LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

October 8–10, 2026 | Providence, Rhode Island

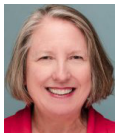
Welcome!

We eagerly look forward to our higher-education conferences because of the cordial, talented, and dedicated people we meet. We are especially excited to welcome you to the Leadership in Higher Education Conference and look forward to seeing you at many more. We have confidence you will return to your campus with new ideas, new enthusiasm, and new connections. Let us know if there's anything we can do to improve your experience.

Advisory Board

We sincerely appreciate the guidance of our advisory board in helping organize Magna Publications' tenth annual conference for academic leaders. Their contributions were invaluable in shaping the conference structure, including selecting track topics, conducting a blind review of session proposals, and providing advice on various aspects of the program. We are especially looking forward to the concurrent sessions presented by our board members.

David A. Bucci, EdD
Program Director
Project Kitty Hawk
UNC



Kathy Burlingame, EdD
Dean
Galen College of Nursing

Russell Carpenter, PhD
Assistant Provost and Professor
Eastern Kentucky University

Edna B. Chun, DM
Chief Learning Officer
HigherEd Talent

Stephanie Delaney, PhD
Vice President of Instruction
Renton Technical College

Oliver Dreon, PhD
Professor
Millersville University of Pennsylvania

Craig Hlavac, EdD
Associate Dean
Southern Connecticut State University

Gretchen Oltman, JD, PhD
Associate Professor
Creighton University

Magna Staff

The Magna onsite team is here to assist you throughout the conference. Please see us if we can be of service.

Mark Beyer
Customer Service Manager

Ryan Colwell
Marketing Coordinator

Lindsay Drozdik
Publication & Event Support Specialist

Tierney King
Content Manager

General Information

Wi-Fi

Enjoy complimentary Wi-Fi using:

Network: **Omni Meeting**

Password: **LHE26$** *(case sensitive)*

Open a browser, select "I have a code," and enter the passcode.

Registration/Check-In

Be sure to check-in at the conference registration desk on Level 1 at Stateside Suite when you first arrive to pick up your name badge, meal tickets, and other conference materials.

Name Badges

Name badges are required for all sessions, meals, and plenary presentations. Please wear your name badge at all times. If you lose your name badge, please see a conference staff member at the registration desk for a replacement.

Download the Swapcard — Smart Event App

1. Download Swapcard – Smart Event App from the Apple App Store or Google Play. Scan the QR code to download the Swapcard app.
2. Open the app and select Start Now.
3. You'll be directed to sign in. Enter the same email address you used to register for the conference.
4. Once you submit your email address, you'll receive a verification code in your email inbox. Enter the code to log in.
5. Select Magna Publications, then choose Leadership in Higher Education Conference under Upcoming Events.
6. Start exploring!

Meals

Your registration includes a reception on Thursday, a continental breakfast and plated lunch on Friday, and a continental breakfast and to-go lunch on Saturday. If you selected any dietary restrictions on your registration, you will be provided with special meal tickets. Present these tickets to the hotel staff at lunch.

Exhibitors/Sponsors

Visit the exhibitor displays on Level 1, Narragansett Pre-Function to learn about products and services for your campus.

Networking Opportunities

- Attend the New Attendee Orientation
- Attend the reception
- Attend as many sessions as possible
- Use the breaks between sessions to continue conversations
- Share a meal with someone you don't know
- Use the activity wall or attendee/speaker tab within the conference app to plan or connect with other attendees beyond the conference
- Tweet #LHE26

Stay Connected

Connect with other attendees using the conference hashtag #LHE265, and stay connected with us all year by following us on social media.

Conference Hashtag: **#LHE26**

facebook.com/MagnaPubs

@Magnapubs

Linkedin.com/company/604209/

Session Tracks

The Leadership in Higher Education Conference focuses on both academic and administrative leadership with six tracks. Our interactive 60-minute sessions engage and inform attendees in these six unique topical areas, color-coded and designated at the beginning of each session listing.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

This track shares ways to respond to campus issues, such as structural diversity, change management, transformation of institutional culture, diversity skills and competency training programs and supporting and retaining diverse staff and faculty.

Institutional Culture & Climate

The culture of a university consists of the set of values that helps the university's faculty, staff, students, and administrators understand which actions are considered acceptable and which actions are considered unacceptable. Climate looks at the present moment: what is the atmosphere like for members of the faculty, staff, students, and administrators? This track includes presentations on managing and improving institutional culture and climate and dealing with the problems that arise at the department and college level.

Leadership & Professional Development

Sessions in this track focus on building and refining innovative approaches to higher-education leadership in support of student success, building faculty collaboration, addressing conflict resolution, promoting innovation through research, fostering needed curricular change, mentoring faculty, establishing equitable promotion and tenure processes, and building a positive working and learning environment. Sessions in this track may also address new trends or developments in higher education.

Student Retention & Success

Student success is a gauge of institutional success, and—as such— it is an indicator of the institution's overall product. Presentations in this track focus on overcoming challenges to retention, such as escalating costs, declining state support, and a shrinking student population; creating successful retention strategies through student-focused efforts in admissions, financial aid, academic advising, course management, or residential living; and promoting student success by supporting high-risk students, adult learners, academic assistance, health and wellness counseling, and more.

What New Leaders Need to Know

This track is a boot camp for new leaders. Sessions within the track are specific to the main skills required for successful leadership at a higher-education institution, including hiring, development and retention, budgeting and finance, academic policymaking, program development, evaluation and assessment, mediation and problem solving, fundraising and development, communication, and mentoring.

