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

Thank you to our sponsor



Aligning Data, Strategy, and Financial Practices to Advance Student Success

CIC 2026 Institute for Chief Academic Officers

Pre-Conference Workshop | November 7, 2026

NACUBO

Before We Begin

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Have a device ready

You will use a laptop or tablet to explore the CIC Insights Tool and NACUBO Student Success Hub resources.



Learn from peers

Work individually on your own institution, then compare notes with fellow higher education professionals.



Speak candidly

What is said in the room stays in the room. Bring real challenges -- the scenarios work best with honest examples.

Your Facilitators



Kelli Rainey, EdD

Senior Director,
Student Success Initiatives

NACUBO



Resche D. Hines, PhD

NACUBO Student Success Hub
Subject Matter Expert

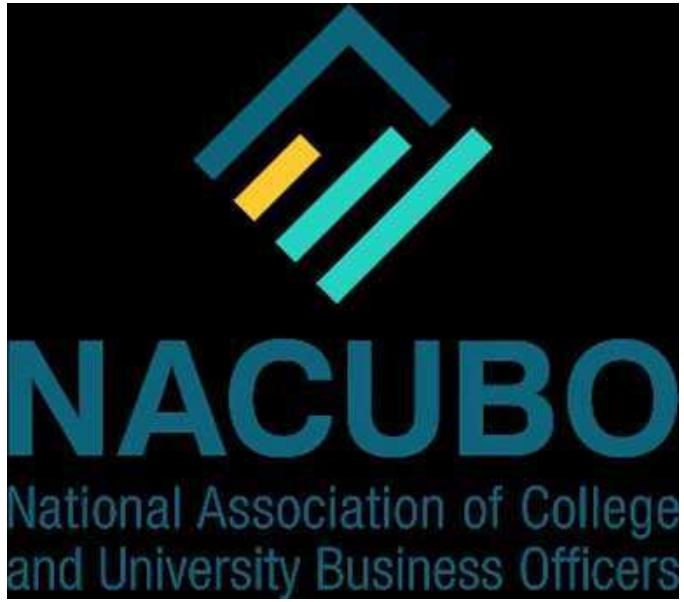
NACUBO



Ellen Peters

Senior Director of Research and
Membership Strategy

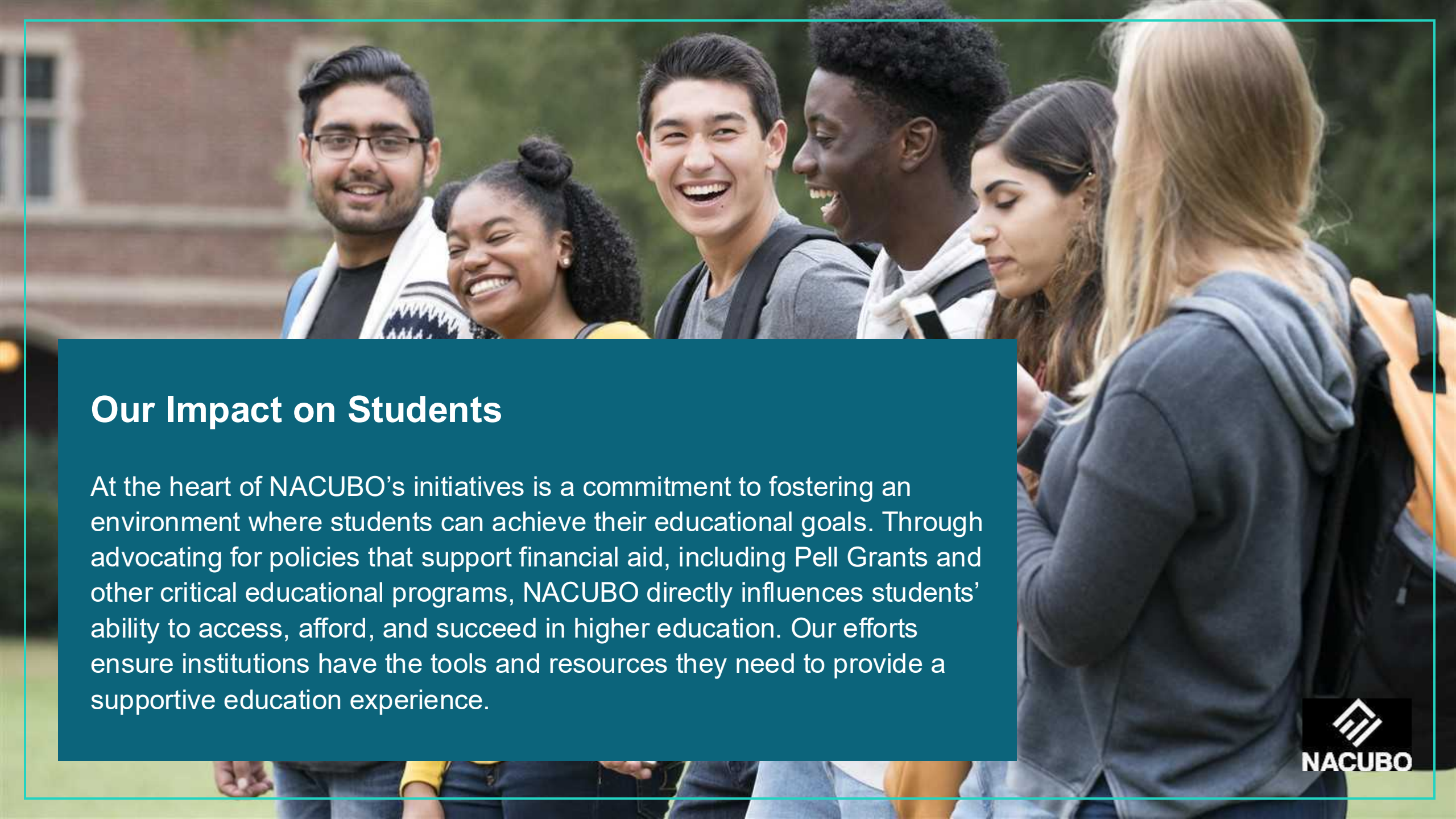
Council of Independent Colleges



Who We Are

