

2026 Presidents Institute

A Deeper Purpose



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The Council of Independent Colleges

Concurrent Session

Securing Your Financial Future

Securing Your Financial Future

Leading in an Era of Unprecedented Financial Pressure

Sally Amoruso, [EAB](#)

Susan Burns, [University of Mount Saint Vincent](#)

Tom Evans, [University of the Incarnate Word](#)

Nicola Pitchford, [Dominican University of California](#)

Securing Your Financial Future

Leading in an Era of Unprecedented Financial Pressure

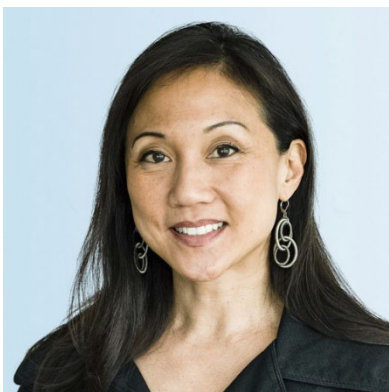
Sally Amoruso, [EAB](#)

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Our Panelists



Sally Amoruso

Chief Partner Officer

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Tom Evans

President

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Susan Burns

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Nicola Pitchford

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A Dire Financial Landscape for Higher Ed

Cost Pressures

Source	Outlook	Pressures
Instruction		Salary growth outpacing revenue; static workload & delivery models
Academic and student support		High labor costs; growing demand for high-touch support
Institutional support		Escalating compliance, legal, and technology costs
Research and public service		High-cost infrastructure, new compliance mandates, federal cuts
Auxiliaries		Capital renewal and deferred-maintenance burdens
Financial aid		Rising aid demand amid discounting wars, waning federal support

A Dire Financial Landscape for Higher Ed

Revenue Pressures

Source	Outlook	Pressures
Tuition and fees		Demographic decline, global volatility, ROI skepticism → nonconsumption
Government funding		Federal policy pressures (especially research), weakened state budgets
Auxiliaries		Margins compressed by inflation, uneven across units
Private gifts		Major donors holding steady, political scrutiny and fatigue looming
Investment returns		Endowment taxes, inflation, market volatility reducing real value
Private grants and contracts		Dependent on federal flows, shifting priorities post-election

A New Kind of Cost Cutting

Drastic Measures Becoming the Stuff of Headlines

Prestige No Longer a Shield	Academic Labor Fair Game	Legislating Labor Productivity
 <p>“Stanford Lays Off 363 Employees”</p>	 <p>“WVU Board Approves Dramatic Academic Cuts to Address \$45M Deficit”</p>	 <p>“Florida University System Approves New Tenure Policy, Spurning Faculty Critics”</p>
 <p>“Duke Doubles Down on Cost-Cutting”</p>	 <p>“William Paterson Plans to Lay Off 100 Full-Time Professors”</p>	 <p>“4/4 Teaching Load Becomes Law at Most of Wisconsin’s Public Universities”</p>

Source: Higher Ed Dive, [Florida University System Approves New Tenure Policy](#), [Stanford University Lays Off 363 Employees](#), and [WVU Board Approves Dramatic Academic Cuts](#); Inside Higher Ed, [William Paterson Plan To Lay Off 100 Full-Time Professors](#); The Chronicle, [Duke Doubles Down](#); The Chronicle of Higher Education, [4/4 Teaching Load](#); EAB interviews and analysis.

