

Enhancing the Foresight Community:

A Case Study on Strategies to Expand Partnerships in Foresight Education

Submission Team



amy weber



Ingrid Furtado



Nicci Obert

Executive Summary

Implications to the Field



While this project was narrowly tailored to the needs and futures of UH Foresight program, we believe that the findings have broad implications for the future of foresight education and the continued growth of the field.

Foresight education isn't a destination, it's a journey. *What happen to a foresight professional after graduation? Who would you go to ask a question or refresh some framework ideas? Who do you go for support?*

Our research determined that investing in building a true sense of community and belonging will maximize lifelong implications to individual foresight professionals and to the field. Long term success and growth of the field through foresight learning will be dependent on robust partnerships that leverage collaboration - tapping into industries, fields of student, and learners - over dominance.

Key findings:

- **Professional field retention & development:** Foresight learners crave access to easy-to-use tools and updated materials to use in their practice. This is especially true for foresight learners who are not full time foresight consultants.
- **Professional Portfolio Building:** Establishing a foresight practice can be intimidating and learners lack platforms to share foresight educational projects outside of their program.
- **Safe containers are necessary to share ideas, be vulnerable and grow:** Most people aren't going to turn to LinkedIn to workshop an idea or ask to be challenged. Safe communities are critical to establish trust and cultivate open sharing.
- **Foresight educational programs tend to go at it alone:** As leaders in a niche field, foresight programs may lack established partnership strategies to ensure sustainable revenue, expand the influence of the field, and attract new learners.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Having a diverse perspective is a key driver for innovation. Foresight programs can offer diverse cohorts of people that reflect the world we live in.

Implications for Foresight Education Programs:

- **Accessible libraries** for alumni or learners to access each other's knowledge, foresight templates, project examples and updated foresight trends, methodologies and tools.
- **Elevating Student Work as Professional Work:** By leveraging student work and capacity, foresight programs can create platforms to promote students, fill capacity gaps in the program, and elevate programs' brands and reputations.
- **Establishing communities that grow with the learner:** While professional networks have an important role in supporting the field, smaller communities designed to cultivate relationships over time can complement the continued growth and development of foresight practices.
- **Creating robust pipelines for partnership:** When considering partnerships and the futures of foresight learning, there are opportunities for leveraging all program stakeholders (learners, alumni, employers, and other educational programs) as potential partners.
- **Leveraging technology to create inclusive experiences:** Online platforms, hybrid learning opportunities, and affinity groups allow foresight programs to reach diverse learners and bring diversity in thought to the field.

OUR WHY

By exploring the future of foresight education in postsecondary settings and the opportunities of expanded partnerships, this project provides a strategy for foresight education programs to embrace new partnerships to create a future in which educational experiences create communities of practice and belonging and where educational experiences lead to lifelong learning and professional growth for the field of foresight.

BACKGROUND

This project was created as part of the coursework for an advanced strategies class for the UH Foresight masters program. The initial team consisted of amy weber, Ingrid Furtado, Nicci Obert and Vinny Tafaro.

Scope of work:

Create a partnership strategy for the UH Foresight Program to implement over a 5-8 year timeframe. Strategy must include efforts to increase both internal and external partnerships for the program. Strategies were informed by the UH Foresight project "The Changing Demands for Higher Ed" (Houston Foresight Team, 2019) and utilized rigorous application of foresight research, methodologies, and strategy approaches.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project designed a comprehensive approach to advance foresight education among internal and external partners with the expectation that the improved partnerships would increase revenue, broaden the touch of UH Foresight, and expose more people to the foresight field.

- Internal Partnerships: Increase campus awareness of and engagement in foresight across the diverse student and faculty body through targeted events, learning experiences and research collaborations.
- External Partnership: Concentrate efforts to build robust relationships with alumni and partners and offer continued opportunities to learn with and connect and contribute to UH Foresight and the foresight field.

The final framework and strategy presented in this project aims to create a vibrant and interconnected ecosystem that enhances foresight education through the client, UH Foresight, and provide implications and ideas that can be applied to the field at large.

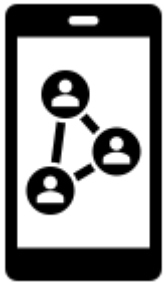
Project Constraints:

While this project created a strategic framework and implementation strategy for the UH Foresight program to expand partnerships, the project team was not tasked with creating a business plan or financial model.

Research + Inputs



This project was informed by an array of research to broadly understand the possible futures of higher education and adjacent domains - such as belonging, communities, and hybrid life. In addition to futures research, the team explored the current needs of foresight education stakeholders. We combined these inputs, using foresight methodologies and strategy approaches, to synthesize key insights and opportunities to increase partnerships in foresight post-secondary education. These inputs and methods were the foundation of the strategy presented in this case study. The following slides provide details on results of the research followed by details on the strategy and key opportunities for expanded partnerships.



