Innovations CONFERENCE

Innovations Conference
March 15-18, 2026
Indianapolis, Indiana
JW Marriott Indianapolis

Hosted by Ivy Tech Community College

FOLLOW THE LEAGUE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

#INN26INDY

Session Key

IOY = Focused on a 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award-winning innovation and/or presented by at least one award recipient

EA = Presented by at least one 2025-2026 Excellence Award recipient

= Recorded for posting on iStream

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Saturday, March 14

All conference activities take place on the 3rd floor of the JW Marriott Indianapolis.

5:00 - 7:00 PM

REGISTRATION, PRESENTER SUPPORT, AND AWARDS DESKS

Sunday, March 15

All conference activities take place on the 3rd floor of the JW Marriott Indianapolis.

7:00 AM - 6:30 PM

REGISTRATION, PRESENTER SUPPORT, AND AWARDS DESKS

7:30 - 9:15 AM

WELCOME BREAKFAST* AND OPENING SESSION
*Breakfast service ends at 8:15 AM.

Chair
Rufus Glasper, President and CEO, League for Innovation in the Community College

OPENING PRESENTATION

Moderator

- Geoff Cramer, Founder, Futures Inc.

Panelists

- Jon Gardner, Senior Leader, Strategic Partnerships and Learning and Development, Owens Corning Roofing
- Nate Hurn, Director, Government Affairs, CAT Simulators
- Lisa Larson, CEO, Education Design Lab
- Holly Miller, Federal Liaison, NASA Office of STEM Engagement

Education at the Speed of Business: How Community Colleges Are Becoming the Engine of America's Workforce and Economic Growth

As the U.S. faces historic shortages of skilled technical talent and states face pressure to deliver economic growth and mobility, community colleges are being asked to do more—faster—with fewer resources. At the same time, students lack clear visibility into high-demand careers and pathways. This is not a talent shortage. It is a systems and resource alignment problem, and one the League for Innovation is working to address. In this session, the League will introduce its new Center for Workforce Solutions (CWS), created to lead innovative national, industry-driven collaborations across all U.S. industries—placing community colleges at the center of workforce and economic development. Through CWS, the League is reshaping how education and industry collaborate in ways that place employers at the table from day one. Moderated by League President and CEO Rufus Glasper and featuring a panel of industry experts, this session will highlight national progress in the construction industry and the aerospace and defense industry, as these efforts are forming a national blueprint for industry-education collaboration. Come learn more, including how your institution and state can get involved.

9:30 AM - 3:15 PM

PRESIDENTS TRACK (Invitation Only)

Sponsored by EAB

Innovation, Thought Leadership, and Long-Term Success

<u>Morning</u>
(Joint sessions with Vice Presidents Track Participants and ELI Alumni)

   -**Navigating Upheaval on Four Fronts: Building Community College Agility for a Defining Moment**
   -**Unpacking the Crisis of Confidence in Higher Education**

<u>Afternoon</u>

   - **How AI Is Rewriting the Higher Education Business Model**

Full schedule and details available at www.league.org/innovations-2026-presidents-track-agenda

9:30 AM - 3:15 PM

VICE PRESIDENTS TRACK (Invitation Only)

Sponsored by EAB

Innovation, Thought Leadership, and Long-Term Success

<u>Morning</u>
(Joint sessions with Presidents Track Participants and ELI Alumni)

   -**Navigating Upheaval on Four Fronts: Building Community College Agility for a Defining Moment**
   -**Unpacking the Crisis of Confidence in Higher Education**

9:30 - 10:30 AM

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Building Vibrant Student Life Through Strategic Operating Partnerships
Community colleges are increasingly recognizing the importance of student life facilities in supporting student engagement, belonging, and retention, particularly for diverse and nontraditional learners. At the same time, many institutions face staffing and financial constraints that make operating these facilities challenging. This forum examines how Moraine Valley Community College leveraged an outsourced operating partnership purpose-built for higher education to manage its campus recreation facility in a way that preserves institutional mission, culture, and priorities. Presenters will discuss the leadership decisions behind this approach, including how day-to-day operations were strengthened without increasing institutional headcount, how student employment and development were expanded, and how community partnerships supported both engagement and financial sustainability. The session will also draw from other community college contexts to illustrate different operating paradigms and how institutions balance mission and margin in student life facilities through collaborative higher education-focused operating partnerships.
Mike Schneider, Director, Campus Recreation; Pamela Haney, President, Moraine Valley Community College, IL

Grant Writing Strategies for National Science Foundation ATE Proposals
The National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education (NSF ATE) program has grant funding opportunities available to support two-year institutions' STEM and CTE technician program development, faculty professional development, career pathways, curriculum development, outreach activities, and more. Learn grant writing strategies focused on the NSF ATE solicitation and how NSF ATE grant funding can help with technician program development and improvement. Discover the categories of NSF ATE grant funding that are available. The current NSF ATE solicitation and grant proposal development mentoring opportunities plus some helpful NSF ATE resources will be presented. Anyone thinking about submitting an NSF ATE grant proposal and desiring to learn about the program and how to craft a proposal may benefit from this session.
Greg Kepner, Principal Investigator, National Science Foundation Advanced Technological Education, Hillsborough Community College, FL

Innovation 100: Empowering Employees to Lead Change
Innovation 100 is Jackson College's signature initiative to surface, fund, and support employee-driven projects. Through this program, faculty, staff, and administrators are invited to propose creative ideas that directly support the college's strategic agenda, with mentoring, resources, and recognition provided to bring them to life. Funded projects are held accountable through structured reporting, shared back to the college community, and celebrated publicly, creating a cycle of learning and inspiration. This session will describe how Innovation 100 was designed and implemented, share examples of completed projects, and highlight lessons learned in building a culture of innovation. Participants will explore how similar initiatives can cultivate leadership, equip employees with project management skills, and break down silos across divisions.
Jamie Vandenburgh, Dean, Workforce, Technical, and Professional Education; Jen Fiero, Director, Library; Brad Choate, Coordinator, Multimedia Services, Jackson College, MI

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Generative AI Self Conversations for Faculty and Staff
This interactive session will introduce participants to a unique prompt-designing technique called Generative AI Self Conversations (GAISC), where a user can instruct a generative AI tool such as ChatGPT to have engaging and dynamic conversations with itself on any topic of the user's choosing. Essentially, drawing upon the vast repository of humanity's collective knowledge within its training data, multiple personas may speak with each other about a tapestry of human ideas, experiences, and knowledge spanning cultures, languages, and fields of expertise. Participants will gain a foundational understanding of the GAISC technique, including its educational value, benefits, and practical applications, and learn how to design an effective GAISC prompt. Using ChatGPT for a live demonstration, participants will discuss, analyze, and reflect on the generated GAISC conversation, summary elements, and use case scenario and explore iteration strategies. The session is particularly tailored to expand instructional possibilities for faculty and academic leaders.
Tim Self, Coordinator, Performance Optimization and Data Systems, Austin Community College District, TX

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Integrating Workforce Skills and Dispositions Into the Classroom
Workforce knowledge, skills, and dispositions have always been at the heart of high-impact practices (HIPs) (Kuh, 2008). The introduction to this seminal study outlined the need for integration of workforce skills and disposition into higher education curricula, helping to prepare workers, thought leaders, and informed citizens. HIPs answered the question of how to design assignments that foster these career and civic outcomes, along with articulating the associated benefits—from deeper learning and workforce preparation to positive impacts on student achievement. Additionally, HIPs work for all students, especially those who have been historically underrepresented in college success measures. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has long been a partner in this work, informing us about what employee skills and dispositions are most needed. This session aligns NACE's competencies with general education outcomes and then with practical teaching and learning strategies for easy classroom implementation.
Heather Lang, Director, Academic Professional Development; Robin Schofield, Executive Director, Teaching and Learning Transformation Hub, Community College of Aurora, CO

10:30 AM - 4:00 PM

BREAK STATION*

10:30 AM - 4:00 PM: Coffee, tea, soda, and water
10:30 - 11:30 AM: mid-morning snack (e.g., granola bars, cookies)
2:00 - 3:00 PM: mid-afternoon snack (e.g., granola bars, cookies)

*This information is provided as a general overview; food selections may vary.

10:45 - 11:45 AM

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Agile Leadership in Higher Education: Navigating Change With Adaptability

Colleges are facing constant change—from shifting enrollment and funding models to workforce demands and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence. Traditional leadership approaches can feel too rigid in this environment. This forum introduces agile leadership as a practical framework for anyone in higher education who is responsible for leading people, projects, or programs. Through stories of accreditation efforts, workforce partnerships, and cross-campus collaborations, participants will see how agile principles help institutions respond quickly and effectively. Interactive polls, case discussions, and small-group activities will give participants the chance to connect theory to their own roles. Whether you are a faculty leader, program coordinator, or senior administrator, this session provides adaptable strategies to build resilience, foster collaboration, and spark innovation across your campus.

Shadi Kilani, Dean, Technology, Health, and Business, Tarrant County College District, TX

LEARNING AND TEACHING

AI as Teaching Assistant: A Framework for Student Partnership

Moving beyond detection, this session introduces the AI Teaching Assistant (AITA) framework developed under Hostos Community College's ADELANTE grant. We present a pedagogical model that positions AI as a scaffolded partner for five key tasks: clarifying instructions, curating sources, analyzing structure, generating study aids, and managing schedules. Presenters will share the 4 Rs of source qualification, AI interaction logs for accountability, and adaptable syllabus policies. Participants will leave with a deployable toolkit to empower students as ethical AI managers, enhancing agency and critical thinking. Primary audience: faculty, deans, and instructional designers.

Eric Ritholz, Coordinator, Online Learning; Carlos Guevara, Director, Educational Technology, Hostos Community College - CUNY, NY

From Chatbots to Brain Dumps: Personalizing Online Learning

Personalized learning is no longer a future goal; it's here, transforming how community colleges design and deliver online education. Through live polling and quick think-pair-shares, participants will explore innovative strategies that bring personalization to life in online courses. We will showcase practical methods, such as AI-powered chatbot tutors and simulations, that adapt to learner needs and build communication skills; branching scenarios that immerse students in healthcare decision-making; and student-driven memory retrieval activities known as brain dumps, which improve content retention. Presenters will share examples of how these approaches are integrated into course design to support diverse learners. Participants will leave with concrete ideas, tools, and inspiration for implementing scalable, student-centered personalization in their own online programs.

Sharon Tjade-Burkes, Senior Instructional Designer; Meredith Hook, Instructional Designer, eLearning, Sinclair Community College, OH

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Modernizing Student Support in the Age of AI

Community colleges are serving students with increasingly complex academic, financial, and personal needs—yet many student support decisions still rely on fragmented data, delayed signals, and manual processes. This

forum explores how data and emerging AI-supported approaches can help student services teams identify needs earlier, prioritize outreach more effectively, and coordinate support at scale. Grounded in innovative work underway at Roane State Community College, the session uses a composite student case to examine how institutions recognize when a student is struggling, decide how to intervene, and understand whether support efforts are making a difference. Participants will reflect on their own student support practices; surface common challenges in early warning, advising, and retention; and consider how more unified, data-informed approaches can modernize student services while preserving professional judgment and human connection. Designed for vice presidents, deans, directors, advisors, and student success leaders, this session emphasizes practical insight, collaboration, and student-centered innovation.

Ryan Lau, CEO, Straia; Jamie Stringer, Vice President, Student Services and Innovation; Kat Baker, Executive Director, Student Services, Roane State Community College, TN

Rethinking Orientation: Improve Attendance and Engagement Through Innovation
Community colleges serve students with diverse backgrounds, responsibilities, and goals—and orientations must adapt to meet those realities. At Onondaga Community College (OCC), rethinking orientation has meant building a flexible, student-centered experience that combines the best of online and in-person opportunities. In this session, participants will learn how OCC designed and continually refined an online orientation that complements, rather than replaces, in-person programming. Years of iteration have resulted in a more engaging and accessible model, with lessons that can be applied at any institution. Beyond orientation, OCC has expanded the platform into a broader Student Success Hub—incorporating training for student club leaders, Title IX and hazing prevention modules, and other resources that extend its value across campus. By leveraging a single hub for multiple touchpoints, OCC has increased student engagement and made orientation more than a one-time requirement.

Shawn Edie, Director, Student Orientation, Leadership, and Engagement, Onondaga Community College - SUNY, NY; Fred Scott, Head of Partnerships, Innovative Educators, CO

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

From Campus Jobs to Career Confidence: Redefining Student Employment
Student employment can be one of the most powerful forms of work-based learning when designed with intentional career development outcomes. This session will showcase how one institution transformed its student employment program into a structured, student-centered experience. Initiatives include, but are not limited to, (1) a centralized application process through Handshake that ensures equitable student opportunity; (2) personalized outreach to students not hired for on-campus roles to connect them with other opportunities; (3) job description templates based on NACE Career Competencies to highlight transferable skills; (4) a case management model in which students meet with career counselors to reflect on experiences, strengthen resumes, and prepare for interviews; (5) early and ongoing evaluations, reframed as learning tools, to help students build professional skills; and (6) an end-of-year employment celebration recognizing student-employees' contributions and achievements. Participants will gain adaptable strategies for embedding equity, efficiency, and career development into student employment programs.

Laura Aycock, Associate Director, Career Services, Arapahoe Community College, CO

POSTER SESSION

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Blazing a CBE Trail: Pioneering a New Path for Early Education
Saddle up for a ride through how Shasta College ECE faculty wrangled the wild frontier of teacher preparation—blazing a bold new trail where none had dared to ride before. With grit and vision, they charted a course through rough terrain: ropin' together curriculum, hitchin' it to state and national standards, wranglin'

college bureaucracy, and rustlin' up support from stakeholders. Every decision followed their true north star—the students—using every tool in their saddlebag, from differentiated instruction to hands-on work experience, ensuring that no learner was left behind. What emerged wasn't just a shiny new program, but a whole new frontier of respect for student smarts and perseverance. Like a well-built homestead on the plains, this approach didn't just survive the wild—it transformed the territory for every traveler after. Since 2021, Shasta College has been a statewide competency-based education (CBE) pilot site, launching its first certificate in fall 2025.

