methodological advances**. The power of IFs lies in its ability to integrate across domains—to simulate complex feedback systems over time—and we are uniquely positioned to publish in academic venues that value that systems lens.

Our academic strategy will focus on:

- Targeted submission to high-impact journals in fields such as development studies, political science, environmental science, public policy, demography, economics, and futures studies
- Embedded academic outputs in funded research projects, ensuring that our work in health, education, equity, and geopolitics doesn't end with policy reports but also yields contributions to scientific and academic discourse
- Development of foundational modeling papers, including methodological and technical deep dives into IFs submodules—e.g., economic growth dynamics, bilateral modeling, renewable energy transitions, or AI's future impacts on development

We're committed to moving beyond incremental contributions to produce work that pushes boundaries—conceptually and technically—and that is **cited and applied by others in global systems research**.

DEVELOP AND DISSEMINATE SCENARIOS FOR ACADEMIC USE

Scenarios are more than pedagogical tools—they are analytic inputs that can spark original research, test policy assumptions, and expand the range of global futures under consideration. **We are investing in scenario frameworks that can be integrated into comparative academic work:**

- Expanding IFs-based Shared Socioeconomic Pathways (SSPs) to support scholarly research.
- Providing openly available scenario sets and documentation that others can use for model comparison, narrative development, or regional analysis.
- Contributing to global modeling networks and collaborations (e.g., with RAND, University of Essex, and others) that align scenario-based modeling with empirical social science.

These efforts will build a stronger bridge between the IFs modeling community and the broader academic ecosystem engaged in global change analysis.

ELEVATE OUR PRESENCE IN SCHOLARLY VENUES AND NETWORKS

Academic leadership requires visibility. We are working to **deepen the Pardee Institute's presence in the professional communities that shape global trends, systems modeling, and foresight research.**

This includes:

- Active participation in academic conferences and global forums, with a focus on systems modeling, international development, climate policy, and long-term planning
- Strategic memberships in scholarly networks, ensuring we are present where model-based research into integrated long-term futures is being developed and discussed
- Partnering with publishers and journal editors to create special issues or curated volumes around long-term development, foresight, or IFs-based analysis

These efforts aim to raise the visibility and credibility of our work, not only as a forecasting platform but as a site of rigorous, peer-reviewed knowledge creation.

BRIDGE ACADEMIC AND POLICY SPHERES

Finally, we acknowledge that scholarship alone is not enough. By **embedding scholarly rigor into our policy-facing work**, we ensure that the insights we provide to

governments, international organizations, and multilateral initiatives are grounded in solid theoretical and empirical foundations.

This strategy includes:

- Reframing select policy reports into academic manuscripts, so that work like Mohammad Irfan's energy transition modeling or the Diplometrics geopolitical influence forecasting also circulates in peer-reviewed domains
- Collaborating with policy partners to publish joint papers, demonstrating how rigorous academic tools can inform complex decision-making
- Creating integrated project structures that allow academic and applied outputs to coexist—what we might call “value-added manufacturing” for knowledge

Academic rigor and policy relevance are not competing values—they are mutually reinforcing. By investing in the people, processes, and platforms that produce cutting-edge scholarship, **we not only expand the Pardee Institute's intellectual leadership but also strengthen its role as a trusted, global public resource.**

We want our work to shape conversations—not just about what's likely, but about what's possible.

We see our future scholarship as a foundation for building more inclusive and better-informed futures. That means producing knowledge that matters—at the frontiers of academic understanding and also in the service of real-world transformation.

Goal 3 | Deepen relationships with policy communities

Strengthen the Pardee Institute's role as a trusted, high-value research partner to governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations by supporting their efforts to understand long-term trends, explore future scenarios, and identify policy strategies that lead to more intentional outcomes.