We are the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). Since 1962, we have been an indispensable source of clear, trusted knowledge for campus leaders.

We provide a bold voice, collaboration, and resources to tackle higher education’s evolving challenges. Our mission is to help you ensure the success of your institution.



Our Impact on Students

At the heart of NACUBO's initiatives is a commitment to fostering an environment where students can achieve their educational goals. Through advocating for policies that support financial aid, including Pell Grants and other critical educational programs, NACUBO directly influences students' ability to access, afford, and succeed in higher education. Our efforts ensure institutions have the tools and resources they need to provide a supportive education experience.

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Who Is in the Room?

1. Your name, institution, and role
2. One student success goal your institution is pursuing right now
3. One resource challenge or opportunity shaping that goal
4. What you most want to take home from today



Workshop Objectives

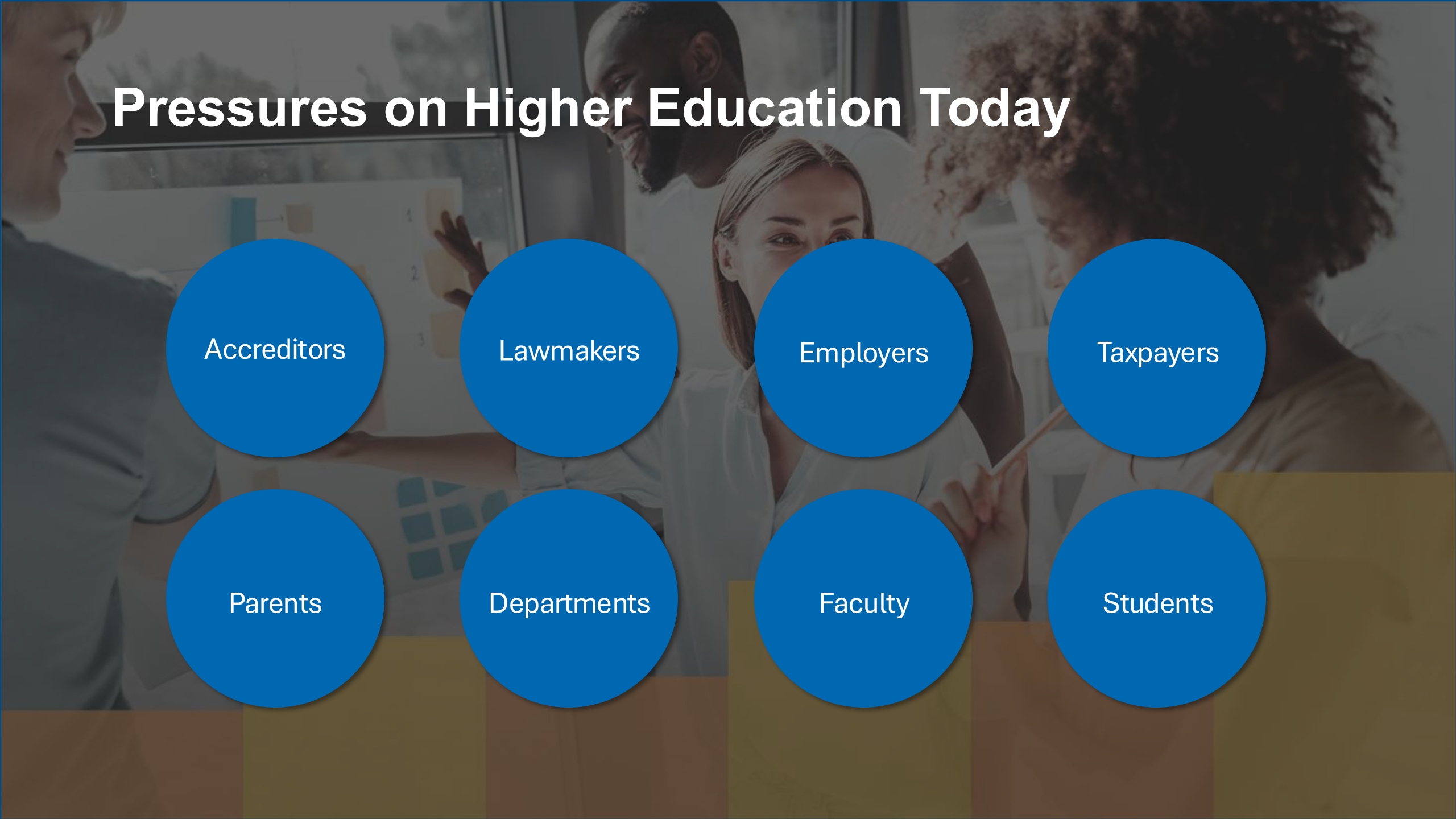
By the end of today, you will be able to:

Explain	How data, institutional strategy, and financial practices align to support student success and long-term sustainability
Strengthen	Cross-functional planning and decision-making among academic, financial, and data leaders
Apply	Mission-centered approaches to setting priorities, making investments, and allocating resources
Develop	Practical next steps and a tailored action plan for integrated planning at your institution

The Case for Integration

Mission, student success, and institutional sustainability

Pressures on Higher Education Today



The Pressures Are Converging

Independent colleges face enrollment, demographic, and affordability headwinds at once

57.1%

Average tuition discount rate for first-time undergraduates at private nonprofits, 2025-26 (preliminary)

90%

Share of first-time undergraduates receiving institutional grant aid

–1.9%

Change in average net tuition revenue per undergraduate, after inflation, 2024-25

~10%

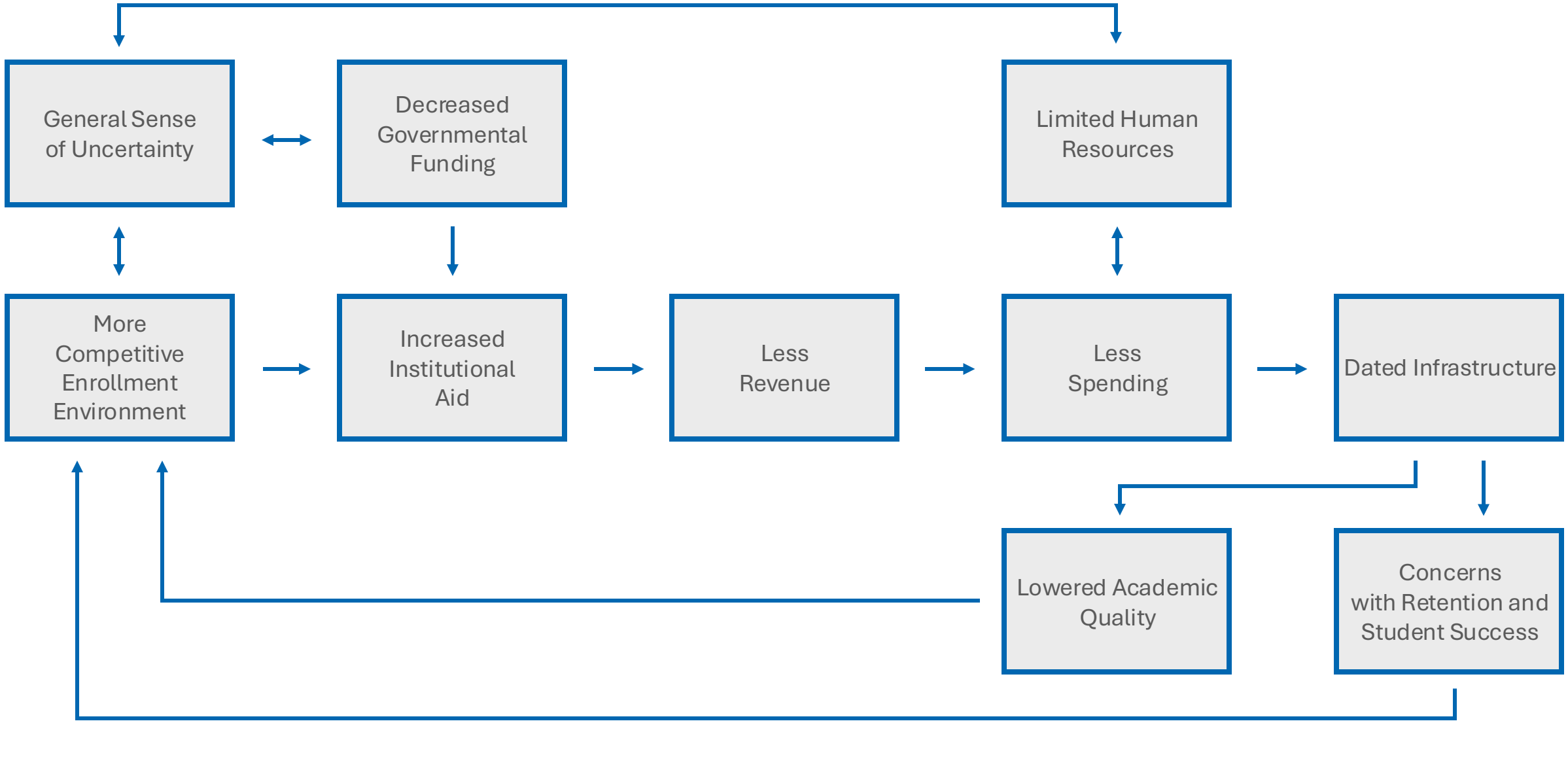
Projected decline in U.S. high school graduates from the 2025 peak to 2041