Special Topics in Higher-Education Leadership

With the complexity of leadership roles and responsibilities at different institutions, sometimes our work doesn't fit neatly into a single category. Sessions in this track represent topics not clearly defined in another track.

Sessions

Please keep in mind that sessions are available on a first-come, first-served basis and seating may be limited. Please be prompt; some sessions will fill early. Please have your second and third choices ready. If you attend a session and realize it's not for you, please feel free to leave and join another session.

Evaluation

You will receive an electronic survey after the conference via email. Please take note of the sessions you attend and complete the survey! Your feedback helps us improve future programs.

Conference Schedule

Thursday, Oct 8

Registration Hours
Noon–5:00 PM
Floor 1, Stateside Suite

Exhibitor Hours
12:30 – 7:30 PM
Floor 1, Narragansett Pre-Function

Preconference Workshops
1:00 – 3:30 PM
Floor 3, Kent Room, Newport Room, Providence I, Providence III

New Attendee Orientation
4:15–4:45 PM

Conference Welcome & Opening Plenary
4:45–6:00 PM

Reception and Exhibitor Mingle
6:00–7:30 PM

Friday, Oct 9

Continental Breakfast
7:30–8:30 AM

Sessions
8:45–9:45 AM

Sessions
10:00–11:00 AM

Sessions
11:15 AM–12:15 PM

Lunch
12:30–1:30 PM

Sessions
1:45–2:45 PM

Sessions
3:00–4:00 PM

Magna Publication Session
4:00–4:30 PM

Saturday, Oct 10

Continental Breakfast
7:30–8:30 AM

Closing Plenary
8:45–10:00 AM

Sessions
10:15–11:15 AM

Sessions
11:30 AM–12:30 PM

Lunch — Grab & Go
12:45 PM

Exhibitors/Sponsors
Visit the exhibitor displays on Floor 1 in the Narragansett Pre-Function to learn about products and services for your campus.

Exhibitor Hours

Thursday, October 8	Friday, October 9	Saturday, October 10
12:30 – 7:30 PM	7:30 AM – 4:00 PM	7:30 AM – 1:30 PM

Thursday, October 8

Pre-Conference Workshops

*Separate registration and fee required

1:00–3:30 PM

Leading in the Age of AI: Rethinking Leadership

Stephanie Delaney, PhD

AI is changing not only how work gets done, but what leaders are capable of doing. For higher-education leaders navigating constrained resources and increasing demands, AI offers an opportunity to expand personal and institutional capacity, but only if leaders learn to use it thoughtfully. This preconference workshop will explore what it means to become an AI-empowered leader: using AI as a thought partner, learning accelerator, and source of capacity while retaining the human judgment, curiosity, empathy, and critical thinking that effective leadership requires. Participants will explore how AI can help leaders think more deeply, analyze complex problems, learn faster, and create capacity for the human-centered work of leadership. This workshop will also examine the responsibilities and risks that accompany this new capacity, including academic integrity, bias and inequity, privacy, environmental impact, workforce reskilling, and overreliance on AI-generated information. Through discussion, reflection, real-world scenarios, and hands-on experimentation, participants will consider how leaders can navigate these tensions while using AI to strengthen their leadership and expand what their institutions are able to accomplish.

Room: Floor 3, Kent Room

Coaching Skills for Academic Leaders: Bringing Out the Best in Yourself and Others

Susan Robison

In this workshop, you will practice several powerful brain-based coaching skills drawn from improv games to increase your skills and confidence for leadership that matters: transformational coaching conversations that build institutional collegiality, civility, and engagement. Attendees will learn a structure for shaping such conversations (ASK – Assess client motivation, Set agenda, Keep success continuous), contribute to a facilitator/volunteer demonstration of these skills, and then practice them in dyads.

Room: Floor 3, Providence III

Designing Strategic Convenings for Faculty and Leadership Development

Russell Carpenter

At a time when higher education faces unprecedented challenges, faculty engagement and career satisfaction are critical to the daily vitality and long-term success of our institutions. It is important, then, that faculty leadership development (and faculty development broadly) not feel like an obligation. How do we move away from routine gatherings and toward dynamic experiences that genuinely connect and engage faculty? This workshop introduces academic leaders to the art and science of "convening"—defined by strategic design firm Shook Kelley (Kelley, 2024; Shook Kelley, n.d.) as bringing people together around a space, idea, or experience to create powerful "bonfire moments" that build deep connectedness. Drawing on Gallup's (2026) research on employee engagement and Shook Kelley's convening frameworks, participants will explore their current institutional practices and learn how physical spaces, intentional design, and relational psychology impact faculty behavior(s). Rather than simply talking about engagement, participants will experience it.

Room: Floor 3, Providence I

Leadership in an Era of Distrust: Rebuilding Confidence Through Transparency, Communication, and Community Engagement

Courtney Plotts

Higher education leaders are navigating an environment of increasing public skepticism, institutional scrutiny, and rapidly evolving stakeholder expectations. Building and maintaining trust has become one of the most important responsibilities of academic leaders as they work to foster confidence among faculty, staff, students, governing boards, and the communities they serve. This workshop examines practical leadership strategies for strengthening institutional credibility through transparent decision-making, authentic communication, and meaningful community partnerships. Participants will explore how trust is established, how it can be damaged during periods of change or crisis, and how leaders can intentionally rebuild confidence through

consistent actions and ethical leadership practices. This workshop will also highlight approaches to navigating difficult conversations, communicating during uncertainty, managing institutional reputation, and cultivating collaborative relationships that reinforce the mission of higher education.