Pardee's strength lies in applying quantitative tools and academic research to policy discussions. This goal aims to deepen this work by fostering stronger, more committed relationships with non-academic organizations, in which Pardee collaborates to **build knowledge, shape conversations, and provide transparent, globally unique analysis.**

At the Pardee Institute, we recognize that the value of our work is not only measured by its analytical rigor but also by its ability to inform decisions and shape outcomes. That's why we're committed to being more than just a research provider—**we aim to be a trusted, long-term partner to institutions tackling complex global challenges.**

This means delivering timely, policy-relevant research that is grounded in the realities of our partners. It also means showing up with humility, curiosity, and a willingness to co-create solutions. Whether we're supporting national development strategies, contributing to global assessments, or advising multilateral institutions, our goal is the same: **to bring clarity to complexity and help decision-makers act with confidence.**

WHERE WE ARE

DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

Our Development Analysis Team engages policy communities in diverse and deeply collaborative ways. Across our portfolio, we aim to inform decision-making at every level—from national strategy development to multilateral assessments.

The primary types of policy engagement reflected in our recent work, along with examples of specific engagements, appear below.

📌 Country-level strategic support

We work directly with governments and UN country teams to provide **long-term scenario analysis that supports national planning, climate adaptation, and economic diversification**. Examples include:

- Examining the intersection of climate change, land degradation, conflict, and human development in Yemen
- Modeling oil dependency risks and outlining diversification pathways in Iraq
- Providing scenario analysis to support SDG reporting in Yemen, national development planning in North Macedonia, and development strategy in Ethiopia

These engagements enable governments to make evidence-based decisions grounded in realistic forecasts and systems-level thinking.

📌 Continental and regional coordination

We contribute to large-scale policy processes that require coherent, cross-country coordination, supporting institutions like the African Union. Examples include:

- Enabling the African Union's Agenda 2063 target setting with integrated modeling tools for continental Africa
- Assessing connections between renewable energy strategies and human development in the Sahel region

This type of engagement ensures policy alignment across nations and supports shared continental goals.

✎ Global foresight and agenda-setting

Through **participation in high-level multilateral processes**, we help shape global conversations on climate, cooperation, and development. Recently we have:

- Collaborated with other international modeling groups to map transformative global environmental futures for the seventh UNEP Global Environment Outlook
- Developed global development scenarios to guide child-focused policy priorities for UNICEF's Global Outlook 2024
- Explored systemic risks to multilateralism for the UN Secretary-General's Office

These efforts elevate IFs as a global tool and position our research in critical, future-oriented dialogues.

✎ Thematic/Issue-specific policy analysis

We engage partners on urgent global challenges, such as climate change, energy transitions, and gender equity, and provide data-driven pathways toward more equitable outcomes. We have:

- Modeled just transitions in renewable energy for inclusive growth as part of a private-nonprofit collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and Octopus Energy
- Assessed global climate risks to women and girls through scenario modeling with UN Women
- Analyzed green growth potential in Guinea-Bissau and the enabling conditions required to support it for the United Nations Development Programme

This form of engagement tackles complex development challenges by linking sectoral policies to broader systems outcomes.

✎ Capacity-building and stakeholder engagement

Beyond the analytics, many of our projects **bring together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners** around shared data, tools, and questions. We delivered:

- Presentations and interactive dialogue at global meetings like the UN Climate Change Conference of Parties in Dubai (COP28) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification Conference of Parties in Riyadh (COP16)

- Online and in-person workshops and IFs model trainings, including in Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, and North Macedonia

These engagements provide a platform for fostering conversations and understanding among groups with differing perspectives, building long-term institutional capacity, and promoting a shared language for futures thinking.

Whether shaping national development plans, supporting regional strategy alignment, or contributing to global foresight, our policy engagement is rooted in partnership. **Delivering findings is just one part of what we do — we collaborate, co-create, and support the application of our insights in real-world contexts.** It's this long-view commitment that distinguishes the Pardee Institute's approach and helps ensure our research leads to real impact.