Kate Ashbey, Faculty, Early Childhood Education; Jeanne Veich, Faculty, Business, Agriculture, and Career Technical Education, Shasta College, CA

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Writing Center 3.0: Reimagining Program Framework Through Data Analysis and Advocacy [IOY]
This roundtable explores how academic support programs can better serve the diverse and evolving needs of community college learners. Drawing from Bakersfield College Writing Center's award-winning project, we present a data-informed framework developed at a rural-serving institution with large populations of Generation 1.5 ELL students, early college participants, baccalaureate cohorts, and justice-impacted learners. By assessing the efficacy of existing services and treating composition students as distinct cohorts with varied goals, we identified service gaps, implemented scalable innovations, and strengthened equitable support. These efforts led to significant gains in student success and persistence among writing center users. The session will first share key insights and strategies from our model, then invite participants into an interactive dialogue to reflect on their own institutional contexts, challenges, and opportunities for sustainable collaboration. (This session highlights Kern Community College District's 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award winner.)
Kimberly Arbolante, Program Manager, Writing Center; Tiffany Wong, Adjunct Faculty, English, and Data Tracking Lead, AB1705; Marissa Patton, Adjunct Faculty, English, Bakersfield College, CA

11:45 AM - 1:00 PM

SOLUTIONS CENTER
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11:45 AM - 1:00 PM

LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

1:00 - 2:00 PM

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

From College Search Through First Year: Lessons From 5,000 Students
How do students experience the transition from exploring college to thriving in their first year? In this session, we share findings from more than 5,000 community college students who participated in three national surveys spanning the full student journey—from their earliest college search behaviors, through the onboarding process, and into the critical first year. Participants will learn what prospective students want most from colleges, which barriers during onboarding cause students to stall or walk away, and how first-year learners describe their needs regarding belonging, well-being, and career clarity. Together, these insights reveal a connected story about student momentum: Early doubts about value, confusion during enrollment, and limited connection in the first year often stem from the same underlying concerns. Participants will leave with research-backed strategies to strengthen engagement, streamline onboarding, and build a first-year experience that improves both access and persistence.
Tara Zirkel, Director, Strategic Research, EAB, DC

Leveraging the Library as an Innovation Incubator
This forum explores the library as an incubator for innovation, refocusing the library as the campus's social and academic center, offering students the platform and ability to discuss and challenge information and technology. The community college library is a valuable catalyst to motivate innovation on our campuses. Our libraries can also be a platform to integrate core learning outcomes and foster student engagement. Libraries need to provide access to content, people, space, and technology and to offer instruction. Additionally, they can motivate innovation and serve as an equalizing space and outreach arm to the campus and community. Participants will learn strategies to empower their library to take risks and implement innovative technologies that contribute to flexibility in teaching and instructional spaces and identify new ways to impact student success outcomes.
Terra Jacobson, Dean, Learning Resources, Moraine Valley Community College, IL; Spencer Brayton, Director, Library Services, Waubonsee Community College, IL

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Codesigning a Free AI PD Program: AI 4 Learning
Faculty and administrators from teaching-intensive institutions across the U.S. collaborated to cocreate a free online professional development (PD) course for educators at broad-access institutions. The course helps faculty learn to use AI in their teaching effectively and ethically. This collaboration was led by Carnegie Mellon University and College of the Canyons, working with faculty from California Community Colleges, State University of New York, and United Negro College Fund members. The development process engaged subject matter experts and pilot participants to codesign and improve the course and supported a facilitated community of practice. This openly licensed PD course is available for free on Carnegie Mellon University's Open Learning Platform. Participants will learn about the unique codesign process and how they can access this PD on AI.
James Glapa Grossklag, Dean, Learning Resources and Distance Learning, College of the Canyons, CA

Vibe Coding: Changing How We Teach Coding
Vibe coding is an emerging paradigm in software development that leverages large language models and other AI assistants to generate functional code from natural language prompts. Vibe coding describes a workflow

where the primary role shifts from writing code line by line to guiding an AI assistant to generate, refine, and debug an application through a more conversational process. This frees up the programmer to think about the big picture, or the main goal, of the application development, while AI handles writing the actual code. As educators, we need to ask, how does it impact teaching programming in the future? This presentation will demonstrate how vibe coding is used in classrooms to develop apps with no coding, or just proper prompts, and how to refine the conversation with AI tools to generate a fully functional code. All participants are welcome to come and learn to code without coding.

Rajiv Malkan, Professor, Computer Information Technology, Lone Star College System, TX

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Choices and Experiences of Students in Noncredit Workforce Education
Why do adults enroll in noncredit workforce programs? What do they hope to gain from them? This forum will present findings from a study on noncredit workforce students at three community colleges. Major themes include nonlinear enrollment pathways, attractive program features, common challenges facing students, and promising strategies for student advising and support. Designed for deans, directors, faculty, managers, supervisors, and presidents, the session will deepen participants' understanding of noncredit students' education journeys as well as their considerations when and motivations for enrolling. Participants will also gain perspective on the ways that students' education and employment decisions are sometimes misaligned with their career goals. Participants will reflect on how these findings align with their own institutional experiences through a Q&A-based conversation.

Nicole Sandelier Boyd, Researcher; Michelle Van Noy, Director, Education and Employment Research Center, Rutgers University, NJ; Diana Lupercio, Director, Short-Term Vocational, Mt. San Antonio College, CA

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Beyond the Badge: Building Workforce Pathways Through Purposeful Partnerships
How can community colleges integrate industry-recognized credentials without losing the heart of academic learning? In this roundtable, the presenter invites faculty and workforce leaders to explore how partnerships, purposeful design, and shared language can bridge the gap between classroom learning and employer needs. Using the Topics, Tasks, Tools, Trends (4T) Framework, participants will discuss ways to map general education and program courses to professional certificates, engage faculty across disciplines, and build internal capacity for sustainable credential pathways. While not limited to STEM, this discussion highlights scalable strategies that support technical and cross-disciplinary workforce pathways, including programs embedding data analytics, cloud computing, and digital literacy credentials. Together, we'll exchange examples, identify challenges, and cocreate practical steps to align workforce preparation with the community college mission.

Elizabeth Hornsby, Adjunct Faculty, Humanities and Social Sciences, Grand Canyon University, AZ

2:15 - 3:15 PM

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

From Spark to Startup: Building a Startup Launchpad at a Community College [EA]
In this session, join a cross-disciplinary team of faculty, staff, and administrators in exploring the implementation of our incubation program at Foothill College. Learn how our existing programs, including

Foothill's Innovation Challenge, Research Service and Leadership Symposium, Science Learning Institute, and Emerging Technologies Institute, collaborated across divisions and with industry to develop an incubation program for students. The program aims to give students the opportunity to gain real-world skills in transforming their ideas from conception to fruition, and eventually, to pitching their products to industry leaders. This session will include the creators of the program, detailing how such an infrastructure can be scaled and how students can utilize these opportunities to enhance their credentials both on paper and with real-world learned skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, conflict resolution, and project execution.
Zach Cembellin, Dean, STEM; Laurence Lew, Professor, Business; Karl Ashley Welch, Administrative Assistant, STEM; Ron Zinger, Short Course Instructor, Kraus Center for Innovation, Foothill College, CA

Guiding AI Integration: Leadership Lessons From the Front Lines
As artificial intelligence transforms higher education, community colleges face the dual challenge of innovation and inclusion. This interactive forum explores how Middlesex Community College developed a comprehensive plan for AI integration across teaching, learning, and operations. The presenter will share lessons learned from his first year leading institutional efforts—balancing experimentation with governance, aligning AI literacy across departments, and building faculty trust through training and ethical frameworks. Participants will discuss common barriers, exchange institutional strategies, and codevelop actionable approaches to managing AI adoption within their own colleges. The forum emphasizes practical leadership models, cross-campus collaboration, and strategies for fostering a culture of responsible innovation. Primary Audience: academic deans, faculty leaders, instructional designers, and institutional planners.
Peter Shea, Assistant Dean, Digital Innovation and AI Integration, Middlesex Community College, MA

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Beyond the Basics: Designing Next-Generation Learning With Generative AI
Generative AI has progressed exponentially since last year's presentation, moving far beyond simple prompt queries. This dynamic, hands-on workshop is designed for faculty and administrators ready to transition from foundational knowledge to advanced prompt engineering—the critical skill for unlocking AI's immense potential in education. Participants will engage directly in creating highly effective, custom course content and developing frameworks for truly individualized learning experiences. We will pivot the conversation from anxiety over academic dishonesty to demonstrating how AI strategically enhances core student outcomes: creativity, critical thinking, and complex problem-solving across all disciplines, from STEM to the humanities. The session will deliver innovative practices, live demonstrations, and structured activities to foster ethical and high-impact AI use. Join us to transform the learning environment and empower both educators and students with the most current generative tools.
Rajiv Malkan, Professor, Computer Information Technology, Lone Star College System, TX

From Detection to Dialogue: Practical Strategies for Building GenAI Literacy
Generative AI (GenAI) has prompted educators to rethink how students demonstrate their learning, raising urgent questions about assessment, integrity, and engagement. Because there is no reliable way to prevent or detect GenAI use in coursework, educators must shift from prohibition to collaboration—working with students to create a culture of trust and authentic learning. The Teaching and Learning Transformation Hub at Community College of Aurora supports that coproduction through a robust GenAI Initiative designed to equip faculty and students with the skills to engage responsibly with AI. Our program centers on the following outcomes: (1) developing and communicating AI literacy; (2) designing transparent, relevant assignments; and (3) establishing clear and accessible AI use.
Heather Lang, Director, Academic Professional Development; Robin Schofield, Executive Director, Teaching and Learning Transformation Hub, Community College of Aurora, CO

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

From Caution to Confidence to Closing Equity Gaps EA IOY

The Academic Success Workshop (ASW) is a required intervention for students who find themselves below good standing for the first time, resulting in academic caution. Redesigned in 2020, after reviewing plateaued data and critical student feedback and identifying barriers to access, Counseling and Career Development Center faculty reformatted the ASW in Canvas, providing students 24/7 access in a familiar interface. In collaboration with Academic Advising, workshop modules prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion; focus on important themes to support student success; and require the completion of a post-survey for ongoing data collection about noncognitive challenges and other factors impacting and supporting students' academic success. Post-survey data, gathered and assessed by Institutional Research and Information Technology, indicate students' consistent positive outcomes toward retention and completion as well as an increased sense of belonging and motivation to persist. Faculty, student success and student development staff, and administrators are encouraged to attend. (This session highlights Moraine Valley Community College's 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award winner.)

Sharon Brennan, Counselor; Aminah Salah, Counselor, Moraine Valley Community College, IL

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Designing an Employer Engagement Engine: A Holistic Strategy

Illinois Central College (ICC), in partnership with Education Design Lab's Community College Growth Engine, is redesigning its employer engagement strategy to create a coordinated, measurable approach to partnership development. Using the Lab's employer engagement process and five-phase framework, ICC mapped its current employer ecosystem, identified communication gaps, and piloted new tools to assess and strengthen relationships. This interactive session highlights ICC's journey applying the Lab's Ladder of Engagement framework to codesign micropathways with employers in high-demand sectors. We will review ICC's employer engagement standard operating procedure as well as the process and stakeholders included in developing it. Participants will leave with practical tools for tracking and deepening employer relationships, insights from ICC's cross-departmental design process, and strategies to engage employers as codesigners of micropathways that expand learner-earner opportunity and strengthen regional workforce ecosystems.

Joe Davis, Senior Education Designer, Education Design Lab, DC; Kari Schimmel, Associate Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness and Innovation; Corrine Brown, Associate Dean, Agricultural and Industrial Technologies, Illinois Central College, IL

3:30 - 5:00 PM

GENERAL SESSION

Chair
Rufus Glasper, President and CEO, League for Innovation in the Community College

Host College Welcome
Marty Pollio, President, Ivy Tech Community College

Terry O'Banion Provocateur Awards Presentation

Presented by Cynthia Wilson, Vice President, Learning, and Chief Impact Officer, League for Innovation in the Community College

Presented to:

- Kate Smith, President, Rio Salado College
- Lim See Yew, Senior Director, Engineering, Institute of Technical Education

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

- Michael Gavin, President and CEO, Alliance for Higher Education

Innovation at the Sector Level

This keynote will explore how true innovation in higher education must happen at the sector level, with community colleges at the center. Community colleges multiplied rapidly in the mid-20th century in response to a national call to expand educational opportunity, and as democracy's colleges, they have long been the nation's most democratic institutions. They reshaped the American landscape in the mid-1900s, yet our economy, politics, society, and technology have accelerated in ways our sector has not fully matched. The keynote will argue that it's time for a new commission on community colleges—not one led by politics, but one catalyzed by a coalition of leaders and practitioners. It will highlight that many of the solutions we seek around value, economic mobility, and public trust already exist within our own institutions. By examining our sector's strengths and weaknesses, we can surface concrete practices that shift both our work and the nation's understanding of higher education. You'll be invited to consider how community colleges can once again claim their role as the moral and intellectual center of American democracy—and what it will take, in your college and in our collective sector, to get there.

5:00 - 6:30 PM

RECEPTION
Join us in a casual atmosphere to mingle, network, and get acquainted with colleagues while enjoying light hors d'oeuvres. The drink ticket you receive as you exit the preceding general session can be used for one beverage on offer during this event.

5:00 - 6:30 PM

SOLUTIONS CENTER
Conference sponsors provide hands-on demonstrations of their higher education products and services for participants. Stop by each station to discuss how your institution can benefit from working with these innovative companies. Participate in the Passport Game for a chance to win one free registration for the 2027 Innovations Conference! Find out how in the Event Information area of the conference app.

Monday, March 16

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

REGISTRATION, PRESENTER SUPPORT, AND AWARDS DESKS

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

BREAK STATION*

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM: Coffee, tea, soda, and water
8:00 - 9:00 AM: continental breakfast (e.g., yogurt, muffins, pastries)
10:00 - 11:00 AM: mid-morning snack (e.g., granola bars, cookies)
2:30 - 3:30 PM: mid-afternoon snack (e.g., granola bars, cookies)

*This information is provided as a general overview; food selections may vary.

8:00 - 9:00 AM

SOLUTIONS CENTER

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9:00 - 10:00 AM

GENERAL SESSION

Chair
Rufus Glasper, President and CEO, League for Innovation in the Community College

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

- France Hoang, Co-Founder and CEO, BoodleBox

The Community College AI Advantage: From Access to Innovation

Community colleges serve as democracy's front door to opportunity—and AI must follow the same path. This keynote challenges the notion that advanced AI tools are only for elite institutions, presenting a vision where every community college can lead the AI revolution in education.

Drawing on 25 years of experience spanning national security, law, and technology entrepreneurship, Hoang shares how community colleges are uniquely positioned to democratize AI access for students who need it most. Learn practical strategies for implementing collaborative AI that enhances teaching, improves student outcomes, and prepares learners for an AI-driven workforce—without breaking institutional budgets or compromising academic integrity.

Through real-world case studies from community colleges already transforming their campuses, discover how to move beyond pilot programs to sustainable, scalable AI integration. This presentation addresses the critical questions facing community college leaders: How do we ensure access? How do we maintain our mission while embracing innovation? How do we prepare students—and faculty—for an AI-augmented future?

