

South Suburban College

Strategic Planning

Community Breakfast Forum

May 5, 2025





COMMUNITY BREAKFAST FORUM

COMMUNAL DECISION MAKING FOR OUR NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

8:30-9:05 a.m.Check-in and Breakfast

9:05-9:15 a.m.Welcome Address – Dr. J.D. Chavez, Ph.D. Executive Director of Accreditation & Institutional Effectiveness

9:15-10:00 a.m.Discussion Panel - ***The State of Education in the Southland***

Led by Dr. Lynette Stokes, Ed.D – President of South Suburban College

Distinguished Panelists:

Jose Gonzalez – Thornwood HS Administrator/Soccer Coach & SSC NJCAA Hall of Fame Soccer Coach

George Grenchik – Retired educator, lifelong district 510 resident (Calumet City), writer

Dr. Nakia Hall, Ed.D. – Former IASB Executive Director and Local School Board President

Erica Jenkins – Director of Economic Development - City of Calumet City

Erica Glorious Moore – Motivational Speaker and Author

Paul McGuinness – Vice President of Student Affairs and Student Enrollment – Governors State University

Jim Reed – Executive Director of the Illinois Community Colleges Trustees Association.

10:00-10:10 a.m.Break

10:10-11:40 a.m. Presentation of Local and National Trends

Discussion in Groups, Group Consensus of Core Trends - Present Out

11:40 a.m. - Noon..... Individual help and questions regarding the Survey

Please take the individual survey:

Welcome!

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to join us for the Strategic Planning Community Breakfast. We're truly grateful for your presence and participation.

During today's event, we'll be drawing on your valuable experience and leadership as members of our community to help shape South Suburban College's 2026–2030 Strategic Plan. This plan will define our institutional priorities and guide decision-making across the College in the years to come. Your insights are essential—engaging our community in the development process is critical to fulfilling our mission as a community college.

You'll also receive a briefing on the key challenges and opportunities facing our region, both now and in the future. This overview highlights important forces of change—including shifts in the economy, labor market, education, technology, demographics, and more. We hope this information, along with today's conversations, will be valuable not only to the College, but also to your own organization or business.

Once again, thank you for being here and for contributing your time, perspectives, and expertise. Your involvement plays a vital role in ensuring the success of our students, our institution, and our community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lynette Stokes, Ed. D.

President



PRESIDENT LYNETTE STOKES

Having worked in public service for nearly 30 years, Dr. Lynette Stokes has served as an advocate of youth in the child welfare system, taught elementary and community college education, and worked for equal rights organizations. On October 1, 2018, Dr. Stokes was named President of South Suburban College. She now has the distinction of being the first African-American female President in the college's 91-year rich history. In this role as CEO of the institution, Dr. Stokes has assumed responsibility for providing leadership in setting directions for curricular and organizational change designed for the betterment and improvement of the total educational program of the College. She joined the college in June 2013 as the Vice President of Academic Services and prior to that she spent nearly 12 years at the City Colleges of Chicago improving the quality of education by promoting pedagogical and andragogical techniques and strategies that support academic excellence for all students.

During her seven-year tenure with Ada S. McKinley Foster Care, Dr. Stokes prepared over 200 families to receive a foster home license, authored the training curriculum for more than 500 families and developed multi-faceted workshops to assist nearly 200 children with the transition into independent living. Dr. Stokes is well acquainted with the foster care system. She lived in seven different foster homes as a child and is an example of one who through resiliency and an intact ability to succeed, has overcome many obstacles.

Wanting to fulfill her desire to make a positive impact on the education of adult learners, Dr. Stokes returned to school and in 2004 earned her doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Organizational Change at Roosevelt University. This academic credentialing, coupled with the skills she gained while working at the then Operation PUSH, Community Mental Health Council and Ada S. McKinley Community Services, provided the foundation to propel her career into higher education as Dean of Adult Education and Dean of Instruction at City Colleges of Chicago. In the latter role, Dr. Stokes provided instructional leadership and guidance for more than 150 full- and part-time faculty, two associate deans, 32 academic tutors and 15 administrative and support staff.

