

2026 Presidents Institute

A Deeper Purpose



January 4-7, 2026 • Signia by Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek • Orlando, FL



The Council of Independent Colleges

Protecting Your Spirit: Practices for Renewal, Recreation & Reinvention

Presenters

Kelly Shushok

Presidential Spouse

Roanoke College (VA)

Travis Tamerius

Presidential Spouse

Meredith College (NC)



The Occupational Hazards of a Hazardous Occupation

A Conversation about the Challenges We Face



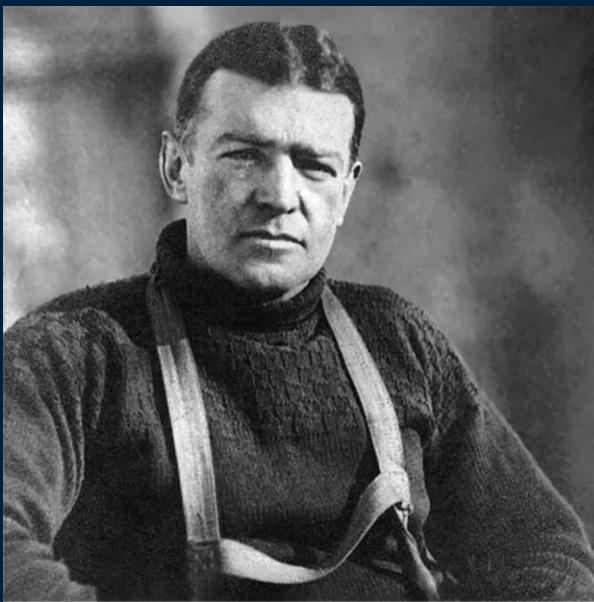
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The *Endurance*
Expedition
1914 - 1917





What's Lost When Liberal Arts Schools Close



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A looming 'demographic cliff': Fewer college students and ultimately fewer graduates

JANUARY 8, 2025 5:00 AM ET
By Jim Marcus



College enrollment has collectively experienced a 10% decline in enrollment between 2010 and 2021, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Tracking College Closures and Mergers

The number of nonprofit colleges and universities closing keeps ticking higher. Find historical data about college closures and a list of closed colleges and mergers.

By Evan Castillo and Lyss Welting
Updated on September 18, 2025

Edited by Rebecca Long • Fact-checked by Marley Rose
Learn more about [our editorial process](#)



Credit: Image Credit: Image Source / Getty Images

Data Summary

- ✓ At least 84 public or nonprofit colleges have closed, merged, or announced closures or mergers since March 2020.
- ✓ Over 40 have closed or announced closures.
- ✓ We estimate that roughly 50,580 students have been impacted by private nonprofit college closures since 2020.
- ✓ For-profit colleges had closure rates from 2012-2019. ^[1]
- ✓ Since the COVID-19 pandemic, private nonprofit colleges and universities have increasingly closed. ^[2]



S&P: Negative outlook for nonprofit colleges in 2026

The credit ratings agency on Tuesday cited federal policy shifts, rising costs and increased competition over students. [Read more →](#)

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College Bankruptcies Are Coming

Chasing an idealized past has undermined higher ed's present.

August 11, 2025

Market Conditions Forced July Cuts at Public and Private Colleges

While cuts at the richest institutions were mostly driven by federal research funding issues, many others also introduced cost-cutting measures due to challenging economic headwinds.



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Q&A

‘Who’s going to want these jobs?’: How the role of college president is changing

Public policy professor James Finkelstein spoke with Higher Ed Dive about the increased political and private sector influence on higher education’s top role.

Published July 30, 2025



Laura Spitalniak
Editor

in



The governing board of Florida’s university system voted against selecting Santa Ono, above, as the next president of the University of Florida, despite Ono being named the sole finalist for the position. [The image](#) by U423310 is licensed under [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

Is the role of president still a consequential one? Do the heads of colleges wield influence in the same way they have in the past?

Who the president is makes a difference. They set the tone of the institution in many ways. But presidents today can exercise less independent leadership than they did in the past — they’re being put on a shorter and shorter leash.

There are so many different constituencies that they’re having to serve, and a lot of those constituencies are in conflict with each other.

Some presidents are engaging in what people call anticipatory compliance.