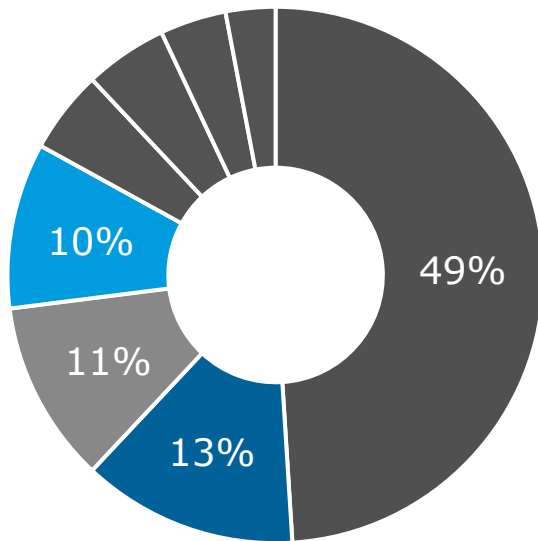
Labor Costs Loom Large

An Unavoidable Focus on Faculty

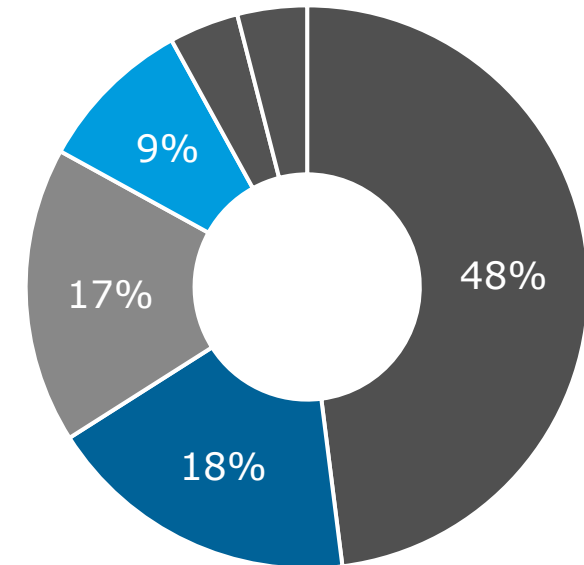
56% of All Expenses Are Labor, With Half Dedicated to Instruction

Breakdown of Total Salary Expenditures, by Category¹

Public Institutions



Private Institutions



¹ Other expenditures in public graph: research (5%), auxiliary enterprises (5%), public service (4%), all other categories (3%). Other expenditures in private graph: auxiliary enterprises (4%), all other categories (4%).

An Academic-Cost-Savings Reference

10 Difficult (BUT CRITICAL) Decisions for Achieving Academic Cost Savings Goals

Given financial pressures, every campus unit is being asked to reduce costs. Labor is a major component of Academic Affairs budgets, so leaders are unlikely to find substantial savings without looking at instructional efficiency, faculty capacity, and faculty headcount. While making decisions in these areas can be particularly difficult, the costs of inaction are too high to ignore. **Avoiding tough decisions today can result in leadership teams having to make even more controversial or damaging decisions later**, such as cutting academic programs.

This infographic outlines 10 savings avenues that academic leaders must decide whether to pursue, along with key questions to answer before implementation. Academic leaders can use this resource to educate stakeholders on short-term savings options, assess what their institution is (and is not) willing to do to increase efficiency within the academy, and develop a more realistic savings strategy.

Instructional Efficiency
Faculty Capacity
Faculty Headcount

SAVINGS POTENTIAL
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Low Medium High

TIME TO ACHIEVE SAVINGS
Semester Fiscal Year Two Years

FACULTY TOLERANCE
Low Medium High

1 Reduce or eliminate small class sizes

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Key questions to jump-start progress

Will we enforce a blanket class size policy or tailor it based on context and opportunity size?
Which courses will we prioritize eliminating versus offering less frequently? How will we decide this?

2 Consolidate underfilled course sections

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Key questions to jump-start progress

Will we enforce a blanket course section policy or tailor it based on context and opportunity size?
How will we decide which sections to prioritize consolidating?

3 Reduce curricular complexity

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Key questions to jump-start progress

Will we focus on specific bottlenecks, credit requirements, or both?
What internal structures (e.g., curriculum or accreditation committee) will we need to update?

4 Enforce faculty workload expectations

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Key questions to jump-start progress

When we bring faculty up to load, how will we deploy them if their expertise does not align with current needs and demand?

6 Reduce and/or retract unfunded faculty overloads

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5 Reduce and/or retract unfunded faculty releases

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University of Mount Saint Vincent

Three Defining Features of Our Approach to Financial Sustainability

Pursuing community partnerships

We are intent on bringing our offerings in line with the most urgent needs of our local communities and actively pursue collaborations to make that happen.



**UNIVERSITY OF
MOUNT SAINT VINCENT**

New learner populations, new revenue streams

We are constantly looking for opportunities to serve new communities of learners, including demographics we have not previously engaged and individuals interested in credentials other than a traditional four-year degree.

Evidence-based action

We have very deliberately built a culture of data-informed decision making and action that infuses our organization at every level.

University of the Incarnate Word

Three Defining Features of Our Approach to Financial Sustainability

Fostering faculty partnership

We are prioritizing strong faculty relations, an effort that included investing our provost with a high degree of autonomy, authority, and budget discretion.



Ensuring top-notch execution on student recruitment

We are cutting costs in a way that preserves our ability to attract potential students; we have found sophisticated recruitment marketing to be among the most reliable means of securing enrollment.

Maximizing the benefits of “systemness”

We have found creative ways to make the most of our instructional and physical infrastructure—a high-value, low-cost means of enriching student experiences.

Dominican University of California

Three Defining Features of Our Approach to Financial Sustainability

Communications strategy

Our approach depends on having the whole of our campus community informed about and bought into our financial sustainability work; that, in turn depends on clear, frank, and impactful communications registering at every level of our organization.



A data-analytics toolkit

It is difficult to move the dial on finances without an understanding of where the opportunities lie and related evidence to share with stakeholders; we built out a new set of analytical tools to promote those ends.

Multifariousness

While we have a high degree of focus and clear prioritization in our financial sustainability work, we have availed ourselves of the full scope of potential levers that might be pulled to achieve cost savings and revenue growth.

Q&A



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**Thank you for participating in
this session!**

**Session resources are available in
Guidebook**