Leave with actionable insights for fostering cross-sector collaboration, building faculty confidence with AI, and positioning your institution as an innovation leader. The future of education isn't being written at elite universities; it's being built at community colleges.

10:15 - 11:15 AM

SPECIAL SESSION

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Expanding Community College Metrics: Telling a More Complete Story of Impact
Many higher education professionals recognize that IPEDS graduation rate metrics do not accurately capture community college effectiveness because a large population of learners are not measured. The metrics omit critical data about many learners, including credit-bearing, non-credential-seeking learners. The negative impact is an incomplete understanding of actual completion rates and learner successes as well as negative perceptions by prospective learners, policymakers, funders, and others who use IPEDS metrics. This presentation by the 2026 Terry O'Banion Provocateur Award first-place recipient proposes approaches to community college data that tell a more complete story of community college learner experiences in achieving their educational goals.
Kate Smith, President, Rio Salado College, AZ

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Day One Access in Action: Results From Lone Star College
As community colleges confront evolving student expectations and rising affordability pressures, campus retail operations are reemerging as a powerful lever for transformation. At Lone Star College, a multi-campus community college system serving Greater Houston, a bold strategic shift is underway. Rather than taking incremental steps through traditional Inclusive Access models, Lone Star made the decisive move to implement a comprehensive Equitable Access program. In this session, the presenter will share the financial, operational, and strategic framework that guided this transformation. She will discuss the institution's transition to hybrid collegiate retailing; the decision to outsource campus store operations; and how cross-functional collaboration drove measurable outcomes, including a 92% participation rate with 88% of materials being delivered digitally. This systemwide initiative has improved affordability, simplified operations, and enhanced the student experience, while also supporting and reinforcing fiscal responsibility and operational efficiency.
Kelly Tilstra, Director, Day One Programs, Vitalsource Technologies, TN; Kristy Vienne, Vice Chancellor, Administration and Finance, and CFO, Lone Star College System, TX

From Curiosity to Confidence: Inspiring AI Transformation in Higher Education IOY
How can community colleges move from curiosity about AI to confident human-centered adoption? In this engaging forum, Merced College shares a roadmap for building trust, clarity, and collaboration across the institution. We will explore how AI can solve problems, improve processes, and enhance the student experience, all while keeping people at the heart of innovation. This session highlights Merced's AI Guidelines and Policy framework, a districtwide AI Innovation Challenge, and a new AI course designed for faculty and staff. Participants will engage in guided dialogue to identify opportunities for connection, creativity, and responsible implementation on their own campuses. Rooted in the mission that "Students are our focus, and we are known by their success," this session models openness, psychological safety, and shared leadership in the age of AI.
Kody Stimpson, Dean, Innovation and Institutional Effectiveness, Merced College, CA

Innovating Pathways: Leadership That Transforms Learning Into Opportunity
Discover how Nebraska's six community colleges, 36 Manufacturing Advisory Council (NeMAC) business partners, Chamber of Commerce, and Department of Labor joined forces to design a bold statewide model that opens doors for every learner. Through a dynamic three-level framework, students can seamlessly advance from adult education through noncredit and credit programs powered by pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship pathways in smart manufacturing. This collaborative effort redefines how education and industry connect, breaking barriers, aligning credentials, and accelerating opportunity. During this session, we will unveil the Pathways to Career Success Toolkit, developed in partnership with ACT Work Ready Communities, College of Southern Nevada, and ECMC Foundation. Be among the first to explore this groundbreaking resource and see how visionary leadership, shared purpose, and innovative design are transforming Nebraska's education-to-employment pipeline into a statewide model—and an example of collective impact.
Tammy Green, Executive Director, Workforce and IT Innovation, Metropolitan Community College, NE; Tina Gridiron, Chief Impact and Learning Officer, ACT, Inc., IA

Mentorship x 60: 10 Years of Clark State's SOAR Program
This session will highlight Clark State's award-winning employee mentorship program: Serving Our Own through Advancement and Retention (SOAR). In this interactive session, the presenter will include research and best practices in how mentorship has created student success champions at the college. The audience will learn about the competencies developed, including legislative advocacy, governance, strategic planning, and budgeting as well as leadership development and career planning. SOAR alumni and current SOAR participants will share lessons learned, promotions, and impacts made at the college as a result of their required Board of Trustees-approved projects, including the development of a comprehensive wellness program and an Office of Student Support Services. Learn how your college can create a mentorship program that gives to its employees and the college at the same time by centering student success as the guiding principle of mentorship.
Jo Alice Blondin, President, Clark State College, OH

LEARNING AND TEACHING

AI Across Campuses: Strengthening the Transfer Pipeline Through Peer Collaboration
How can community colleges strengthen the transfer pipeline while preparing students for an AI-integrated workforce? This session highlights a partnership between College of Central Florida (CF) and University of Florida (UF) that connects first-year CF students with UF peers through three structured virtual touchpoints: introductions, cross-campus peer reviews, and reflection on transfer goals. Students use generative AI to create personal websites showcasing their academic pathways, skills, and career plans. The exchange culminates in a UF campus visit that deepens belonging and transfer intent through hands-on exploration of majors and faculty connections. Presenters will share outcomes, templates, and facilitation guides. Participants, especially faculty,

advisors, and program coordinators, will engage in collaborative activities to adapt this community college-led model for their own institutions.

Julee McCammon, Associate Professor, Humanities and Social Sciences, College of Central Florida, FL; Adrienne Provost, Assistant Dean, Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Florida, FL

California's Big Bet on Zero Textbook Cost Pathways

The largest system of higher education in the U.S., the California Community Colleges, obtained funding to develop zero textbook cost (ZTC) pathways, built primarily with open educational resources (OER). As of 2026, colleges are implementing hundreds of ZTC pathways to remove financial barriers and support faculty creativity at scale. In this session, hear from a statewide leader who is supporting colleges in this historic work. Learn about supports provided to colleges, success metrics to date, and broader implications of California's ZTC movement for other states. Participants will be invited to share their own experiences with ZTC development and contribute to a discussion on scaling OER efforts nationwide. This session will be of interest to deans and chief academic officers as well as faculty leaders and librarians aiming to create equitable pathways at scale.

James Glapa-Grossklag, Dean, Learning Resources and Distance Learning, College of the Canyons, CA

Leading With AI: Building Literacy, Strategy, and Student Success Today

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the workforce, and higher education must evolve just as quickly. This session explores why AI literacy is no longer optional and how colleges can move beyond experimentation toward intentional, ethical, and student-centered AI integration. Designed for academic and administrative leaders, this presentation examines practical strategies for preparing institutions, faculty, and students for an AI-driven future. Participants will explore real-world applications of AI across disciplines, approaches to faculty development and institutional readiness, and ways AI can support, rather than replace, human teaching and learning. Through examples from community college innovation and workforce-aligned programs, participants will gain insight into how AI can enhance student understanding, improve instructional efficiency, and align curriculum with emerging career pathways. The session emphasizes responsible AI use, critical thinking, and equitable access—helping leaders position their institutions to support student success in a rapidly changing educational and economic landscape.

Reetika Dhawan, Vice President, Workforce and Healthcare, and CEO, Entrepreneurial College, Arizona Western College, AZ; Matthew Wanta, Director, Nursing, Cerro Coso Community College, CA; Nadine Dunning, Senior Director, Business Development, Cengage, OH

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

From Connection to Completion: Evolving Student Support at SUNY Orange

SUNY Orange implemented Orange Connect (EAB Starfish) to enhance the efficiency, coordination, and equity of student support services. Through a phased rollout, faculty and professional staff collaboratively developed a shared advising model designed to strengthen communication, streamline student interventions, and close achievement gaps. This presentation will explore how intentional collaboration and data-informed practices helped improve enrollment, retention, and course success rates while fostering a more holistic approach to student development. Presenters will share lessons learned from engaging cross-campus teams, aligning academic and student support units, and using technology to create a more connected college experience. Participants will gain practical strategies for leading sustainable, equity-focused change in advising and student services—regardless of institutional size or structure—and will be encouraged to consider how shared ownership of student success can transform campus culture and outcomes.

Angela Rios, Associate Vice President, Learning and Student Success; Dana Salkowsky, Director, Center for Teaching and Learning; Flor Araujo, Director, Center for Student Success, Orange County Community College - SUNY, NY

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Transforming Internship Learning Into Success Through Evidence-Based Reflection Workshops
Effective internship reflection remains a persistent challenge across technical and vocational education and training institutions, with students often unable to articulate workplace learning or connect experiences to career development. This action-based research employed structured reflection workshops utilizing Driscoll's reflection framework to enhance students' internship outcomes in Singapore. Using experimental design, our study achieved significant gains in reflective writing competencies and communication abilities through AI-assisted text analysis of reflection journals. Pre- and post-experiment surveys demonstrated measurable improvements in students' problem-solving articulation and career readiness. Our innovative workshop model combines instructor-led facilitation, Lego Serious Play® engagement techniques, and contextualized peer learning with quick-reference tools. Participants will experience hands-on demonstrations and learn implementation strategies for scaling across programmes. This evidence-based approach addresses workforce preparation needs by developing students' critical thinking, problem-solving communication, and career articulation abilities. Primary audience includes faculty, internship coordinators, and workforce development professionals seeking actionable methods to enhance internship outcomes.
Pei Shan Siah, Lecturer, Business and Services; Karen Loh, Manager, Business and Services, Institute of Technical Education, SG

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Creating and Executing an Academic AI Vision in the Community College
AI adoption in higher education is accelerating, but many institutions lack a coherent academic vision to guide it. Without clear vision and leadership, AI initiatives often become fragmented, reactive, or stalled by internal resistance. This roundtable brings together institutional leaders to explore how to build and execute a shared academic AI vision. Led by Packback in partnership with a community college leader, the discussion will focus on how to create an AI vision and then execute the change management that moves AI from exploration and confusion to strategic advantage. Drawing on established change frameworks, including Kotter's principles for leading transformation, participants will examine how to build urgency and alignment, support faculty adoption, and sustain momentum. Participants will leave with practical tools for shaping academic AI strategy as a coordinated institutional initiative.
Kelsey Behringer, CEO, Packback, Inc., IL; Kurt Hoffman, Senior Vice President, Instructional and Student Affairs, Allegany College of Maryland, MD

11:15 AM - 2:00 PM

SOLUTIONS CENTER
Conference sponsors provide hands-on demonstrations of their higher education products and services for participants. Stop by each station to discuss how your institution can benefit from working with these innovative companies. Participate in the Passport Game for a chance to win one free registration for the 2027 Innovations Conference! Find out how in the Event Information area of the conference app.

11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

SPECIAL SESSION

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Building a Culture of Innovation and Change at a Community College ^{IOY}
Innovation is not just about adopting new technology—it's about creating a culture that embraces change and inspires new ways of thinking. At Merced College, a two-year Hispanic-Serving Institution in California's Central Valley, we have intentionally built such a culture, transforming programs, services, and community impact. This session will highlight how Merced College has secured millions in grant funding and leveraged public-private partnerships to diversify resources and integrate workforce development with innovation. Examples include launching Dreamscape Learn, an immersive virtual reality lab; developing an Ag Innovation Program and Smart Farm connecting industry research with student training; embedding AI into academics and operations; and reimagining workplace culture with High-Flex Fridays and wellness programs. We have also established a Dean of Innovation role and the Merced College Innovation Center as institutional drivers of change. Participants will explore how intentional leadership, partnerships, and openness to change foster innovation at any institution. (This session touches on Merced College's 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award winner.)
Chris Vitelli, Superintendent/President, Merced College, CA

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Building the Future: The CT State AI Presidential Fellows Model
This session explores Connecticut State Community College's (CT State) Presidential AI Fellows program, where 37 leaders across multiple campuses drove ethical, collegewide AI implementation. Learn how to build leadership pipelines, establish ethical frameworks, and launch student-centered AI initiatives with a replicable roadmap for your institution.
Carey Hawkins Ash, Special Advisor to the President, Connecticut State Community College, CT

Leading Through Transformation: A Human-Centered Approach to Organizational Change
The volume and pace of change present on today's college campuses require every leader to possess the foundational knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate transformation from wherever they sit within the institutional hierarchy. By engaging in this session, participants will understand how to manage change with a human-centered approach that promotes collective buy-in; enables thorough implementation; and eases change resistance, initiative fatigue, and other employee relations issues that surface due to poorly-led change. Based on her recently published book, *Essential Practices of Organizational Change in Higher Education*, the presenter will share five change leadership practices that bridge the gap between high-level strategy and frontline operations by focusing on execution through aligned employee participation—helping leaders make decisions, take actions, and allocate resources that effectively engage and prepare the faculty and staff who will be expected to carry out and sustain the change.
Nicole Gahagan, Associate Vice President, Strategic Integrations and Initiatives, Madison Area Technical College, WI

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Faculty Investment Teams: A Professional Development Journey
Join us for an interactive session that showcases how Delta College is investing in its faculty to build a more inclusive, engaging, and student-centered learning environment. Discover the four Faculty Investments—

Creating Community, Having Conversations, Supporting Student Progress, and Practicing Situational Fairness—that are transforming teaching and learning across campus. By emphasizing connection, reflection, and shared ownership of student success, the Faculty Investment Teams model redefines faculty development as a collaborative, inclusive process that directly enhances the student experience and strengthens institutional culture. Come ready to connect, reflect, and leave with actionable ideas to strengthen faculty engagement and student success at your college.

Jerrard Johnson, Instructor, Communication; Beth Kelch, Professor, Mathematics; Janet Alexander, Professor, English, Delta College, MI

From Chalkboard to Chatbot: Evolving Teaching Through AI Integration

This session traces one educator's journey from traditional, tech-free teaching to designing AI-driven learning experiences and a custom educational app. Through storytelling, demonstration, and audience participation, the session explores how intentional integration of AI can enhance engagement, deepen learning, and promote academic integrity. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in exercises to mirror this evolution, reflect on their comfort zones, and learn about tools to help AI partner with education, not replace the human connection that drives authentic learning.

Kristen Mudge, Faculty, Psychology, Jackson College, MI

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Helping Students Succeed: Direct Financial Supports Address Unmet Basic Needs [IOY]

Supporting the growing population of college students with unmet basic needs demands new approaches to meet our educational mission. The St. Louis Community College Financial Supports Initiative, envisioned by our board of trustees and implemented by the Student Advocacy and Resource Centers, integrates an existing Emergency Fund Award with the new Archer Meals Award and Basic Needs Award. Utilizing an individualized and comprehensive social work approach, these programs were designed to holistically serve the unmet needs of under-resourced students, so they develop the stability and capacity to continue their education. Learn more about our intrusive and collaborative approach to providing immediate financial assistance and long-term support and resources. Standard operating procedures based on evidence-based best practices, diverse funding models, lessons learned, and assessment and evaluation tools demonstrating effectiveness will be shared in this interactive presentation. (This session highlights St. Louis Community College's 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award winner.)