GEOPOLITICAL ANALYSIS

Our Geopolitical Analysis team specializes in **unpacking the dynamics of international relations by combining cutting-edge data development with deep, policy-relevant analysis.** Our approach blends long-term historical context with scenario-based forecasts to illuminate how diplomacy, conflict, and national power and influence evolve over time—and what that means for the present and future of the international system. Here's how our work engages with policy and contributes to the broader research ecosystem:

📌 Foundational data for global policymaking

We build and maintain one-of-a-kind datasets that serve as critical public goods for the international community. These tools not only inform academic inquiry—they also enable evidence-based decision-making in multilateral institutions, governments, and think tanks worldwide. Examples from our portfolio include:

- **Country and Organization Leader Travel (COLT)** | Released in 2025, COLT is the world's first global dataset tracking the travel of heads of government and state from 1990 to the present—over 100,000 trips. It's already fueling new research on geopolitical influence, regional cooperation, and diplomatic norms.
- **Perceived Mass Atrocities Dataset (PMAD)** | Developed in response to the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act, PMAD is helping both researchers and policymakers track and potentially forecast atrocity crimes across 195 countries.
- **Formal Bilateral Influence Capacity (FBIC) Index** | A unique measure of power projection and geopolitical leverage, FBIC is now being forecast through 2045 and has been featured in outlets like *The Economist* and the BBC.

✚ Embedded policy contributions

Not only do we publish—we also partner. **Our team supports policy processes directly**, providing data and insights that appear in high-level government briefings, multilateral assessments, and collaborative reports with strategic partners.

- **U.S. State Department reporting** | PMAD informed recent congressional briefings on global human rights, aiding atrocity risk assessment.
- **Stimson Center collaboration** | Our scenario-based forecasts of the FBIC Index were featured in a major 2024 report that explored spheres of influence, bringing academic modeling into the applied policy debate.

✚ Global public goods for security and human rights

We are committed to ensuring that complex data on diplomacy, security, and mass violence are accessible for real-world application. Examples of bespoke datasets include:

- **UN Voting Behavior Data** | We maintain a live dashboard tracking voting alignments in the UN's General Assembly, Security Council, and Human Rights Council, supporting transparency and analysis for academics, diplomats, NGOs, and journalists.
- **Diplomatic Representation (DDR)** | The DDR dataset has become a go-to source for tracking embassy-level engagement globally. It has been cited in major media reports by *The New York Times*, *Financial Times*, and others.

✚ Academic research that drives policy dialogue

Our outputs appear not only in peer-reviewed journals but also in public repositories, policy briefs, and interactive platforms—ensuring wide usability. Example outlets include:

- [War on the Rocks](#) | In the past five years, our forecasts of national power and influence and related geopolitical analysis have appeared in nine commentaries and briefings in this widely-read, inside-the-beltway-focused outlet.
- [The Conversation](#) | Following our publication of PMAD in the *Journal of Peace Research* and *COLT in International Studies Quarterly*, we authored public-facing summaries for non-academic audiences to access and engage with our research.

✚ Scenario-based forecasting of geopolitical futures

Looking ahead is at the core of our mission. **We leverage IFs to push the boundaries of long-term international relations modeling.** We can:

- **Forecast geopolitical influence** | We integrated FBIC projections into IFs, marking the world's first long-term, scenario-based forecast of bilateral geopolitical influence.
- **Intersecting Systems** | Our work bridges diplomatic data, economic metrics, and conflict indicators to generate whole-of-system insights into how international relations have. It is expected to continue evolving.

📌 Student-powered, globally relevant

Finally, it is important to note that our exceptional team of student researchers powers much of this work. We've built the capacity to collect, code, and clean large datasets—and ensure their value reaches the people who need them most.