Methods + Tools + Artifacts

Foresight

- *Scanning, Existing Plans and Scenarios, 1:1 Interviews*
- *Preferred Futures Outcomes (10 year horizon), Joel Barker's Implication Wheel, Summarized 3rd Order Impacts (UH Foresight Option Elevator Speech and Wind Tunnel)*

Strategy

- *Strategy approach research and application: Business Strategy Schools - Design and Planning School approaches, Multiple strategy book reviews*
- *Business model canvas (Mission Model designed for mission oriented efforts), Value Proposition Canvas, Empathy Map, OKR Template*

Primary Artifact







- *A centralized platform to demonstrate one way to integrate the Houston Foresight ecosystem*

See bibliography for citations.

Stakeholder Needs



The team explored the differing needs of stakeholders in the context of future scenarios of foresight education, including those who may seek foresight education in the future and foresight instructors. The personas, shown below, were created to represent the diversity of professionals across the field and their foresight education needs such as easy to access practical foresight advice, customized and scalable solutions for training staff within an organization, and a supportive community of foresight leader.

The SME	The Believer	The Leader	The Ambitious Student	The Fellow Academic	The Fearless Foresight Leader
A proven expert in their field seeking to stand out with their new foresight practices.	Already bought into the value of formal foresight education, this person sought out a specific program to learn from the best.	A leader that deeply values foresight and is seeking to build foresight fluency in their own teams or organization.	A foresight student looking to distinguish themselves from other foresight learners and build a professional brand.	Looking to stand out in their field, the academic is seeking out new ways to stretch their research and advance cutting-edge projects.	A well-rounded foresight leader, practitioner and teacher, stretched to maintain rigor and contribute to the development of the field.
					
Needs: A community to plug in to practical foresight advice, SME, and peer support.	Needs: A supportive community of foresight leaders and opportunities to contribute to the field	Needs: Customized and scalable solutions to train staff and support their foresight capabilities.	Needs: Opportunities to build their professional resume and promote their thought-leadership.	Needs: Ready to go opportunities to apply new methodologies or concepts to advance their research.	Needs: Increased capacity to maintain operations and maximize new partnerships.

External Customer:

Understanding their needs and aspirations informed strategies for expanding external partnerships

Internal Customers:

Understanding internal partnership opportunities and implications for implementation & change management

Insights & Opportunities



In addition to understanding learner needs, we assessed the landscape in which the foresight program operates to understand other factors at play that could impact the future of the program and inform the strategy. Key themes included identifying critical stakeholders, revenue streams, program capacity, campus relationships, and recognition in the foresight sector/ field. Key insights were re-framed into actionable opportunities to work towards a preferred future for the foresight program.

Students, Alumni & Partners	Revenue & Capacity	Campus Relationships	Sector Recognition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New growth in the program is driving larger classes & changes to program experience - Certificate program participants are less connected - Limited repeat project partners - Students & alumni value and seek the community offered by UH Foresight - Limited online community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Certificate and project revenue has big returns for the program - Proportionally, less revenue is earned through traditional masters program tuition - With 2.5-3 Paid FTEs program is stretched and capacity hinders growth - Program has limited experience with philanthropic & research grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program has flown under the radar for nearly 20 years and was recently moved to a new college - University has made a significant investment in a new Division of Energy and Innovation - Limited relationships and collaboration with other departments or colleges. - Continued reality that programs must make money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recent accreditation and global recognition by the World Futures Studies Federation - Regular APF Winners & foresight fellowships - Growing number of students choosing to use foresight in their field of choice - High quality but under tapped student work and expertise

Stakeholder Engagement	Sustainable Revenue	Campus Visibility + Partnership	Thought-Leadership
<p>BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY THAT PROVIDES UNIQUE VALUE TO ALL</p> <p><i>Establishing a comprehensive community for all Houston Foresight stakeholders, offering a range of in-person and virtual engagements, that drives new opportunities for partnership.</i></p>	<p>DIVERSIFYING REVENUE THAT POWERS FORESIGHT OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM</p> <p><i>Expanding partnerships with private business and philanthropy through a suite of foresight opportunities (learning, research and engagement); focusing on opportunities with high returns, limited red-tape, and mission alignment.</i></p>	<p>GROWING UNIVERSITY ALLIES TO AMPLIFY OUR ACADEMIC RIGOR</p> <p><i>Exposing undergrad students to foresight through personal futures to build new pipelines for student engagement in foresight and expand collaborative research relationships to build foresight into other departments.</i></p>	<p>DOUBLING DOWN ON THE PROGRAM'S LEADERSHIP IN THE FIELD</p> <p><i>Ensuring visibility of thought-leadership through strong branding, toolkits and publications to ensure we're top of mind for external & internal partners.</i></p>

Setting a Vision for the Future



Leveraging the futures research, personas, insights and opportunities, a manifesto was established to serve as a guiding value for the preferred future of foresight education and the program. From here, a strategy framework was defined to provide a roadmap for implementation efforts. Details on the three primary strategies are provided in the following pages.

