

The Futures of University Planning in 2040

Using Foresight Analysis to Help SCUP Look Ahead, Adapt and Innovate

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Overview for Today

SCUP Members as Futurists and Thought-Partners

1. **Surfacing the Room** (10 mins)
2. **Foresight as a Tool** for Building Personal and Organizational Readiness and Resilience (10 mins)
3. An **Overview** of Lisa's SCUP Fellowship Project (5 mins)
4. **Futuring:** Identifying Drivers of Change and Soliciting Your Perspectives (35 mins)
5. Q&A

Surfacing Who **Is** in “The Room”

About Foresight and Futurist Methodologies

Why foresight?



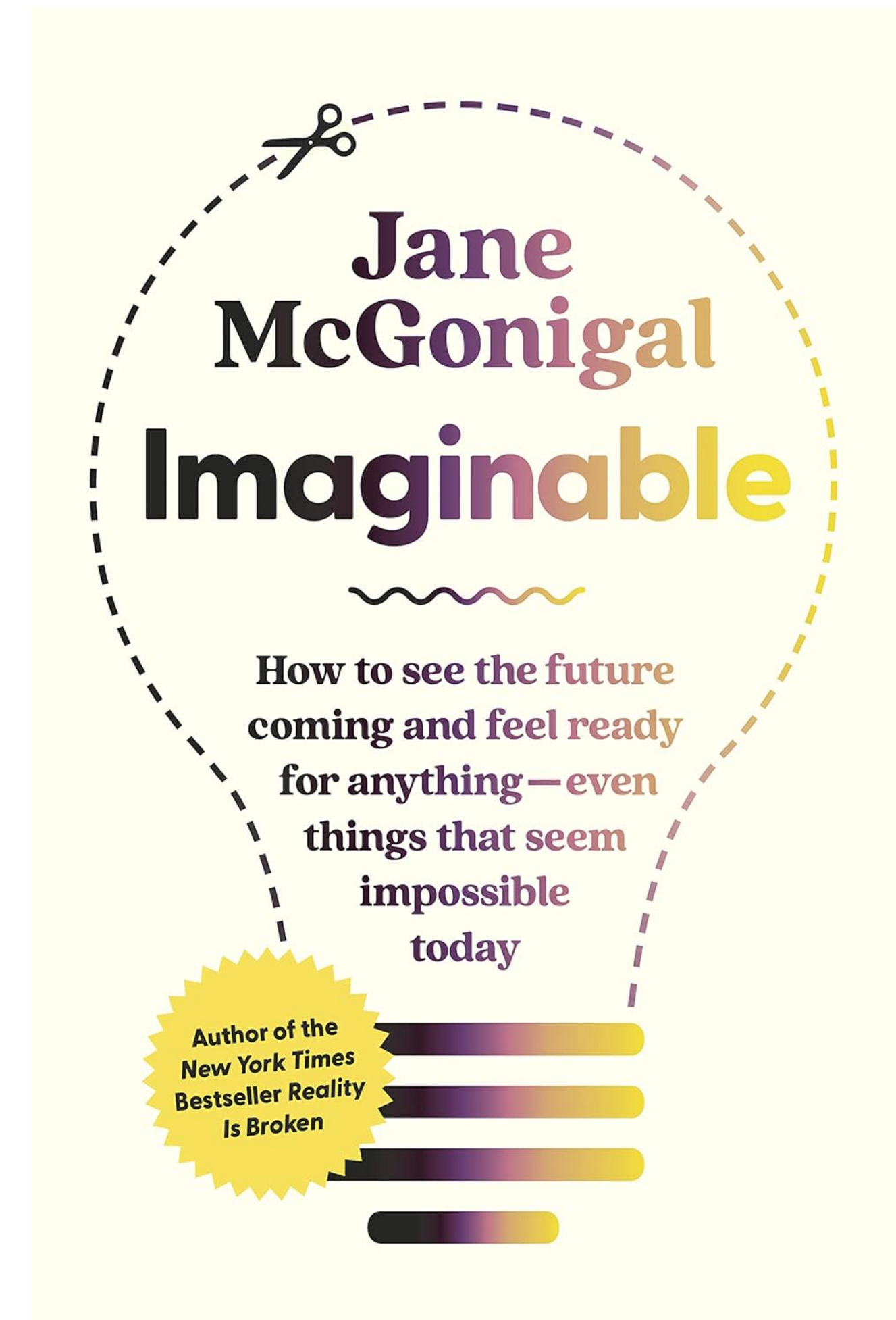
A future.
Explored.

 The Society for College and University Planning

“Futures thinking isn’t a superpower, and you don’t have to fix everything or save everyone.

But futures thinking is an **incredibly useful, practical tool** to prepare your mind to adapt faster to new challenges, build hope and resilience, reduce anxiety and depression, and inspire you to take actions today that set yourself up for future happiness and success.”