In addition to serving as a presenter for several professional development events in Higher Education and Child Welfare, Dr. Stokes is the 2005 recipient of Roosevelt University's Most Outstanding Dissertation of the Year; the 2009 recipient of the Kathy Osterman Award for Outstanding Supervisor given to public service employees in the City of Chicago; 2014 recipient of the Chicago Defender's Women of Excellence Award; in 2018 she was honored with the Egretta Education Award for Excellence in Education and the Illinois Committee on Black Concerns in Higher Education (ICBCHE) Trailblazer Award; in 2020 Dr. Stokes was awarded the MLK Excellence in Education Award by the Southland Ministerial Health Network; and in 2024 was awarded the Service Award by MLK Ministries.

Dr. Stokes is a current member of the board for Junior Achievement of Chicago and the Chicago Southland Chamber of Commerce. She is the former President of the Chief Academic Officers' Group for the South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (SMHEC); former President and Vice President of the Board for the South Cook County Mosquito Abatement District; and, former member of the Board for the Illinois Community College Board. In 2019, Dr. Stokes was initiated into the Alpha Kappa Alpha, Sorority, Inc., Xi Nu Omega chapter. Additionally, Dr. Stokes has volunteered for the Chicago Marathon, serves as a Board Member for the South Suburban College Scholarship Foundation, and spearheaded the Service-Learning volunteer activities for South Suburban College. Lastly, after having grown up in the child welfare

system Dr. Stokes understands the value of giving back to the community and as such remains an advocate for children and families through her contributions to scholarship programs and support of toy, clothing, and food drives. She is a true example of persistence, dedication, commitment and resiliency.

Dr. Stokes shared the following quote to describe her life's purpose: "The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, and to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." Author is unknown. In her role as College President at South Suburban College, Dr. Stokes strives to make a difference and create access to a quality education for all students. When she is not working at the college, Dr. Stokes enjoys spending time with her family. She has a daughter and three granddaughters.

Biographies of Panelists

COACH JOSE " TONY" GONZALEZ



Jose "Tony" González has been leading the South Suburban College (SSC) Men's Soccer team since 2000 and took the helm of the Women's Soccer team in 2017. Under his guidance, the Men's team has achieved a commendable record of 273-141-32, clinching the Region IV championship four times and making four appearances at the NJCAA national finals. González has been honored as Region IV Coach of the Year four times and received the NSCAA Midwest Region Coach of the Year award. His tenure has seen over thirty players earning First Team All-Region honors, with several named Region IV Player of the Year and achieving NJCAA and NSCAA All-American status, including Ricardo Avalos in 2017.

In his inaugural season with the Women's team, González led them to unprecedented success, setting records for wins and post-season victories, and significantly increasing the number of players selected for the First Team All-Region.

Coach González emphasizes life lessons through soccer, instilling values of character, integrity, work ethic, and teamwork. His coaching philosophy prioritizes discipline, skill-oriented play, and ball possession. As a former collegiate player at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), where he was named Academic All-Conference in 1995 and Soccer Student Athlete of the Year in 1997, González brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to his coaching roles. He furthered his coaching expertise with stints as the top assistant at UIC in 2002 and through various coaching courses, holding a USSF National “B” license and certifications from La Liga Methodology Level 3 Course, Morelia Monarcas youth course, and an internship with Club Necaxa in Mexico.

In addition to his coaching duties, González is the Director of Coaching for the South Suburban Soccer Academy, contributing significantly to the development of young players and their progression to collegiate soccer. He firmly believes in the powerful link between athletics and education, continuously seeking to expand his knowledge and experience in soccer.

On top of his coaching duties at both SSC he also works as a High School Administrator as a Discipline Administrator at Thornwood High School, creating a bridge between local high schools and our community college.

GEORGE GRENCHIK



George Grenchik, a Whiting native, taught junior high for 41 years and is an active longtime resident of Calumet City. He can be reached at gigrenchik@aol.com. He continues to serve his community in various charitable capacities and is the founder/curator of the St. Victor School Museum, which is housed at Our Lady of Knock in Calumet City, Illinois. He is a regular guest columnist for The Times in NW Indiana.