Room: Floor 3, Newport Room

4:15–4:45 PM

New Attendee Orientation

Ryan Colwell and Tierney King, Magna Publications

New attendees are encouraged to attend our brief orientation about navigating the conference, expectations, making the most of your experience, and upcoming Magna events.

Room: Floor 1, Narragansett Ballroom

4:45–5:00 PM

Conference Welcome

Advisory Board Member

Room: Floor 1, Narragansett Ballroom

5:00–6:00 PM

Opening Plenary

Leadership in an Ever-Changing World

Sean Slade

Higher education is changing rapidly and relentlessly. Our institutions, systems, and expectations are evolving faster than any single leader can fully predict or control. In this era, the traditional "Captain of the Ship," who leads primarily through authority and expertise, is quickly ending. In this opening plenary, attendees will explore a new leadership mindset—one that asks leaders to shift from Captain to Navigator, and ultimately, to Explorer. This shift does not abandon expertise or experience; rather, it reframes leadership as a more human and relational practice that is grounded in authenticity, humility, and trust. At the heart of this evolution is a deeper understanding of emotion as a leadership asset, not a liability. For generations, leaders have been told to suppress their emotions, separating the personal from the professional, and "leaving feelings at the door." But in times of ambiguity and change, emotional intelligence (EQ) is essential. Our words shape our mindsets, our mindsets shape our behaviors, and our behaviors define the kind of leaders we become.

Room: Floor 1, Narragansett Ballroom

6:00–7:30 PM

Reception and Exhibitor Mingle

Enjoy hors d'oeuvres and drinks while networking with other attendees. This is also a good opportunity to visit the exhibitors who have products and services that support teaching and learning.

Room: Floor 1, Narragansett Pre-Function

Thank you to our Exhibitors

Lightcast

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Friday, October 9

7:30–8:30 AM

Breakfast

Room: Floor 1, Narragansett Ballroom

8:45–9:45 AM

More Than Meetings: How Jam Sessions & Clubs Impact Culture

Lisa Brennan, Cathy McKay, and Crystal Neumann

Institutional Culture & Climate

When faculty and staff feel connected, culture stops being abstract and starts being lived. This session explores how non-traditional engagement strategies such as faculty jam sessions, virtual holiday parties, book clubs, and social impact programming can intentionally shape institutional climate. Attendees will discover how small, joyful practices can have an outsized impact on trust, collaboration, and retention. Perfect for leaders looking to build culture without burnout. This session blends strategy with play!

Room: Floor 3, Blackstone

When Culture Breaks: Leadership Strategies for Rebuilding Institutional Trust

Millicent Lee

Institutional Culture & Climate

Higher education leaders are navigating increasingly complex institutional environments that require both strategic decision-making and people-centered leadership. This session introduces Strategic Compassion, a leadership framework that integrates accountability, relational awareness, and structural understanding to support sustainable institutional culture change. Drawing from leadership experiences across cross-campus initiatives and community partnerships, the session explores how leaders can translate institutional values into operational practice.

Room: Floor 3, Bristol

From AI Curious to AI-Informed: Becoming a CLEAR Leader

Stephanie Delaney

Special Topics in Higher-Education Leadership

Most of us use AI to help us produce things. What happens when we use it to help us think? AI can be more than a tool for efficiency—it can become a powerful thought partner for leaders. In this session, explore what it takes to become an AI-informed leader: one who uses AI to expand reflection, challenge assumptions, and explore possibilities while remaining grounded in purpose, values, judgment, and accountability. Come ready to rethink your relationship with AI, and bring your laptop or tablet for the hands on activities.

Room: Floor 3, Kent

How Do You Like to Be Appreciated? Rethinking Recognition in Our Workplaces

Vicki Bautista and Gretchen Oltman

Leadership & Professional Development

Participants will complete a brief Exploration of Meaningful Recognition Preferences Assessment to identify how they personally experience appreciation in the workplace. The session will include structured small-group discussions that invite participants to compare recognition preferences, reflect on lived experiences within higher education environments, and consider how recognition is typically expressed on their campuses. A facilitated large-group dialogue will surface key themes and common challenges, helping participants identify where recognition efforts fall short and how leaders can make appreciation more meaningful, inclusive, and effective.

Room: Floor 3, Newport

= Advisory Board Sessions

Meaningful Collaboration Through the Art of Delegation and Appreciation

Kristie Cerling

What New Leaders Need to Know

Because higher education leaders are increasingly asked to "do more with less," delegation and appreciation are universally relevant leadership practices. This session will help higher education leaders identify what to delegate, what to retain, and how to set clear expectations while maintaining accountability. Through guided reflection, discussion, and real-world scenarios, participants will apply a practical framework for delegating with clarity and appreciation. Attendees will leave with strategies to reduce overload, strengthen collaboration, improve morale, and create more opportunities for faculty and staff to contribute and lead.

Room: Floor 3, Washington

Strategies for Supporting, Invigorating, and Retaining Mid-Career Faculty

Brooke Griffin and Sarah Shrader

Leadership & Professional Development

Turnover in higher education, fueled by workplace stress and burnout, jeopardizes institutional stability and workforce development, with 65% of faculty considering leaving their institution and 45% contemplating departing academia. Academic leaders play a critical role in supporting mid-career faculty as they navigate questions of purpose and engagement. Since its June 2023 launch, a nine-month hybrid Mid-Career Faculty Recharge Program has enrolled three cohorts. Findings highlight evidence-informed, scalable strategies—including topics, activities, structured reflections, coaching, and peer connection. Academic leaders can implement the essential tenets of this program across disciplines to strengthen career vitality, retention, and institutional resilience.