Manifesto for the Future of Foresight Education

At **Houston Foresight**, we're **amplifying the power of foresight** by fostering **vibrant internal collaborations**, providing **leading foresight practitioner tools**, and **forging unbreakable bonds** with students and alumni.

Join us as we build a community that expands minds to create positive futures and shape the leaders of the future.

Strategic Framework

Applying an adaptive approach to strategy, we created a strategic framework to advance the future of the foresight education program. This structure defines key objectives for the strategy along with a series of primary and secondary strategies to implement. As opposed to a traditional waterfall strategic plan, the framework provides more opportunity to adjust and evolve the implementation of the strategy based on new information or unexpected challenges.

HOUSTON FORESIGHT PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

Building Blocks of a Comprehensive Approach to Partnership



PRIMARY STRATEGIES + ROADMAP

**how we get there: bringing strategy to life with three initiatives through an action plan
roadmap**

Strategy 1. Virtual Foresight Community

To harness the power of the most valuable asset in the foresight community, our people, the first strategy is to establish a stronger online community for the program that cultivates a sense of belonging, vulnerability, and continuous learning. Because the UH Foresight program is exclusively virtual, building a tangible, authentic community is paramount. This community serves as a front door for new students or prospects, while providing engagement throughout the program experience and into alumni engagement. We created a prototype for this platform. By cultivating this community, the strategy also helps the program establish a robust pipeline for partnerships, both internal and external, and enhance the brand's reputation for foresight excellence.

We're under leveraging our most powerful resource: **people.**
Our community is craving connection.

Strategic Objective: Build a hub for the localized (program) foresight community.



What is the UH Foresight Fluency Portal?

The UH Foresight Fluency Portal cultivates community and innovation in Foresight by providing a platform for the UH community, professional certificate participants, and students and alumni of the UH Master's in Foresight program to explore personal futures, connect with other foresight professionals, collaborate on projects, and workshop and discuss emerging ideas in foresight.



The online hub embraces students at orientation, encourages and empowers them through graduation, and continues to equip and support alumni as early and career professionals. More details are provided later in the presentation.

Strategy 2. Bite-sized Continuous Learning

To address the challenges associated with a niche field in which many foresight practitioners are applying foresight within a specific industry, our second strategy focuses on creating life-long foresight learning through a variety of fee-based, bite-sized content. By introducing a suite of paid content, we not only address the loneliness in incorporating foresight but also add a new revenue stream for the foresight program and provide the program with a platform to monetize program-specific tools and templates through an annual subscription model. This strategy meets unique stakeholder needs at an appropriate value, providing an avenue for sustainable growth and enhanced program impact.

Bringing foresight to your field can be lonely.

Learners are looking for practical supports to stay relevant in the field.

Strategic Objective: Offer a suite of paid content for continuous learning.

Continuous Learning

A central resource for continued learning and access to professional tools.

- Content library for free downloads and paid materials (templates, games, etc.)
- Online Learning Courses
- Recorded webinars
- Sector Circles

Cost: **A la carte pricing**

Foresight in Action

Online course | [Enroll Now](#)



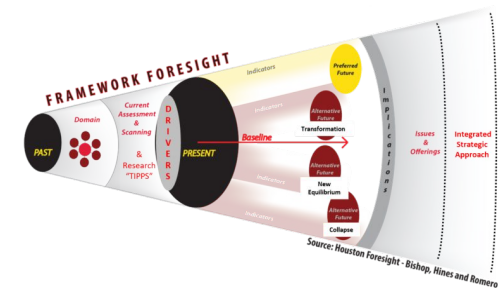
Resource Library

A subscription to stay connected to new projects, updated materials and

- Houston Framework Projects library
- Regularly updated, downloadable templates
- Monthly trend report

Cost: Annual subscription

First 2 years are free to Masters' alumni



Strategy 3. Foresight in All Fields of Study

To fully harness the power of foresight, our third strategy focused on embedding foresight into various fields of study across the university. Recognizing myriad opportunities represented by potential internal partnerships, we propose integrating foresight into key campus initiatives, research departments across campus, and within academic and career counseling services. By cultivating these internal partnerships, the program may unlock new research grants, enhance the program's brand, and foster growth in project partnerships. This raises the overall exposure of students and teachers to the foresight field, supporting broader awareness and application of foresight in more fields of study.

We know foresight brings value to all fields,
we need **them** to know it, too.

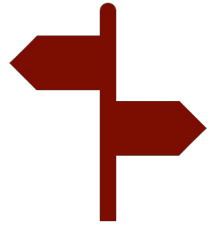
Post-secondary education is a goldmine for foresight application.