DR. NAKIA HALL

Next Level
Core Solutions



Dr. Nakia Hall **LEADERSHIP EXPERT**



DR. NAKIA HALL

Dr. Nakia Hall is a former classroom teacher and college university professor. She is also a community leader, highly sought after motivational speaker and author who has a respectable background in helping schools, families and communities by way of activism, legislative influence and social justice advocacy. While on the Crete-Monee 201U School District school board for 10 1/2 years, she was the first female President and first African American female President for 4 years, and addressed issues related to equity, diversity, and inclusion within schools and the community. As a board member and community activist she worked tirelessly to improve local, statewide and national educational programs, school finances, personnel policies and practices, and community engagement. She is a youth mentor who helps to encourage, inspire and empower young people, and is the founder of the Kids in the Hall youth leadership mentor program. She has worked to pass state legislation on educational equity in school funding, school safety, youth violence prevention and student discipline.

Dr. Hall is the former Associate Executive Director of Field and Equity Services with the Illinois Association of School Boards. In this position, she led the field services initiatives for nearly 850 school boards in Illinois, as well as the organization's internal and external equity, diversity and inclusion initiatives. She is currently the owner and CEO of Next Level Core Solutions, a professional development firm that specializes in consulting, training and coaching in the areas of leadership development, team culture development, DEI and strategic planning. Her passion and dedication for leadership, education and equitable practices has led to her receiving numerous awards and recognitions and being considered a champion for education within communities throughout the state of Illinois, as well as the nation. Dr. Hall holds a Doctor of Education degree in Ethical Leadership and certification in Diversity and Inclusion from Cornell University.

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ERICA JENKINS



A life-long resident of Chicago's Southland, Erica France Jenkins discovered her passion for public service and the value of helping others from her parents and her church.

Her commitment to life-long learning led her to earn a Bachelor of Science Degree from Chicago State University, then a Master of Arts Degree from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology with a emphasis in Human Relations.

Erica currently serves as President of the Calumet City Library Board where she's worked tirelessly to transform our city's library into a state-of-the-art learning and community center we can be proud of.

PAUL MCGUINNESS



Paul McGuinness is the current Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management at Governors State University. Paul has previously served as the Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs at Roosevelt University from April 2016 to December 2017. In this role, he was responsible for the budget and enrollment projections as well as the academic advising, career development, and student involvement programs. Paul also oversaw the Athletic Department and Resident Life for the university. Prior to his work at Roosevelt University, Paul worked in various management roles at other universities.

Paul McGuinness attended Marist High School. Paul then went on to study at Saint Joseph's College, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree. Finally, he completed their education with a Master of Arts in Political Studies from Governors State University.

ERIKA GLORIOUS MOORE



Ms. Moore is a motivational speaker, best-selling author, and award-winning designer committed to empowering businesses to elevate their brands through strategic creativity.

Jim Reed

Executive Director



James "Jim" Reed, Jr. became the Illinois Community College Trustees Association's sixth executive director on July 15, 2019. His appointment was made after an extensive national search supported by The Pauly Group.

Reed most recently served as Director of Government Relations for the Illinois Education Association, which represents 131,000 teachers and education support professionals across the state of Illinois.

"I am humbled to have been selected to serve as the next Executive Director of the ICCTA," said Reed.

"Having worked closely with educators and education support professionals for more than a dozen years, it is clear to me that the success of our public education system in Illinois cannot be achieved by focusing solely on K-12 education. Community colleges are an integral part of that success and professional associations such as the ICCTA play an important role in educating the public about the benefits of a well-funded community college system.

"Furthermore, the trustees who are critical to the success of our community colleges need to be supported and encouraged to be strong advocates. I believe that ICCTA plays a critical role in providing that support. I look forward to working with the leadership and staff of ICCTA to advance the issues of importance to the organization and educate policymakers about the role they play in making Illinois community colleges attractive to students," he said.