Keith Robinder, Vice President, Student Support Programs, St. Louis Community College, MO

Mentorship for All: Building Comprehensive, Data-Informed Programs to Advance Student Success

Institutions are navigating a complex student support landscape, where varying levels of preparation, confidence, and social capital create challenges in fostering belonging and persistence. While campuses invest in advising systems, wellness initiatives, and retention strategies, these efforts often function in silos and rely on lagging indicators. This roundtable will explore how comprehensive, data-informed mentorship can serve as an integrative framework for holistic student success. Discussion will center on mentorship as a unifying structure—linking academic support, engagement, and student development through relationship-based insights. Participants will consider how mentorship can generate leading indicators that complement institutional data and facilitate coordinated action across departments. This session invites practitioners to examine how mentorship can be structured as a program that connects siloed efforts and supports institutional goals. Through collective inquiry, participants will consider how mentorship ecosystems generate actionable insights, inform coordinated interventions, and ultimately advance student success.

Andrew Shaw, Director, Partner Development; Blair Maloney, Associate Vice President, Sales, Mentor Collective, MA; Tiffany Laudano, Director, Student Success Program, Middlesex Community College, MA

Placement Processes as Bridges to Success: Ivy Tech's Knowledge Assessment
Legacy placement practices are ineffective and at odds with the educational mission of community and technical colleges. Nonetheless, many institutions have struggled to implement and sustain alternative approaches, resulting in reduced recruitment, poor student success, lower retention, and revenue shortfalls. Institutions must utilize technology to blend seemingly different institutional obligations into a coherent, holistic approach for managing marketing, placement, and persistence. In this presentation, Ivy Tech Community College (ITCC) presenters will share their experiences with and outcomes from using a solution called EdReady. ITCC discarded its high-stakes placement tests in favor of a customized solution: the EdReady-powered Knowledge Assessment. Students matriculating to any ITCC campus can use Knowledge Assessment to evaluate their readiness for desired courses, and, if necessary, improve their readiness to enroll and succeed in their preferred courses. We'll show evidence that the model works as intended, at scale.
Ahrash N. Bissell, President, The NROC Project, AZ; Tim Kish, Director, Institutional Research, Ivy Tech Community College, IN

Tech-Driven Advising: Simplifying Caseloads, Amplifying Success
Community college advisors are navigating increasingly complex student needs while managing large caseloads and striving to deliver individualized, proactive support. This session explores effective strategies for using EAB Navigate 360 to streamline advising processes and strengthen student success initiatives. Participants will learn how to design and implement targeted campaigns, early alerts, and personalized messaging that promote engagement and retention. The session will also highlight strategies for reimagining the advising journey—an intentional approach to assessing needs, tracking progress, and aligning services to support each student's path from entry to completion. Additionally, the session introduces practical applications of AI functionality within Navigate 360, including how it can automate communication, support caseload management, and enhance data-driven decision-making. Real-world examples illustrate how these tools foster efficiency, consistency, and collaboration across advising teams. Participants leave with actionable strategies to elevate advising effectiveness, strengthen outcomes, and create a more responsive and equitable student support model.
Tara Zirkel, Director, Strategic Research, EAB, DC

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Texas Opportunity High School Diploma: Two Credentials, One Life-Changing Opportunity
The Texas Opportunity High School Diploma program, established by the 88th Texas Legislature through House Bill 8, offers adult learners a unique pathway to earn a competency-based high school diploma while simultaneously pursuing career and technical education at a public junior college. In this session, representatives from San Jacinto College and Dallas College will share insights into how strategic collaborations—with continuing and professional development divisions, adult education and literacy programs, the Texas Workforce Commission, and other key partners—are transforming lives and addressing critical workforce needs across our communities. Participants will gain practical knowledge about program implementation, partnership development, and the impact of integrated educational pathways on student success and regional economic growth. Intended audience: vice chancellors, deans, directors, faculty, workforce development professionals, and others interested in innovative adult education and workforce alignment strategies.
Lamar McWaine, Dean, Strategic Initiatives; Allatia Harris, Vice Chancellor, Strategic Initiatives, Workforce Development, Community Relations, and Diversity, San Jacinto College District, TX; Chalen Jackson-Rice, Vice Chancellor, Strategic Initiatives, and Project Coordinator, Opportunity High School Diploma, San Jacinto College - Central Campus, TX

12:30 - 1:30 PM

LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

1:30 - 2:30 PM

SPECIAL SESSION

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Beyond Skills-First: The Emergence of Hybrid Intelligence in Human Evolution
The current global approach to AI and sustainability, focused mainly on incremental upskilling and reskilling, is deeply flawed. It is in what we call the Factory Logic Trap—applying linear, skills-based solutions to complex, systemic problems. Looking at the issue through the lens of human evolution, Hybrid Intelligence, the collaboration between humans and AI, is the next stage of development, and it is essential. The AI-First Blueprint for Re-Engineering Skills, Learning, Systems, and Societies is a framework that challenges the status quo. In this presentation, the second-place recipient of the 2026 Terry O'Banion Provocateur Award discusses how the blueprint lays out a five-phase playbook to guide institutions, companies, and governments from isolated operations to interconnected innovation ecosystems. This approach builds resilient organizations, fosters a co-creative workforce, and paves the way for AI-driven, inclusive nations.
Lim See Yew, Senior Director, Engineering, Institute of Technical Education, SG

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Results of the ACCT-CSCC Community College Trustee Survey
In the session, we will provide findings from the 2025 Survey of Community College Trustees, the largest national study of its kind and a result of a partnership between the Association of Community College Trustees and the Center for the Study of Community Colleges. Open to all who are interested in governance, but likely of most interest to presidents, faculty, and others who work with trustees, the presentation includes findings related to trustees' demographics and how they've changed over the years, their perspectives on priorities, institutional challenges, visions for change, and more. We will engage participants in conversations about how the findings relate to their perceptions and institutional realities. The survey includes responses from over 2,000 trustees and an additional 40 one-on-one interviews, making it a comprehensive view of trustees and their work.
Susan Kater, Consultant, Special Projects, League for Innovation in the Community College, AZ

Sparking Growth Mindsets for Agile Community Colleges Through Culture Pods [EA]
Foothill College's journey toward a growth mindset-centered organizational culture is aided by adopting Culture Pods, as defined by Mary Murphy. This session shares how Foothill laid the groundwork for using Culture Pods to tackle persistent challenges. Unlike traditional communities of practice that circulate expertise and knowledge, Culture Pods can spark mindset shifts that are crucial to the agility needed at community colleges. Culture Pods—small, intentional groupings—serve as hubs of belonging and psychological safety where faculty and staff reflect, offer support, and collaboratively tackle challenges. Through regular pod meetings, honest dialogue, and mutual encouragement, participants embraced growth-oriented thinking. This grassroots approach accelerated change across college processes and activated institutional reflective practices. As participants internalize and model growth mindsets, these microcultures have begun to influence larger

structures, fueling continuous improvement. This interactive session presentation provides a Culture Pods toolkit that can be added to an institution's reform toolbox.

Lené Whitley-Putz, Dean, Online Learning; Kristina Whalen, President, Foothill College, CA; K. Allison, Professor, Geography and Geospatial Technology, Foothill-De Anza Community College District, CA

The Skinny on AI: Thinking and Communicating Better With Digital Assistants
In an era of information overload, this session offers participants the skinny—a practical, mindset-based framework for using AI-powered digital assistants to think and communicate more effectively. Rather than outsourcing creativity, educators will learn to amplify their own cognitive processes through three core practices: structuring AI threads as digital thinking spaces that make thought visible, generating concise skinny summaries that distill complex ideas, and using parallel prompts to explore multiple strategies at once. Participants will also see how these techniques support reflective writing, professional communication, and sensitive message delivery with clarity and empathy. Through live demonstrations, collaborative exercises, and reflective discussion, participants will discover how AI can sharpen—not replace—the human voice in teaching, learning, and leadership. You will leave with prompt templates, ethical guardrails, and renewed confidence in using AI as a partner in clarity, creativity, and strategic thought.

Vincent LoCascio, Associate Professor, Mathematics, Santa Fe College, FL

LEARNING AND TEACHING

AI as a Lever for Student Persistence and Retention
Student persistence has long been shaped by academic confidence, belonging, and timely support. In recent years, however, these factors have been compounded by new pressures, including pandemic disruption, faculty burnout, and the rapid emergence of AI. Many institutions have responded defensively, focusing on restriction or compliance rather than student success. This forum reframes AI as a strategic lever for improving persistence and retention at scale. Led by Packback in conversation with a college president, the session will explore how institutions can intentionally deploy instructional AI to strengthen student competency, motivation, and engagement while expanding faculty capacity for meaningful intervention. Grounded in learning science and institutional practice, this discussion will offer administrators practical guidance for leveraging AI as a strategic tool to drive student persistence and retention.

Kelsey Behringer, CEO, Packback, Inc., IL; Kate Smith, President, Rio Salado College, AZ

AI by Design: Turning Faculty Wishes Into Reality [EA]
What happens when faculty share their wish lists and instructional designers use AI to make them real? In this session, participants will explore how five Jackson College faculty members, from yoga to marketing, collaborated with the Center for Innovation to bring their ideas to life using the CREATE method. Without even realizing it, each instructor engaged in a purposeful AI design process that turned curiosity into course-ready practice. Using simple tools such as Google AI Studio, ChatGPT Projects, and Gemini Gems, the team transformed everyday challenges into opportunities for creativity, accessibility, and engagement. This session tells the story of how AI became a normal language across disciplines, highlighting practical examples, lessons learned, and the impact on both teaching and learning.

Sonja Howell, Instructional Designer and Developer; Brian Newberry, Executive Director, Center for Innovation; Kristen Mudge, Faculty, Psychology, Jackson College, MI

Five Predictions for How AI Will Impact Community Colleges
Artificial Intelligence is rapidly transforming every aspect of education—and community colleges are uniquely positioned to benefit. In this forward-looking session, the presenter shares five key predictions for how AI will redefine teaching, learning, and institutional operations. Drawing from real-world trends and emerging AI capabilities, such as GPT-5's multimodal, agentic systems, this presentation explores how universal AI tutors, adaptive teaching assistants, and personalized learning pathways will revolutionize student success and faculty

roles. Participants will gain insights into how AI can expand access, improve retention, and elevate instructional quality while challenging colleges to rethink their value in an AI-abundant world. Participants will leave with actionable ideas for integrating AI responsibly and strategically within their institutions to enhance equity, engagement, and workforce readiness.

Feng Hou, Chief Information Officer, St. Louis Community College, MO

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

From Data to Design: Transforming STEM Student Success Through Collaboration

Rhodes State College has made student success a collaborative institutional priority—especially for the 87% of students in STEM majors. Leveraging a Title III grant as a catalyst, the college adopted an engineering design mindset to break down silos, integrate technology, and build a data-informed culture that strengthens retention and completion. This session highlights how cross-disciplinary collaboration and sustainable systems are reshaping the student experience. The college's efforts emphasize belonging, ensuring that every student feels supported from entry through completion. Key strategies include orientation redesign, tutoring innovations, gateway course support, and actionable data use. We will analyze real survey feedback, identify trends, and reimagine orientation activities to address barriers and boost outcomes. Participants will gain proven strategies and a practical framework to build or enhance their own student success ecosystems, creating lasting impact for STEM learners and beyond. This session is ideal for administrators, faculty, and support staff.

Abby Miller, Project Manager; Brendan Greaney, Vice President, Enrollment Management and Student Affairs; Nicole Dittman, Senior Director, Student Success, Rhodes State College, OH

Meeting Students Where They Are: A Dual Enrollment Orientation That Works

When Ohio introduced a state mandate requiring a formal orientation for all dual-enrolled students, Edison State Community College was faced with a challenge shared by many institutions: how to design an engaging, scalable orientation that meets state requirements and truly prepares high school students for the realities of college coursework. In this session, the presenter will share how the college rapidly transformed a compliance requirement into a meaningful student success initiative. By collaborating with Innovative Educators, Edison State created an interactive online orientation that supports more than a thousand College Credit Plus students across three delivery models—on campus, online, and at partner high schools.

Amber Hare, Registrar, Edison State Community College, OH; Fred Scott, Head of Partnerships, Innovative Educators, CO

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Galactic Collaboration: Activating Potential, Aligning Pathways, and Amplifying Impact

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to bridge education, workforce, and innovation, but are too often left out of high-visibility research collaborations. This session shares how Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C) partnered with NASA Glenn Research Center to advance scientific testing of healthcare technologies designed for deep space missions. This project illustrates more than a scientific milestone: It is a strategic case study in activating people and potential, aligning educational pathways with meaningful purpose, and amplifying community impact—the three pillars of Tri-C's Vision 2030 Strategic Transformation Plan. Students experienced hands-on learning tied to emerging global needs, faculty expanded professional growth through cross-sector research, and the college strengthened partnerships that enhance regional reputation and workforce ecosystems. Activities will include a case study walk-through of the project design and execution, facilitated discussion on aligning partnerships to strategic plans, and a guided framework activity for participants to identify transferable opportunities at their own institutions.