Jane McGonigal, *Imaginable: How to see the future coming and feel ready for anything – even things that seem impossible today* (2022)

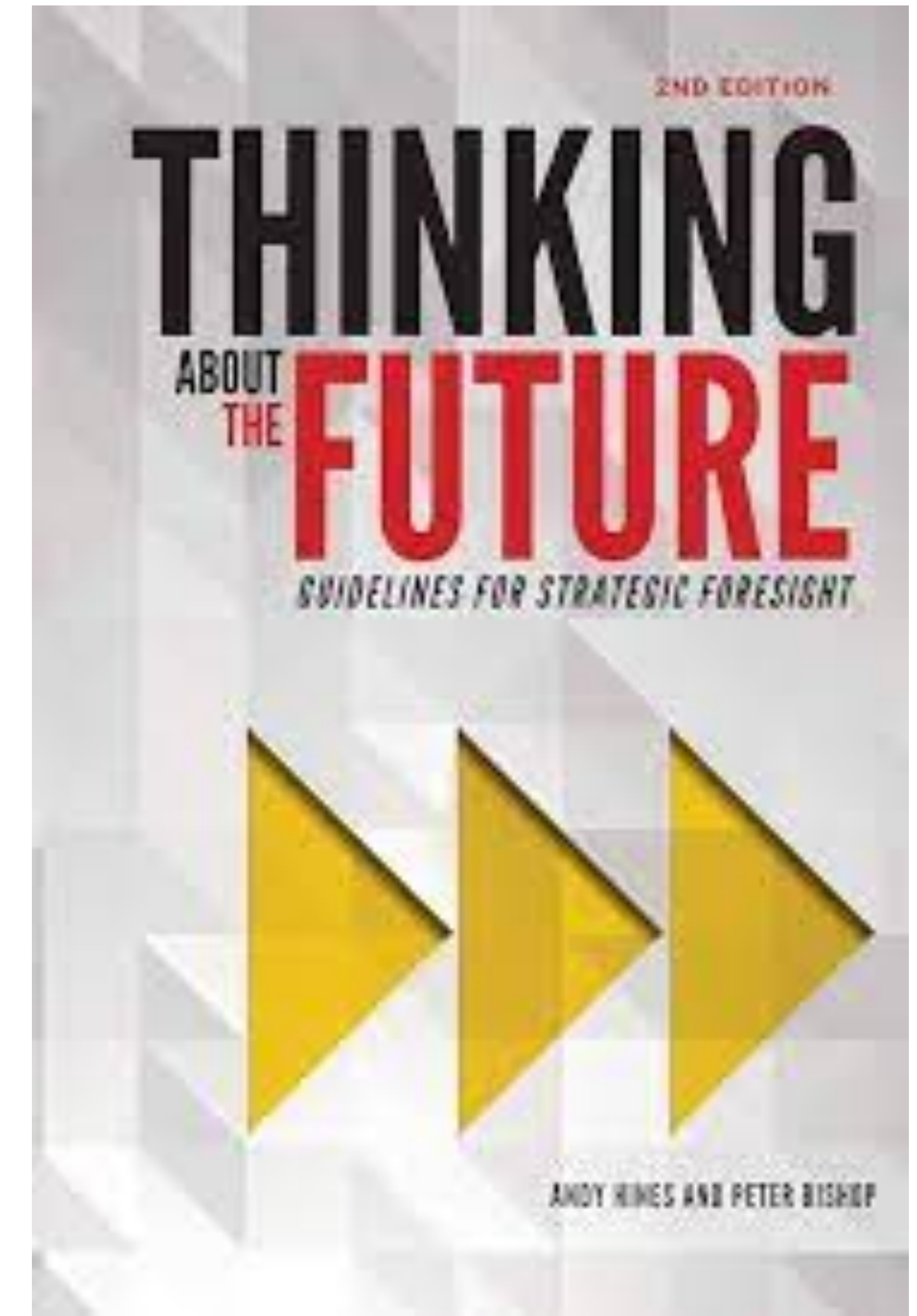


10 Principles for Strategic Foresight

Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS)







- Strategic foresight is a systems-thinking approach to support resilient organizational futures.
- Foresight and strategy are complementary parts of one process and in pursuit of future organizational success.
- Strategic foresight looks beyond the traditional strategic planning time horizon.
- Strategic foresight can be applied to a broad range of organizational contexts.
- Strategic foresight is not about making predictions of the future, but rather exploring plausible futures.
- The strategic foresight process is at least as important as the final outcomes.
- Strategic foresight focuses on exploring the future before considering implications for the present.
- Strategic foresight should be seen and approached as a form of collective intelligence.
- Strategic foresight seeks to challenge mental models and organizational perspectives.
- Applying strategic foresight in practice is not an academic exercise.

“Foresight is the study of change that uses a **systematic methodology** to explore the future in order to **make better decisions today** by helping us move us toward the futures we want and avoid those we don’t, and ultimately build confidence in the future by **building our capacity to avoid surprise!**”



**Andy Hines, Futurist, Founder of Hinesight
Associate Professor and Program Coordinator at the University of Houston’s
Graduate Program in Foresight**