Reed served as Deputy Legislative Director for Attorney General Lisa Madigan from 2002-2006. Prior to joining the Office of the Attorney General, he was the legislative director for Citizen Action/Illinois.

He attended the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, where he received a B.S. degree. He received a Juris Doctor from the Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul, Minnesota. Upon completion of his studies, Jim worked as a judicial clerk for the Michigan Supreme Court under Dennis Archer and Conrad Mallett, Jr.

"Mr. Reed is an accomplished leader with demonstrated results," said ICCTA president Bob Thompson of Sauk Valley Community College. "We are excited that he is joining the Trustees Association as we prepare to celebrate our 50th anniversary in 2020."

Contact Information

jreed@communitycolleges.org

Directions for the External Trends Workshop:

This being a community forum, we wish to remind you to please look at and consider these trends and external influences from your vantage point as a community member. Think of your children, grandchildren, neighbors, friends and family and how you want them to be served by South Suburban College, whether they are current students, future students, or will benefit indirectly from the impact that this Institution makes on the larger community.

1. Individual Work
 - a. As an individual, listen to the presentation of the trends within each category. Actively listen and write down any questions you may have for your group concerning the discussed trends.
 - b. Make your personal choices for your top 2 trends that you think SSC should focus on and be prepared to discuss it with your group.
2. Group Work
 - a. After the presentation of each category, you will have some time to discuss and come to a group consensus on which trends SSC should focus on for the next 3-5 years.
 - b. You will continue this group discussion after each category is presented and choose a top trend.
 - c. After all of the categories have been presented and your group has made a choice about each category, collectively, create a final list of 3-5 trends that you would like SSC to focus on for the next 5 years of their strategic plan.
 - d. If time allows, we would like a group leader to share out their group's final list of recommendations for the entire forum.
 - e. **Please, notetaker, ensure that your list of final choices is left on the table for the SSC strategic planning team.**

Politics

Trend 1: Political Polarization Influences Perception of Higher Education

Trend 2: Negative Perceptions of Chicago/South Side Affect Regional Policy and Investment

Trend 3: Increased Accountability Expectations in Higher Education

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Economics

Trend 4: Growing Economic Inequality in the Region

Trend 5: Lower Housing Costs Offer a Competitive Edge

Trend 6: Next Door to a WORLD-CLASS CITY

Trend 7: Local Unemployment Higher than National Average

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Economics continued - Labor Force

Trend 8: Demand Grows for “Soft Skills” in All Fields

Trend 9: Community Colleges Face Hiring Challenges of Their Own

Trend 10: Widespread Need for Upskilling and Career Transitions

[illegible]

Social Values & Lifestyle

Trend 11: Mental Health Challenges Intensify Among Young Adults and College Students

Trend 12: Multi-Generational Households Are Becoming More Common

Trend 13: Changing Attitudes Toward Social Media

Trend 14: Male College Enrollment Continues to Fall

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Technology

Trend 15: Artificial Intelligence Is Transforming Education and Employment

Trend 16: Cybersecurity Threats Are Escalating Across Higher Education

Trend 17: IT Talent Pipeline Challenges in Higher Education

[illegible]

Environment, Educational

Trend 18: Academic Recovery Challenges Persist Post-Pandemic

Trend 19: College Enrollment and Graduation Trends Shift in Response to Societal Changes

Trend 20: Rising Costs and Financial Perception of College Impact Enrollment

[illegible]

Legal – Regulatory & Tech Changes → Competition

Trend 21: Alternative Educational Pathways offer Flexibility but increase Competition

Trend 22: Online Education Has Redefined the Competitive Landscape

[illegible]

Opportunities and Threats - Demographics

Trend 24: Shifting Racial and Ethnic Composition in the District and College

Trend 25: Rising Age of the Population and Looming Enrollment Cliff

Trend 26: Ongoing Population Loss and Stagnation in Illinois

[illegible]

Thank you for your hard work!

Finally, outside of SSC's environmental scan, we present the Higher Learning Commission's "Trends 2025" Report.