Rebecca Rahschulte, President, Western Campus; Annie Myatt, Director, Dental Hygiene, Cuyahoga Community College, OH

2:45 - 3:45 PM

SPECIAL SESSION

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Center for Workforce Solutions Education Leadership Group Kickoff
Following the Sunday panel on workforce innovation, this session serves as the kickoff meeting for the Center for Workforce Solutions (CWS) Education Leadership Group. Community college leaders are invited to learn how CWS is working with national industry partners to design faster, more aligned pathways into high-demand careers. Presenters will introduce the purpose of the Education Leadership Group. Early work underway in sectors such as manufacturing and aerospace and defense will be shared, including pathway mapping, skills validation, and emerging micropathway training models. Participants will discuss the role community colleges play in this work and how education leaders can collaborate with industry to strengthen workforce pipelines. This interactive session invites colleges to help shape new models that connect high school students and adult learners to accelerated career pathways while advancing enrollment, completion, and employment outcomes at their college through the CWS Inspire, Prepare, Employ framework.
Geoff Cramer, Founder; Jenna Sorrells, Vice President, National Workforce Partnerships, Futures Inc., NC; Joe Davis, Senior Education Designer, Education Design Lab, DC

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Applying Leadership Styles to Change Management Frameworks
This session invites participants to explore how leadership styles can influence institutional change. Frameworks are grounded in foundational and current models of change management. The session offers reflective opportunities to engage with theory-driven models with purpose.
Tina Smith, Associate Vice President, Learning, Anne Arundel Community College, MD

Driving Student Success Through Data Transparency and Benchmarking
City Colleges of Chicago and the National Community College Benchmark Project (NCCBP) have partnered to reimagine how community colleges define and measure success, linking institutional health and student success through data transparency, equity-centered dashboards, and strategic benchmarking for continuous improvement. City Colleges' Institutional Health Dashboards connect operational, academic, and student journey metrics to their 55 for All completion goal, integrating NCCBP benchmarks for course success, persistence, and completion. The dashboards use a red/ yellow/green system to make data actionable and foster a learning culture where red means focus, not failure. Looking ahead, City Colleges plans to expand its data-informed ecosystem by incorporating workforce and labor market statistics using National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute's Lumina-funded Workforce and Labor Market Platform, which connects program-level outcomes to service area, regional, and national job demand. Together, these initiatives demonstrate how benchmarking can drive continuous improvement, data-informed decision-making, and equitable student success across community colleges.
Michelle Taylor, Senior Research Analyst; Jacquelyn Eidson, Director, National Higher Education Benchmarking Institute, Johnson County Community College, KS; Brittany Kairis, Vice Chancellor, Strategy and Planning, City Colleges of Chicago, IL

The Entrepreneurial Engine: How Community Colleges Drive Business Innovation ᴵᴼʸ
Small businesses are the primary driver of economic growth and job creation in the U.S., yet over two-thirds fail by year 10 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Supporting small businesses by creating an entrepreneurial

ecosystem increases the chances of success for these firms, upon which our economy relies. Further, soaring tuition costs, student debt, and a rapidly changing world are eroding confidence in the value of formal degrees (Gallup, 2019). Colleges that support business incubation and entrepreneurship ensure institutional relevance while supporting the businesses that hire their students, inform curriculum development, provide internships, and become college advocates and donors. When small businesses win, we all win. Innovation centers that provide business incubation and acceleration services foster business growth while demonstrating value to a much broader set of stakeholders. This session will review how College of DuPage formed Innovation DuPage, review six years of impact, and help explore replication at your institution.

Joseph Cassidy, Assistant Vice President, Economic Development, and Dean, Continuing Education and Public Services, College of DuPage, IL

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Highly Effective AI Use Cases for K-12 Practitioners

Ivy Tech Community College recently completed a project to identify the highest value use cases for AI in K-12 education. Participants will learn how Ivy Tech collaborated with an industry advisory group of educators/practitioners to identify, prioritize, and validate high-value AI use cases. Presenters will share input from the college's curriculum committee.

Stacy Hootman, Assistant Vice President, Teaching and Learning; Mike Bottorff, Vice President, Information Technology, Ivy Tech Community College, IN

Real Talk, Real Results: Fostering Belonging That Changes Classrooms

Imagine a student facing unexpected life challenges and considering withdrawing from classes. Unsure what to do, they wonder whether to reach out to their instructor first. How can a professor encourage that step toward connection? The Pedagogy of Real Talk is a framework designed to build trust between students and instructors so that, when challenges arise, students feel safe turning to an encouraging voice. Over the past five years, North Central Michigan College's (NCMC) Real Talk efforts have shown that this approach strengthens students' sense of belonging in the classroom and leads to significant gains in persistence and retention across diverse groups. Community college faculty and administrators will benefit from this forum's exploration of how one college has transformed authentic conversation into measurable success—showing that at NCMC, it's not just real talk, but real results.

Erin Sonneveldt, Associate Vice President, Institutional Effectiveness; Dominic Borowiak, Professor, English; Scott LaDeur, Professor, Political Science, North Central Michigan College, MI

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Charges to Chances: Scaling an Expungement and Opportunity College Model

Community colleges are uniquely positioned to remove systemic barriers faced by students with justice involvement. This session will highlight Alamo Colleges District's expungement and opportunity program, a pioneering model that combines legal expunction services with holistic academic and career supports. Through cross-sector partnerships with legal providers, employers, and community organizations, the program has scaled from pilot to districtwide, serving hundreds of students across five colleges. Presenters will share evidence of impact, including expunction outcomes, persistence data, and student testimonials, while offering actionable strategies for replication. Participants will engage in interactive discussions on adapting the model to their own campuses, exploring how colleges can turn barriers into bridges that expand access, accelerate momentum, and create pathways to mobility for justice-impacted learners.

Julia Stotts, Director, Strategic Planning and Partnerships, Alamo Colleges District, TX

Diverse Students Require Diverse Solutions and Approaches

Panelists will discuss the challenges faced by three student populations as well as potential institutional responses. (1) LGBTQ students: For years, higher education institutions supported diverse student populations with support programs, but many are no longer available. What alternatives do we have? How can we foster community and belonging? (2) First-generation students: Efforts supporting retention and completion typically focus on first-level goals—certificates, transferable credits, or degrees leading to employment. What if focus expanded beyond short-term goals to include long-term career and graduate degree goals? How and should we support these goals? (3) Stop-out students: The pandemic's many effects included prompting some students to leave education because of eroded social connections, disruptions in academic progress, and personal health concerns. Understanding their reasons for leaving—and returning—can help institutions support stop-out students and reduce barriers. The presenters' doctoral research provides the discussion's foundation.

Sandy Balkema, Dissertation Director, Doctorate in Community College Leadership; Elise Gramza, Executive Assistant, Diversity, Inclusion, and Strategic Initiatives, Ferris State University, MI; Devethia Guillory, Dean, Social and Behavioral Sciences; Michael Walsh, Dean, Creative Arts and Education, Lone Star College System, TX

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The AI Advantage: Automating Success for Community College Students

As the workforce shifts toward an AI-generation economy, community colleges play a pivotal role in bridging the skills gap. This session moves beyond theory to demonstrate how Generative AI can be practically applied across diverse career and technical professions. Participants will (a) engage in a hands-on exploration of AI tools used to automate and enhance real-world operational tasks ranging from creating dynamic dashboards and compliance instruments to generating complex simulations, and (b) see how AI can build operational frameworks and evaluation models. This workshop provides a blueprint for integrating AI into career preparation. Join us to see how AI can transform student readiness from the classroom to the boardroom.

John Sands, Professor, Information Technology, Moraine Valley Community College, IL

Workforce Opportunities Through Research and Knowledge: Building an AI-Ready Workforce

A major challenge to scaling advanced manufacturing in the Finger Lakes—especially in optics, semiconductors, energy storage, and supply chain industries—is access to a skilled, motivated workforce. With state and federal initiatives such as the I-90 Smart Corridor and On-RAMP positioning New York as a hub for high-tech manufacturing, building a sustainable pipeline of talent is critical. This forum introduces Workforce Opportunities Through Research and Knowledge (WORK), an innovative civic engagement program created in 2023 to inspire youth to envision futures in the region. By connecting students to the Finger Lakes' social, economic, and innovation history while fostering AI-ready skills, WORK prepares them for rapidly evolving industries and careers. Following a successful 2024 pilot, the program expanded in 2025 with a stronger focus on employability and community engagement. Participants will explore the program's design, outcomes, and challenges. The session is relevant to leaders in workforce and economic development.

Robin Cole, Jr., Vice President, Economic and Workforce Development and Career Technical Education; Siva Visveswaran, Director, Finger Lakes Workforce Development Center, Monroe Community College - SUNY, NY

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Bringing Technology to Wellness: Integrating App Creation Into Building Resilience [EA]

In this presentation, participants will gain insight into how artificial intelligence and low-code app development can enrich health and physical fitness courses by strengthening resilience, reflection, and engagement. Participants will experience how students used AI-assisted tools to design simple apps that support personal goals in emotional intelligence, nutrition, and wellness. Through real classroom stories and demonstrations,

participants will recognize how app creation supports self-regulated learning, creativity, and digital literacy. They will consider strategies that make emerging technologies accessible within holistic or wellness-based courses and discover adaptable ways to introduce student-centered AI experiences in their own instructional settings. This session offers a window into a transformative classroom experience where technology and human development intersect, showing how even nontechnical fields can empower learners to become innovators in their personal growth and professional preparation.

Sonja Howell, Instructional Designer and Developer; Brian Newberry, Executive Director, Center for Innovation; Payge Hodapp, Lead Faculty, Health and Physical Fitness, Jackson College, MI

4:00 - 5:00 PM

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Building Inclusive and Sustainable Concurrent Enrollment Teams
Concurrent enrollment (CE) is rapidly expanding across the U.S., but sustaining these programs requires more than compliance—it requires intentional structures that integrate CE into the college culture. This session will briefly trace the development of CE in Colorado and at Arapahoe Community College (ACC), highlighting the evolution of ACC's CE department from its inception to its current inclusive model. Presenters will describe the basic duties and collaboration of the two main CE departments and outline the roles of the instructional team as they support faculty and program quality and development. Participants will explore how inclusive team models create sustainability by embedding CE instructors into the life of the college while teams still provide support and CE specialized expertise. The session is designed for deans, directors, faculty leaders, and CE coordinators seeking strategies to strengthen and sustain their programs.

Misty Murphy, Coordinator, Instructional Partnerships; Monica Fuglei, Chair, Concurrent Enrollment, and Faculty, English; Vicki Aycock, Dean, Educational Partnerships, Arapahoe Community College, CO

Building the First National Cohort of Community College Museum Leadership
While over half of community colleges in the United States operate a museum or gallery on campus, a professional network for their leaders was only recently created. Community college museums and galleries (CCMGs) serve a critical role in teaching, cultural exposure, and student success. Despite their pedagogical importance and proliferation, there was no dedicated professional network for the staff and faculty who direct them. This problem of practice changed in 2024 with the first national convening of CCMG leaders at CT State Housatonic Community College. This forum (1) shares key findings, including CCMGs' educational value, workforce development, and community connections; (2) demonstrates a replicable methodology for establishing and sustaining a community of practice; and (3) identifies museum-specific funding sources to supplement campus budgets. This session is helpful for faculty looking for interdisciplinary teaching and research methods, and deans and presidents seeking funding sources and professional development models.

Jennifer Reynolds-Kaye, Director, Housatonic Museum of Art, CT State Community College - Housatonic, CT; JoAnne Northrup, Executive Director and Chief Curator, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Johnson County Community College, KS; Craig Hadley, Executive Director and Chief Curator, Dennos Museum Center, Northwestern Michigan College, MI

Reclaiming Human Dialogue in the Age of AI
As AI continues to disrupt and transform higher education, community colleges stand at a critical intersection of innovation and humanity. This session introduces a human framework for AI integration grounded in transparent dialogue, co-construction, and human-centered learning. Participants will explore practical strategies for guiding their community through AI disruptions and transformations by reclaiming dialogue as a means of fostering trust, curiosity, and ethical awareness. Drawing from constructivist and participatory

research, the presenter will model a human-centered dialogue method to engage participants in examining their own perceptions of AI. Primary audience includes institutional leaders, educators, and staff seeking meaningful human-centered approaches to AI integration in learning and organizational practice.
Chadd Engel, Manager, AI Initiatives and Outcomes, Waubonsee Community College, IL

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Bridging the Gap: Integrating Google Data Analytics Into Non-STEM Mathematics
This presentation aims to better equip students for today's data-driven workforce by sharing our experience integrating the Google Data Analytics Professional Certificate, offered through Coursera, into non-STEM mathematics courses at Dallas College. This innovative approach has created meaningful learning experiences, helping students see the relevance of math beyond the classroom. Students were given free access to the Coursera-hosted Google Certification program. This unique opportunity allowed them to merge academic learning with in-demand, real-world professional skills. The integration helps students connect math to real-world data and technology. By working with real data, students build problem-solving and analytical skills that are in high demand, strengthening their marketable skills for future careers by gaining hands-on experience with tools and terminology used in entry-level data analyst roles. A key part of this session will be sharing student feedback and experiences.
Ali Ahmad, Faculty; Gowri Putcha, Professor, Mathematics, Dallas College, TX; Benjamin Parris, Strategic Partner Manager, Google, CA

From Classroom to Code: An English Instruction-AI Integration Case Study [EA]
An English Instructor at Jackson College exemplifies the evolution of innovation in education. What began as an in-person teaching journey grew into online course delivery, then expanded into the exploration of learning management systems, artificial intelligence, and now app design. Through this progression, the presenter transformed her courses into dynamic, technology-integrated learning experiences that promote engagement, creativity, and student ownership. In this session, participants will explore how she used emerging tools to build a case study on authentic student application and reflection. The presentation highlights practical outcomes, including improved student confidence, stronger communication skills, and new pathways for course-level innovation.
Geraldine Jacobs, Professor, Liberal Arts Pathway; Sonja Howell, Instructional Designer and Developer; Brian Newberry, Executive Director, Center for Innovation, Jackson College, MI

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Enhancing Student Professional Development to Empower Home Childcare Providers
To address the critical need for professional development and credentialing in early childhood development, the Service Employees International Union contracted with De Anza College to provide a structured pathway for home childcare providers, in a pilot program designed to meet California State Teacher's Permit requirements. By obtaining their California Teacher's Permit, pilot program participants could enhance their qualifications, improve the quality of care they provide, and strengthen their economic mobility. The structured pathway and pilot program support the broader mission of De Anza College to foster educational equity and workforce development. Features include online and hybrid instruction, a curriculum designed to cover essential topics aligned with Associate Teacher's Permit requirements, faculty-guided instruction, student access to essential textbooks, frequently scheduled group and one-to-one tutorial support, and computer technical support. The structured pathway has enabled student achievement and may have potential for replication across workforce sectors.
Elvin Ramos, Division Dean, Social Science and Humanities; Richard Zalman, Adjunct Professor; Jila Maleksalehi, Adjunct Professor, Early Childhood Education; Magda Kosowicz, Interpreter and Coach, Childhood Development; Mayra Aguilar, Lecturer, Anthropology, De Anza College, CA

Panther Advanced Technology Hub: Revolutionizing Workforce Development Through Public-Private Partnerships IOY

Palm Beach State College (PBSC) has launched the Panther Advanced Technology Hub (PATH), a cutting-edge workforce development initiative, in partnership with TMRW Sports and Levatas, Inc. PATH bridges the gap between education and industry, preparing students for high-demand careers in sports technology, cybersecurity, robotics, autonomous drones, and data engineering. TMRW Sports has named PBSC the exclusive home of TGL, its tech-driven golf league with the PGA TOUR, airing on ESPN. Levatas specializes in machine learning and computer vision software for industrial automation, offering students exposure to advanced robotics and AI systems. Through internships and hands-on experience, PATH equips students with practical skills that translate directly to the workforce. This session explores how public-private partnerships can drive innovation in the classroom and elevate workforce readiness. Participants will gain insights into building impactful collaborations that benefit students, institutions, and industry alike. (This session highlights Palm Beach State College's 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award winner.)