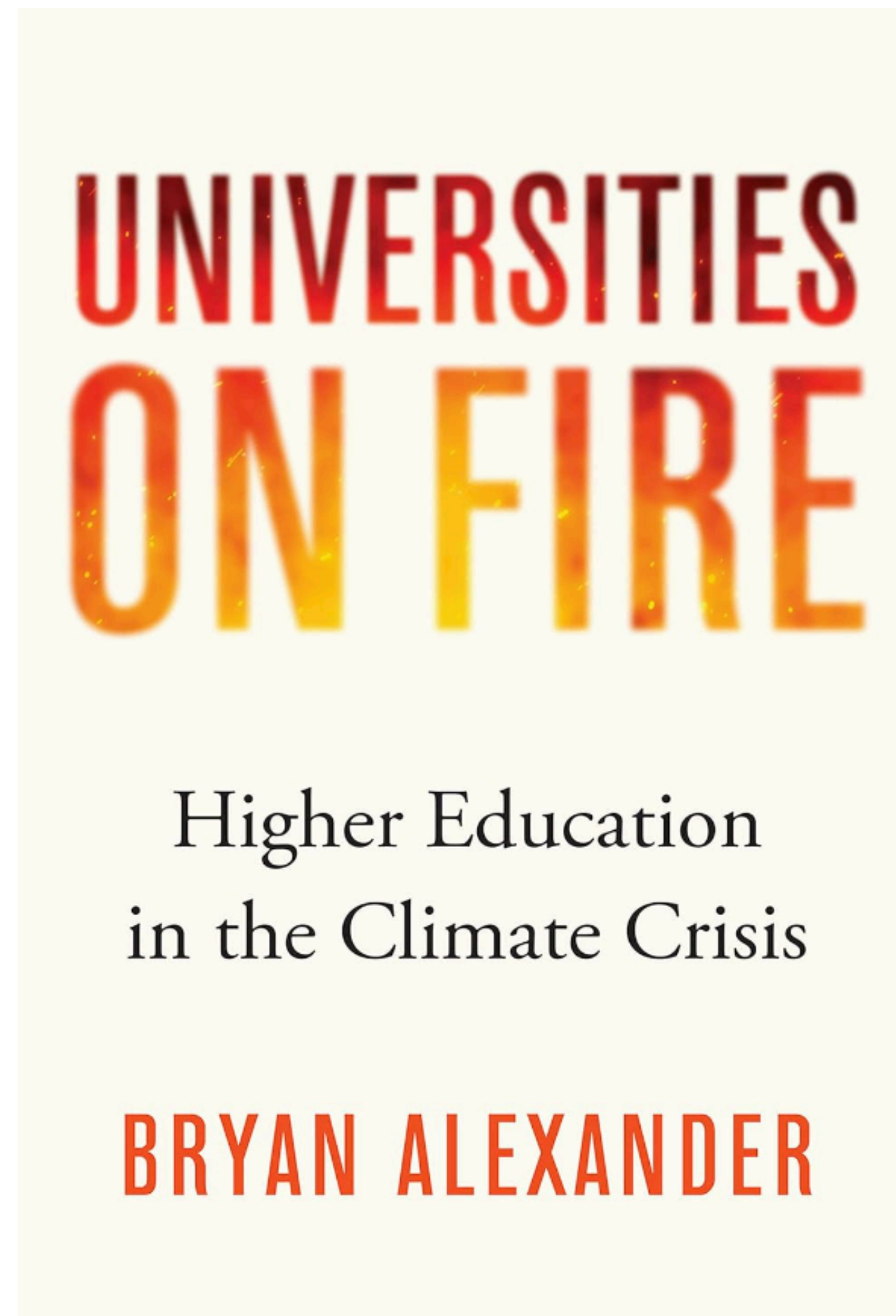
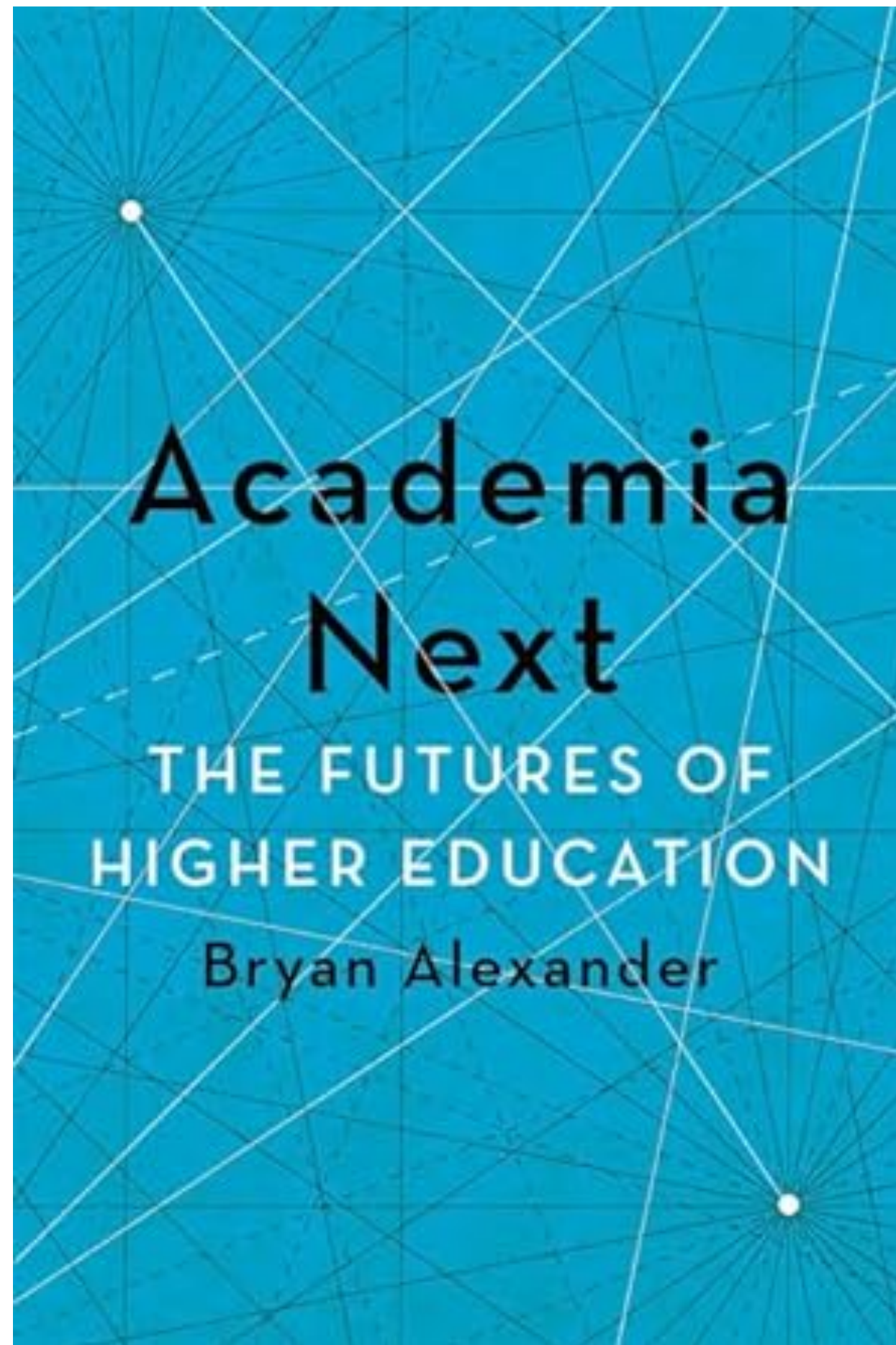
CURRENT STAGE