As a research team formulating this PESTEL analysis, it is reassuring that we came to many of the same conclusions for targets/trends that we, as an Institution, should be focusing on and anticipating.

Trends 2025



The secret of change is to focus all of your energy
not on fighting the old, but on building the new.

attributed to Socrates

The Higher Learning Commission Trends 2025 are likely the most challenging we have ever compiled. They are candid and present the key issues of the past year, with an effort to challenge readers to ask a key question of each: "How will our institution respond?" The trends are built on the most frequently discussed issues and events that impact higher education in the United States, and they will be used to build HLC's strategic directions in our next plan, **North Star**. We build this list with a knowledge that the future is unknown, which can be scary in some ways, but exciting in others. The exemplary work being done at our member institutions is remarkable — in teaching, research and public service. It is our sincere hope that anyone reviewing this list will use it for important discussions on your campuses or other related organizations. Prioritize what matters most to you according to your mission, vision and values. Then ask, "What can we do next for our students?"

Barbara Gellman-Danley, Ph.D., President

1. Change Leadership

- a. The rate of change in higher education requires leaders who are well-prepared to assess institutional readiness to adapt and implement short- and long-term strategic solutions.
- b. Training for change management and leadership across the organization will strengthen buy-in and foster sustainable pathways to success.
- c. Creating a culture of change positions leaders to empower others to develop proactive continuous improvement.
- d. There are great opportunities for higher education to reclaim that shifting narrative by implementing effective change and building on successful teaching, research and other historical advances.

2. Leadership Turnover: Opportunities and Threats

- a. With shortened tenures for college and university chief executive officers (CEOs), the pipeline for talent becomes increasingly important each year.
- b. The portfolio for leadership is changing from the traditional academic background to a much broader scope, including business leaders, lawyers, elected officials and candidates from other industries.
- c. There is a growing concern about presidential readiness for an increasingly multi-faceted, difficult job. The voice of critics from within and outside of higher education is taking a toll on leaders, even those with a long history and strong reputation in higher education.

- d. A new president may feel very isolated and benefit from participation in individual or group coaching. The same can be true of those with other cabinet-level positions. Trustees need to support their leaders as the positions become exponentially more difficult and, frankly, lonely.
- e. New methods will be needed in hiring practices to ensure future leaders have the appropriate skills, i.e., emotional intelligence, political savvy, financial acumen, vision, tolerance for ambiguity, and the ability to motivate others to action.

3. Teaching, Learning and Faculty

- a. The growth and improvements in artificial intelligence (AI) will continue to provide opportunities and some threats for both students and faculty.
- b. While the historical ownership of the curriculum rests with the faculty, many others are weighing in or influencing what takes place in the classroom.
- c. The impact of the pandemic on students' readiness is clearly a result of the time lost in the K-12 systems.
- d. The focus on workforce does not need to replace general education or liberal arts, each to be defined by the mission of the institution and its student populations.
- e. There is growing concern about the time to complete a degree program and a concomitant interest in reduced-credit bachelor's degrees.
- f. Skeptics are increasingly questioning the value of graduate education; it will be important to ensure outcomes are matched with student expectations and the needs of the relevant workforce.
- g. Many states are growing dual enrollment programs to help students earn college credit while in high school.
- h. The disruptions in higher education impact faculty and staff, who continue to hold a very central role in students' lives.

4. Financial Stability and Sustainability

- a. The demographic cliff is here, and the result is a decrease in traditional-age students entering college.
- b. The future of funding at the federal level is unknown, and institutional leadership must navigate unpredictable budgets, while balancing the commitment to the public good of higher education.
- c. State funding is stable, but unknown for future years. Any traditional tasks from other parts of the Triad that are transferred to states will come with a cost.

- d. Students as consumers are making choices outside of traditional higher education for postsecondary learning.
- e. The increase of remote learning and work, coupled with advanced technology, will lead to different campus infrastructures for the future.
- f. More institutions will merge or close. New institutions could open with alternative curricula.