The challenges are not new. *Their convergence and speed are.*

Sources: NACUBO 2025 Tuition Discounting Study (258 private nonprofit institutions; released June 2026); WICHE, Knocking at the College Door (Dec. 2024).


What are the pressing priorities facing your institution today?

Perception of Campus Pain Points



Top 5 Higher Education Business Issues of 2026



Student Success Is a Strategic and Financial Imperative

Student success is not just an academic or student affairs priority. It is a strategic and financial imperative.

- Financial decisions determine which student supports can scale and sustain.
- Budget processes can accelerate or stall implementation.
- Strategic finance connects investments to outcomes, not just expenses to line items.
- The goal is not more spending by default. It is better-aligned spending.

Shifting the Question

From constraint to investment

FROM

“What can we afford?”



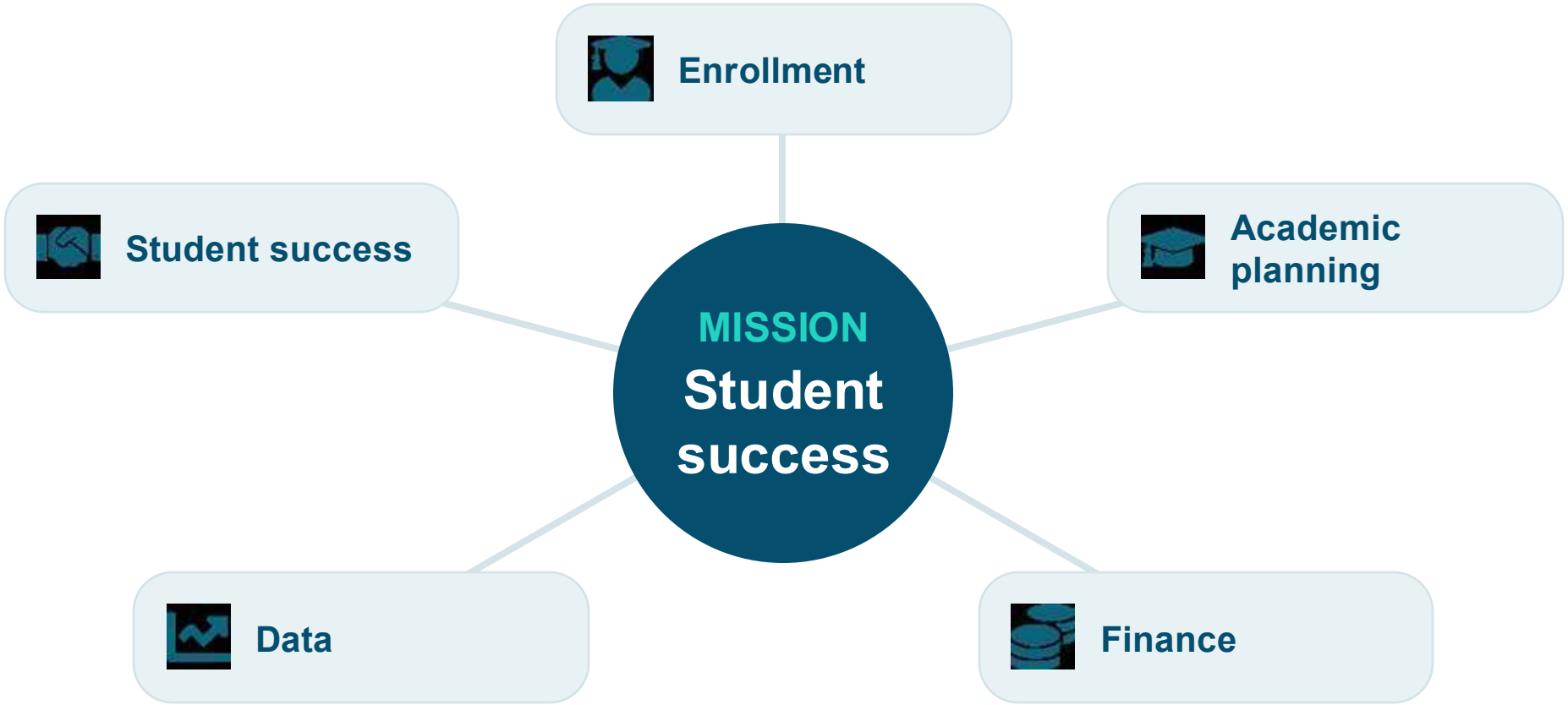
TO

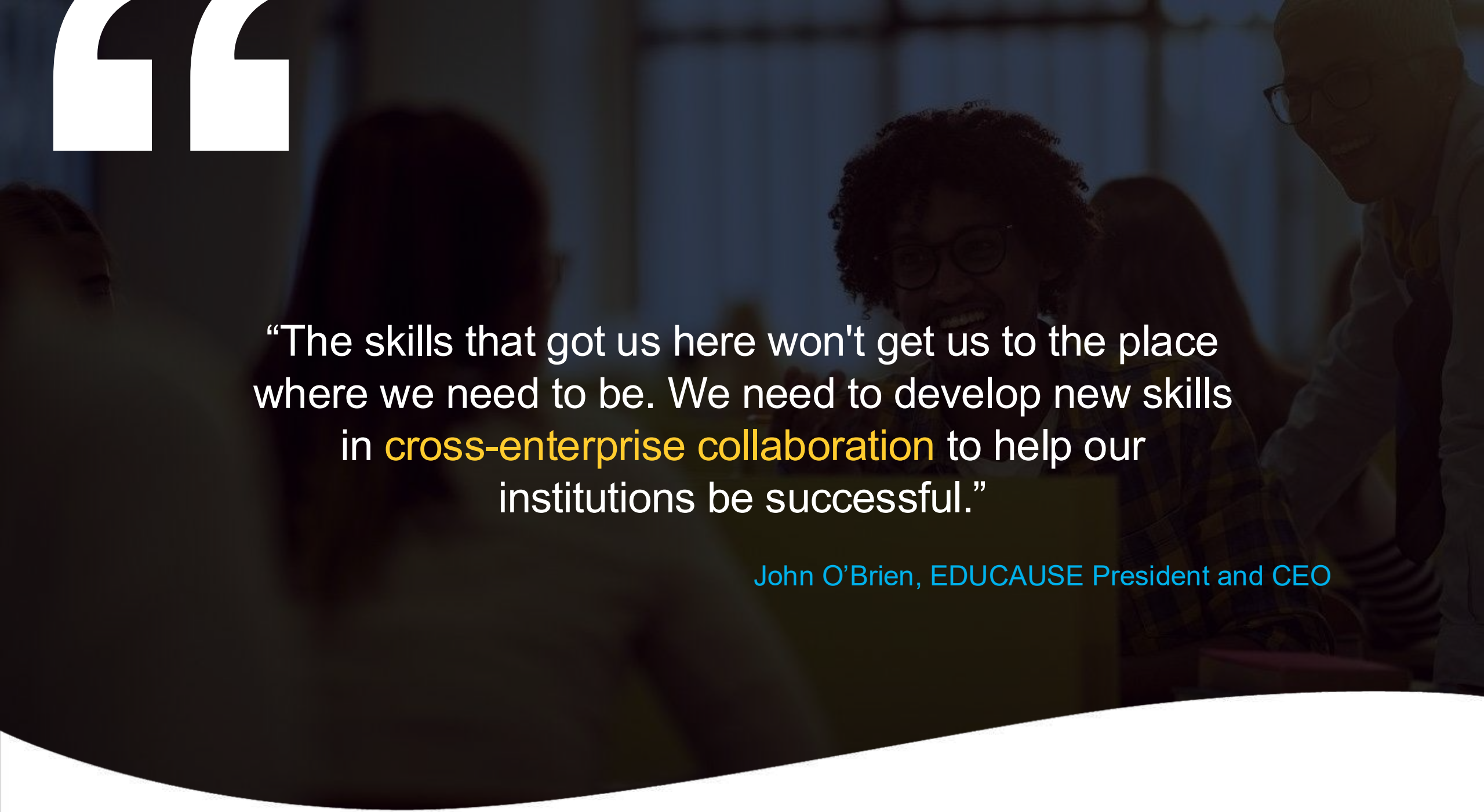
“What investments best improve student success?”

For academic leaders: What must our academic portfolio deliver for students, and what will it take to sustain it?

One Decision System, Not Five

Priorities move through every function—decisions should too





“The skills that got us here won't get us to the place where we need to be. We need to develop new skills in cross-enterprise collaboration to help our institutions be successful.”

John O’Brien, EDUCAUSE President and CEO

Mission as a Decision Criterion

Three tests for any student success investment



Mission fit

Does it advance who we serve and how we serve them?



Student impact

What evidence shows it changes outcomes, and for whom?



Sustainability

Can we afford to sustain it, and what will we stop doing?

The strongest investments pass all three.
Mission alone justifies a choice only when the trade-offs are named.

Shared Ownership Across the Cabinet

Academic, financial, and data leaders each hold part of the answer

Chief Academic Officer

- Program and curricular insight
- Faculty capacity and workload
- Learning and completion outcomes

Chief Business Officer

- True costs and revenue
- Multi-year resource view
- Trade-offs and sustainability

IR and Data Leaders

- Shared, trusted definitions
- Evidence of what works, for whom
- Timely signals for course correction

Business officers and academic leaders act as partners and catalysts, not only stewards.