MAPPING			INFLUENCING		
					
FRAMING	SCANNING	FUTURING	VISIONING	DESIGNING	ADAPTING
Scoping the project and current assessment	Searching for signals of change and specific future inputs	Identifying a baseline and alternative futures	Exploring implications of the futures	Crafting options and an integrated strategic approach	Communicating the response, ongoing monitoring, and implementation
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Domain Description Domain Map	Research Scanning Library	Baseline & Alternative Futures	Implications	Options Integrated Approach	Actions Monitoring Library

Source: A. Hines

Foresight Work and Higher Ed

Many authors have applied these tools to map the plausible futures of learning, colleges, and universities.



About Lisa's SCUP Fellowship Project

Project Goals

Engaging those in and beyond the SCUP Community to use a foresight approach to map the futures of college and university planning in 2040

- To conduct a **broad environmental scan** of signals of change and trends likely to influence university planning in the next 20 years
- To use this research to develop **multiple scenarios**, brief narrative descriptions of possible futures
- To create a project to inform and **actively involve current SCUP members and higher education professionals** (to enhance the credibility of the findings and to learn from their experience participating in the project)

Full Project Description: <https://www.scup.org/bio/lisa-jasinski/>

Participation Opportunities

Foresight is a form of collective intelligence. I need your voices.

JANUARY

26

Emerging Leaders Conversation

An interactive discussion with SCUP's Emerging Leaders to identify [trends and factors](#) that may influence the future of university planning in the next two decades and beyond.

FEBRUARY

23

SCUP Community Conversation 1

A participatory webinar with SCUP members to examine emerging trends and [future scenarios](#).

Members gauge their preparedness for plausible futures and identify steps they can take today to prepare for these plausible futures.

Virtual Session: 1 - 2 pm EST

MARCH

8

SCUP Community Conversation 2

A participatory webinar with SCUP members to examine emerging trends and [future scenarios](#).

Members gauge their preparedness for plausible futures and identify steps they can take today to prepare for these plausible futures.