Room: Floor 3, South County

Mentoring Faculty through Reflective Teaching to Support Student Success

Nichole Barta and Juliane Mora

Student Retention and Success

Improving student success requires faculty to examine how their teaching practices influence student learning and development. Academic leaders and teaching centers play an important role in mentoring faculty to engage in reflective and scholarly teaching practices that support this work. This session explores strategies for guiding faculty to examine instructional decisions using multiple sources of evidence, including student learning data, formative feedback, and course artifacts. Participants will also consider approaches that support faculty reflection, peer dialogue, and instructional refinement. The session will introduce practical tools, including a structured reflective practice cycle, mentoring guides, and professional development approaches that help faculty translate reflection into intentional improvements in teaching and student learning.

Room: Floor 3, Providence I5

Designing Learning Plans and Projects to Support Leadership Development

Russell Carpenter, Luke Dodd, Charlie Hughes, Kerem Ozan Kalkan, Randi Polk, JP Stearns, Starr Wentzel, and Sara Zeigler

Leadership & Professional Development

How can institutions build faculty leadership development programs that are timely, responsive, and immediately transferable to a range of academic contexts? This session explores the power of experiential learning design in faculty leadership development. Using Eastern Kentucky University's (EKU) Provost's Faculty Internship Program as a model, panelists will share a hands-on approach where faculty develop applicable skills by actively engaging in critical campus strategic initiatives tailored to their career goals. Led by EKU's Provost, Assistant Provost, and members of the current Intern cohort, this session examines how to successfully align individual faculty growth with institutional priorities to build long-term leadership capacity. Attendees will explore the design of impactful learning plans, reflect on transferable leadership principles, and leave with a framework to adapt on their own campuses.

Room: Floor 3, Providence III

10:00-11:00 AM

From Evaluation to Elevation: Coaching for Confidence and Performance

Jennifer Noble and Jeffrey Stevens

Institutional Culture & Climate

Higher education leaders increasingly face challenges related to employee burnout, disengagement, and retention. This session introduces a coaching-centered leadership framework designed to build confidence, clarify expectations, and improve performance among faculty and staff. Grounded in research on psychological safety, feedback, and leadership development, participants will learn practical strategies for transforming underperformance into growth through relationship-based coaching. Attendees will leave with communication scripts and assessment strategies to implement immediately within their institutions.

Room: Floor 3, Blackstone

Exploring the Phenomenon of Underrepresentation of Women in Executive-Level Academic Leadership Positions

Viktoriya Stavesky

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Despite decades of progress, women remain significantly underrepresented in executive academic leadership roles. Drawing on a phenomenological study of women leaders across private, public, and community colleges in the Western United States, this session examines the systemic lack of institutional support shaping women's pathways to roles above the dean level. Participants will explore lived experiences, persistent barriers, and the informal strategies women use to navigate leadership trajectories, while engaging in critical dialogue about how institutions can move from individual resilience to structural responsibility.

Room: Floor 3, Bristol

Faculty-Staff Partnerships as a Leadership Lever: Designing, Sustaining, and Scaling Collaborative Work

Erin Kelley, Liz Paushter, and David Szymanski

Special Topics in Higher Education Leadership

As leadership roles in higher education become increasingly complex, much of the work that drives institutional effectiveness does not fit neatly into traditional faculty or staff silos. This session explores how intentional faculty–staff partnerships can serve as a critical leadership lever for advancing institutional initiatives and culture. Utilizing adult cohort-learning models, the presenters will share evidence-based practices for fostering and sustaining key relationships to drive change. Drawing on real institutional cases, participants will examine the conditions, attributes, and leadership behaviors that enable productive collaboration across roles—and the risks when those conditions are absent. The session situates faculty-staff partnership work within broader leadership challenges, including governance, organizational structure, accountability, and change management.

Room: Floor 3, Kent

Building Collaborative Academic Departments: A Systematic Approach to Preventing and Navigating Conflict

Patricia Gagliardi

Leadership & Professional Development

Conflict within academic departments is inevitable, but many leaders lack structured tools to prevent escalation or facilitate productive dialogue when tensions arise. This session will introduce a practical model for improving department communication, increasing awareness of conflict styles, and establishing collaborative norms. Participants will review and examine 3-4 facilitated departmental sessions focused on communication styles, conflict modes, and culture-building. The presentation provides a replicable structure academic leaders can use to reduce interpersonal friction, improve collaboration, and strengthen departmental effectiveness.

Room: Floor 3, Newport

Utilizing the Transition Theory to Develop Future Leaders

Drew Van Dam

What New Leaders Need to Know

Collegiate students and junior faculty are preparing to lead within increasingly complex academic environments, but leadership development requires more than subject-matter expertise. This session explores how mentors can use Schlossberg's Transition Theory to provide structured, developmentally appropriate support as emerging leaders build confidence, strengthen interpersonal skills, and adapt to new responsibilities. Participants will examine how leadership styles, active listening, communication, collaboration, and intentional challenge contribute to growth. Attendees will leave with practical ideas for creating mentoring experiences that encourage reflection, build resilience, and prepare students and early-career faculty to lead others effectively.