Strategic Objective: Amplifying foresight across the post-secondary institution



Prototype Experiences
We created two prototypes of experiences aligned to this strategy. The first is a workshop to incorporating foresight into career advising. The second is a possible symposium and workshop to explore the future of water through foresight tools such as experiential scenarios and futures games.

Early Wins + Long Term Success



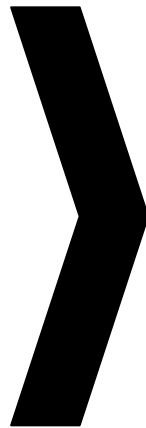
Finally, we provided the client with a roadmap, in the form of an action plan, to bring these three strategies to life through short and long term initiatives. Using an Objective and Key Result (OKR) framework, a robust action plan was established including long-term objectives and shorter-term milestones. The graphic below summarizes the partnership action plan by showing key short term milestones and longer goals to increase revenue, improve program recognition, and expand the application of foresight across the post-secondary institution.

6 MONTHS: QUICK WINS

Online community platform decided, developed and tested (integrated with Activation Lab events)

Package branded Houston Foresight Framework tools & templates into a workbook - available for download.

Align a Masters class (ex. Foresight Intro) with a defined campus research partnership (ex. future of energy)

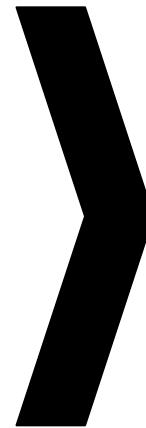


1 YEAR: FOUNDATION BUILDING

Launch new community platform as part of the 50th year anniversary. Extend invitations to all alumni

Expand paid content through alumni submissions, public projects, and intern created material (ex. monthly trends)

Leverage Masters class (ex. Advanced Research) to create a toolkit for personal futures; offer free workshops to career and college advisors



3-5 YEARS: PATHWAY TO BIG WINS

A continuous pipeline for new students, certificate participants and continued thought-leadership in the foresight field.

Increased revenue, personally and employer funded, to expand life long learning and application of foresight among professionals that supports program growth.

Increased research grants and improved recognition of Houston Foresight's academic leadership by UH, college/department leaders to ensure program sustainability.

Artifact

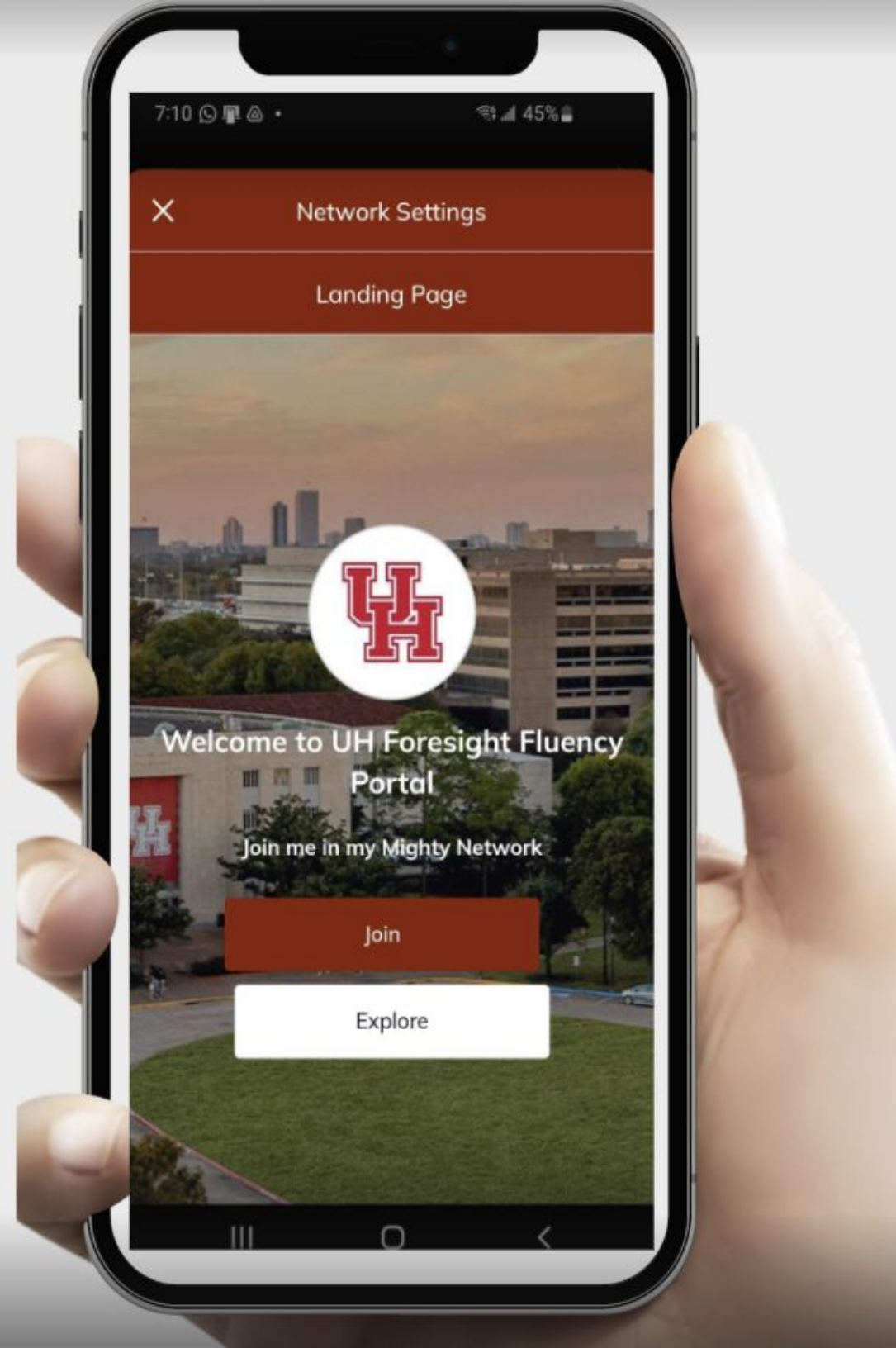
***Where imagination meets reality,
and every step leads to a new
dimension of possibilities.***