“In order to avoid these conflicts,” the thinking goes, “I’m going to get one step ahead.” Sadly, what that means is that when the board intervenes, they want even more.

Is there a world where that kind of interference becomes so unpleasant that it renders the job unpalatable?

I think for many serious potential candidates, the answer is yes. It doesn’t matter whether you’re being paid \$1 million. Or if you have two country club memberships, a big car, a big house and staff, and all of that. These jobs have always been 24/7, 365. And the scrutiny is exponentially worse now.

The real question is: Who’s going to want these jobs? That’s part of the plan of critics of higher education. They want to drive people out so they can replicate what they’re doing in Florida and appoint political loyalists who have no experience in higher education.



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Question

What is hazardous right now in your journey as a presidential couple?

What challenges are you currently facing?

Practices for Renewal: A Conversation About What Helps



(c) Scott Polar Research Institute
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Leonard Hussey, meteorologist , Shackleton Expedition



“It’s rather heavy,” I said, dubiously. “Do you think we ought to take it?”

“Yes certainly. It’s vital mental medicine and we shall need it.”



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Practices of Renewal

Mindful Reflection

10-5-1 Model

A ten-minute direction...

- Absorb something in addition to the news
- A great text/a good podcast

A five-minute confession...

- What's keeping you up?
- What's holding you up?

A one-minute question...

- How are you doing, really?
- What's bringing you hope these days?
- Who will you be happy to see today?
- What did you wake up thinking about today?



Practices of Renewal

Rest

“Every person needs to take one day away. A day in which one consciously separates the past from the future. Jobs, family, employers, and friends can exist one day without any one of us, and if our egos permit us to confess, they could exist eternally in our absence. Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us.”

Maya Angelou, *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now*



Time Management

Beware a Culture of Busyness

Organizations must stop conflating activity with achievement. by
Adam Waytz

From the Magazine (March–April 2023)