We are not just collecting data—we are building tools that make geopolitical dynamics legible. We're not just publishing research—we're shaping how the world understands and prepares for emerging threats and long-term trends. From global diplomacy to human rights, our work is helping policy communities see what matters, measure what's hard to capture, and act with greater confidence in a rapidly changing world.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

At the Pardee Institute, we take pride in delivering rigorous, systems-based analysis. But insight alone isn't enough. Our true value emerges when our work informs real-world decisions. Our ambition under this goal is clear: to embed ourselves as trusted, long-term partners to governments, NGOs, and international bodies, helping them navigate uncertainty with clarity, foresight, and confidence. To that end, we have identified the following strategic priorities:

PARTNERSHIP DEPTH AND DURABILITY

- Develop **multi-year partnerships or other institutionalized agreements** with governments (e.g., development ministries), inter-governmental organizations (e.g., UNEP, NATO), and foundations (e.g., Rockefeller, Carnegie)
- Develop and deepen **relationships with strategic partners aligned with IFs capabilities**—climate strategy, energy transition, geopolitical foresight, bilateral development
- Continue pursuing research collaborations that are rooted in **co-developed frameworks**, not transactional consulting

SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT ACTIONABLE, TIMELY, AND RELEVANT RESEARCH

- Improve and maintain teams with **strong internal processes** to efficiently and effectively respond to research questions and pivot as needed without sacrificing rigor
- Continue to **develop a collaborative approach to knowledge-sharing and research discussion** within the Pardee Institute, including building from conversations that occur during Brown Bag meetings and groups like the Modeling Pod, a team of Pardee researchers who support and use the model and meet regularly to generate ideas and solutions for its uses and functionality
- Invest in staff time for **rapid scenario development and policy translation**—ensuring quality, efficiency, and relevance

ADAPTIVE FUNDING MODELS FOR SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT

- Broaden the basis of support and opportunities for collaboration on new topics with **strategic entry into new partner spaces**—including organizations and government entities.
- Develop **targeted proposals for foundation support** tied to priority policy domains (e.g., energy-conflict linkages).
- Leverage successful partnerships to **pitch multi-cycle fundable projects**
- Use smaller internal grants to **seed new ideas and develop early pilot collaborations**—then pitch at scale.

STRENGTHENING STAFF CAPACITY FOR POLICY ENGAGEMENT

- Provide increased opportunities for research associates and Pardee fellows to **co-author policy briefs** and to deepen their participation in partner meetings.
- Leverage university-provided professional development initiatives, such as writing workshops, and Korbel School programming, such as the Scrivner Institute-hosted events, to enhance understanding across diverse policy and practice areas while refining strategies for engaging audiences with varying levels of familiarity with the topics at hand.
- Cultivate staff career pathways that reward time invested in developing policy engagement.

This goal is based on the premise that we can continue to earn the trust of policy actors by delivering insightful, timely, and deeply grounded research co-developed with sponsors and collaborators who rely on us for long-term thinking and informed decision-making. By building durable partnerships, aligning research efforts to real-world needs,

and investing in the people who serve those partnerships, Pardee will cement its role as an essential partner in global strategy development.

Goal 4 | Strategically and effectively communicate our story

|| Increase the visibility, accessibility, and impact of our research by embedding communications into our core strategy.

This goal emphasizes leveraging existing assets—such as digital platforms, data tools, and institutional partnerships—to amplify reach and relevance. Rather than creating new campaigns or introducing new spending items, the focus is on activating existing resources with greater coordination and intentionality and identifying core audiences and targeted strategies. Through enhancing our digital presence, unifying our institutional voice and communications, and building our visual storytelling capacity, we aim to ensure that our work is not only rigorous but also seen, understood, and applied by the audiences best positioned to act on it.

At the Pardee Institute, we are dedicated to producing rigorous, forward-looking research that informs policy, empowers decision-makers, and fosters global understanding. But to fulfill that mission, our work must be seen, understood, and acted upon. Visibility is not vanity—it is a strategic imperative.

We have long prioritized substance over spotlight, and rightly so. But this strategic planning process has uncovered a critical truth: that communications and marketing are not peripheral—they are essential infrastructure. They are how we translate research into relevance and connect our work to the people and institutions positioned to act on it.

As we look ahead, our goal is clear: to become more accessible, more visible, and more valuable to those who share our vision. That means increasing the reach, resonance, and uptake of our work—not for recognition, but for impact.