Virtual Session: 1 - 2 pm EST

JULY

21-23

SCUP Annual Meeting

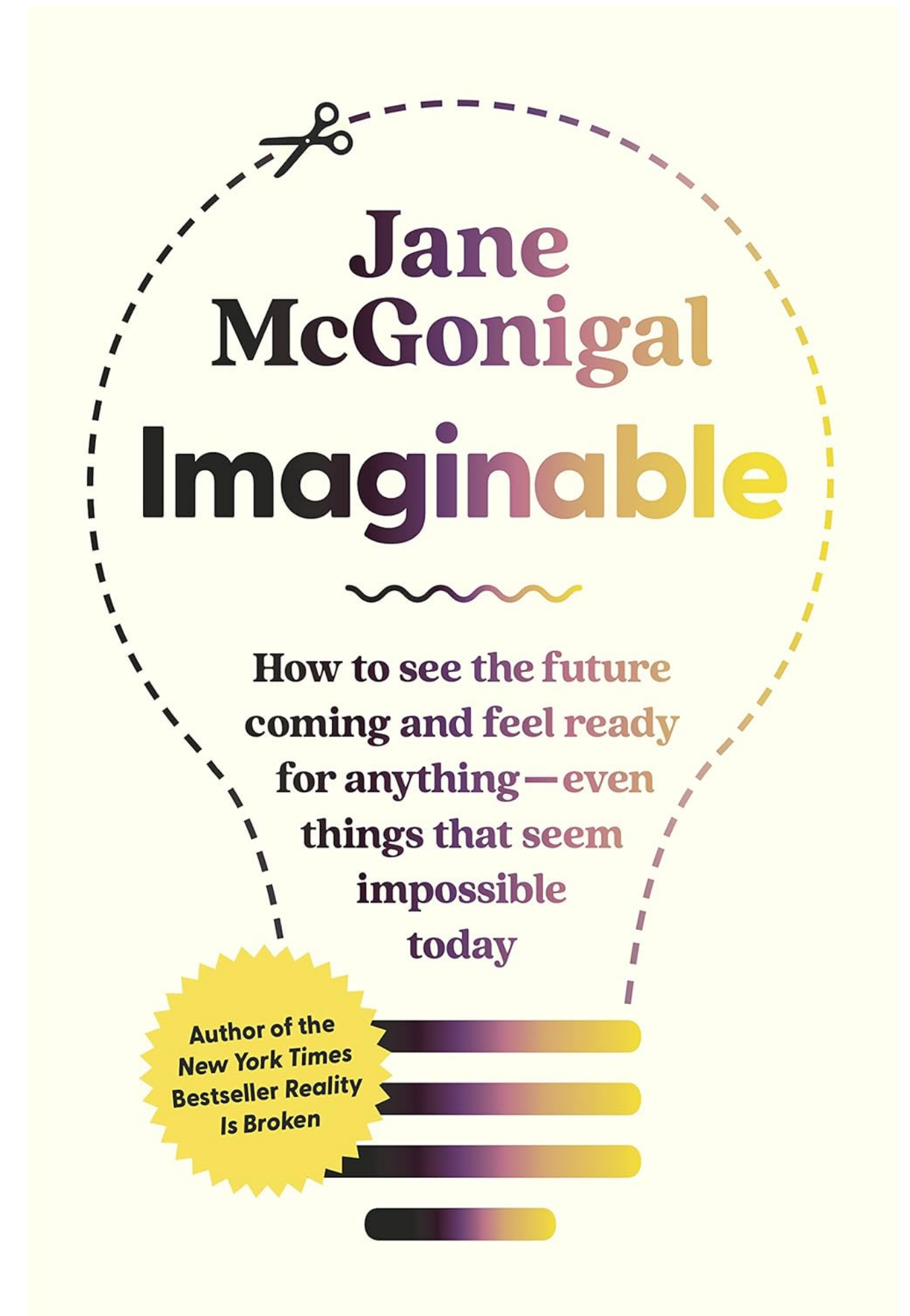
Lisa will share the [findings](#) of the project at the SCUP Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, PA.

Come learn about how your collective feedback informs how planning professionals plan for an unknown future.