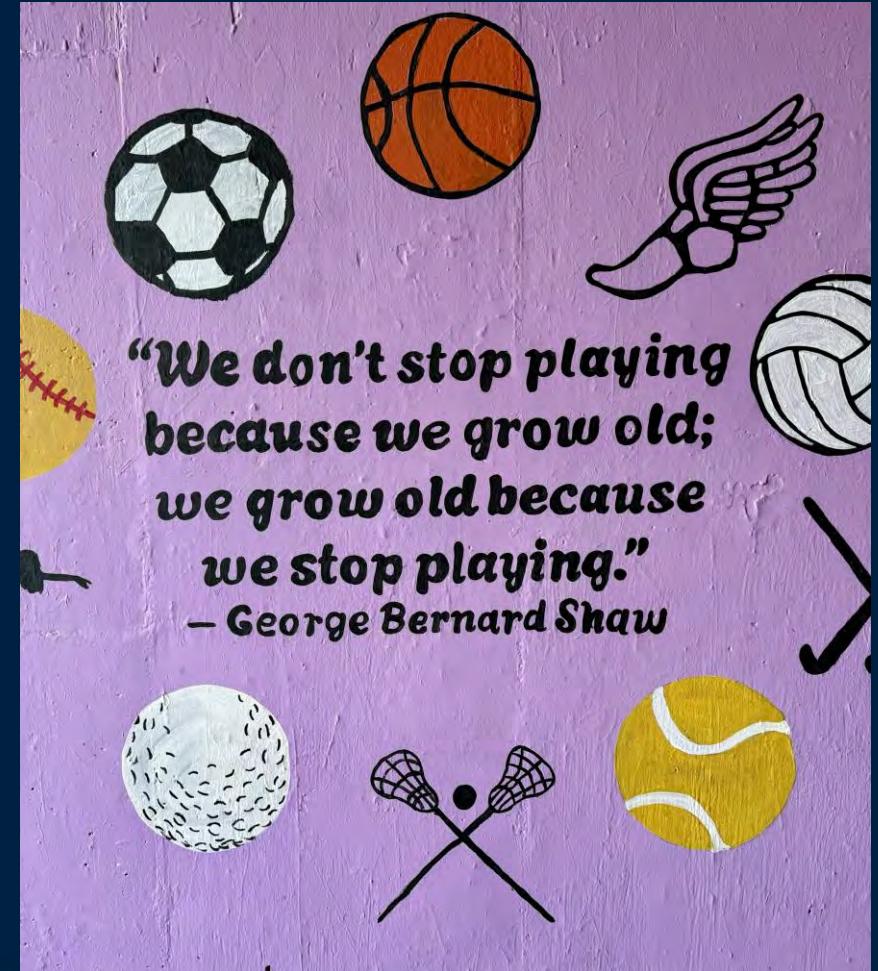


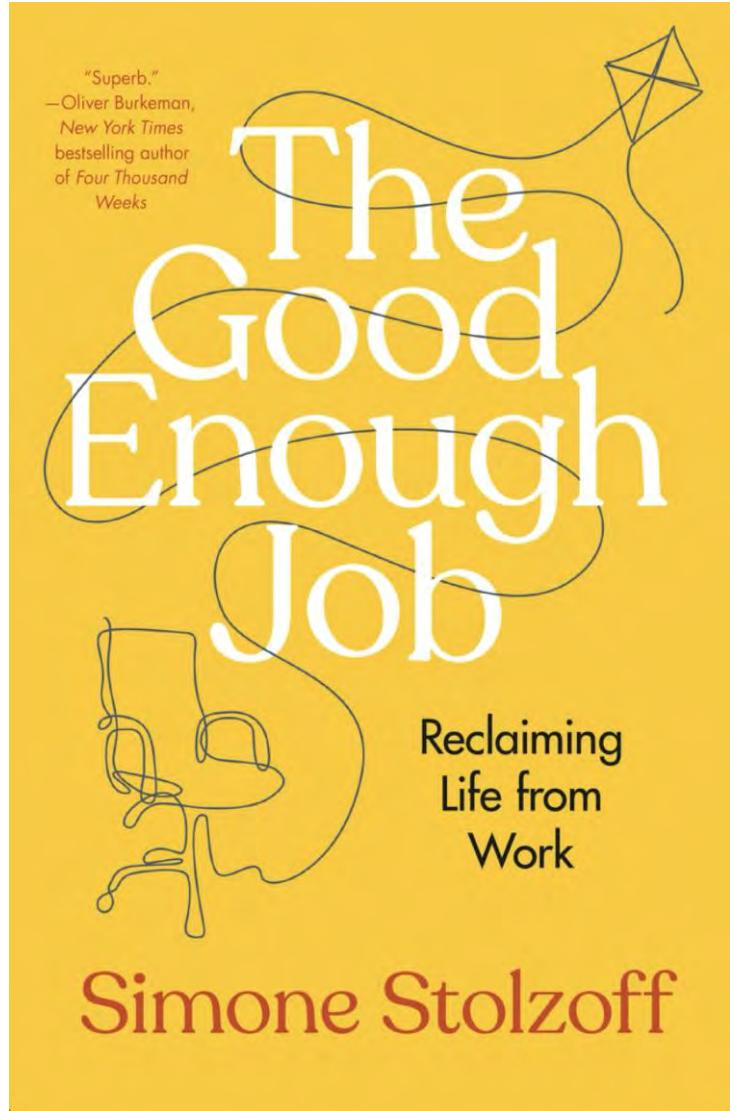
Practices of Renewal

Recreation & Play

“We are most nearly ourselves when we achieve the seriousness of a child at play.” - Heraclitus

“The more complex the mind, the greater the need for the simplicity of play.” - Captain Kirk, Star Trek





But I can't help thinking that, through all of our quantified ambition, we lose sight of the wisdom we all knew as children: the joy of play. Play is a natural antidote to workism. It indexes not on utility, but on curiosity and wonder. It cares not about "better," but only about our present experience. Like rest, play can be a source of rejuvenation. And there are opportunities to play all around us. In art, there's crafting. In music, there's jamming. My personal favorite is dancing. The closest I get to the enthusiasm of a child on a playground is on the dance floor at a wedding. Play helps us remember that we exist to do more than just produce.

Simone Stolzoff, *The Good Enough Job: Reclaiming Life from Work*



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Practices of Renewal

Reinvention

“Each of us must go where we’ve never gone and do what we’ve never done.”

Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*

“Each of us must prepare for endless and riotous waves of transformation.”

Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*



Crowdsourcing our Best Practices

Questions for Discussion

What practices do you find nourishing and supportive?