To fulfill our mission of making future-oriented thinking more accessible and actionable, the Pardee Institute must scale its reach while ensuring users are equipped, supported, and motivated to engage deeply with our work. This means investing in experiences that attract users and keep them engaged—whether it's the usability of our tools, the relevance of our insights, or the community we cultivate around futures thinking.

WHERE WE ARE

This plan challenges the false dichotomy that sometimes emerges in nonprofit spaces where lean operations must prioritize direct services over strategic communication and other ancillary activities. This planning process made it clear that we should not have to

choose between investing in research and amplifying its reach. We already possess a rich portfolio of underutilized assets, as described below.

COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS

📌 Our website

Our dedicated website, www.pardee.du.edu, is a subsite of the Korbel School website. The Korbel School began a migration to a new website content management platform, WordPress, in February 2024. This migration both enhanced and limited our website functionality in crucial ways, opening new possibilities for featuring engaging content and improved navigation while also limiting our ability to restructure existing content. The result has been uneven: the promise of an enhanced, data-driven user experience is somewhat diminished by outdated content that cannot be removed or updated without additional website development.

We are pursuing a subcontract with the Korbel School's website developer to **complete our subsite migration in the Winter of 2025**. Not only will this effort enable us to update and restructure all subsite content, but it will also introduce new linkages between our resource pages and our research activities, enhance our publications library, and build new features to keep our homepage relevant and up-to-date.

📌 Social media

We manage a LinkedIn account with **a growing follower base and have increased activity in recent years** through posts and content updates featuring important developments, such as new reports and upcoming events.

📌 Newsletters

We manage several newsletters in Salesforce, with **each serving a distinct purpose and reaching a specific audience**.

DATA TOOLS

Below, we list our data tools, each of which serves as a touchpoint for our community. These remain underutilized in their collective capacity to drive engagement.

📌 International Futures platform

https://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs/frm_MainMenu.aspx

📌 Our IFs wiki page

[https://pardeewiki.du.edu/index.php?title=International Futures \(IFs\)](https://pardeewiki.du.edu/index.php?title=International_Futures_(IFs))

📌 Our IFs network diagram

<https://ifsnetworkdiagram.du.edu/>

📌 Other data tools

<https://korbel.du.edu/pardee/diplomatic-representation/>

<https://korbel.du.edu/pardee/country-organization-leader-travel/>

<https://korbel.du.edu/pardee/national-power/>

<https://korbel.du.edu/pardee/perceived-mass-atrocities/>

<https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/diplometrics>

INVESTING IN VISUAL STORYTELLING

📌 Building a media library

When the Pardee Institute received its [official “Institute” designation](#) from DU in 2023, in addition to the prestige and recognition that it conferred, we also gained access to additional resources, including the opportunity to collaborate with key specialists within DU to expand our media library. Leveraging these DU resources, we held a photoshoot and received guidance and training from the University’s media team.

These learnings helped us view every research activity through a new lens of visual storytelling, inspiring us to begin **building a structured media library and standardizing new practices for maintaining and expanding it with intention**. This includes developing and executing shot lists, building internal capacity for in-house photography and photo editing, investing in and featuring background signage and displays for photographed events, and leveraging AI to generate artwork, graphics, and designs.

📌 Building a brand through standardizing displays of visual elements

Beyond building a media library, **we are also dedicating more attention to developing our brand through other visual elements**, such as creating a custom style guide, templated documents, and effective communications. Over the last year, we have launched new initiatives in this vein, including a series of one-page summary handouts

for our research projects and stylized templates for internal reports, guides, and communications. We have also built internal capacity and infrastructure to sustain these practices. Relatedly, we strive to showcase our brand's signature artwork, the Pardee "swoosh," alongside our research activities and official communications.

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

📌 Finding synergies for cross-promotions and leveraging resources

We continue to build and strengthen relationships with key administrators at DU and other key stakeholders to **better leverage the institution's resources for maximum impact**. Over the past year, we began developing marketing and promotional strategies that align with and complement similar efforts within both the Korbel School and the broader DU community. We have worked closely with our marketing and communications counterparts in these areas to coordinate messaging about key research activities.