Key Conditions for Success

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Cross-institutional collaboration

Finance, academic affairs, student affairs, and institutional research align their efforts.



Data-informed decisions

Clear connections between financial investments and student outcomes.



Continuous improvement

Cycles to test, learn, and refine approaches over time.



Integrated planning and budgeting

Resources aligned with institutional priorities and student success goals.

Seeing the System

A current-state alignment scan

Audience Polls

NACUBO



Join from your phone, tablet, or laptop

Scan the QR code or visit the session link to answer live polling questions.

Responses are anonymous; results appear on screen for discussion.

Session QR code

and polling link

Poll Question 1

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How well are your institution's financial strategies and practices aligned with its academic and student success goals?

A. Very well — we're in sync!

B. Somewhat — we're making progress.

C. Not much — it's hit or miss.

D. Not at all — totally separate.

E. No clue!

Poll Question 2

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When assessing student outcomes, does your institution integrate institutional financial data with student data?

A. Yes, we consistently conduct analysis at the intersection of institutional financial data and student outcomes data.

B. Yes, but institutional financial data is used sporadically and not systematically.

C. No, our analysis of outcomes does not connect institutional financial data and student data.

D. Not sure.

Poll Question 3

NACUBO

Which of the following best describes your institution's approach to funding academic and student success initiatives?

A. Most of the funding is provided by grants.

B. Most of the funding is provided by our operational budget.

C. We use a balance of both grant funding and operational dollars.

D. Not sure.

Poll Question 4

NACUBO

How much collaboration happens among the finance office, academic affairs, and student success teams?

A. A lot — there are regular, structured discussions and collaboration among these areas.

B. Some — there is occasional collaboration, but it's not consistent or structured.

C. Not much — collaboration is minimal and typically happens only in response to specific issues.

D. None — these groups operate in silos with little to no interaction.

E. I don't know.

Current State Worksheet

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Strategic financial activities include: resource planning that builds in sustainability and scale; joint review of budgets and student outcome data by finance, academic, and student success leaders; and assessing outcomes against resources invested.



LEVERAGE

What are we doing well?

Practices that help students and build capacity for financial sustainability and scale

Factors to optimize → impact



IMPROVE

Where are we siloed?

Practices or structures that stronger finance, academic, and student success collaboration could strengthen

Factors to improve → impact



ANTICIPATE

What is outside our control?

Economic trends, demographics, operating costs, labor market shifts, and policy changes

Ecosystem factors → impact



Session Break

Leveraging Tools & Frameworks

The CIC Insights Tool and NACUBO Student Success Hub toolkits

Every Data Point Represents a Student

NACUBO

A two-point gain in retention changes the trajectory of hundreds of students' lives, and the lives of their families and communities.

Data Identify	**Information** Evaluate	**Knowledge** Communicate
What do we know?	*What does it mean?*	*What should we do?*

Underpinned and shaped by a student success lens

Common Barriers to Using Data

Which of these sound familiar?

- Reports exist but go unused
- Decisions rest on institutional myths
- Too many stale, static reports
- Offices report the same number differently
- People don’t know where to go for data
- Official data isn’t transparent
- Analytic capacity hasn’t kept pace with demand
- Outcome data never meets financial data

Building a Culture of Data Users

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Break down silos

Make data shared, governed, and easy to find.



Bring data users together

Academic affairs, advising, budget, enrollment, and advancement.



Use data in strategic decisions

Tie dashboards to goals, budgets, and owners.

An Informed Data Culture Helps Institutions

- Communicate key priorities
- Make informed decisions
- Connect across silos
- Plan strategically
- Use resources more efficiently

Introducing the CIC Insights Tool

Interactive peer benchmarking for CIC members

Builds on two decades of benchmarking

Replaces CIC's Key Indicators Tool (KIT) and Financial Indicators Tool (FIT), used by members for 20+ years.

Interactive dashboards

Developed with UQ Solutions in 2025; KIT- and FIT-style reports remain available.

Self-curated peers

Compare your institution with the peer group you choose.

From comparison to action

Identify areas needing attention, set targets, and share findings with campus stakeholders.



OPEN THE TOOL

reports.cic.edu

Log in with your CIC member credentials.

An introductory video and user guide are available in the tool.

Welcome to CIC Insights Tool

- **Purpose**
  - Understand
  - Prioritize
  - Communicate

- **New Features**
  - Comparison Group Curation
  - Summary Dashboards
  - Single and double metric graphs
  - Financial projections
  - User's Guide and Terms & Definitions

CIC Insights Tool:
Dashboards and Information

- Summary Dashboards
- By Metric
- FIT Scores, including projections
- KIT & FIT legacy reports
- Terms and Definitions
- User's Guide



Let’s Sign In!


Welcome to the CIC Insights tool!
This tool and its products are not intended for competitive marketing or general public dissemination. By clicking on the “I AGREE” button to access the tool, you agree not to publish or distribute the CIC Insights tool visualizations that include specific comparators' institutional data for purposes beyond your own institutional planning and internal communications.
I Agree
You may notice a new look to the platform and some new features. We released a major upgrade in October 2026. We hope that you like it and find it useful. Please see the User’s Guide for more details.