The following slides provide a preview of the primary project artifact - a prototyped online portal for the UH Foresight Program developed using Mighty Networks, an app designed to build and support online communities.

Welcome to the virtual UH Foresight Community.

This platform demonstrates a seamless integration of the different facets of the Houston Foresight ecosystem, providing a path for stakeholders to find community, generate revenue, and expand the Foresight Program's influence throughout the UH Campus Community.

Houston Foresight, graduate students, certificate participants, and UH students and faculty are invited to join the Foresight Fluency Portal upon introduction to the program. Depending on their role, their access to different levels of content within the portal differs.



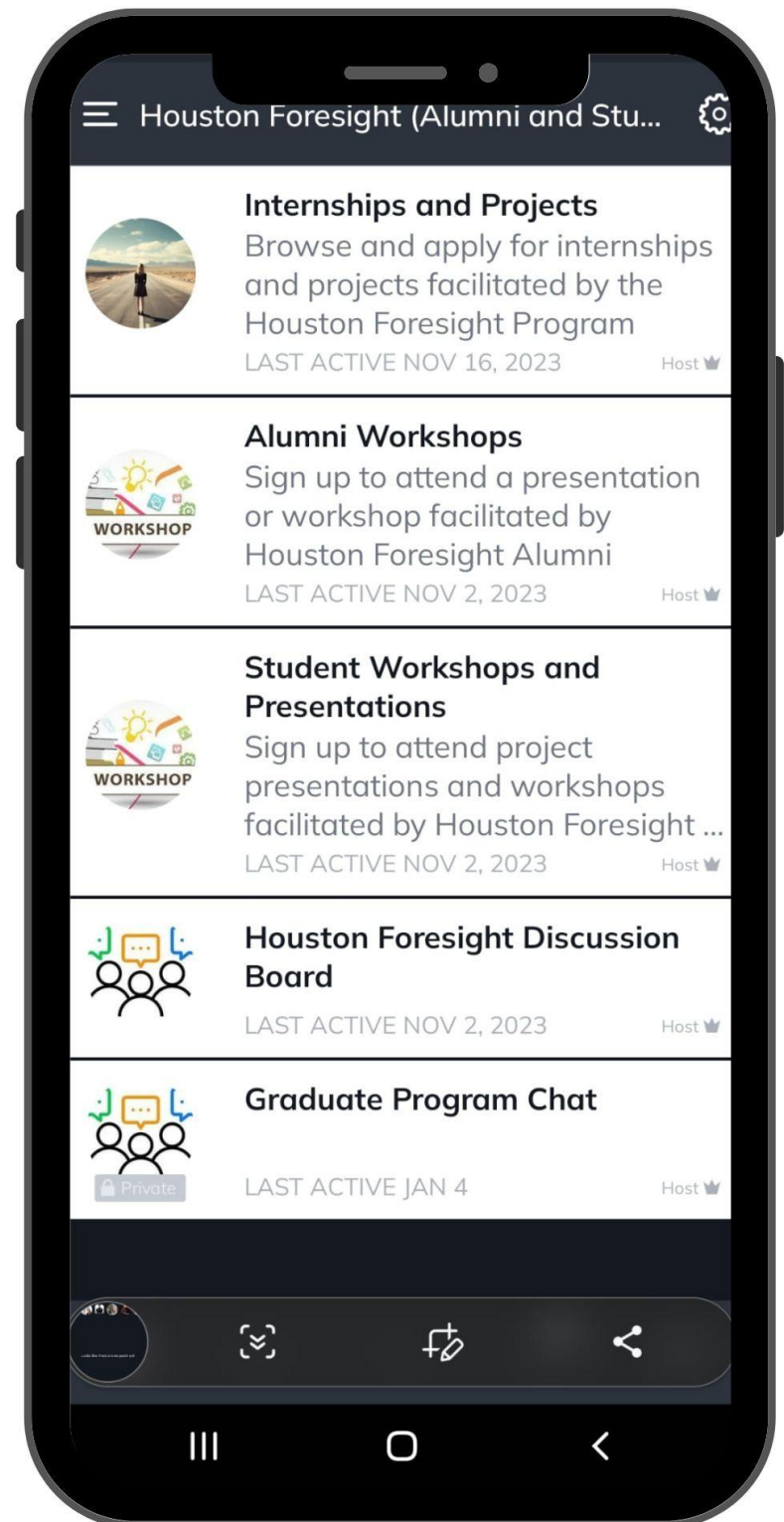
Houston Foresight Community

Student and Alumni Hub

The Houston Foresight student hub capitalizes on the existing robust graduate student Community dynamic and provides a deeper level of engagement by integrating existing aspects of the program into a single point of entry:

- Listing and application point for internships and projects (currently managed by UH Foresight administration)
- Invitation to and opportunities to present workshops (the emerging UH Activation Lab)
- Discussion boards (currently housed in the Future Slack community)

Most importantly, the Houston Foresight hub provides a safe container for professional vulnerability as students and alumni workshop ideas with each other and hone their teaching and facilitation skills within the Houston Foresight ecosystem.