BODY OF RESEARCH

📌 Sharing knowledge with purpose

At the heart of our communications is a commitment to share knowledge in ways that support our mission and vision. Like our data tools, our academic activities and policy-oriented research, as described in [Goal 2](#) and [Goal 3](#), respectively, serve as touchpoints to inspire additional engagement with the Pardee Institute. Using our [communications channels](#) and [data tools](#), we can do more through cross-promotions, dedicated features, etc., to disseminate the knowledge we are building and drive further engagement with it.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

One of the most valuable insights from this planning cycle is that we do not need to reinvent the wheel; instead, we need to maximize the assets we already have. Reflecting on [where we are](#), we believe that the Pardee Institute is rich in intellectual capital, digital infrastructure, and institutional partnerships.

These assets serve as strategic levers to help us scale our impact, strengthen our partnerships, and ensure our work resonates in and beyond academic and policy circles. If we want to shape the future, we must be part of the conversations that define it.

Looking ahead, we need to embed targeted, coordinated marketing and communications strategies into our research activities from the outset, aligning our resources with an

approach that elevates our voice, deepens engagement, and enhances the visibility of our work across the communities we serve.

STRENGTHEN OUR DIGITAL FOUNDATION

We will make it easier and more inviting to interact with our platforms. We are moving forward on efforts to build a dynamic, user-centered web presence that reflects our values, showcases our work, and adapts to the evolving needs of our audiences.

We should:

- Leverage the Korbel School's new web environment to modernize pardee.du.edu—improving structure, navigation, and searchability
- Use new web analytics tools to gain insight into how audiences engage with our content and tailor updates accordingly
- Resume content and structural updates with a focus on enhancing the user experience and communicating our research with greater clarity and accessibility

PROMOTE OUR RESEARCH ASSETS STRATEGICALLY

We must leverage our data tools as both primary knowledge repositories and secondary marketing assets. We should increase visibility and use of our data tools and platforms—especially IFs, our network diagram, wiki, and data tools—by academic, policy, and public audiences. We can accomplish this by:

- Developing clear messaging strategies for each of our major assets and amplifying them across channels
- Packaging complex tools into more approachable content—highlighting insights, user guides, or policy applications that make these tools more accessible and actionable
- Creating integrated communications campaigns around major product releases, updates, and publications to ensure visibility and coherence

INSTITUTIONALIZE STRATEGIC STORYTELLING

We must continue building a brand that inspires trust and action. We should position every communication channel as an opportunity to develop a cohesive, professional, and recognizable Pardee brand that earns trust and invites action. This would involve:

- Formalizing internal processes for announcing publications, launching projects, and showcasing events to promote visibility with every opportunity we have to share our impact

- Transitioning our Annual Review from a static report into a multimedia experience that conveys the depth and dynamism of our work
- Standardizing formatting, design, and messaging across white papers, working papers, and proposals to reinforce brand identity and readability

EXPAND AND ENRICH AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

We must understand and embrace what drives engagement with our work. Our efforts should foster a growing, responsive community that regularly engages with our newsletters, social media, and public events.

We must:

- Continue building our email list and using DU's Salesforce license to distribute newsletters and event announcements with greater intention
- Expand our presence on platforms like LinkedIn, sharing research insights, behind-the-scenes development stories, and partner spotlights
- Create recurring content formats—such as “insight snapshots,” model deep dives, or project timelines—to keep audiences engaged between major releases

LEVERAGE EVENTS AND CONVENINGS

We should regard turnout and participation as vital to our mission of sharing knowledge. Events are more than just moments; they are outward-facing opportunities to highlight our leadership, research, and community.

We need to:

- Systematically document, brand, and share outputs from our brown bags, workshops, and seminars
- Expand access to select events through livestreams or recordings—especially for DU faculty, students, and partners around the world
- Use events as launch points for publications or research updates to create momentum and build audience awareness

ELEVATE VISUAL AND MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLING

We can share knowledge through visual storytelling. We should create visual content that draws audiences in, distills complexity, and reinforces our identity as a forward-looking research institution.