Stephen Joyner, Provost, Palm Beach Gardens Campus; John Hadley, Dean, Business and Computer Science, Palm Beach State College, FL

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Enhancing Student Success: Onboarding, Orientation, and Support at Community Colleges

This session explores how a multi-campus community college with several Hispanic-Serving Institutions innovatively enhanced its dual student orientation. Through a comprehensive program, the institution increased in-person attendance by creating a welcoming environment, providing essential resources, and offering engaging activities. Connecticut State Community Colleges also expanded its orientation model to address the unique needs of dual enrollment and international students, resulting in improved retention and persistence. Participants will learn effective strategies, examine the impact on student engagement and retention, and explore the role of family and friends in supporting student success.

Jesselica Rodriguez, Assistant Director, Orientation and Onboarding, CT State Community College - Gateway, CT

5:15 - 6:15 PM

EXPRESS CONNECTIONS (Invitation Only)

During this VIP event, community college presidents and vice presidents network with our solution providers. Express Connections is invitation-only, and attendance must be confirmed. Light beverages and snacks are provided.

Tuesday, March 17

* All conference activities take place on the 3rd floor of the JW Marriott Indianapolis.

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

REGISTRATION, PRESENTER SUPPORT, AND AWARDS DESKS

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

BREAK STATION*

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM: Coffee, tea, soda, and water
8:00 - 9:00 AM: continental breakfast (e.g., yogurt, muffins, pastries)
10:00 - 11:00 AM: mid-morning snack (e.g., granola bars, cookies)
2:30 - 3:30 PM: mid-afternoon snack (e.g., granola bars, cookies)

This information is provided as a general overview; food selections may vary.

8:00 - 9:00 AM

SOLUTIONS CENTER

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9:00 - 10:00 AM

GENERAL SESSION

Chair
Rufus Glasper, President and CEO, League for Innovation in the Community College

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

- Rufus Glasper, President and CEO, League for Innovation in the Community College
- Kurt Hoffman, Senior Vice President, Instructional and Student Affairs, Allegany College of Maryland
- Chadd Engel, Manager, AI Initiatives and Outcomes, Waubonsee Community College
- Joanne Fish, Associate Dean, Humanities, Jefferson College

AI in Action: A Conversation With League AI Fellows

Artificial intelligence is already reshaping how community colleges teach, support students, and operate—but turning possibility into practice requires intention and leadership. In this engaging panel, graduates from the League AI Fellows Program share firsthand experiences using AI at their institutions, from early exploration to real-world application. Panelists discuss what motivated them to engage with AI, how their colleges are approaching it today, and what they've learned through hands-on use. Through concrete examples, they highlight practical AI applications improving workflows, informing decisions, and supporting students and staff, alongside challenges related to culture, ethics, and trust. Conference participants will leave with grounded inspiration and actionable insights for advancing responsible, human-centered AI use in community colleges.

10:15 - 11:15 AM

SPECIAL SESSION

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

A Culture of Caring and Communication to Support a Learning Community
In higher education, success is often measured by academic outcomes and institutional growth. Yet, the heart of our mission lies in how we serve students and support one another through meaningful, values driven interactions. This session presents a campus wide interaction model built on two core values: a culture of caring and communication. Developed through intentional design and inclusive collaboration, the model promotes warmth, respect, and responsiveness in every interaction—from admissions to graduation and among all campus personnel. To reinforce the model, we implemented a recognition system that celebrates individuals who exemplify positive engagement, using storytelling and visibility to inspire broader participation. Attendees will explore how intentional interactions foster belonging, improve retention, and support student success, while also cultivating a campus culture where people want to work and learn. Practical strategies for gathering stakeholder feedback and sustaining a student centered culture will be shared, offering tools for meaningful engagement and institutional transformation.
Helen Sullivan, Assistant Dean, Student Affairs and Academic Success; Tim Dorsey, Dean, Student Affairs; Scott J. Latiolais, President, Westshore Campus, Cuyahoga Community College, OH

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Building Learning Pathways That Stick: From Curation to Capability
How can colleges design professional development that's both scalable and strategic? This session explores how Ivy Tech Community College built curated learning pathways to strengthen organizational capability and align employee growth with institutional goals. Instead of creating new content from scratch, Ivy Tech leveraged data from coaching conversations, engagement trends, and performance insights to curate targeted strengths-aligned learning pathways using LinkedIn Learning and other trusted resources. Participants will discover how this approach made professional development more accessible, relevant, and connected to the college's leadership competency framework. Those who attend will also leave with practical tools for designing skill-based pathways that empower managers to lead development conversations, promote accountability, and build a culture of continuous learning across all levels of the organization.
Melody Swigert, Director, Leadership and Professional Development; Trent Hawker, Director, Professional Development, Ivy Tech Community College, IN

Program Reviews: Not Just for Academics
Ivy Tech Community College requires annual program reviews, and the Sellersburg Campus expanded this process by adding a presentation component with three strategic questions focused on workforce alignment, advisory board sustainability, and top employer partners. All cabinet members attended each of the 37 program presentations, ensuring consistent feedback and engagement. Programs were asked to assess the health of their advisory boards, identify support needed to strengthen those relationships, and highlight their top three employer partners. This presentation will share the practical structure of the enhanced review model, including sample program reviews, cabinet notes, and follow-up actions. Real examples will illustrate how the process strengthened employer connections, revealed opportunities for growth, and guided improvements in academic programs. We will also demonstrate how insights from the reviews informed the

next round of faculty professional development, emphasizing that academic quality and continuous improvement remain at the heart of the college's mission.

Travis Haire, Chancellor, Sellersburg Campus; Matthew Cupp, Executive Director, Career Link; Elizabeth Cassady, Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs; Tyiana Thompson, Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs and Marketing, Ivy Tech Community College, IN

RISE on the Road: Inclusive Innovation for Community Colleges

At Waubonsee Community College, more than 160 employees came together to ask a bold question: What if equity and innovation guided everything we do? The answer became RISE 2030, a strategic plan reimagining what a community's college can be for students, staff, and the community it serves. This forum will share Waubonsee's journey—the challenges, the breakthroughs, and the lessons that continue to shape meaningful change. Participants will see how collaboration across roles is building student success, institutional resilience, and stronger workforce partnerships.

Stacey Randall, Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Innovation, and Planning; Jessica Price, Associate Chief of Staff; Shellee McCullum, Project Manager, Institutional Effectiveness; Toya Webb, Chief of Staff and Vice President, Strategy, Waubonsee Community College, IL

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Campus Reading Revolution: Book Tasting Meets Common Reads

Transform your campus reading culture through an engaging exploration of innovative book tasting and common read initiatives. Join us to discover how Northeast State Community College is building a vibrant reading community across disciplines through creative approaches to student engagement. Experience our dynamic book tasting methodology firsthand. We will demonstrate how *The Bear*, by Andrew Krivak, became a catalyst for campuswide conversations and connections. Through this interactive session, you will participate in hands-on activities that showcase how faculty from diverse disciplines have successfully integrated reading initiatives into their courses. Whether you are struggling with student reading reluctance or seeking fresh approaches to unite your campus through literature, this session offers practical, adaptable strategies you can implement immediately. Leave with a toolkit of proven techniques for book tasting activities, cross-disciplinary applications, and innovative solutions that make reading both accessible and enjoyable for today's students.

Andrea Amos, Assistant Professor, College and Lifelong Learning; Dawn Dabney, Associate Professor, Mathematics, Northeast State Community College, TN

Practicing Paradox: Balancing Rigor and Care for Student Success [IOY]

How can faculty uphold high academic expectations while also supporting students' individual needs? This session shares emerging research on the practice of paradox—simultaneously providing rigor and care in the classroom. Drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data, we will highlight outcomes from courses where faculty intentionally designed for this balance as well as insights from faculty implementing the 4 Connections framework. Together, these findings illuminate how structure, flexibility, challenge, and support work in concert to foster student success. Participants will explore practical strategies to apply in their own teaching and advising contexts, and leave with concrete examples of how balancing rigor and care can positively impact student engagement, persistence, and learning.

Jennifer Kelley, Reference Librarian; Kate Szetela, Manager, Adjunct Faculty Support, College of DuPage, IL

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

From Setback to Comeback: Redefining Academic Probation Support

Nearly one in five college students faces academic probation, a setback that can derail degree progress unless institutions provide timely, effective support. Waubonsee Community College's Students on Academic Probation (SOAP) program reimagines academic recovery through technology, compassion, and data-driven design. Originally a traditional in-person meeting, SOAP has evolved into a three-tiered online system that

meets students where they are—promoting structure, self-reflection, and accountability. This session will share how Waubonsee's redesign increased access, engagement, and retention through an interactive online module integrated with workshops on time management, motivation, and self-advocacy. Presenters will highlight data showing reduced registration barriers, stronger student reflection, and higher completion of probation requirements paired with powerful student feedback demonstrating the impact of this holistic approach. Participants will leave with practical strategies and a roadmap to design or enhance scalable, equity-minded, and human-centered academic recovery programs.

Daniela Salazar De Luna, Senior Student Retention Advisor; Shellee McCullum, Project Manager, Institutional Effectiveness, Waubonsee Community College, IL; Katie Anderson, Customer Success Representative, Innovative Educators, CO

Help Is Here: A Mental Health and Wellness Resource App IOY

Community college students face several challenges related to mental wellness. Anxiety, stress, depression, and family concerns are the four highest reported reasons that community college students seek out counseling services, and nearly 40% of college students experience a significant mental health issue (AUCCCD, 2021). This presentation will examine the unique qualities of community college students and their mental wellness. An overview of depression and suicide symptoms will be presented, along with the factors of student populations that put them at an elevated risk of suicide. This presentation will also review suicide as a health epidemic and how a multi-campus referral system, led by a multidisciplinary team—Help Is Here—may be beneficial to community colleges and their students. This presentation will provide a framework for developing a student and community accessible mobile app and an education campaign to increase help-seeking services and decrease stigma-related issues. (This session highlights [Cuyahoga Community College's 2024 2025 Innovation of the Year Award winner](.).)

Kevin Berg, Assistant Professor, Counseling; David Nardecchia, Assistant Professor, Counseling, Cuyahoga Community College - Western Campus, OH; Kevin Kuntz, Professor, Counseling; Michelle Nicopolis, Professor, Psychology, Cuyahoga Community College, OH

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

From Data to Action: Strengthening STEM Collaboration

This session introduces a collaborative model piloted at Baton Rouge Community College's NSF ATE Grant Development Conference to address systemic barriers to grant readiness, including budget clarity, compliance support, and proposal tracking. Using surveys to identify challenges and Community College Presidents Initiative in STEM (CCPI-STEM) modules to provide a structured framework, the model fosters collaboration that is critical to strengthening STEM workforce development and preparing students for an ever-changing workforce. Participants will examine survey findings, engage with planning strategies, and explore how collaborative activities can build institutional capacity to pursue NSF ATE and other competitive grants. Faculty, deans, grants administrators, and workforce development leaders will gain practical insights and tools for applying replicable strategies to enhance grant success and cross-institutional collaboration.

Shane Kirby, Director, Grants, Columbus State Community College, OH; Shalini Gogawale, Grants Administrator, Institutional Advancement, Baton Rouge Community College, LA

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Language Immersion Cohorts Create Equity and Growth

North Seattle College has more than quintupled enrollment and completions in its early childhood education programs over a five-year period by offering certificates and degrees in multiple languages, including English, Arabic, Somali, and Spanish. This effort required course development not only in the field of study but in general education courses as well. In this session, we will share how cross-campus collaboration between

transfer and workforce education has enabled these programs to progress from short-term certificates to an Associate of Applied Science and a Bachelor of Applied Science in early childhood education.
Annie Garrett, Manager, Early Childhood Education, North Seattle College, WA

11:15 AM - 2:00 PM

SOLUTIONS CENTER
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11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

SPECIAL SESSION

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Gaucho Roundup: Community College Cybersecurity Interns Herding Hackers [IOY]
This presentation outlines the creation and purpose of the Gaucho Security Operations Center, a program designed at Glendale Community College to address the increasing problem of cyberattacks, and the difficulty cybersecurity students face in finding employment due to a lack of experience. The core solution was building a Security Operations Center (SOC) on campus, enabling students to gain over 300 hours of hands-on experience by offering security as a service to underserved rural municipalities. This initiative is part of a larger network of Regional SOCs across Arizona, supported by state funding in partnership with the Arizona Department of Homeland Security, with resources such as specialized software and training. The program has garnered national recognition, including visits from the National Cyber Director, participation in White House discussions regarding the national cyber workforce strategy, and local recognition as the Best of the West in Innovative Excellence. (This session highlights Maricopa Community Colleges' 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award winner.)
Rachelle Hall, Faculty Chair and Director, Cybersecurity, Glendale Community College, AZ

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Leading the Shift: Building a Centralized Advising Model for Student Success
Community colleges face ongoing challenges related to changing student needs, resource constraints, and demands for measurable student success. In response, Kirkwood Community College undertook a structural transformation, moving academic advising from a decentralized model to a centralized department of professional advisors. This shift enabled the professionalization of academic advisors, allowing faculty advisors to focus more fully on their instructional responsibilities. Advising was reframed as a teaching activity, complete with student learning outcomes, a syllabus, and assessment protocols. Standardized advising processes promote clarity, coordination, and efficiency across programs. To enhance collaboration, the institution also established cross-functional student support teams that connect faculty, advisors, and student services staff to provide holistic support. Come explore the leadership decisions, change strategies, and organizational structures required to make this transformation sustainable. Participants will gain practical

insights into leading structural change, fostering collaboration between divisions, and creating sustainable systems that advance student learning and institutional effectiveness.

Colette Atkins, Associate Vice President, Academic Affairs; Jennifer Bradley, Vice President, Academic Affairs, Kirkwood Community College, IA

The Future of Program Review: Data, Faculty Buy-In, and AI

Community colleges are under increasing pressure to demonstrate program value and workforce relevance while maintaining financial sustainability. This interactive forum focuses on the practical application of academic program data to drive engagement and portfolio strategy. Northcentral Technical College (NTC) will share its process for integrating PES Markets and Economics data into program health reviews, moving toward relevant, precise data to empower faculty to make specific performance improvements. We will then see how these insights shape NTC's broader program portfolio decisions. Finally, we will explore the next frontier with a look at the Economics Agent, an AI tool designed to retrieve program economics data through a chat interface. We will discuss the current reality of this technology—where it shows promise, why it isn't a replacement for human analysis, and how institutions can make use of these tools without losing focus on their mission.