Room: Floor 3, Washington

Does Your College Treat Disability as Diversity? A Leadership Diagnostic

Karin Boxer

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Many colleges approach disability primarily through compliance and accommodations, overlooking its role as a dimension of student identity and campus diversity. This session introduces an Infrastructure Parity Diagnostic that helps chairs, deans, provosts, and other academic leaders assess how disability is treated across five areas of institutional life: governance and strategy; visibility and representation; curriculum and learning; community and connection; and faculty, staff, and leadership. Participants will apply an abbreviated version of the diagnostic to their own institutions. They will leave prepared to reframe disability as part of campus culture and with the full diagnostic to identify where disability has been integrated into the cultural life of the institution, where it remains confined to compliance and accommodation, and where leadership attention is most needed..

Room: Floor 3, South County

Advising for All: Building Shared Models That Drive Student Success

April Belback

Student Retention and Success

What if every student at your institution had equal access to excellent advising? Research shows that shared advising models improve student outcomes, such as retention and graduation rates. This session explores the importance of building a shared and holistic student success vision using a "hierarchy of needs" framework—moving students beyond a transactional mode to thriving at our institutions. By making small shifts, leadership can begin progress towards a shared advising organizational structure by creating a system of academic support where collaboration is key.

Room: Floor 3, Providence Ballroom I

The Future of DEI in the Higher Education Workforce

Edna Chun

Student Retention and Success

Based on Edna Chun and Alvin Evans' newly published book, The Future of DEI in the Higher Education Workforce: Present Controversies and Future Strategies (Routledge, 2026), this session highlights the scope, breadth, and intensity of DEI backlash at the federal and state levels and the specific impact on higher education's leadership and workforce. Situating these legal and policy shifts within broader political and demographic contexts, the seminar posits that for meaningful progress to be made, the values, principles, and practices at the heart of equal opportunity must be woven into workforce talent processes. Within higher education, this calls for a recalibration of HR/diversity workforce strategies and institutional approaches that transcend institutional silos and reflect new workforce realities. As such, the seminar shares concrete examples drawn from case studies of innovative approaches in support of inclusion, equity, and organizational justice.

Room: Floor 3, Providence Ballroom III

= *Advisory Board Sessions*

11:15 AM -12:15 PM

We Need to Talk: Navigating Difficult People & Difficult Conversations

Lynne Texter

Leadership & Professional Development

We dread and often avoid the difficult conversations we need to have about the topics, behaviors, and communications that negatively impact our students, our colleagues, and our departments/institutions. Handling these situations can be a particular challenge for leaders who may need to address long-standing challenges or ongoing issues left from previous leaders. We'll discuss how you can improve your ability to engage in productive conversations to strengthen working relationships and yield more positive outcomes.

Room: Floor 3, Blackstone

Why You Need a Leadership Council—and How to Get One

Invited Presenter: *Thomas J. Tobin*

Leadership & Professional Development

Who do you turn to when you encounter sensitive and pressing workplace situations, especially when you need an external perspective? Campus leaders benefit from having a personal leadership council of colleagues with similar roles and experiences, but who aren't part of your organization. External mastermind groups, advisory boards, or trusted-colleague groups are a key way to stay grounded, test new ideas, and establish mutual support. In our session, you'll learn about four leadership-council models, how they work, and how to create your own or find a trusted one to join.

Room: Floor 3, Bristol

Leading Beyond Screens: Effective Virtual Leadership

James Heffner and Emily Wagner

Leadership & Professional Development

As the modern workplace continues to evolve, effective leaders must be able to adapt their approach in a virtual environment. This session explores the unique dynamics, challenges, and opportunities that arise when leading remotely. Participants will examine how communication, team engagement, trust-building, collaboration, and performance management shift in virtual settings. This session aims to bring leaders and developers together to better understand leadership development opportunities and challenges in a virtual environment.

Room: Floor 3, Newport

The Problem-Solving Leader: A Research-Based Framework to Break Silos and Build Capacity You Can Implement Monday

Philip Hulbig

What New Leaders Need to Know

New academic leaders face complex and interconnected problems while working in systems designed to keep departments isolated. This session introduces a research-based, two-phase framework for wholistic problem-solving that breaks down silos and builds institutional capacity. Grounded in cognitive science showing that all intelligent systems solve problems through prediction and error-correction, this approach equips leaders to solve immediate challenges while developing problem-solving capabilities in others through structured mentorship. Participants will apply the framework to their own leadership challenges and leave with actionable Monday-morning strategies.

Room: Floor 3, Washington

Leading in the In-Between: Holding Tension as a Core Leadership Skill

Allison Curington and Lesley Reid

Leadership & Professional Development

Higher education leaders are increasingly asked to navigate competing demands. This session introduces the Tension-Holding Leadership Model, a framework grounded in paradox, complexity leadership, and psychological safety. Rather than resolving tensions prematurely, leaders learn to hold them productively. Participants will explore how leadersoften collapse into defensive responses under pressure and how intentional tension holding supports trust, learning, and adaptive decision-making.

Room: Floor 3, South County

Leveraging Consortia to Support Student Retention and Success

Michelle Niestepski

Student Retention and Success

Course and program-sharing consortia can help institutions expand offerings, address low enrollment, and support student progress. However, these partnerships also raise important questions about cost, academic planning, advising, and student experience. This session examines how one institution evaluated its consortium partnerships by tracking why students enrolled in shared courses, reviewing student outcomes and satisfaction, and improving communication with faculty advisors. Attendees will explore

the benefits and limitations of course and program sharing and leave with practical strategies for assessing whether consortium partnerships meet their institutional and student needs.