This involves:

- Investing in visual storytelling through increased use of graphics, video, and interactive content
- Using Adobe Creative Cloud and DU media services to enhance production value and consistency across our channels
- Positioning our student communications team as a core asset in producing high-impact visuals

Our story is worth telling—but only if we tell it with the same intentionality and rigor that we apply to our research. We don't need more tools or more content. We need alignment, cohesion, clarity, and commitment. And with that, through every publication, tool, event, and visual—we will translate our capacity into visibility, our insights into influence, and our work into impact.

Conclusion

At the Pardee Institute, our commitment to building a more knowable future is not just a vision; it is a mandate embedded in how we operate and in the values we share.

We fulfill our mission by supporting a global network of individuals and institutions seeking deeper insight into the forces shaping our collective future.

Expanding our footprint within this community—and increasing the accessibility and impact of our work—is central to achieving that vision. This is our guiding principle.

With the conclusion of our 2025 strategic planning process, we begin a new phase of purposeful growth. This plan serves as a call to action for us and an invitation for members of our community to join our efforts to use actionable, data-driven knowledge to build a more future-forward world. We hope it resonates with you—our colleagues, collaborators, and friends—and inspires deeper engagement in the years to come.

Let's build a more knowable future—together.

Appendix 1 | 2020 Mission, Vision, and Values

MISSION

We build and use data and tools to analyze our complex world and the long-term dynamics of change in human, social, and natural systems. We share our resources with policymakers, academics, and others seeking to improve the ways we contemplate and plan for the global future.

VISION

Increased knowledge for future wellbeing

VALUES

Interconnectedness: Bringing together ideas and people to build knowledge

- We analyze the world as a deeply connected system by bringing together insights from multiple academic fields
- We interact with policymakers, academics, and students to build and support communities of users of our data and models and to broaden our own perspective

Understanding: Mapping and measuring how the systems of the world interact

- We strive to understand better, represent, and communicate how human, social, and natural systems dynamically interact
- We work to make our complex models transparent and intelligible

Integrity: Committing to openness, honesty, and trustworthiness

- From our modeling assumptions and tools to the way we work with others, we strive to be as open and accessible as possible
- We deliberately communicate the limitations of our work as well as its strengths

Appendix 2 | 2020 Strategic Plan Goals

#	Goal/Subgoal Name
1	Research portfolio: To shape a research portfolio that allows the Pardee Center to best build knowledge for sustainable development and future wellbeing
1.1	Project selection. Staff have a shared understanding of fitness of potential partners & projects
1.2	Active project development. We seek projects that play to our strengths and/or respond to emerging opportunities
1.3	Personnel capacity. We can (1) successfully handle base level project needs and (2) adapt to short-term changes on demand
1.4	Secondary project outcomes. Projects have secondary objectives/deliverables that benefit Pardee.
2	Client-based work: To selectively expand client-based work in directions that enhance the Center's ability to support policymaking within the framework provided by the Center's vision, mission, and values
2.1	Scalable IFs user base. Develop tools and capacity to train large audience without overburdening Pardee resources
2.2	Public presence. Expanded presence at high levels within policymaking community
2.3	Innovation. Expand IFs model into additional relevant issue spaces and/or incorporate new methods and tools
2.4	Scientific foundation. More publications in peer-reviewed journals
3	Academic/scientific work: To expand and improve the Pardee Center's participation in and contributions to the academic and scientific communities.
3.1	Publications. Increase # and quality of peer-reviewed publications + their visibility within academic + scientific communities
3.2	Personnel. Add more academics and PhD students doing dissertation work
3.3	Funding. Increased funding to support academic work
3.4	Links and collaboration within DU. Korbel & other DU faculty engagement in connection with our goals and expertise
3.5	External links and collaboration. Increased visibility to and engagement with external colleagues
3.6	Internal activities. More academically-oriented activities with high attendance from staff (e.g., brown bags)
4	The IFs system: To strengthen the IFs system, linked to appropriate data and other tools of the Pardee Center, and to enhance its long-term viability
4.1	The model. A systematic, responsive, and balanced plan for improving and developing the model that addresses both project and broader internal needs
4.2	Personnel. Increase capacity for both system development and theoretical modeling
4.3	Processes. Modeling team is integrated with dev team, diplo team, other Pardee units and broader DU community
4.4	Awareness, perception, and use. Modeling team regularly prepares and disseminates materials that convey strengths of the model structure and auxiliary datasets
5	Education: To enhance and increase students' learning experiences and professional development through coursework, research opportunities, internships, and post-graduate experiences
5.1	Curriculum. Expand faculty-affiliated offerings to DU students as well as online courses

