

For Immediate Release

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## Educators to explore state of higher education in the United States on April 5-8 in Chicago

### *Higher Learning 2025 expected to elevate perspectives, ideas for future change*

CHICAGO – The Higher Learning Commission will hold its Annual Conference examining the state of today’s higher education and ways forward for positive change on April 5-8 in Chicago.

Thousands of educators from around the nation are expected to attend Higher Learning 2025, where a variety of stories on topics ranging from accreditation to lessons learned and new innovations will be shared.

Presentations include:

- Opening address on Latest Trends in Higher Education by HLC President Barbara Gellman-Danley. The outlook is expected to set the stage for candid conversations by educators attending the conference’s 170+ General Program sessions and networking events.
- Keynote address on “Uniting Campus Communities: Finding Common Ground with Shared Values” by best-selling author and human-values expert David Allison.
- Update and analysis by the American Council on Education (ACE) of higher education initiatives on the horizon in Washington, D.C.
- “Strategies for Teaching, Learning and Student Success” by NASPA President Amelia Parnell and AASCU President Charles L. Welch.

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## Conference Highlights

Ongoing change to the nation's learning/work system, including the rise of credentials, applications for generative AI in higher education, and growing popularity of competency-based learning programs and the reduced-credit (three-year) bachelor's degree are among innovations in higher education that will be discussed during conference sessions.

Among other topics, HLC will present on its newly revised Criteria for Accreditation, which take effect on September 1, 2025, and on lessons learned in conjunction with the Vera Institute of Justice on prison education since Pell Grants were recently reinstated for incarcerated students.

HLC will introduce its future focus and direction, called North Star, as well as launch a publication for reviewing Tribal Colleges and Universities called "Distinctive and Connected: Tribal College Considerations for HLC Peer Reviewers."

### Success Stories, Lessons Learned

U.S. colleges and universities of all sizes and types, including community colleges, public and private institutions, tribal colleges, and for-profit and nonprofit entities, will be represented at the conference. The program includes more than 100 institutional presentations organized around four themes, offering a rich variety of perspectives and approaches for handling the many challenges confronting colleges and universities today:

- **Leading and managing for the future.** Example: "Back from the Brink: How to Turn Around a Struggling University" by the president of faith-based Friends University in Wichita, Kansas.
- **Promoting student success.** Examples: "Grading for Equity in Higher Education: Implications for Minority-Serving Institutions" with leaders from one of the nation's largest tribal colleges, Navaho Technical University, and "Admissions and Academics for First-Session Retention," a presentation and discussion led by the for-profit American InterContinental University System.
- **Institutional experiences with accreditation.** Examples: "Understanding the Legislative Pushback on DEI in Higher Education" with leaders from the Florida Department of Education, Southeastern Legal Foundation and the Claremont Institute at Boise State University and "Closing a Door, Opening a Window" on the University of Wisconsin system's experiences with recent closings and openings.
- **Teaching and learning in a changed environment.** Examples: "Implementing Responsible AI Use" at Illinois State University, the state's first and oldest public university, and "Embedding Certifications Within Degrees," a presentation by leaders from Kirkwood Community College, Community College of Aurora and Delta College.

"This year's conference comes at a defining moment in higher education's history," said HLC President Gellman-Danley.

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She will deliver the conference's welcome address at 9 a.m. on April 6.

"The trends we have compiled for 2025 are challenging, but are also exciting," she said. "I see this conference as an important opportunity for higher education leaders to take stock of things together, and to tackle the key question: 'How will our institutions respond?'"

### **Conference Resources**

Find more information, including the full conference program, at [hlcommission.org/conference](https://hlcommission.org/conference).

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### **About the Higher Learning Commission**

*The Higher Learning Commission accredits approximately 1,000 colleges and universities in the United States. HLC is a private, nonprofit accrediting agency. It is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Questions? Contact [info@hlcommission.org](mailto:info@hlcommission.org) or call 312.263.0456.*