Houston Foresight Community

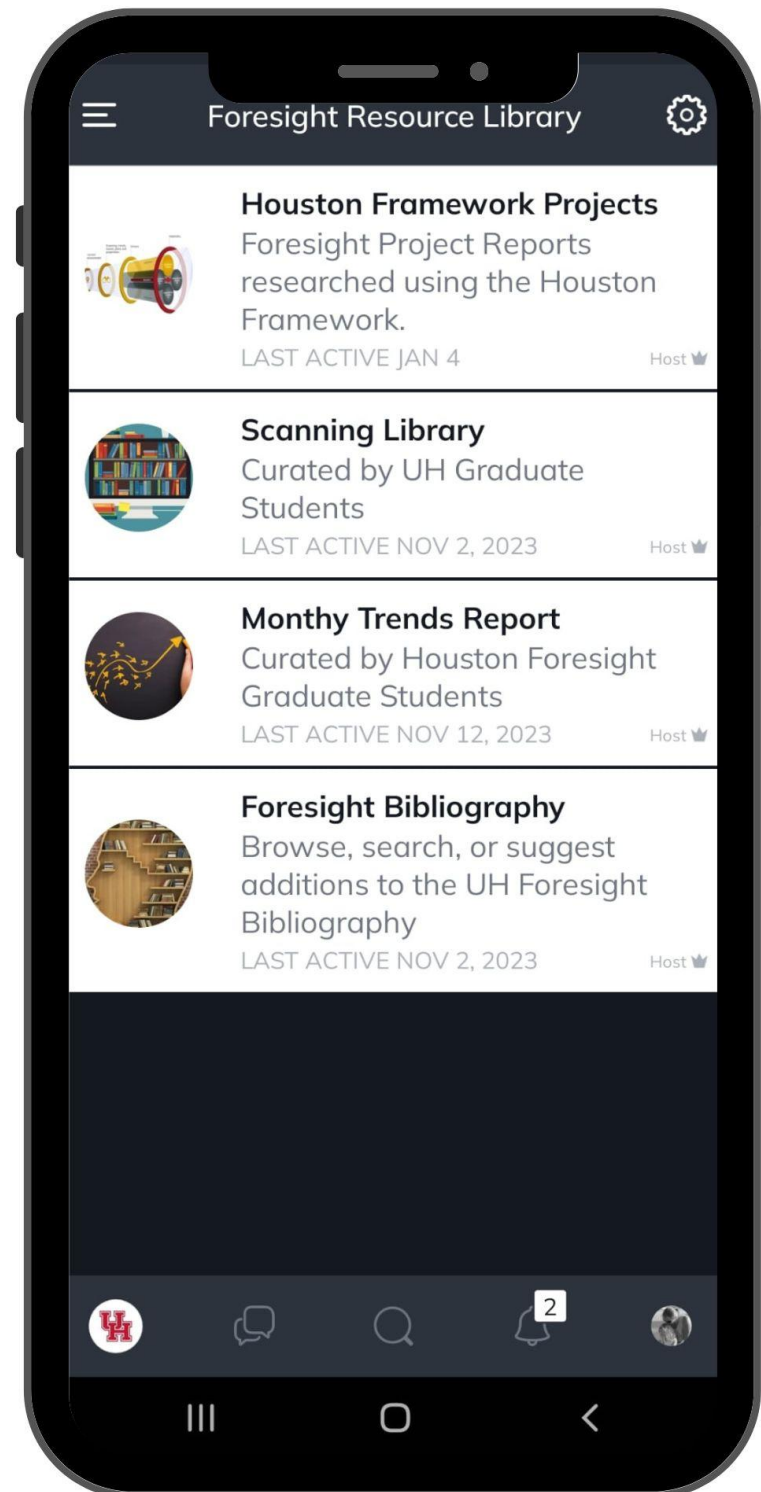
Foresight Resource Library

The Foresight Resource Library is free for students and recent alumni and is available as paid content for more experienced alumni and certificate participants.

The library houses:

- publicly available Houston Foresight projects including paid group projects, projects generated by certificate participants, and notable student work.
- Scanning Library (curated by a team of students and recent alumni)
- Monthly Trends Report (curated by a team of students and recent alumni)

The library provides a platform for students and recent alumni to gain experience and build their professional portfolios with work that elevates the Foresight Program's influence and branding.



