



The Council of
Independent Colleges

Building Places
of Promise:
**Unlocking
Student
Success**

2025 Institute for Chief Academics Officers with
Chief Student Affairs Officers and Chief Student Success Officers
November 1–4, 2025 📍 JW Marriott, Indianapolis, IN



Is your facemask on?



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Is Your Facemask On?

- Shawn Hartman
Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
Academic Search
- Suzanne Blum Malley
Executive Vice President and Provost
Methodist University
- Kim Coplin, Chair
Provost
Denison University (OH)



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Current Trends in Leadership

- People know what to do, just not where they are going
- Generational shift in leadership is occurring
- Talented professionals feel isolated in the work
- So many feel a path forward for them in leadership is not right or will be possible
- Even so, there are good people, doing good things, to further democracy and care for our students





2024 Competencies for the College Presidency

A NATIONAL STUDY OF EFFECTIVE
LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

7 Key Competencies Identified

Trust-Building
Demonstrating Resilience
Communication Savvy
Crafting a Cabinet and Team Building
Emotional Intelligence
Leading with Courage
Data Acumen and Resource Management



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Demonstrating Resilience

Coping with adversity and demonstrating resilience was frequently rated as very important by survey respondents (92%)



Focus group participants discussed how their resilience is a product of leaning on teams and networks of friends, family, mentors, and faith communities. Not a solo project, but rather a product of *relationships*.

“Isolation is very real in this role...my situation is unique because I’m in a very small institution in a very small world community...so having that network to reach out to in times of need is critical.”



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Reframing Resilience

It's Not Just Grit—It's Strategic Adaptation

Individualism to Interdependence

Heroics to Sustainability

Leading Through Ambiguity with Clarity

Perfectionism to Progress

Values, Vision, and Where You Stand

Rediscovering Purpose: The Antidote to Burnout

Creating Psychological Safety

Mission and Finding Your Why



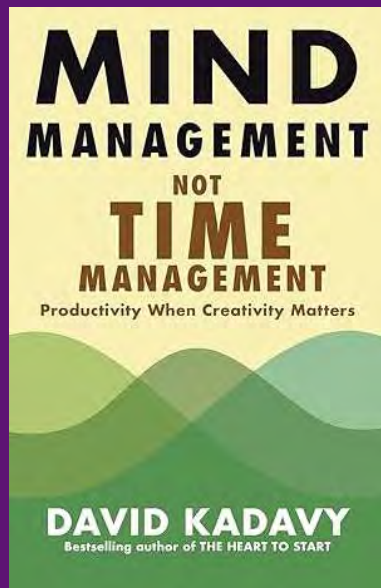
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Mind Management and Resiliency



Manage Energy, Not Hours

Track your mental peaks and schedule demanding work when you think best. Use low-energy periods for routine tasks to prevent burnout and preserve focus under stress.

Build Recovery into Your Workflow

Treat rest, reflection, and creative downtime as part of the job—not a reward after it. Protect mental recovery time just as intentionally as meetings or deadlines.

Adapt Your Mindset, Not Just Your Calendar

When plans fall apart, shift gears instead of pushing harder. Reframe challenges as signals to adjust strategy, experiment, or change context—core behaviors of resilient thinkers.



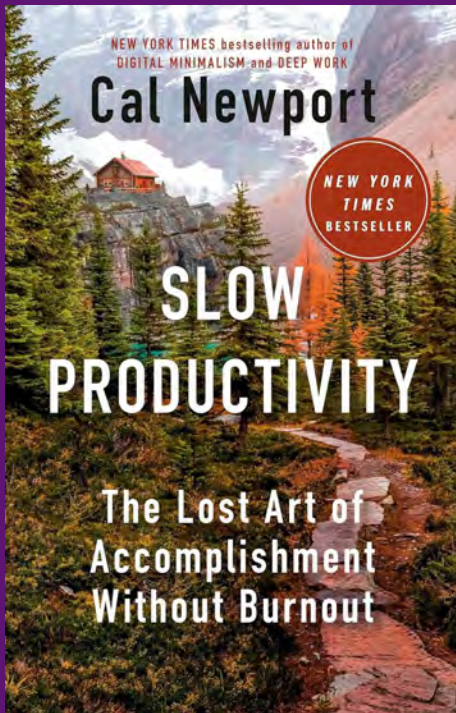
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Accomplishment and Resiliency



Select fewer strategic initiatives and protect them

Narrow your focus to a small set of high-impact goals and resist adding low-value tasks. When disruption hits, this “fewer things” mindset ensures your core efforts stay intact rather than being scattered.

