

HACU 40th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

40 Years of Championing Higher Education Success: One Graduate at a Time

October 31 - November 2, 2026

Gaylord Pacific Resort & Convention Center • Chula Vista, California



Sunday, November 1, 2026

3:55 - 5:10 p.m.

Concurrent Workshops

Why are you even here? Capacity building for E-HSI

Across the country, HSI director roles are under questioning, yet the evidence is clear: without intentional leadership, institutions struggle to achieve and sustain eHSI status and HSI designation. This session explores how HSI directors at three higher education institutions are driving progress by using data to strategically strengthen access, retention and completion through cross-campus partnerships and aligned policies and practices. Participants will leave with practical approaches to position HSI leadership, align stakeholders, and accelerate progress toward eHSI/HSI designation and lasting impact.

Your Signature: Critical Thinking and Creativity in the AI Era

Everyone has access to the same AI tools. So what makes work stand out? This interactive session shows educators and students how critical thinking and creativity become the differentiator in an AI-saturated world. Through live demonstrations with Claude, Midjourney, Veo3, and Gemini, participants will see how to transform generic AI output into authentic, portfolio-ready storytelling, and leave with a clearer sense of how to use AI without losing their voice.

Empowering Students Through Financial Wellness: Insights from Campus Leaders

Federal funding changes under the One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act are reshaping how students fund their education, making financial wellness programs play an even greater role in student success. Hear from campus leaders who have advanced financial wellness programs to enhance resilience and drive student and institutional success.

Built to Thrive: Advancing First-Gen Student Success With Limited Resources

Supporting first-generation college students often requires creativity more than capital. The presenter will highlight high-impact, low-cost strategies institutions can use to advance first-gen student success despite limited resources. The presenter shares how one can leverage collaboration and creativity to build meaningful initiatives with limited funding. Attendees will leave with practical tools, adaptable ideas, and renewed confidence, proving first-gen success is driven by intention, collaboration, and innovation, not budget size.

Elevating Latinx Student Success Through the Transforming Éxito Advising Model

The Transforming Éxito Advising Model (TEAM) reimagines academic advising through culturally grounded, relationship-centered practices that support Latinx and first-generation students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Guided by Collaboration, Connections, and Cultivation, TEAM integrates Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Model and the servingness frameworks by Garcia et. al (2019) and Bonilla & Martinez (2024) to affirm students' identities and strengths. This session highlights how El Centro at UC Davis operationalizes holistic advising practices that foster belonging, agency, and persistence while offering a replicable framework for institutions seeking to strengthen culturally responsive student success initiatives

Rebranding Guided Pathways: A Systematic Approach

Imperial Valley College took a systematic approach to change-management in their guided pathways work. This will be an open discussion on how to streamline process by leveraging existing structures, working with consultants, advocating for institutional support, and engaging in professional development. We will focus on strategies for creating tangible, limited goals to achieve success.



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Immigration Issues Impacting HSIs: Policy, Advocacy, and Research

This panel examines immigration issues affecting HSI campuses and student success including immigration enforcement, policy and legal developments impacting Dreamers, international students, graduates, scholars, and opportunities for bipartisan reform. Featuring policy experts and college leaders, the session will pair research and analysis with campus-level realities and actionable advocacy strategies. Attendees will leave with practical insights and partnership approaches to advance durable, student-centered solutions.

Building the Global Workforce Through International Experiential Learning Programs

Preparing students for a global workforce requires experiential learning opportunities that extend beyond the classroom. International rotations and supervised practice experiences allow students to apply academic knowledge while developing intercultural competence, adaptability, and professional confidence. Through structured international programs, students gain exposure to diverse professional environments and interdisciplinary collaboration. These global learning experiences strengthen career readiness, expand perspectives, and equip graduates with the practical and cultural skills necessary to thrive in today's interconnected workforce.

Building the Equitable Health Workforce Through HSI Partnerships

Hispanic-Serving Institutions play a critical role in developing the next generation of diverse health leaders. This workshop highlights the American Heart Association Scholars Program as a scalable workforce development model connecting HSI students with mentorship, research opportunities and professional development. Participants will explore strategies for building partnerships that expand career pathways, strengthen the health workforce pipeline and prepare students to address persistent health disparities in their communities.