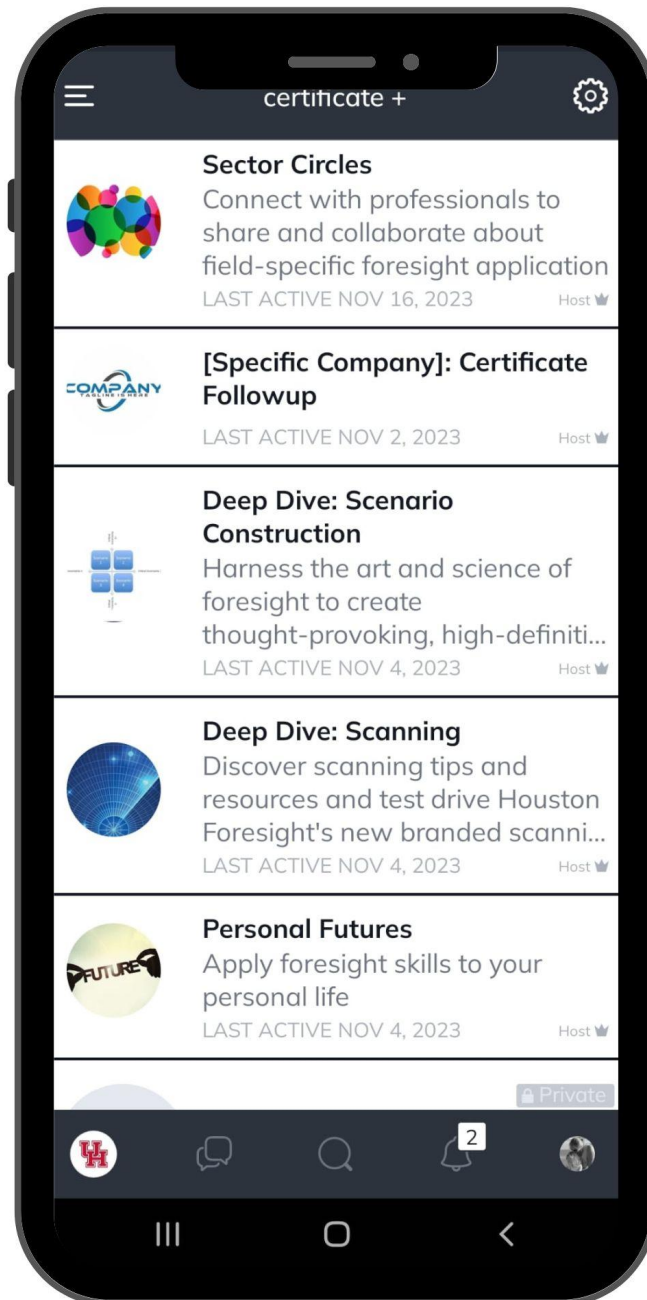
Certificate+

Engagement and Paid Content

Other paid content targeted to past certificate participants includes:

- Sector circles, where professionals connect and collaborate with other foresight practitioners in their fields;
- Customized online workshops for companies wishing to receive more foresight training;
- synchronous online modules to deepen skills in specific areas.

The Certificate+ program builds robust partnerships with foresight-friendly organizations while providing opportunities for clients to consume student- and alumni-generated work.



