The Council of Independent Colleges

Creating **Tomorrow's Institutions**, Together

2026 Institute for Chief Academic Officers with Chief Advancement, Enrollment, Financial, and Marketing Communication Officers

November 7–10, 2026 ■ Baltimore, Maryland

The Architecture of Belonging: Cabinet Strategies to Translate Enrollment Success into Alumni Loyalty

Presented by

Catawba College



Presenters

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CATAWBA COLLEGE

EST. 1851

GOOD *goes* FAR.

OVERALL ENROLLMENT 1,389

UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT 1,283

AVERAGE NEW STUDENT GPA 3.86

HOMETOWN
Salisbury, N.C.

CLOSEST MAJOR CITIES
Charlotte & Greensboro, N.C.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

97.9%
Working or in Graduate School

INTERNSHIPS & PRACTICUMS

48%
Of Graduates Participated

AVERAGE CLASS SIZE 14

MALE/FEMALE/OTHER
46%/53%/1%

STATES REPRESENTED 34

COUNTRIES REPRESENTED 33

ALUMNI GIVING RATE 10.3%

FT FACULTY/ADJUNCT FACULTY 94/61

FT STAFF/ PART-TIME STAFF 208/15

ENDOWMENT

2016 $57M > 2026 $741M

MOUNTAINS
2 hours
(Asheville, N.C.)

OCEAN
4 hours
(Wilmington, N.C.)

3RD PARTY RECOGNITION

Princeton Review
Colleges of Distinction
US News and World Report

Guiding Questions:

- Where is the structural divide between your mission and your margin?
- How do we activate a cabinet strategy that embeds belonging into our business model to drive long-term net tuition revenue?
- How do we leverage a culture of belonging to transform first-year enrollment success into lifetime alumni loyalty?



Common Institutional Challenges

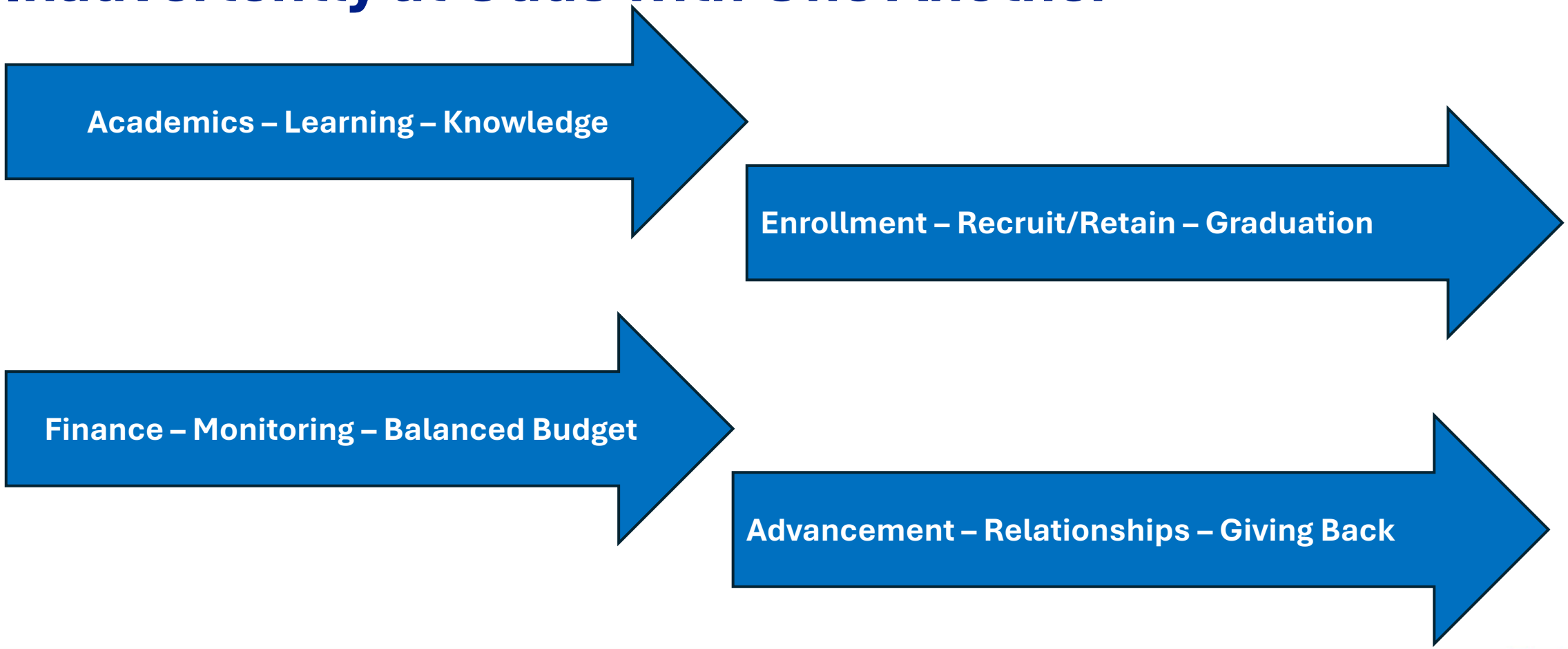
Challenges that Stifle Collaboration

- Focusing Only on Departmental Goals & Outcomes (e.g., net revenue)
- Accountability Myths—"Belonging is for Student Affairs to Address"
- Students Don’t See an Organizational Chart
- Conflicting Priorities from Various Stakeholder Groups
- Unclear and Inconsistent Communication

Siloed Departments Running Processes Independently



Departments and Processes Running Independently are Inadvertently at Odds with One Another