#	Goal/Subgoal Name
5.2	Research opportunities. Seek funding for RA opportunities that promote academic learning, professional dev, and personal growth
5.3	Internships. Establish a formal, standard process for matching students to internship opportunities through clients and partners
5.4	Alumni network. Build and grow a network of former RAs that helps them maintain active connections to Pardee
6	Human resources, governance, and financial resources: To enhance the Center's organizational capacity and functioning vis-à-vis its personnel, its governance structure, and its financial resource base
6.1.1	Recruitment. Pardee employees targeted and inclusive recruitment practices
6.1.2	Onboarding. Onboarding practices and standardized and effective
6.1.3	Professional development. Staff are aware of and pursue a variety of prof dev opportunities that we can fund
6.1.4	Career advancement at Pardee. We have clearly mapped pathways for internal career mobility and staff are given equal opportunity and access to advance
6.2.1	Leadership team. Is formed by director and regularly meets and engages in decision-making
6.2.2	Assistant directorships. Pardee has assistant directors with distinct delegated authorities and responsibilities
6.2.3	Organizational structure. Reporting lines are clear and rational with supervisory resp. dispersed across the org
6.3.1	Resource planning. Is thoughtful and rigorous and used to inform project selection, assignments, and management.
6.3.2	Pursuit of sponsored funding. Pardee has processes to pursue funding opportunities for both client-based and academic work.
6.3.3	Resource stocks. Pardee leverages its discretionary funds to align with medium-to-long term needs and has strategy for growing these resources over time
7	Project management, communications, and organizational culture: To enhance the Center's organizational capacity and functioning vis-à-vis project management strategies and processes, a robust communications plan, and a respectful and supportive culture
7.1.1	Project Management. Project mgmt. practices are developed and applied to all research projects
7.1.2	Center governance and ops. Develop and apply project mgmt. practices to support collaboration across the org and streamline ops
7.1.3	Student work. Project management infrastructure that supports work by RAs is developed further with emphasis on training, prof dev, and leadership
7.2.1	Internal communications. Are clear, regular, and predictable in scope to build shared awareness of updates and opportunities within Pardee
7.2.2	Client communications. Encompass follow-up processes after project completion
7.2.3	Korbel & DU. We have a comms plan focused on engaging Korbel school and broader DU communities in work and activity of Center
7.2.4	External comms. Pardee uses best practices to share information about us on our work thru our website and other online platforms
7.3.1	Inclusivity. Pardee staff are sought and celebrated for their diverse strengths, perspectives, and approaches
7.3.2	Shared values. LT in partnership with all staff, develop, communicate, and embrace shared values
7.3.3	Collaborative work environment. Deliberate and engaging opportunities for team building and appreciation
7.3.4	Culture of gratitude. Staff are recognized for their contributions and any performance issues are addressed through constructive feedback.

#	Goal/Subgoal Name
8	Moderate growth: To seek moderate growth congruent with research goals and opportunities within an environment of shared Center governance and broader Korbel School and DU support
8.1	Positions. We use, as approp., new position types (e.g., post docs, PhDs) to contribute to breadth and depth of research
8.2	Space. Offices and other work and meeting spaces support a productive work environment
8.3	DU and Korbel role articulation. Roles and responsibilities among Pardee, Korbel Dean's office, and DU central units are understood and are shared among parties
8.4	Korbel School research. Pardee and other research units and projects at Korbel are integrated

Credits

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