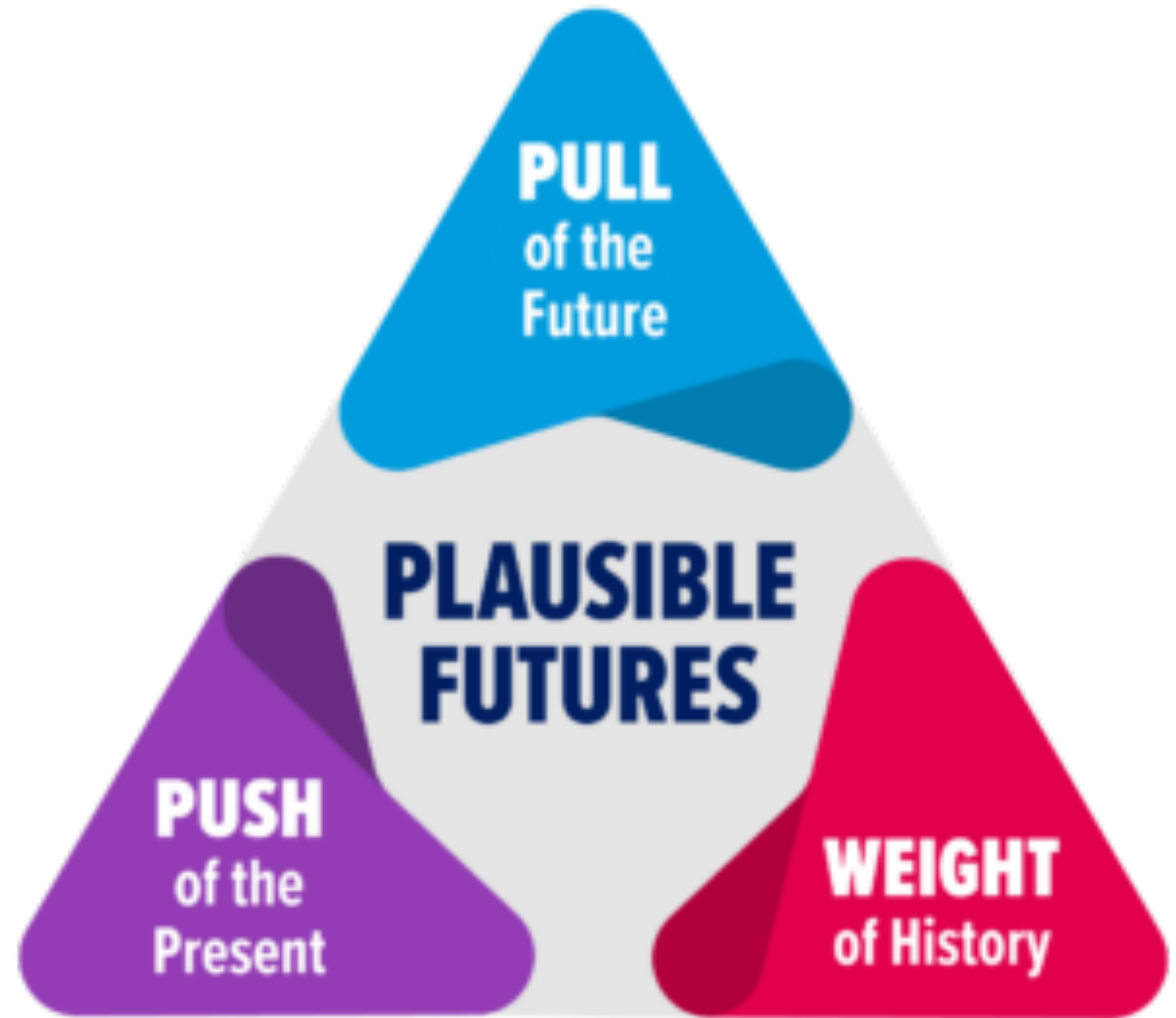
Futuring Together

“There are no facts about the future. Only questions.”

Jane McGonigal, *Imaginable: How to see the future coming and feel ready for anything – even things that seem impossible today* (2022)



Identifying the **Drivers of Change** that May Impact Our Work as Planners and Leaders



Identifying Signals of Change

What can we infer about the future from the present?

- **Broad Changes: STEEP (Increased Competition for Resources*)**
 - **Social** | Decline of Legacy News Media; Declining Life Expectancy; Values Divide: Hillbilly Elegy vs. Coastal Elites
 - **Technology** | Wrestling with the Uncertainty Around A.I.; Half of All Jobs Could be Vulnerable to Automation; A Shrinking Global Digital Divide
 - **Environment** | 2023 was the Hottest Year Ever; Climate Risks Are Everywhere (and varied); 22% of U.S. Energy is From Renewables and Increasing; Warming World Leads to Adverse Health Effects
 - **Economic** | Poor are Getting Poorer; Skilled Workers Have Demands in a Tight Labor Market; Geopolitical Uncertainty; College Students Struggle With Basic Needs
 - **Politics** | Rising Perceptions of Partisan Polarization; Dysfunctional and Unproductive Congress, A Rising Activist Generation; Global Rise of Far Right/Nationalism

Identifying Signals of Change

What can we infer about the future from the present?

- **Higher Education Trends External**
 - **Enrollment Declines & Demographic Shifts*** | Changing Student Demographics; Between 2025-29, College-going Cohort will Shrink by 650,000 Students; Profound Regional Differences
 - **Declining Public Confidence** | Only 36% of Americans have Confidence in Higher Ed; Families Question Cost and Value of a Degree; Calls to Abolish the Department of Education
 - **Impact of State Legislatures** | State Governments Spent Less on Higher Ed in 2022 than they Did in 2008; 8 States Have Passed Anti-DEI Laws; 30+ States Have Promise Programs Free/Nearly Free College
 - **Funders Focus on Workforce Needs** | Lumnia Foundation is all in on degree and credential attainment; \$100m in Federal Spending on Worker Preparation; University Innovation Alliance Emphasis on College-to-Career

Identifying Signals of Change

What can we infer about the future from the present?

- Higher Education Trends **Internal**
 - **Campus Leadership Instability** | College presidents serving fewer than 6 years in their roles and 55% plan to leave within 5 years
 - **Post Post-Pandemic** | Rethinking Finances, Learning, Operations, and Support
 - **Bottom-Line Matters** | Program and Personnel Cuts, 75% of Classroom Instructors are Non-Tenure-Track; Mergers and 15 Colleges Closed in 2023
 - **Inert U*** | Despite being liberal bastions, universities are slow to adapt and change-resistant ([link](#))
 - **From Knowing to Doing** | Growing Emphasis on Professional Preparation Across Post-Secondary Institutions

Inhabit this Future With Me

Futurists Identify Scenarios of Plausible Futures Using Archetypes

Growth

Current trends and conditions, both good and bad, continue to grow as they have in the past, but at a faster rate.

Constraint

A story of accepting new limits. We collectively respond to a threat or problem by agreeing to new restrictions or kinds of self-discipline.

Collapse*

A story of a sudden shutdown or tragic failure. When something we take for granted or an essential utility essentially disappears overnight.

Transformation

A story of a world-changing innovation or breakthrough. It stretches our imagination, challenging our assumptions and suggesting what we once thought impossible can now be realized.

In 2026, President Trump **merged the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor** to foster innovation and workforce preparedness and enshrine America's preeminence in global competitiveness.



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump
45th President of the United States of America 🇺🇸
DonaldJTrump.com 📅 Joined March 2009
51 Following 87.4M Followers

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Donald J. Trump ✓ @realDonaldTrump · March 8, 2027

Colleges that don't graduate 75% of students in 4 years will pay the fine! #Toomuchdebt #Accountable #NoExcusesHarvard

443K 755K 1.5M

Donald J. Trump ✓ @realDonaldTrump · June 20, 2027

Before you enroll, view how much you'll earn from the new White House earnings website. Don't get ripped off by Woke High Tuition University!