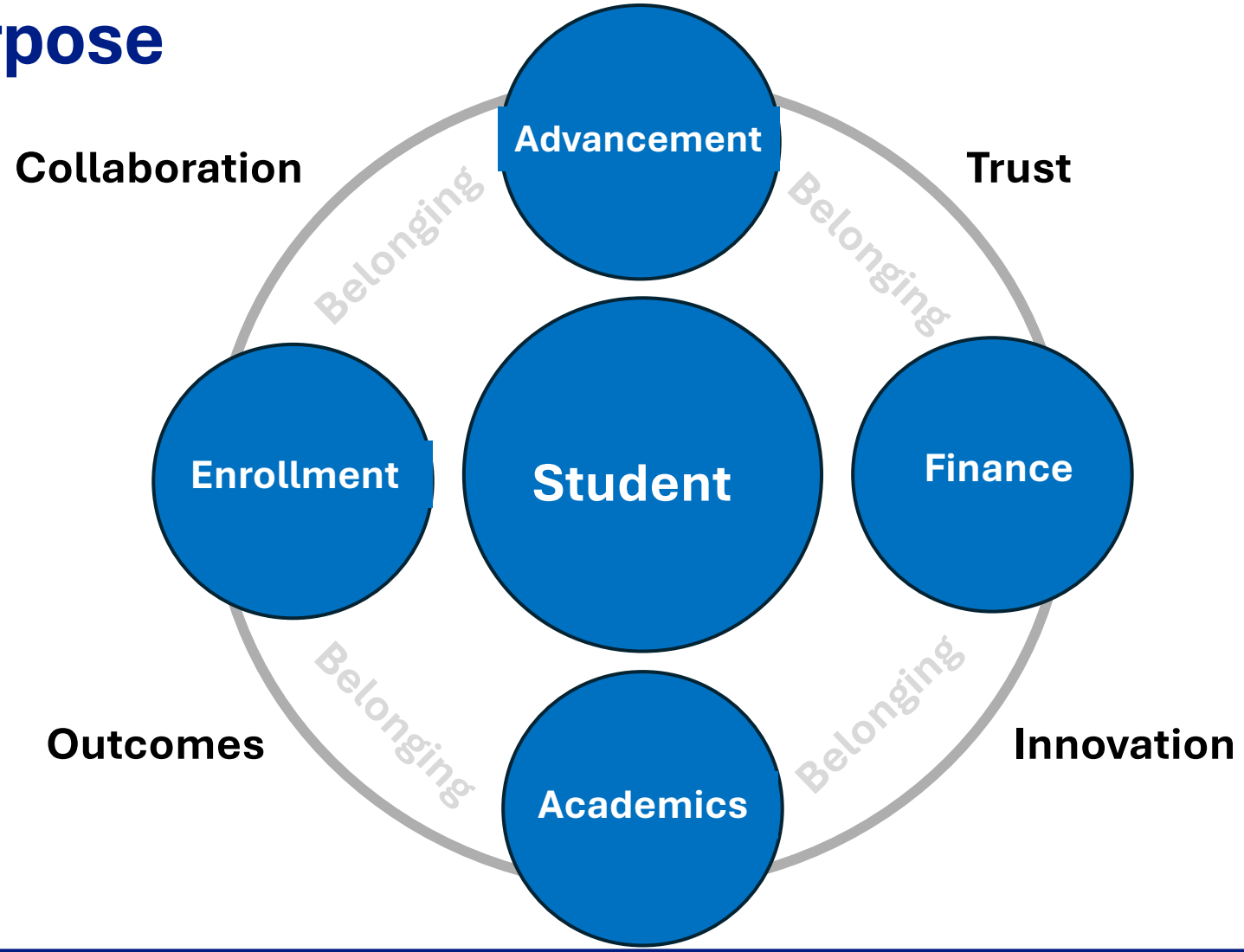
Overcoming Common Institutional Challenges

From Challenge to Collaboration	From Collaboration to Belonging
Focus Only on Area Goal/KPI	Lead with Student Experience
Belonging is for Student Affairs to Address	Belonging is Everyone’s Responsibility
Students Don’t See an Organizational Chart	"Students First" Philosophy/ Soft Hand Offs
Conflicting Priorities and Goals from Various Stakeholder Groups	Shared Institutional Priorities and Goals
Siloed Problem Solving with Minimal and/or Inconsistent Communication	Solution Oriented Problem Solving with Aligned Communication

Pausing to Find a New Way to Foster Belonging

Old Patterns and Habits:	New Patterns and Habits:
“This is how we’ve always done it”	“Keeping students at the center, what are we missing?”
Blame Game/ Finger Pointing	Shared Accountability & Wins
Decisions in Isolation	Stakeholders Deciding Together
Micro Lens—cannot see ripple effect of decisions	Macro Lens—uncover and leverage institutional opportunities
Fear/Uncertainty/Rigidity	Macro Lens—uncover and leverage institutional opportunities together

Students Benefit When Silos are Replaced by Shared Goals and Purpose



The Catawba Experience: Investing in a Culture of Belonging

- Increasing Access and Affordability
- Expanding the Student Success Program to Multiply “Touch Points”
- Prioritizing Clean, Healthy Living Spaces & Food Choices
- Redesigning the Academic Core to Reflect Mission and Belonging
- Enhancing the Student Life Experience to Reflect Student Voices
- Offering Professional Development Opportunities on Belonging for Faculty and Staff
- Supporting Alumni to Foster New Levels of Engagement and Loyalty

Case Study Discussion:
More Net Revenue & Enhanced Student Care

Building Your Own Cultures of Belonging: Key Takeaways to Implement this Semester

Q&A



Thank you for attending this session!

Sample logo: please replace with session sponsor



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