The Council of Independent Colleges

CIC Insights Tool

UQSOLUTIONS

• ***Before you start, click on the "full screen" icon, in the lower right, to see the tool in full screen mode.***

• Welcome to CIC Insights Tool. This tool is designed to help you view key metrics for your institution, compared to customized peer groups, to inform conversations and guide institutional priorities.
• Click on "Comparison Group" below to select your comparison group. Reports on the left give overviews of key metrics in selected areas. Reports on the right provide the "FIT Score"—a summary of your institution's financial health—and its components.
• "Terms & Definitions" provides details on all of the metrics, including which IPEDS variables they represent, or are derived from.
• You can navigate from this home page (click the CIC icon to get here), or using the ribbon above.
• CIC's Key Indicators Tool ("KIT") and Financial Indicators Tool ("FIT") was developed by the Austen Group for CIC in 2004. The CIC Insights Tool was developed for CIC by UQ Solutions in 2025.

Key Indicators (KIT)

- Introduction
- Comparison Group
- Summary
- Enrollment
- Faculty & Staff
- Revenue & Expenses
- Single Metric
- Single Metric - by Institution
- Two Metrics

Financial Indicators (FIT)

- FIT Score
- Core Financial Ratios
- Fit Score Details
- Future FIT Score
- National
- Regional
- Terms & Definitions
- User's Guide



NACUBO STUDENT SUCCESS HUB

LEVERAGE THE POWER OF THE NACUBO STUDENT SUCCESS HUB

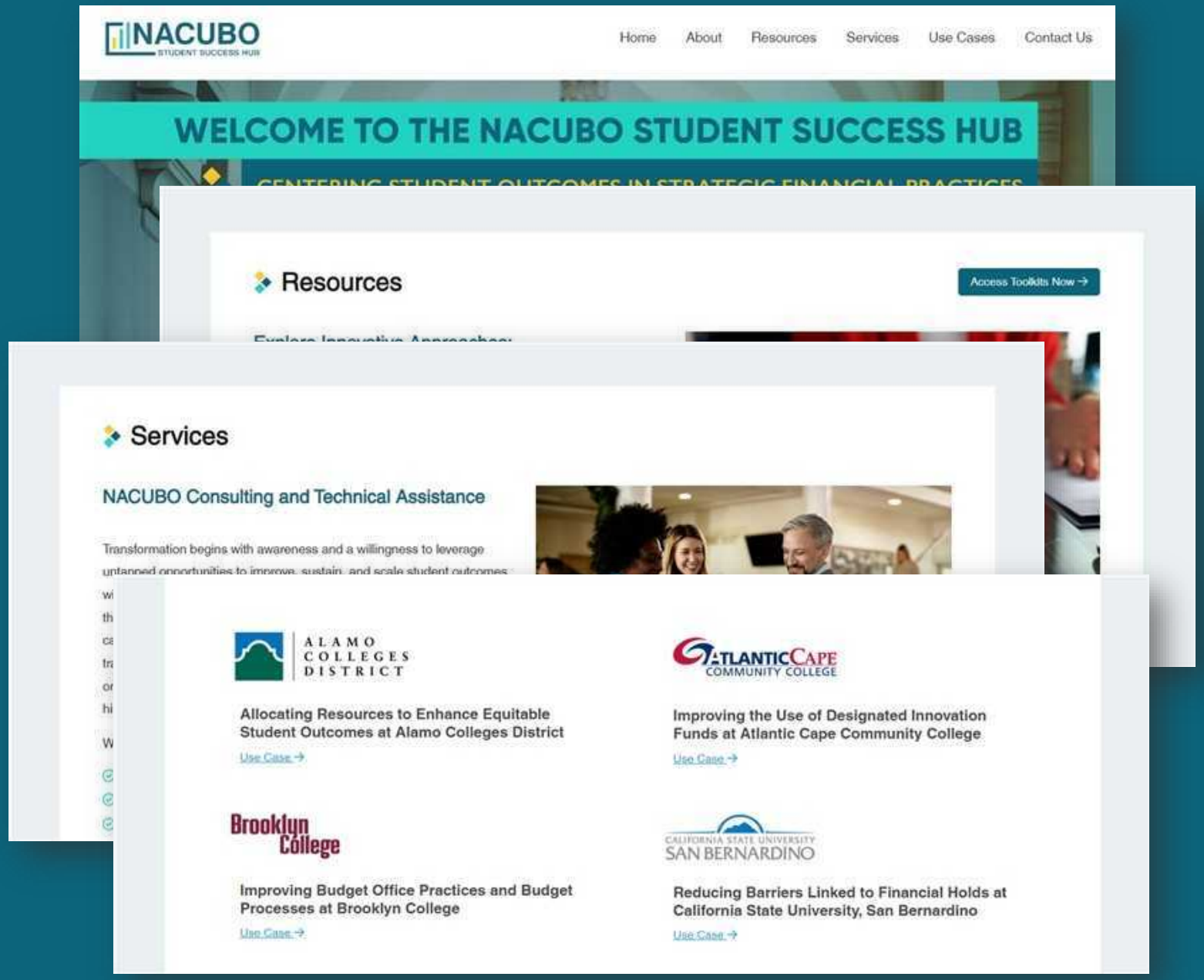
ACCELERATE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES AT YOUR INSTITUTION WITH CUSTOMIZABLE TOOLS AND RESOURCES

About the Student Success Hub

Grounded in NACUBO's long-standing expertise in higher education finance and strengthened by resources developed through a national grant-funded initiative, the Hub equips colleges and universities with practical tools, diagnostics, and facilitation models that translate strategic finance into institutional action.