Room: Floor 3, Providence Ballroom I

Who's at Your Table? Designing a Strategic Advisory Board That Actually Works

Sue Doe, Amanda Penley, and Anastasia Williams

Topic Track: Providence III

Advisory boards can be powerful, strategic assets or time-consuming formalities. Too often, unclear purpose, misaligned membership, and unmanaged power dynamics quietly erode them into obligatory meetings that generate little value. This session equips higher education leaders with a practical, research-informed process for designing or redesigning advisory boards that strengthen advocacy, clarify governance boundaries, and advance institutional priorities. Drawing from three years of implementation at a large public research university, participants will choose a launch or redesign track and leave with a stakeholder map, governance framework, and 90-day plan they can put into action on their campus.

Room: Floor 3, Providence Ballroom III

12:30–1:30 PM

Lunch

Room: Floor 1, Narragansett Ballroom

1:45–2:45 PM

Breaking the Shame Cycle in Schools

Joshua Doumani

Institutional Culture & Climate

Many students enter higher education carrying invisible wounds from earlier academic experiences, creating internalized messages that they are not smart enough. These moments can accumulate into academic shame, a powerful emotional barrier that shapes motivation, belonging, and ultimately, retention. This session introduces a practical framework for identifying and repairing academic shame within campus environments, offering leaders a new lens for understanding student behavior and a toolkit for cultivating cultures of psychological safety. Drawing from research in educational psychology, trauma-informed practice, and student-success theory, this session explores how academic shame influences persistence, risk-taking, help-seeking, and faculty-student dynamics. Participants will examine how campus systems, such as assessment, advising, classroom norms, faculty feedback, and institutional messaging, may unintentionally reinforce or disrupt shame.

Room: Floor 3, Blackstone

Circular Power: The Restorative Path to Bold Leadership

Yune Kim Tran

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In an era of institutional austerity and shifting political landscapes, the "boldness" required of leaders, particularly from underrepresented backgrounds, often carries a personal toll. Conventional leadership models that are rooted in "power-over" dynamics can lead to burnout and contribute to the "glass cliff" phenomenon. This workshop reframes Restorative Justice (RJ), not just as a conflict-resolution tool, but as a holistic sustainability-centered framework. By shifting from punitive management to relational accountability, leaders can protect their well-being while fostering high-trust and resilient teams. Participants will analyze case studies applicable across diverse institutional settings, practice restorative boundary scripts, and conduct a personal vitality audit to lead with enduring impact.

Room: Floor 3, Bristol

= Advisory Board Sessions

Leadership Supporting Students with Precarious Immigration Status

Corinee Kentor and Kenny Nienhusser

Special Topics in Higher Education Leadership

Leadership in times of crisis is pivotal to student learning and success. This session focuses on how immigration enforcement activities are shaping the experiences of undocumented and international students and affecting the priorities and responsibilities of higher education leaders. We highlight the challenges facing immigration-impacted students, including heightened fear, limited access to supports, and visa barriers, and present research on how higher education leaders can support students with precarious immigration statuses within a heightened enforcement climate.

Room: Floor 3, Kent

Emotional Labor: Staying Resilient, Working Well

Invited Presenter: *Susan Robison*

Leadership & Professional Development

In addition to the usual faculty responsibilities of teaching, writing, and service often comes the challenge of emotional labor (EL), the work of supporting colleagues and students who are navigating emotional difficulties that may interfere with their work or studies. EL can bring the satisfaction of connection, but it also places significant demands on our energy, contributing to stress and burnout, especially when it falls disproportionately on underrepresented colleagues. Drawing on recent findings from neuroscience, this practical workshop will offer models for understanding the origins and functions of emotions, along with strategies for structuring emotional labor, both yours and theirs.

Room: Floor 3, Newport

Leading with a Plan: Academic Project Management 101

Megan Reinle

What New Leaders Need to Know

New academic leaders juggle multiple initiatives simultaneously—from program launches to accreditation efforts—often without formal project management training. This session introduces essential PM frameworks adapted for higher education's collaborative culture. Participants will learn practical tools for defining scope, creating realistic timelines, managing stakeholders, and navigating common pitfalls in academic settings. Through real-world examples and interactive exercises, attendees will explore how to move projects from idea to implementation while respecting shared governance and building support. They will leave with practical templates and strategies to keep projects focused, financially responsible, and aligned with institutional priorities.

Room: Floor 3, Washington

Leading Innovation: Launching a Student Success Center in Healthcare Education

Jqar Shayne Washington

Student Retention and Success

Student success centers can play a critical role in helping students persist and thrive, but building one requires strong leadership and a clear institutional vision. This session will examine how leaders can create support structures that respond to students' academic and personal needs while advancing broader retention goals. Drawing on lessons from a healthcare-focused institution, this session will address program development, campus partnerships, and the use of data to guide improvement. Attendees will leave with practical ideas for strengthening student support and identifying the next step for their own institutions.

Room: Floor 3, Providence Ballroom I

Navigating Legislative Mandates: Leading Academic Change through Collaboration

Dana Fohl, Jennifer Wies, and Sara Zeigler

Special Topics in Higher Education Leadership

This session presents a multi-perspective case study of one institution's comprehensive response to state legislation mandating sweeping academic change. From the perspectives of the Provost, Associate Provost, and General Counsel, it examines how cross-functional leadership ensured compliance, protected the mission, and sustained shared governance. Strategies included curriculum redesign, legislative interpretation, faculty engagement, accreditation alignment, and collaborative communication. Participants will analyze the scope and implications of legislative mandates; explore collaborative leadership across academic, legal, and executive domains; identify methods for translating legislation into mission-aligned policy; and apply these lessons to implement rapid, resilient, and integrity-driven responses to statewide mandates.