How are you **resting** in the work? (disconnecting from the work)

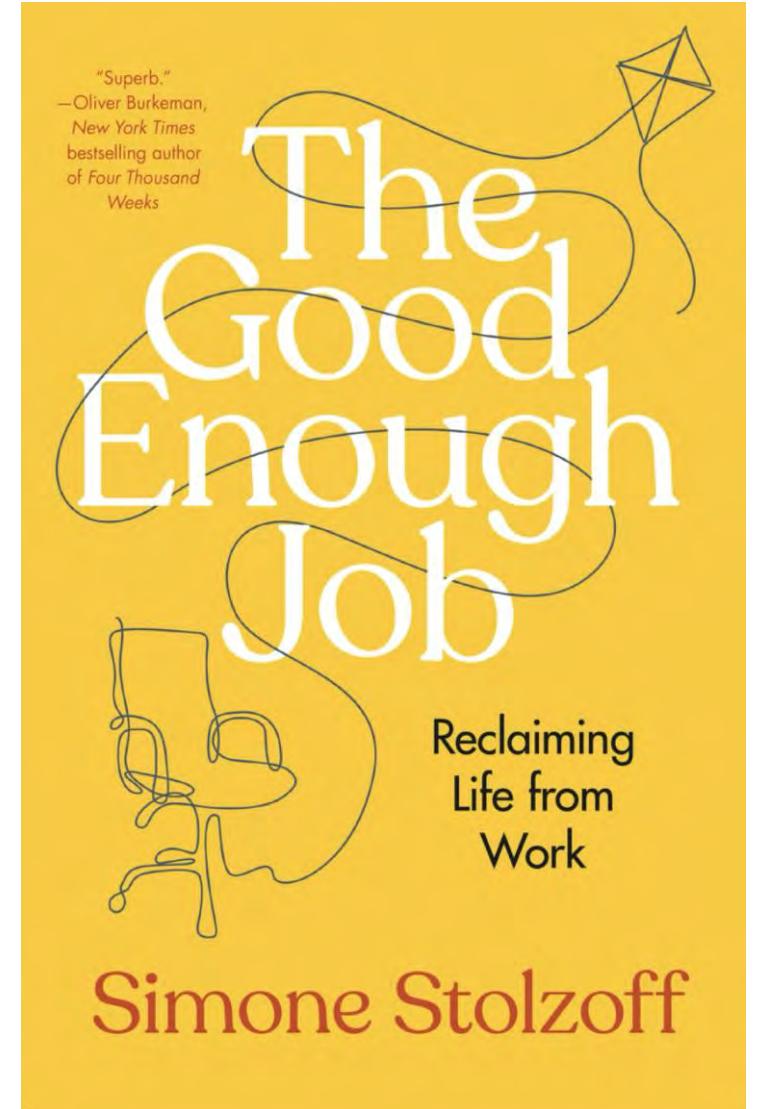
What do you do for fun? (play & **recreation** as re-creation)

In what ways have you **reinvented** yourself in your role?

What is one small change you can make to enhance your life beyond the work and beyond the role?



I began this book with a simple question: what do you do? I want to end with a suggestion for how we might amend this canonical piece of American small talk. All it takes is adding two small words. “What do you **like to** do?” It’s a question that allows you to define yourself on your own terms. Maybe you like to read fiction. Maybe you like to cook Mediterranean food. Maybe you like to watercolor or to write. Maybe you do those things for work. Maybe you don’t. Maybe that’s good enough.



Further Reading

Iyer, Pico. *Aflame: Learning from Silence*. Riverhead Books, 2025.

Iyer, Pico. *The Art of Stillness: Adventures in Going Nowhere*. TED Books, 2014.

Lindbergh, Anne Morrow. *Gift from the Sea*. Pantheon Books, 1955.

May, Katherine. *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times*. Riverhead Books, 2020.

Moskowitz, Simone Stolzoff. *The Good Enough Job: Reclaiming Life from Work*. Portfolio, 2023.

Waytz, Adam. “Beware a Culture of Busyness: Organizations Must Stop Conflating Activity with Achievement.” *Harvard Business Review*, March–April 2023, pp. 58–67

Kabat-Zinn, Jon. *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. New York: Hyperion, 2005.

Thank you for attending this session!