5. Crisis Management, Disaster Recovery and Preparation

- a. Reputational issues continue for higher education, requiring more crisis readiness, informed by counsel from both communications experts and lawyers. No historical time has seen more public pressure on the outcomes of institutions and the performance of their leaders, including both CEOs and trustees.
- b. Conflicts on campus regarding speech and expression are common and reflect historical rights and norms. With more scrutiny on particular issues, leaders need to be transparent, prepared, and anticipate pushback.
- c. Weather disasters have taken a toll on many campuses across the country due to hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, fires and other natural disasters. Even the most prepared campuses suffered surprises and extensive damage. It may take years to recover.
- d. Lessons learned from these unfortunate and devastating disasters can lead to new ways to plan for future incidents for all colleges. Funding will be needed for preparation and recovery.

6. More Complex Legal Issues

- a. As the challenges facing higher education become more complex, there will be an increase in the need for in-house counsel and for consultation with legal firms at colleges and universities.
- b. With increased competition, more antitrust issues could occur, and legal counsel will be needed to assure compliance.
- c. With any new presidential administration, there are directives to institutions that might be confusing or, in some cases, contradictory to existing practices. Legal counsel is often needed for clarification and guidance.
- d. A combined expertise in policy and legal issues will help both elected officials and college leaders interpret the law and legislation. Institutions need to ensure proper support is available and funded in their budgets.

7. Mental Health Issues Continue

- a. Stress continues to be a factor nationally, affecting both students and employees.
- b. Students need appropriate support to ensure all mental health issues are addressed, within and external to campus personnel.
- c. Policies should be updated regularly to address the rising mental health issues for students.
- d. Programs should be made available for employees, such as Employee Assistance Programs, in recognition of the societal and institutional pressures they face.
- e. Appropriate training is needed for all faculty and staff, including resident advisors and academic advisors, to help identify when a student needs assistance.
- f. The increased mental health challenges can impact the completion and success rates of students.

8. The New Landscape of Higher Education

- a. New business models are being implemented at colleges and universities, with a wave of innovation within higher education.
- b. There is a divide between and among campuses related to financial capacity to develop and test new innovations in teaching and learning, as well as research.
- c. AI is permeating all aspects of higher education, from enrollment management to the classroom. Many institutions are involved in research advancing AI applications.
- d. There is an increasing rise in short-term credentials, stand-alone or stackable to degrees, creating new opportunities for learning and competition. Several associations and organizations are deeply engaged in the short-term credential space (CredLens, Jobs for the Future/EQOS, Credential As You Go, Credential Engine, etc.). HLC's Credential Lab is underway with counsel from three prominent groups of stakeholders. hlccommission.org/credential-lab
- e. If short-term or workforce Pell is approved, colleges and universities will be able to access new resources for these credential-based certificates and programs.
- f. The public and employers are focusing on skills-based learning.

9. Value of Higher Ed: Demonstrating Return on Investment

- a. The rising focus on outcomes and accountability is prominent at the state, federal and institutional levels.
- b. Public spending and college affordability are being questioned, leading to a need for more accountability. Some suggest that institutions should be held accountable for unpaid student debts.
- c. The questioning of the need for a degree versus a short-term credential or certificate is ongoing. This questioning challenges higher education's return on investment (ROI) but also speaks to the importance of workforce partnerships and measurable outcomes.
- d. Bipartisan concerns exist about higher education in general. Key areas include transparency, outcomes, costs, debt, job placement, etc.
- e. It will be important for higher education to build strong programs and public statements about the value of college to learners, with a measurable increase in students' quality of life.

10. Past Is No Longer Prologue

- a. Long-held traditions are changing across all of higher education. Many of these shifts are due to adaptations to the evolving learner needs and the marketplace. Others are driven by new state and federal regulations.
- b. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Several states have initiated or passed legislation and other mandates that have the potential to affect many existing programs. The future is unknown as to how these changes will impact institutions and their students. Historical practices will be impacted, but no one knows for certain the outcome.
- c. Governance Structures: Boards and leadership changes demonstrate a mix of restructuring, mergers, more centralization of systems, different backgrounds for leadership roles, etc. The forces behind these changes are sometimes financial; others are creative ways to maximize talent and resources. There is public pushback at times, but one thing is certain: change is going to continue.
- d. Shared Governance: This traditional value and practice of higher education faces challenges at the local, state and federal levels. There are arguments on both sides as to the advantages and disadvantages of consensus

building and participation by faculty in decision making. As above, while it is a gradual change in historical practices, it is nonetheless an ongoing discussion.