Room: Floor 3, Providence Ballroom III

3:00-4:00 PM

The Hidden Retention Factor: Developing Chairs as Retention-Ready Leaders

Parish Jefferson

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

While institutions focus on recruitment and policy, diverse faculty and staff are most influenced by their immediate supervisors, including department chairs and middle leaders who often lack training in inclusive leadership. This research-based session introduces a framework for equipping these leaders with five key competencies: accountability for retention, equitable talent development, inclusive climate-building, continuous feedback, and data-informed decision-making. Grounded in doctoral research and higher education scholarship, participants will gain tools and strategies to develop middle leaders into retention champions capable of fostering environments where diversity thrives, innovation is supported, and meaningful connections are cultivated across lines of identity, role, and experience.

Room: Floor 3, Bristol

Leading AI Integration in Higher Education: From Anxiety to Implementation

Laura De La Cruz

Leadership & Professional Development

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping teaching, learning, and administrative work in higher education, yet many institutions remain uncertain about how to respond. This session explores how academic leaders can move campus conversations about AI from policy anxiety to practical implementation. Drawing on implementation work at a Hispanic-Serving community college, this session presents a leadership framework for integrating AI into curriculum design, faculty development, and program assessment while maintaining academic integrity and accreditation alignment.

Room: Floor 3, Newport

Leading the Way: Rejuvenating Your Strategic Presence and Humaning Capacity

Charlena Miller

Leadership & Professional Development

Higher education leaders are currently navigating a structural displacement of the self. Many face a quiet erosion of capacity where the need for AI integration can hollow out professional presence and undermine one's sense of purpose. This session introduces a research-grounded framework for restoring strategic capacity and keeping human judgment central to institutional decision-making. Participants will examine the distinct human qualities that separate meaningful leadership from management, complete a Purpose Audit to identify where institutional pressures have weakened their sense of purpose, and develop practical actions to strengthen presence, discernment, and human connection within their teams.

Room: Floor 3, South County

Gateway Success and Retention: Meet the Teacher Comes to College

Heather Davis

Student Retention and Success

In fall 2024, an urban community college launched a retention initiative for students enrolled in first-year success, English, and math gateway courses. Students attended an orientation with their professor covering course expectations, required materials, learning management system organization, and available support. The initiative has since become mandatory, allowing the college to track student progress and use the results to refine the program. Participants will identify student populations that could benefit from a similar approach, anticipate implementation challenges, and outline a first step for launching a program on their campus.

Room, Floor 3, Providence Ballroom I

Leadership in an Era of Distrust

Invited Presenter: *Courtney Plotts*

Institutional Culture & Climate

Higher education leaders are increasingly called to guide cultural change amid complexity, burnout, and competing demands. Yet leadership development often prioritizes external skills over the internal conditions that shape leadership presence and decision-making. This session introduces a center-out leadership framework that positions leadership as an energetic and relational practice—beginning with internal alignment and extending outward to departmental culture and institutional climate. Grounded in leadership education theory and applied practice, participants will explore how leadership presence influences collaboration, trust, and culture. Practical tools and guided reflection support immediate application for department chairs, deans, and faculty leaders leading culture change.

Room: Floor 3, Kent

4:00–4:30

Scaling Faculty Development with the Teaching Professor Digital Library

Kevin Patrick and Ryan Colwell, Magna Publications

Great teaching development shouldn't begin and end with a single conference. This session introduces attendees to the Teaching Professor Digital Library, a robust online resource designed to help faculty enhance their teaching practice through research-informed content and practical application. Participants will explore the breadth of resources available, learn strategies for incorporating the platform into faculty development initiatives, and consider how on-demand learning tools can complement workshops, mentoring, and campus-based programming. Ideal for faculty developers, academic leaders, and instructors committed to continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

Room: Floor 3, Providence Ballroom III

Saturday, October 10

7:30–8:30 AM

Breakfast
Room: Floor 1, Narragansett Ballroom

8:45–10:00

Closing Plenary

When Students Are the Strategy: Transforming Higher Education from the Inside Out

Roslyn Artis

Higher education stands at a pivotal moment marked by demographic change, financial pressures, political scrutiny, and growing demands for measurable outcomes. Above all else, this moment calls for courageous leadership—leadership willing to confront outdated practices, challenge institutional inertia, and advocate boldly for students whose potential is too often constrained by systemic barriers.

This plenary examines how institutions can move beyond access toward achievement by designing structures that proactively support retention, completion, belonging, and career readiness. By placing students at the center of strategy rather than at the margins of institutional planning, colleges and universities can renew their public purpose and strengthen their capacity to prepare the next generation of leaders. This address offers a vision for transforming higher education from the inside out—through intentional design, moral clarity, and an unwavering commitment to the students institutions are called to serve.