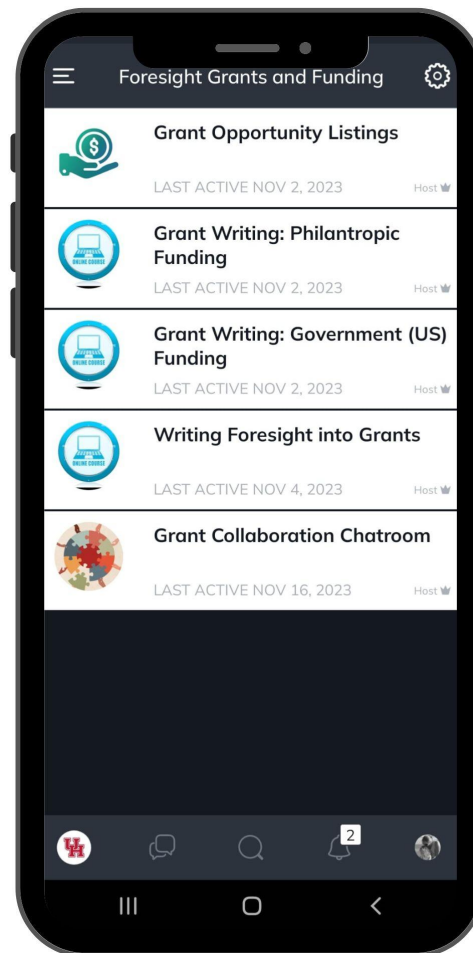
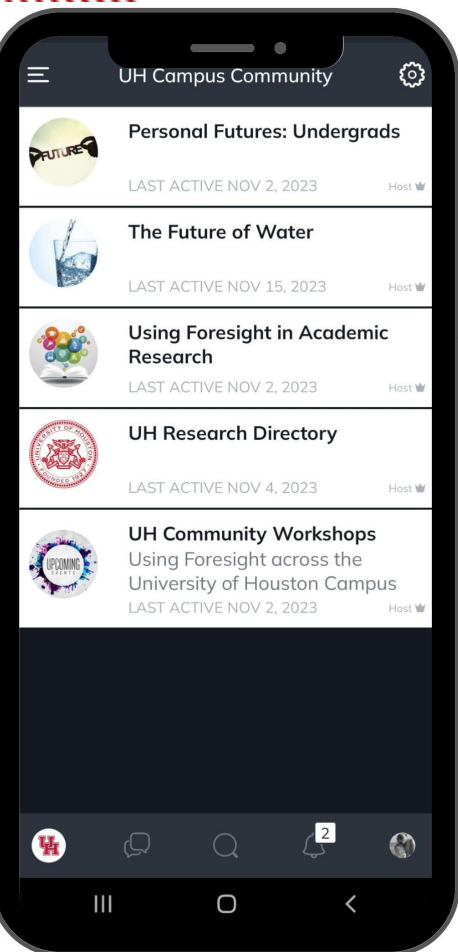
Campus Connections

Attainment of internal partnership goals begins at on-campus events and guides foresight-curious students and faculty to the Campus Connections Hub, curated and managed by graduate students and alumni focused on personal futures and interested in interdisciplinary academic foresight work.

The Campus community section includes:

- online workshops guiding undergraduates through personal futures modules,
- Exploration areas that will parallel on-campus symposia featuring “the future of...” topics
- Workshops for faculty interested in incorporating foresight into their academic research

Campus partnerships build program recognition and engage the wider community, cultivating foresight fluency and potentiating pipeline learners and consumers of foresight practice.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Collins, J., & Porras, J. I. (2004). *Built to last: Successful habits of visionary companies*. Harper Business.

Eisler, R. (1998). *The chalice and the Blade*. Thorsons.

GoStudent. (n.d.). The End of School as You Know It: Education in 2050. <https://hello1.gostudent.org/en/education-in-2050/>

Gros, M., & Eisen, N. (2021). Digitizing civic spaces amid the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Heltzel, G., & Laurin, K. (2020). Polarization in America: Two possible futures. *Current opinion in behavioral sciences*, 34, 179-184.

Houston Foresight Program Team. (2019). (rep.). *Changing Demand for Higher Ed*. Houston, TX: University of Houston

Mintzberg, H., Ahlstrand, B. W., & Lampel, J. (1998). *Strategy safari: The Complete Guide through the wilds of strategic management*. Prentice Hall Europe.

Osterwalder, A., & Pigneur, Y. (2010). *Business model generation: A handbook for visionaries, game changers, and Challengers*. Wiley.

Sloan, J. (2006). *Learning to think strategically: Connecting the dots*. Elsevier.

Stanford 2025. (n.d.). <https://www.stanford2025.com/>

Zalman, A. (2017). *Strategic Narrative: A Framework for Accelerating Innovation*. Amy Zalman.

**Our community is our future.
*Let's start building it today.***

Thank you.

For questions or more information on this project, please reach out to:

amy weber amygweber@gmail.com

Ingrid Furtado ingridfurtado@gmail.com

Nicci Obert NicoleObert@gmail.com