Work at a sustainable, natural pace to sustain stamina

Adopt rhythms that avoid the nonstop sprint—schedule rest, allow reflection time, and avoid perpetual urgency. This helps you recover from setbacks and sustain resilience over time rather than burn out.

Obsess over the quality and longevity of outcomes, not visible busyness

Focus on producing meaningful, lasting work rather than simply being busy. A resilient organization builds depth over time, not just activity metrics—this builds capacity to adapt rather than collapse when pressure spikes.



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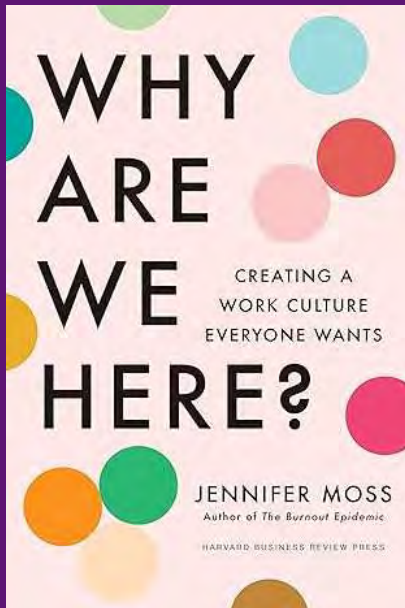
Self and Group Discussion

First, self reflect, what keeps us from putting our facemask on first? Jot those down.

Second, at your group, what changes would you make to your day if you could wave a magic wand?



Filling Our Bucket for Resiliency



Connect Work to Meaning

Start meetings by naming the “why” behind current projects. Regularly link tasks to the broader mission so individuals see how their work contributes to something larger.

Create Space for Voice and Belonging

Build team rituals that invite honest input and appreciation. Use short reflection rounds or open forums to strengthen trust and shared purpose.

Empower with Clarity

Give people autonomy in how they achieve goals but set clear expectations and accountability checkpoints. Flexibility plus structure fosters engagement and resilience.



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Personal Resilience Toolkit

Toolkit elements:

- Mindfulness and reflection
- Executive coaching and peer networks
- Care for your support network
- Boundaries and time management
- Physical well-being and routines
- Growth mindset and self-compassion
- Create outlets and joyful distraction
- Digital discipline
- Gratitude practices



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Self and Group Discussion

First, self reflect, what fills my bucket to be the best version of me (work, personal, family, community, etc.)?



Second, at your group, share what brings you joy?



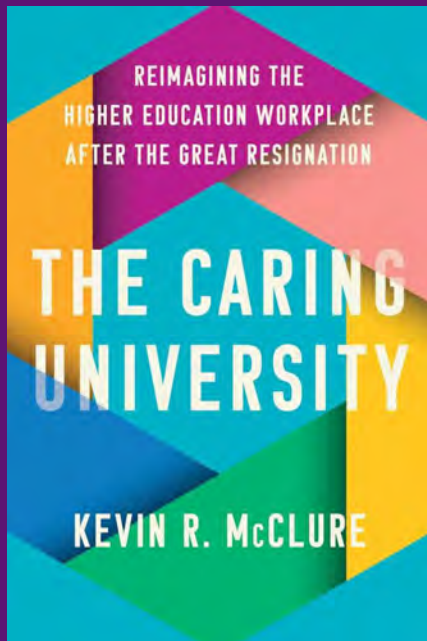
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Building Team for Resiliency



Embed care as a resilience strategy

Shift institutional attention from mere workloads and outputs to the whole-person experience of staff and faculty — by prioritizing employee wellbeing, you strengthen the organization's capacity to recover and adapt.