443K 755K 1.5M

Donald J. Trump ✓ @realDonaldTrump · November 12, 2028

Let's cut the red tape! Two years is all it takes. Students shouldn't be chained to desks It's time to prioritize practical skills and get America back to work!
#EducationReform #EfficiencyMatters

443K 755K 1.5M

*In 2026, President Trump **merged the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor** to foster innovation and workforce preparedness and enshrine America's preeminence in global competitiveness.*

In postsecondary education, throughout the 2030s, this has resulted in...

- **Wave of College Closures** | Demographic shifts have resulted in fewer students and colleges with low 4-year graduation rates buckle under fines
- **Program Realignment and Rise of Credentials** | With greater transparency on earnings, colleges close low-wage degrees in the humanities and launch credential programs for high-wage jobs
- **Shifting Where the “World Learns and Earns”** | Due to a range of nationalist policies, the US has significantly curbed student and worker VISAs, driving the talent pipelines to Canada, Australia, Asia and Europe

Inhabit this Future With Me

Exploring Different Dimensions of this Future Together

For the purposes of this thought-experiment, be yourself in 2040.

How old will you be? Where will you be living? Where are you working (if you are working at all)?

Imagine yourself in your current region, at your current job, and in your current higher ed sector (e.g., a staffer at 4-year public research university in the Southern U.S.; an architect specializing in libraries at small private colleges in rural settings)

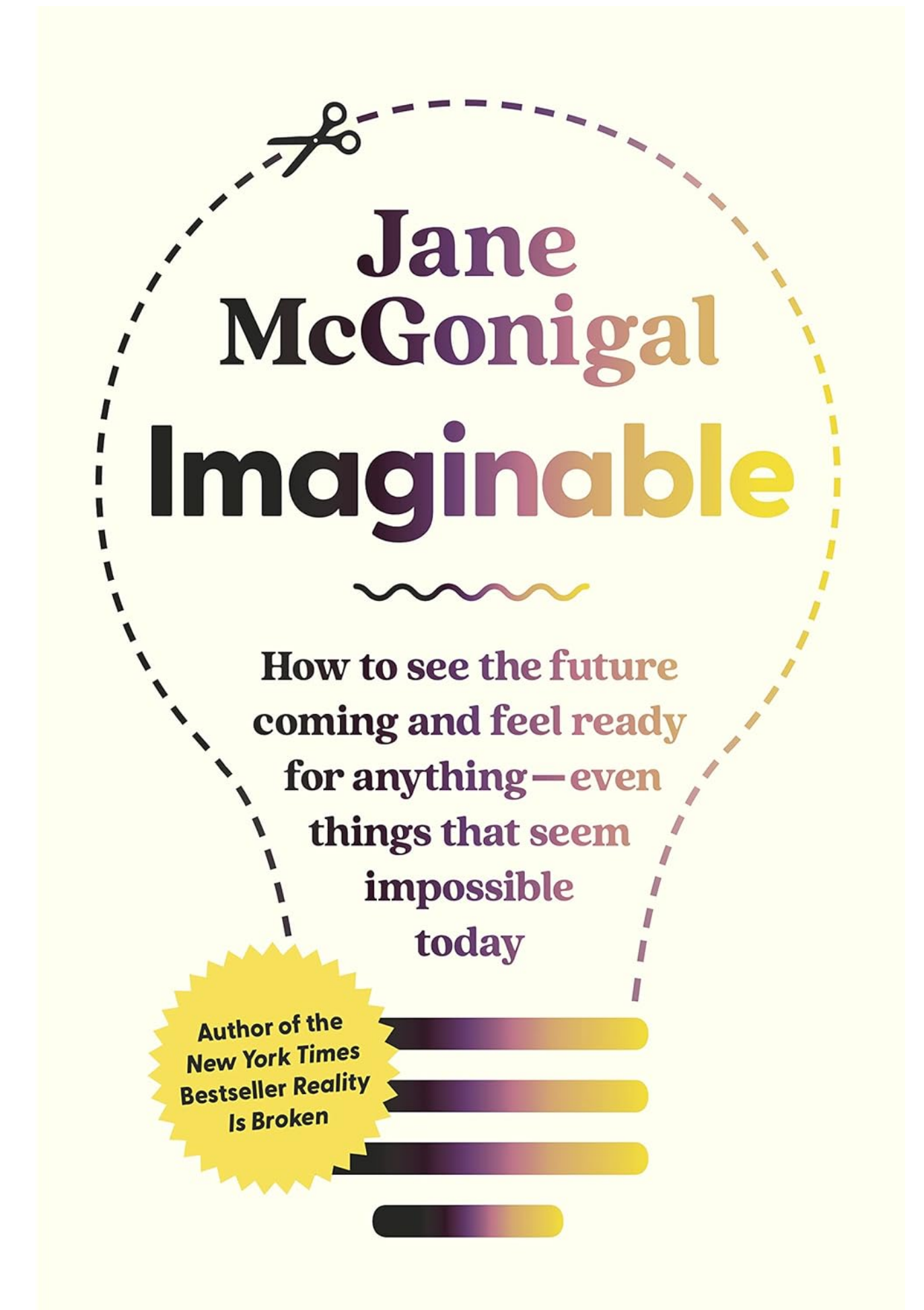
Don't think about how some hypothetical person would answer. **Just be you.**

Closure

Becoming a Future-Ready Citizen

“This mental habit, of always challenging what you believe could or could not be different, and actively looking for evidence that **literally anything could change**—even something that has been true for all evolutionary history—gives you a powerful foundation for spotting any kind of change faster, so you can **adapt faster** and **prepare to help others** more effectively.”