Room: Floor 1, Narragansett Ballroom

10:15–11:15

Leveraging Institutional Culture and Climate to Sustain Academic Leadership

Dimitria Harding

Institutional Culture & Climate

Senior academic and administrative leaders provide continuity, institutional memory, strategic direction, and cultural stewardship—yet leadership turnover remains a persistent challenge across colleges and universities. Too often, administrator retention is framed narrowly as a function of executive leadership or human resources, overlooking the powerful influence of day-to-day campus culture and climate. This session advances an innovative, research-grounded perspective: administrator retention is a shared institutional responsibility shaped by how faculty, staff, and support professionals experience and contribute to organizational culture and climate. Drawing on organizational culture theory, leadership retention research, and real-world institutional practice, this session examines how everyday interactions, norms, and behaviors across departments either strengthen or erode leaders' capacity to remain effective and engaged over time

Room: Floor 3, Blackstone

Minimum Viable Process for Faculty Excellence: A Practical System to Reduce Burnout and Improve Follow-Through

Adlore Casseus

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Many DEI efforts stall because inequity is reinforced through routine academic practices: what counts as legitimate knowledge, how students are "heard", and how evaluation standards are applied. Drawing on leadership and change research, this session offers a practical framework faculty and academic leaders can use to improve classroom climate, belonging, and intellectual agency—without lowering standards. Participants will identify three common "epistemic choke points" and practice redesigning one course element (assessment, participation, or feedback). Attendees leave with a faculty-ready checklist, language for responding to resistance, and a scalable strategy for sustaining the shift beyond a single course.

Room: Floor 3, Bristol

Leading Change: A Transformational Leadership Approach for Student Success

April Belback and Larissa Ciuca

Student Retention and Success

This session is for current and aspiring higher education administrators looking to discover their leadership strengths through the lens of transformational leadership—an innovative approach that builds connections, raises motivation, and drives organizational change. Participants will explore a real-world institutional case study around student success reform. Then, they will assess their own transformational leadership capacity through a guided self-reflection and engage in dialogue about applying these skills within their unique institutional contexts to advance student success initiatives.

Room: Floor 3, Washington

Lessons Learned: Building an In-House University Leadership Program

Tusty ten Bensel, Laura Danforth, and Shannon Collier-Tenison

Leadership & Professional Development

Mid-level administrators within higher education are essential to the success of the institution, as they make daily decisions that influence faculty and student experiences. Most mid-level leaders are selected internally from a university's faculty or staff; however, 49% receive no formalized training during their transition from faculty to administrator, and only 20% report feeling successful within their roles. To address these leadership transition issues on our campus, we created the Academic Leadership Academy (ALA) in 2024. Participants in this session will gain an understanding of the need for leadership development, the framework of the academy, and lessons learned.

Room: Floor 3, South County

11:30–12:30

Retention Starts Day One: Leadership Strategies for First-Year Faculty Belonging

Julie Shaffer and Nita Unruh

Institutional Culture & Climate

Leadership decisions made at the point of hire and during the first year strongly shape faculty belonging, success, and long-term commitment. This session highlights how leaders redesigned their first-year faculty experience by shifting from one-time orientation to a year-long, equity-centered approach. Drawing from on-boarding data, early-career feedback, and cross-unit collaboration, presenters illustrate how leadership choices—not programs alone—drive retention of faculty.

Room: Floor 3, Blackstone

Developing High-Impact Teams: A Framework for Leaders

Micaela Christopher, Dalmer Drake, and Tiana Lindsey

What New Leaders Need to Know

New and emerging higher education leaders must be equipped to develop staff, elevate service culture, and lead through continuous change. This session introduces a four-part training and development framework created by LSU Online and Continuing Education. The framework includes Onboarding and Attachment, Customer Service and Engagement, Skills Enhancement and Leadership Development, and Professional Growth and Change Readiness. Participants will explore how each pillar supports stronger teams and better institutional performance. The session will also show how leaders can apply the framework even without a formal training and development department.

Room: Floor 3, Bristol

The Business of Belonging: Transforming Equity Gaps into Financial Resilience

Jamaica Gainey

Special Topics in Higher Education Leadership

The challenges of declining student numbers and increasing operational costs require institutions to see equity as a vital financial strategy, rather than just an expense. This session will help business managers understand how to use data to achieve financial stability by addressing student achievement gaps. Presenters will highlight the $6.2 billion cost of inequity in education, as reported by The Education Trust, and introduce a framework for more effective resource allocation. Attendees will learn to measure the ROI of retention initiatives and apply an equity lens to budgeting models such as Responsibility Center Management. They will leave with practical strategies for reducing systemic barriers, improving student outcomes, and protecting institutional revenue.

Room: Floor 3, Kent

Fostering Authentic Leadership: A PERMA-Inspired Model for Higher Education Climates

Sylvia Basta

Leadership & Professional Development

How can higher education leaders build healthier institutions while leading with greater authenticity? This session proposes an integrated conceptual framework for advancing authentic leadership development in higher education. The framework explores the reciprocal relationship between institutional well-being, as defined by the PERMA model, and the psychological capacities of hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. It also incorporates the core components of authentic leadership: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. Together, these interconnected elements may strengthen individual leadership capacity, support organizational functioning, and contribute to healthier and more effective higher education institutions.

Room: Floor 3, Newport

Beyond the Forms: Retooling Faculty Evaluation for Growth and Student Success

Andrea Campbell

Student Retention and Success

Higher education faces an increasing deficit in student academic and social college preparedness, requiring faculty to possess skills to respond to increasing retention issues, mental health concerns, and student success interventions, as well as pedagogical best practices. However, most new faculty development programs fall short. In an effort to address this, the Pennsylvania College of Technology evolved their new faculty development program to provide critical instructional coaching, personalized development, and continuous support for their first three years, resulting in establishing immersive leadership support and connection, increased new faculty efficacy and satisfaction, and anticipated student success.

Room: Floor 3, Washington

12:45–1:45

Lunch

Lunches are "grab and go"—enjoy here or save for later in your travel day. One box per registered attendee.

Room: Floor 1, Narragansett Ballroom