Design humanizing policies that buffer stress and sustain resilience

Implement flexible work norms, equitable workload distribution, and meaningful supports (for caregiving, boundaries, mental health) so that when disruptions occur, individuals and teams don't collapse but instead have structural guardrails to maintain functioning

Cultivate caring leadership to foster resilient culture

Develop leaders who listen, trust, and act for the wellbeing of their people — this kind of leadership fosters psychological safety, reduces disengagement, and builds collective resilience when the institution faces shocks or change



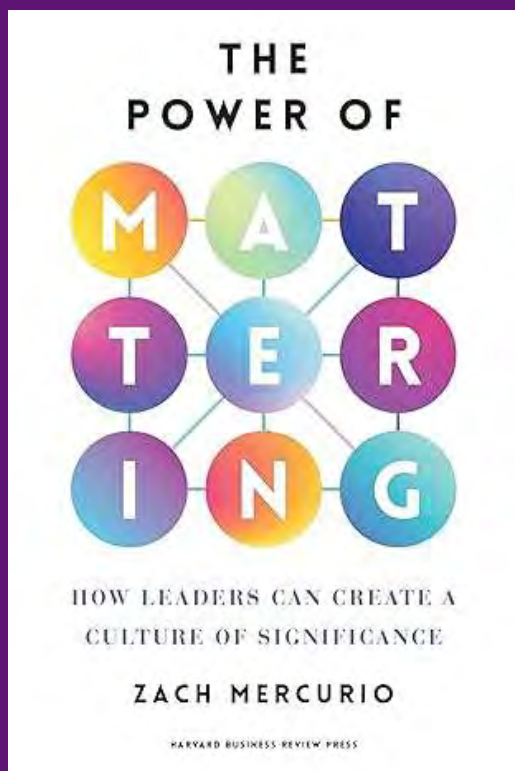
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Mattering and Resiliency



Recognize and reinforce significance to build resilience

Make “You matter” a regular part of your frequent check-ins rather than a once-a-year statement—people who feel seen, heard, validated, and needed are better equipped to bounce back from setbacks.

Use noticing, affirming and needing as resilience habits

Apply Mercurio’s framework—notice someone’s efforts, affirm how their unique gifts make a difference, and show how you rely on them—to deepen connection, foster purpose and create a culture that withstands pressure and disruption.

Design small-moment interactions to sustain resilient teams

Shift focus from big programs to micro-moments (a quick “How did your meeting go?”, a specific thanks, a “I need your insight here”) that signal mattering. These feed psychological safety and meaningful engagement, making teams more durable in change.



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Group Discussion

What is one thing you would like to try implementing around resiliency for your team?



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Reframing Leadership Selection for Resiliency



- Hire for values and capacity, not just credentials
- There is no perfect candidate
- Recognize we have always wanted unicorns
- Refocus on transitioning and onboarding
- Focus on complementary skills
- Continuous support and development, individual and team



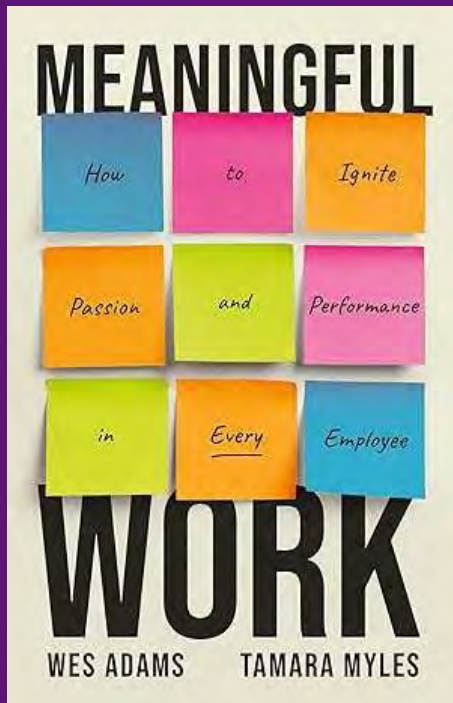
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How Do We Create Meaning?



Anchor resilience in the “Three C’s”: Community, Contribution, Challenge

Encourage team members to build strong interpersonal bonds (Community), recognize how their work matters beyond themselves (Contribution), and regularly engage in growth-oriented tasks (Challenge). These elements provide emotional stamina and purpose when change or disruptions hit.

Create meaning-rich micro-moments to buffer setbacks

Embed small, everyday practices—celebrating peer wins, sharing stories of impact, inviting authentic expression—that reinforce meaning. When meaning is continually reforged, individuals and teams are better able to bounce back from adversity.

Align values-led leadership with resilient structures

Leaders who walk their talk—ensuring that organizational values match everyday behavior—lay the groundwork for trust and psychological safety. In turn, trusted individuals and systems are more resilient because they feel secure and engaged rather than reactive.



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Final Note

What do you need to do
to put your facemask on
first?



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Q&A



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Thank you for attending this session!