Darren Ackley, Chief Operating Officer, Northcentral Technical College, WI; Elizabeth Atkins, Vice President, Product, Gray Decision Intelligence, MA

The Project Marketplace: Building Leaders Through Strategic Projects

How do you design leadership development that produces measurable organizational results? Ivy Tech Community College's Pathways to Peak Leadership program introduced the Project Marketplace to connect emerging leaders with meaningful, skill-building projects that directly address institutional challenges. This session will explore how the model was implemented within the cohort-based leadership program, including project design, sponsor engagement, and participant matching based on competencies and interests. Presenters will share lessons learned from the pilot phase and discuss how the framework could evolve to serve as a scalable, systemwide approach to experiential leadership development. Participants will leave with practical tools for connecting professional development to real institutional priorities and insights into how project-based learning can strengthen both leadership capacity and organizational collaboration.

Melody Swigert, Director, Leadership and Professional Development; Trent Hawker, Director, Professional Development, Ivy Tech Community College, IN

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Scaling Ethical AI Agents for STEM Tutoring

Hostos Community College's Academic Learning Center and Office of Educational Technology are advancing ethical AI integration into STEM tutoring. This forum highlights the development of specialized AI tutor agents designed to scaffold STEM learning while aligning with Universal Design for Learning, accessibility, and privacy standards. Presenters will share strategies for training tutors in AI literacy, including prompting techniques and active use of AI tools in live tutoring. Students will soon be engaged in testing these agents, with their feedback guiding refinement and usability improvements. Participants will explore methods for responsibly scaling AI adoption, balancing innovation with compliance, and fostering equitable student engagement. Faculty, tutors, instructional designers, and administrators interested in AI's role in teaching and learning will leave with practical models, resources, and adaptable practices for integrating AI ethically into student support.

Ana Marjanovic, LMS Administrator and Instructional Designer; Lissette Jourdain, Director, Hostos Academic Learning Center, Hostos Community College - CUNY, NY

The Effective and Responsible Use of AI in College Instruction

The velocity with which AI is transforming nearly all aspects of higher education raises important questions about how to ensure that it is used both effectively and responsibly. The primary purpose of this session is to describe leading best practices in the responsible and effective use of AI in instruction and assessment at community colleges. The secondary purpose is to stimulate dialogue on the transferability of these practices to

other community colleges. Pursuant to these goals, the first part of the session will review leading definitions of the term "responsible artificial intelligence." The second part of the session will describe best practices in the responsible and effective use of AI in community college instruction and assessment. The third part of the session will begin with an interactive exercise in which participants consider the applicability of these practices to their respective colleges and conclude with questions and answers.
Kevin Peek, Professor, Economics, South Texas College, TX

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Building Bridges: Collaborative Pathways From Community College to University
This session highlights a partnership between Marshall University and Mountwest Technical and Community College, supported by Education Design Lab's Community College Growth Engine, that creates seamless stackable credential pathways in healthcare and welding. Students begin with micropathway credentials at Mountwest, which build toward A.A.S. degrees, and then automatically bridge to Marshall's B.A.S. programs, providing a clear, skills-based roadmap for academic and career progression. Engagement strategies foster student agency and belonging through campus visits, interactive experiences, and incentives, helping learners to envision themselves successfully transitioning to university life. Guaranteed progression ensures that all A.A.S. graduates in these pathways receive acceptance into B.A.S. tracks, supporting social mobility and educational continuity. By mapping each step, providing exposure to the next academic environment, and connecting credentials to tangible outcomes, this model demonstrates how intentional design can help students navigate the path from community college to university, gaining confidence, skills, and opportunities along the way.
Joe Davis, Senior Education Designer; Jimmy LeDuc, Education Designer, Community College Growth Engine, Education Design Lab, DC; Josh Baker, President, Mountwest Community and Technical College, WV; Diana Adams, Director, Design Center, Marshall University, WV

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Innovative Public-Private Partnerships: Diversifying Revenue and Expanding Workforce Development **IOY**
Public-private partnerships (PPPs) can be transformative for community colleges—providing new funding models, integrated workforce training, and opportunities to colocate innovation and research. At Merced College, we are advancing a comprehensive PPP that leverages partnerships with Legacy Construction, a master developer; third-party consultants, to safeguard college interests in negotiation and agreements; and the Reservoir, to bring entrepreneurs, small business innovators, and research and development into alignment with our Ag Innovation Program. The model also integrates partnerships with University of California, Merced and University of California Ag and Natural Resources, creating pathways for on-site public research and undergraduate research exposure for two-year students. Come learn how PPPs can diversify unrestricted revenue streams, embed workforce development and training into major projects, and expand innovation ecosystems on community college campuses. Participants will gain strategies for designing and negotiating PPPs that align with institutional missions while fueling long-term sustainability and student success.
Chris Vitelli, Superintendent/President; Nathan Devine, Dean, Enterprise and Academic Partnership, Merced College, CA

Preparing Career-Ready IT Professionals Through Industry Partnership
Ivy Tech Community College is transforming IT support education by integrating ServiceNow University content into curriculum. Students gain hands-on experience with the AI workflow platform used by Fortune 500 companies, developing critical competencies in troubleshooting, ticketing systems, knowledge base management, and customer service through live ServiceNow lab instances. This partnership delivers three key benefits: rigorous academic coursework, real-world technical platform experience, and pathways to industry-recognized ServiceNow certifications—all at no cost to students or institutions. The model addresses the IT

skills gap, accelerates student employability, and creates talent pipelines that benefit communities. Attend this session to learn how the partnership builds workforce-ready skills that translate directly to employer needs. Participants will learn how to replicate this scalable model at their own institutions, empowering students with the technical expertise and credentials that employers actively seek.

Mike Bottorff, Vice President, Information Technology, Ivy Tech Community College, IN; Trey Hemmingsen, Principal Program Manager, Academic Partnerships, ServiceNow, CA

12:30 - 1:30 PM

LUNCH ON YOUR OWN

1:30 - 2:30 PM

SPECIAL SESSION

LEARNING AND TEACHING

The Future of Innovation in Higher Education: Human, Not AI [EA]
What if the most important component of innovation in higher education is not AI but the human being? This session explores how authentic relationships and human presence may be the most powerful drivers of innovation in an AI-driven age. Participants will examine three ways AI could replace professors, three reasons it cannot, and how AI is more likely to transform professors' work than take over their jobs. Using examples of AI as an assistant, this session demonstrates how AI can help faculty reclaim time for the human elements that make education meaningful, such as connection, creativity, and mentorship. Participants will engage in discussion and design activities that envision AI as a partner enhancing, rather than diminishing, human presence. You will leave with ideas for fostering human-centered innovation and ensuring that, in the future of higher education, technology serves rather than substitutes for the educator.

Geraldine Jacobs, Professor, Liberal Arts Pathway; Sonja Howell, Instructional Designer and Developer; Brian Newberry, Executive Director, Center for Innovation, Jackson College, MI

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Applied Practice for Teaching: Design Thinking for Faculty Growth
How can we better meet faculty where they are in their professional growth? This interactive session introduces the Applied Practice for Teaching (APT) program. APT is an evidence-based, competency-driven approach to faculty development designed for community and technical colleges. After a concise overview of the APT model, participants will engage in a collaborative design challenge. Each group will select a faculty persona (e.g., a new technical instructor, a seasoned faculty member skeptical of professional development, or an experienced educator seeking renewal) and identify that persona's potential development needs. Using one-page APT course summaries, groups will then design customized development pathways aligned with teaching competencies. This engaging hands-on format models the learner-centered, applied approach that defines APT and fosters rich dialogue about how to tailor faculty development to local contexts. Faculty developers, instructional designers, deans and directors, and faculty leaders involved in professional learning are encouraged to attend.

Dionne Hicks, Learning Development Specialist, Teaching and Learning, Kentucky Community and Technical College System Office, KY

Strategic Planning in Action: Linking Agendas, Stakeholders, and Outcomes
How can strategic planning become more than a static document? This session shares how Jackson College transformed planning into a living, collaborative agenda that drives both institutional and student success. Central to this shift are inclusive committee structures and the Line of Sight framework, which makes explicit the connection between everyday departmental work, student success drivers, and measurable outcomes. Participants will explore strategies for empowering stakeholders, fostering accountability, and ensuring campuswide alignment. Practical examples will illustrate how to create visibility into priorities, connect levers of influence to student outcomes, and maintain flexibility in response to changing needs. Participants will leave with concrete tools to strengthen strategic planning at their own institutions, making it dynamic, engaging, and directly tied to student achievement.
Ashley Van Heest, Chief Strategy Officer, Jackson College, MI

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Building Thinking Classrooms Meets Khan Academy: Students Running Their Learning
In this interactive forum, participants experience how Building Thinking Classrooms and Khan Academy Mastery Learning combine to create student-led, emotionally intelligent learning communities. Rooted in college mathematics instruction but applicable across disciplines, this model empowers learners to manage their own practice sessions, collaborate across groups, and support one another toward mastery—while instructors act as facilitators of thinking rather than deliverers of content. Participants will engage in a brief Building Thinking Classrooms-style challenge drawn from a Khan Academy mastery activity and reflect on how consensus-building, empathy, and peer feedback drive both engagement and equity. The session highlights practical strategies for transforming classrooms into collaborative learning ecosystems in which every student feels ownership of growth and belonging. Primary audience: faculty, instructional designers, and teaching and learning leaders seeking scalable models that unite active learning, digital mastery tools, and student-driven collaboration.
Vincent LoCascio, Associate Professor, Mathematics, Santa Fe College, FL

From Uncertainty to Innovation: Empowering Faculty in the Age of AI
As AI transforms higher education, the Wake Technical Community College instructional design department created an AI Pathway to help faculty build confidence and competence in using AI for teaching and learning. This structured professional development series guided faculty from foundational awareness to classroom integration through workshops, self-paced modules, and collaborative design sessions. Participants explored AI basics, ethics, student literacy, instructional applications, and student engagement strategies. This session shares the design of the pathway; the range of professional development formats offered; and examples of how faculty implemented AI in their courses, from revising assignments to student-centered learning to engagement activities. Participants will learn about faculty participation across disciplines, the outcomes achieved, and feedback collected on the program's impact. The presentation offers a replicable model and practical strategies for institutions seeking to cultivate responsible, innovative AI adoption among educators.
Katie Surber, Manager, Instructional Design and Development, Wake Technical Community College, NC

Reflective Teaching Through Peer Observations ^{EA}
Peer observations offer faculty a unique opportunity to observe colleagues' classes in a non-evaluative, reflective format. Faculty are organized into groups of four, visit each other's classrooms once per semester, complete guided reflections, and meet for a structured debrief. While the program encourages personal reflection and exposure to diverse teaching approaches, its impact extends beyond pedagogy: It strengthens interdepartmental communication, fosters cross-disciplinary understanding, and boosts morale by creating space for collegial dialogue. Faculty consistently report that the program builds trust and connection across

campus, contributing to a more collaborative culture. The session will share program structure, faculty feedback, and lessons learned from implementation.

Heather Martin, Assistant Dean, Center for the Enhancement of Teaching, Assessment, and Learning; Sarah Bass, Associate Dean; Justin Robertson, Dean, Communications and Behavioral Sciences, Elgin Community College, IL

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Rethinking Campus Discipline Through Restorative Practice

This session explores how one community college shifted from a disciplinary student conduct process to a restorative justice framework. Participants will learn how restorative practices move beyond punishment to emphasize accountability, repair harm, and rebuild trust within the campus community. The session will highlight transferable strategies that extend beyond conduct offices, offering practical tools for all higher education professionals. By engaging with real-world examples and practicing restorative language, participants will leave with concrete approaches to fostering equity-minded accountability in their own work.

Lex Rakovan, Coordinator, Student Support, Sinclair Community College, OH

To Be or Not To Be . . . That Is the Question

This engaging presentation draws a compelling parallel between Shakespeare's famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy and the modern student's enrollment decision-making process. Through the lens of both classical literature and contemporary education theory, we explore the multifaceted challenges students face when deciding to pursue higher education and the institutional responses needed to support their success. Beginning with Shakespeare's timeless exploration of choice and consequence, this presentation examines how modern students navigate their educational journeys. Drawing from 20 years of educational experience and grounded in developmental education research, the presenter will connect Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to student persistence and success. The session addresses critical barriers to enrollment and retention while presenting innovative solutions for institutional support.

Quentin Calhoun, Project Director, Business and Information Technology, Bossier Parish Community College, LA

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Training to Credential: Aligning TDCJ Officer Development With Postsecondary Pathways

Correctional officer turnover has long challenged the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), with rates that far exceed statewide averages. To address this need, Coastal Bend College established a memorandum of understanding with TDCJ to transform internal officer training into recognized college credentials. Through this partnership, cadets in Region IV earn Occupational Skills Awards (OSAs) at pre-service, while current employees with at least one year of service statewide can receive up to 14 semester credit hours of experiential credit. All active TDCJ employees are also eligible for in-district tuition, aligning with the agency's tuition reimbursement program and reducing financial barriers. In just 15 months, the initiative has resulted in more than 600 OSAs, 200,000 contact hours, and over 1,500 employees enrolled. This scalable model demonstrates how community colleges can align public sector training with credentialing systems to expand opportunity, strengthen workforce pipelines, and advance statewide talent goals. (This initiative is featured in the January 2026 issue of *Innovation Showcase*.)