Jane McGonigal, *Imaginable: How to see the future coming and feel ready for anything— even things that seem impossible today* (2022)

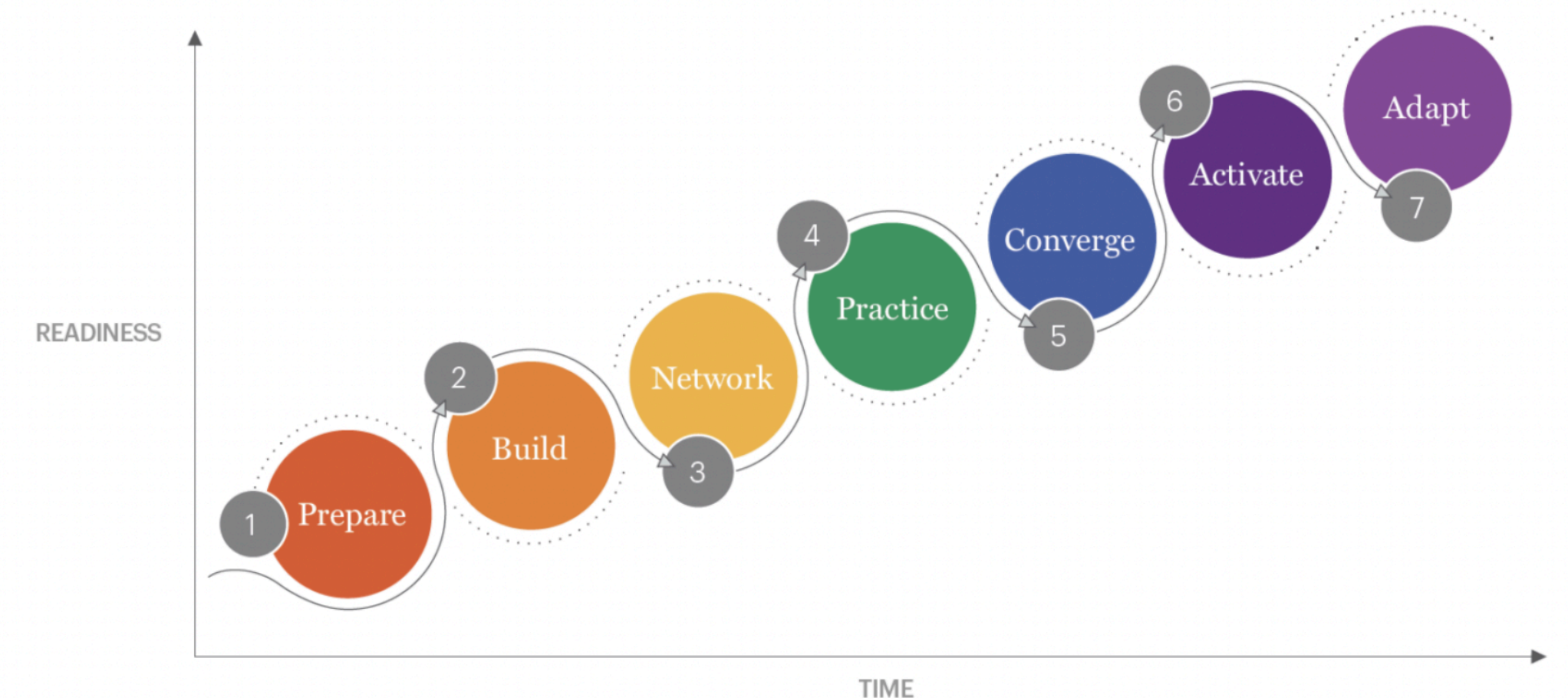


Becoming a Future-Ready Organization

Steps we take as universities and organizations

“Future-ready organizations avoid being blindsided by change and are better able to transform valuable foresight into actionable insight by **building and maintaining an anticipatory system** (a network of resources including people, processes, methods, and tools dedicated to scanning the emerging future).”

7 Steps Towards Becoming a Future-Ready Organization



Becoming a Future-Ready Organization

Steps we take as universities and organizations

Here are some examples:

- A social networking company **monitoring a steady stream of signals** that will impact or transform their current offerings
- A global food company **designing and scoping an internal foresight project** to build consumer insight on the future of snacking
- A philanthropic foundation **listening deeply to the populations they serve** to understand their frontline challenges
- A city's public transit planners **building scenarios** to transform public transportation and increase ridership
- A university **envisioning forms of higher education** that are more responsive to the challenges and opportunities ahead in the next decade.

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Institute for the Future: <https://www.iftf.org/insights/7-steps-toward-becoming-a-future-ready-organization/>

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