- e. **Tenure:** The opportunity to earn the right of tenure is a sacrosanct benefit of higher education. External and internal pressure to examine the pros and cons continues, and the future of tenure is in question.

11. Systemic Reform: A New Political Environment

- a. **The Impact of the Israel-Hamas War:** The war in the Middle East brought immeasurable impacts to campuses across the United States. The situation resulted in ongoing conflicts that are proving very difficult for presidents to manage. New policies are being put in place on some campuses, while campus leaders and state influencers are backtracking former policies and practices. New federal policies will likely be put in place to further weigh in on the chasms that are dividing campuses, frightening students, and creating a passionate and difficult situation.
- b. **Governance:** Higher education is experiencing an increase of state influence and a federal perspective that accreditors should not be reviewing governance issues at all. Many examples exist of conflicts that arise when political appointments are placed in leadership roles, often without campus input. In a time of political uncertainty and need for higher education to provide a measurable return on investment, trustees are looking for very savvy and experienced leaders, who may be former elected officials.
- c. **Triad Disparities:** Accreditors can be caught in the middle when the states have different standards for quality assurance or operations than accreditors, and the federal government is often also going down a different path.
- d. **Growing Influence of Think Tanks:** Many groups — partisan in most cases — are providing reports, analytics and recommendations for higher education. Higher education has the choice to accept, reject or ignore such reports. Another option is to learn from them and reclaim the narrative.
- e. **Civil Rights and Equity Under Fire:** Many areas are experiencing new regulations related to Title IX, a wide range of civil rights issues, and overall challenges to long-held traditions. This trend ties back to the need for more legal counsel, as there will be challenges at all levels. Some of these changes are partisan, but many

have been discussed for years. Higher education will benefit from its own analysis of the future and best next steps for balancing often competing demands and, at times, values.

12. Accreditation

- a. In these dynamic times of higher education, accreditors will find themselves right in the middle of the many public debates and changes facing colleges and universities.
- b. Accreditors will face challenges about their standards and may be asked to add or eliminate certain requirements.
- c. New accreditors will enter the field, expanding the competition that was put in place with the July 2020 regulatory changes.
- d. The changing standards of institutional accreditors is enabling more innovation, focused oversight, transparency and quality assurance of colleges and universities.
- e. HLC must aim to partner with member institutions to navigate the rapid changes taking place in higher education.
- f. Accreditation can be leveraged for positive change at an institution, both internally and with the public.
- g. The past is no longer prologue with accreditation either — the public image does not always reflect the significant continuous improvement of those agencies recognized by the federal government.
- h. As expected of accredited institutions, HLC and all accreditors must be committed to transparency and focusing on the most important stakeholder in all the discussions taking place: students.



How do you prioritize these trends?

- Change Leadership
- Leadership Turnover: Opportunities and Threats
- Teaching, Learning and Faculty
- Financial Stability and Sustainability
- Crisis Management, Disaster Recovery and Preparation
- More Complex Legal Issues
- Mental Health Issues Continue
- The New Landscape of Higher Education
- Value of Higher Ed: Demonstrating Return on Investment
- Past Is No Longer Prologue
- Systemic Reform: A New Political Environment
- Accreditation

Thank you so much for joining us today for this important work.

We appreciate your help, thoughts, and opinions.

Special thanks to the Board of Trustees, President Stokes, and our wonderful Discussion Panelists today.

Exit Ticket/Homework:

Please make sure that you take the individual survey if you haven't done so already.

PLEASE feel free to share this survey with your friends in the SSC community at large..

Board of Trustees

Terry R. Wells, Chair

Kevin L. Daly, Vice-Chair

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Tyhani Hill

Prince Reed

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