Jarod Bleibdrey, Interim Vice President, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness; Braden Reed, Senior Director, Institutional Effectiveness, Accreditation, and Assessment, Coastal Bend College, TX

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Unrough Diamonds: FACET Learning for Five-Faced Cross-Curricular Success
Rough diamonds gain value via their cut, their facets. Brilliance shines through each facet. Likewise, learning can be enriched by a five-faced FACET comprising fundamentals, attractivity, commitment, engagement, and transdisciplinarity. This presentation calls upon administrators, faculty, staff, and students to engage in a new pentagonal process of change where curricular boundaries are struggling to hold fast while simultaneously disintegrating. The presentation proceeds through five overlapping phases: First, the five features of FACET are defined. Second, they are exemplified. Third, they are integrated into each other. Fourth, they are noted as more than cross-curricular, as evident in educational institutions from Utrecht to Australia, passing through Canada and California. FACET integrates monocurricular goals into the pluricurricular ones, defining the new forms of knowledge marking transdisciplinarity. How that works through collaborative synthesis of STEM-arts-humanities-social sciences goals that meet the aims of the outside world will be argued, discussed, explained, and brainstormed among participants.
Katherine Watson, Professor, Community Education, Santiago Canyon College, CA

2:45 - 3:45 PM

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Unpacking Resistance: Psychological Underpinnings of Human Response
Reactions to change can be complex. During moments of resistance, it could be daunting for leaders to overcome hurdles to effective implementation and outcomes for change. This session will explore the underlying psychological nature of the human reaction to change.
Tina Smith, Associate Vice President, Learning, Anne Arundel Community College, MD

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Transforming Teacher Education to Accelerate Teacher Candidate Proficiency and Competency
In this session, the Center for Transforming Alternative Preparation Pathways (CTAPP) at Dallas College will highlight the critical shortage, demonstrate the innovative change process, and compel participants to consider transformations needed within their teaching and learning programs. CTAPP has partnered with teacher preparation programs at community colleges to achieve sustained teacher candidate effectiveness by targeting seven components of teacher preparation to ensure quality. The nation is facing a critical shortage of highly qualified teachers, and this has been catalyzed by ineffective preparation experiences; therefore, CTAPP presents change processes to directly address inadequate preparation experiences. The teacher preparation model allowed the integration of practice-based teacher education across clinical and coursework settings to provide accelerated and innovative candidate interactions. Colleges spent three years improving opportunities to develop candidate competency, integrate responsive data systems, develop teacher-educators to support candidate needs, and improve partnerships with Local Education Agencies.
Matthew Sambrano, Director of Partnerships, Education, Dallas College, TX

Unfolding Simulation: Teach and Enforce Learning Throughout Your Course
This presentation introduces the concept of unfolding simulations as an innovative active teaching strategy designed to engage students continuously throughout a course. By progressively revealing elements of a

realistic scenario, unfolding simulations encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative learning, reinforcing key course concepts in an immersive and dynamic format. Participants will explore the benefits of using unfolding simulations to enhance student engagement and retention, understand common challenges instructors face when implementing them, and receive practical guidance on designing and facilitating their own simulations. The presentation will include personal reflections and insights drawn from the presenter's direct experience, offering actionable tips for success.

Kara Jackson-Sisler, Associate Professor, Nursing, Sinclair Community College, OH

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Start Strong: Designing Orientations for Dual Enrollment Students to Succeed

Dual enrollment programs are rapidly expanding across the U.S., yet many institutions struggle to prepare high school students for the rigor, independence, and expectations of college-level coursework. At North Hennepin Community College (NHCC), dual enrollment students—known as Postsecondary Enrollment Option students—make up over a quarter of the student population. This session explores how NHCC has developed an intentional, engaging, and student-centered orientation process that sets these learners up for success.

Erin Farley, Guided Pathways Coordinator, First Year Transitions, North Hennepin Community College, MN

TCC's MESA Retention Rates Are Pushing 90%: How Are Yours?

Discover how Tacoma Community College's (TCC) MESA Program is reimagining STEM education through a holistic, equity-driven approach that centers student belonging, identity, and success. This session will highlight how MESA integrates culturally responsive curriculum, immersive STEM experiences, and peer-supported learning communities to empower historically underrepresented students to thrive in STEM pathways and careers. Participants will gain practical strategies for fostering inclusive environments and building programs that advance equity and representation in STEM.

Adrienne Scarcella, Director, MESA, Tacoma Community College, WA

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Mobilizing the Untapped Power and Potential of Women Student Veterans

While women student veterans (WSVs) are likely labeled as and considered similar to nontraditional students, they carry unique physical and mental health, social, and financial challenges. They also bring great resiliency and a diverse skill set that is overlooked and undervalued. WSVs engage in higher education at high rates, are more likely to use Post 9-11 GI Bill benefits, and complete their degrees at higher rates than male veterans. Yet financial disparities and missed opportunities remain after completing their associate's degree, with women veterans earning $13,000-$15,000 less per year than their male counterparts. Meanwhile, industries can't find competent employees with professionalism, high-level critical thinking, and communication skills who are ready to take on tough tasks and continue to learn and develop. In this session, we will work through understanding, supporting, and engaging WSVs on your campus through unique recognition, affinity groups, career mentorship, and networking development.

Sherry Shipley, Senior Education and Employment Specialist, Military Family Research Institute, Purdue University, IN

Strengthening the Healthcare Workforce Pipeline: Pathways, Challenges, and Solutions

Monroe Community College (MCC) offers programs and training to address the critical shortage of healthcare workers in its service area. We offer career pathways from entry-level Certified Nurse Assistant training to an earned associate's degree as a Registered Professional Nurse. Current challenges include: lack of qualified faculty, increased need for student support services, and outdated training facilities and equipment. Addressing these challenges requires a multipronged approach that involves institutional and community collaboration and investment. In 2023, MCC hosted the Healthcare Workforce Summit, convening educators and professionals to clarify the ongoing workforce challenges and identify potential solutions and collaborative

efforts. This collaborative conversation led to the understanding that those in the education and healthcare fields, employers, and policymakers must work together to solve this problem. In this session, the presenter will share learnings from the summit and MCC's ongoing action and commitment to resolving this global challenge.

Julianna Frisch, Director, Healthcare Programs, Monroe Community College - SUNY, NY

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

LEARNING AND TEACHING

TIEs That Bind: Teachers Influencers Educators Stimulate the Mind
A new triad has come to define the teaching-learning experience in higher education: teacher influencer educator (TIE). The professoriate must now comprise individuals who are each and all these tripartite deliverers of data. This presentation defines, explains, and questions the TIE in four ways: First, its individual elements are delineated; second, its existence as a necessary teaching-learning singleton is set forth; third, examples of its operativity in the U.S. and abroad will be presented; and finally, TIE impact on the educational experience will be discussed and its future for learning queried. Administrators, faculty, students, and staff curious about how the socially mediated classroom is changing will discover new ways to deliver ageless information with a broad reach and a depth of understanding.

Katherine Watson, Professor, Community Education, Santiago Canyon College, CA

4:00 - 5:00 PM

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

Building Bridges: Leveraging Public-Private Partnerships for Workforce Development Through Naming Opportunities
This session explores innovative strategies for fostering public-private partnerships to secure philanthropic support for workforce development programs. Participants will learn how naming opportunities can serve as a powerful tool to attract corporate and individual donors, creating sustainable funding streams for workforce initiatives. The session will highlight successful case studies, discuss best practices for engaging stakeholders, and provide actionable steps for implementing naming opportunities at community colleges. Designed for workforce development leaders, deans, and institutional advancement professionals, this session will equip participants with the knowledge and tools to enhance their fundraising efforts and strengthen community ties.

Robin Cole, Jr., Vice President, Economic and Workforce Development and Career Technical Education; Gretchen Wood, Vice President, Institutional Advancement, Monroe Community College - SUNY, NY

LEARNING AND TEACHING

Wonder and Imagination as Foundations for Authentic Creation
Can wonder and imagination guide a college class? Achieving authentic assessment in composition courses requires that students have the space to find their voices and engage a sense of purpose connected to their own humanity and agency. This cannot happen when the papers students write are a regurgitation of the same disconnected and impersonal arguments students have written about for decades (i.e., Shall we legalize marijuana? Should we lower the drinking age?). What if, instead, students spent time in true wonder and let that to lead them through imagination that inspires transformation? This session will allow educators to

experience the beginnings of this type of wonder and provide some tools and resources to engage wonder and imagination in their own classes.

Mandy Geddes, Chair, English and Communication, Community College of Aurora, CO

STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Championship Innovation: Strategies That Put Student-Athletes First

Three award-winning leaders from top California community college athletic programs share how Championship Innovation elevates the student-athlete experience by aligning campus partners, holistic support, and equity-based strategies. Participants will explore emerging practices that prioritize student-centered services, strengthen transfer and completion pathways, and foster collaborative networks to advance student-athlete success. The session highlights proven student leadership development programming and new technology that streamlines daily operations and informs decision-making across the athletic department. Designed for faculty, staff, administrators, and campus leaders, this forum offers practical, scalable approaches for creating systems that remove barriers, celebrate achievement, and put student-athletes first in today's evolving collegiate landscape.

Kal Stewart, Director, Athletics, Long Beach City College, CA; Derrick Johnson, Associate Dean, Kinesiology and Athletics, Fresno City College, CA; Eric Mendoza, Dean, Physical Education and Athletics, De Anza College, CA

Transfer Programs: Implementing Creative Change **IOY**

Delta College faculty, staff, and administrators worked collaboratively to introduce non-occupational transfer programs into the curriculum. They created the first two programs in the AA degree, implemented necessary institutional changes, and established 2+2 and 3+1 agreements with partner institutions in the State of Michigan to accept students who complete these associate degree programs. The goal of a transfer program is for students to graduate with an associate degree and enter their four-year institution as a junior or senior in a general education field of study. Come learn how the presenters made transfer programs a reality at Delta College, learn the benefits of creating transfer programs at your college, and analyze the transfer programs you may already have in place. (This session highlights Delta College's 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award winner.)

Eric Wiesenauer, Faculty, Mathematics; Maureen Donegan, Faculty, Psychology; Laura Dull, Faculty, History; Kimberly Katzer, Registrar, Delta College, MI

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

From Survival to Success: Empowering Justice-Involved Veterans With AI and Entrepreneurship **IOY**

This session highlights how the Justice System to Careers Initiative for Veterans (JSCI-V) transforms veteran justice involvement from survival to success. Designed for replication across community colleges, JSCI-V integrates an entrepreneurial mindset with AI competency to help justice-involved veterans overcome barriers to reentry and achieve sustainable career growth. Veterans bring resilience, adaptability, and leadership potential. JSCI-V empowers them to channel those strengths into meaningful employment and/or self-employment opportunities. Through an interactive simulation and live AI demonstration, participants will experience the model in action and explore practical strategies for embedding its components into existing workforce, diversion, and reentry programs. Participants will leave with an adaptable framework that expands access, opportunity, and impact for one of the U.S.'s most overlooked populations through technology and innovation. (This session highlights Carroll Community College's 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award winner.)

Angelica Carter, Director, Community Engagement and Employee Development; Paul Hylenski, Instructor, Workforce, Business, and Community Education; April Calhoun, Advocate, Justice System to Careers Initiative, Carroll Community College, MD

Hands-On Web-Based Mechatronics Courses for High Schools and Industry
Learn how Central Community College is piloting four hands-on, web-based mechatronics courses in high schools, adult education settings, and industry that lead to a certificate, diploma, or degree. Participants will learn how low-cost, high-quality trainers can be utilized to spur interest and grow enrollment in mechatronics; see the trainers; and review the web-based instruction and lab activities. We will also cover opportunities for participants to receive a free trainer and paid professional development session in summer 2026, sponsored by the National Center for Next Generation Manufacturing. Presidents, deans, associate deans, faculty, and workforce development coordinators who want to grow enrollment in mechatronics or industrial automation will benefit from this session.
Andrew Dunn, Coordinator and Trainer, Industrial Technology; Douglas Pauley, Associate Dean, Community and Workforce Education, Central Community College, NE

5:00 - 6:00 PM

LEAGUE AWARDS RECEPTION (Invitation Only)
At this exclusive event, 2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award and 2025-2026 Excellence Award recipients are congratulated and celebrated for their exemplary work. (*This event is for specified award recipients only:* **Your award pin or medallion is your ticket to join us.**)

Wednesday, March 18

* All conference activities take place on the 3rd floor of the JW Marriott Indianapolis.

8:00 - 10:30 AM

BREAK STATION*

8:00 - 10:30 AM: Coffee, tea, soda, and water
8:15 - 9:15 AM: continental breakfast (e.g., yogurt, muffins, pastries)

*This information is provided as a general overview; food selections may vary.

8:00 - 10:30 AM

REGISTRATION, PRESENTER SUPPORT, AND AWARDS DESKS

9:15 - 10:15 AM

FORUMS

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

AACC Mid-Level Leadership Competencies at Work
This presentation will provide information on the job-related experiences that support the development of academic leadership skills that align with American Association of Community Colleges' mid-level leadership competencies.
Sharonda Mikle, Associate Vice Chancellor, Instruction, Bossier Parish Community College, LA

Two Paths, One Goal: Integrating OER and Inclusive Access
Many colleges struggle with textbook affordability initiatives that compete rather than complement one another. In particular, open educational resources (OER) and automatic textbook billing programs, such as Inclusive Access (IA) and Equitable Access, are often framed as oppositional approaches, leaving faculty and students caught in the middle. This session will share how one college worked to move beyond this binary by fostering collaboration between OER and IA stakeholders under a shared mission of affordability. Presenters will highlight strategies for building cross-departmental partnerships, positioning the library as a convener, and supporting faculty through professional development and mentorship. Participants will leave with practical ideas for integrating OER and IA into a cohesive, student-centered strategy that emphasizes equity, choice, and sustainability.
Brandon Board, Digital Services Coordinator, Library, Waubonsee Community College, IL

WORKFORCE PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Empowering IT Faculty: Collaborative Strategies for Program Improvement
The National Information Technology Innovation Center (NITIC), funded by NSF ATE, strengthens IT programs at community colleges across the U.S. This session showcases NITIC's core initiatives: faculty professional development, a resource hub of teaching assets, and industry engagement through the national Business Industry Leadership Team. Learn how NITIC advances IT education by integrating AI and professional skills, supporting faculty collaboration, grant funding, and sharing promising practices. Participants, including IT faculty, staff, and college leadership, will discover how NITIC empowers faculty to modernize programs, respond to workforce needs, and scale effective strategies across institutions, expanding access to emerging technologies and helping students become tomorrow's IT professionals.
Stephanie Schuler, Assistant Director, National Information Technology Innovation Center; Shane Kirby, Director, Grants; Lawrence McWherter, Associate Professor and Principal Investigator, National IT Innovation Center, Columbus State Community College, OH

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM

CLOSING GENERAL SESSION AND LEAGUE AWARDS CELEBRATION

Chair
Cynthia Wilson, Vice President, Learning, and Chief Impact Officer, League for Innovation in the Community College

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

- Mary F.T. Spilde, Director, Executive Leadership Institute, League for Innovation in the Community College

Holding Steady Through Disruption: Innovation, Belonging, and the Work That Is Ours to Do

As community colleges navigate sustained disruption—from shifting student needs to accelerating technological change—innovation is no longer only about systems, strategy, or tools. It is also a deeply human experience. In this keynote, disruption is reframed not simply as something to manage, but as a condition to be met with courage, care, and creativity. Drawing on the Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear, Incomprehensible (BANI) framework and the poetic insights of David Whyte, the session invites faculty, staff, and leaders to slow down, find language for what they are living through, and reimagine innovation as a human-centered practice rooted in belonging, presence, and purpose.

League Awards Celebration

After her keynote address, Spilde will lead a special tribute to [2024-2025 Innovation of the Year Award](#) and [2025-2026 Excellence Award](#) recipients. Recipients wear their lapel pins or medallions to this session in order to receive a copy of the League Awards Program, in which they are featured. At this celebration, all recipients are invited to stand with a colleague or fellow audience member to have their pins/medallions donned. It is a brief, but very moving ceremony you won't want to miss!