The Hub helps institutions:

- **Bridge Finance and Student Success:** Uniting finance leaders with academic, enrollment, and student affairs teams to ensure fiscal decisions advance persistence and completion goals.
- **Leverage Proven Tools and Frameworks:** Access tested toolkits and models co-designed with peer institutions.
- **Build Capacity for Lasting Change:** Embed finance-aligned practices that sustain student success initiatives over time.



To access the Hub,
scan the QR code below.

or visit
nacubostudentsuccess.org

Hub Toolkits Across Three Focus Areas

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Data to Inform Decisions

- Data and Systems Governance Guide
- IPEDS Peer Benchmarking Dashboards
- Data Ecosystem Assessment

Financial Resource Optimization

- Budget Builder
- Grant Development and Sustainability
- Financial Impact Analysis
- Program Scanner

Planning, Processes, and Budgeting

- Budget Equity Blueprint
- Collaboration Accelerator
- Budget Process Assessment
- Funding Allocation Matrix

IPEDS Peer Benchmarking Dashboards

https://bit.ly/IPEDSdashboards

Program Scanner

https://bit.ly/program-scanner



Networking Lunch

12:00 – 1:00 p.m. | Grand Ballroom III

We reconvene in Grand Ballroom IV at 1:00 p.m.

Integrated Planning

Integrated planning and cross-institutional collaboration

What Is Integrated Planning?

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A sustainable approach to planning that builds relationships, aligns the organization, and emphasizes preparedness for change.



Leadership in partnership

Academic, financial, and administrative leaders plan together rather than in sequence.



Cross-institutional

Academic, enrollment, facilities, and financial plans inform one another.



People-centric

Faculty, staff, and students shape priorities, and plans account for their capacity.

Alignment Runs Up, Down, and Across

Plans and initiatives are interdependent



ALIGNMENT DOWN

Institutional priorities shape day-to-day actions and operations within units.

e.g., the strategic plan's retention goal shapes course scheduling



ALIGNMENT UP

Data and feedback from units inform institutional planning and decisions.

e.g., advising data flags gateway-course bottlenecks for cabinet



ALIGNMENT ACROSS

Units align operations, resources, and tactics with each other.

e.g., academic affairs and finance co-design the program review

Institutions are culturally and structurally designed as disparate organizational functions doing business separately (but together) under the same institutional mission.

From VUCA to VUCA 2.0

From conditions to capabilities

THE CONDITIONS		THE RESPONSE	WHAT IT ASKS OF US
V Volatility	→	**V Vision**	Shared student success goals that guide every function
U Uncertainty	→	**U Understanding**	Trusted evidence on what works, and for whom
C Complexity	→	**C Clarity**	Explicit priorities, roles, and decision rights
A Ambiguity	→	**A Agility**	Plans, budgets, and data that adjust together

Clarity in Practice: RACI for Student Success

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R Responsible A Accountable C Consulted I Informed

	President / Cabinet	Academic Affairs	Student Affairs	Finance	Planning	IR / Data
Set goals and targets	A	C	C	C	R	C
Fund the work	A	C	C	R	C	I
Define metrics and data	I	C	C	C	A	R
Deliver interventions	I	A	R	I	I	I
Monitor progress	I	C	C	C	A	R
Adjust plans and budgets	A	R	R	R	C	C

Guided Scenario

Institutional Situation

Explore real peer data before deciding anything

THE SITUATION

The president has asked cabinet for recommendations to strengthen student success while protecting the institution's financial sustainability.

Before recommending anything, you will use peer data to understand where the institution stands, what to ask next, and who needs to be at the table.

YOUR ROLE

Cabinet members bringing academic, finance, enrollment, student affairs, and IR perspectives



YOUR TOOL

IPEDS Peer Benchmarking Dashboards

- NACUBO Student Success Hub toolkit
- Compare the institution with peer and aspirational institutions
- Spot trends in enrollment, retention, completion, and finances

Link: https://bit.ly/IPEDSdashboards

Questions to Explore in the Dashboards

Start with the questions, then let the data point to the next ones

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- What are the enrollment trends over time?
- What has been the budgetary impact for the institution?
- What are the most important data metrics for the institution?
- What are the patterns in retention and completion over the past 10 years?
- What is the revenue impact of students not retained?
- What are the longitudinal trends compared with peers?
- How do our metrics compare with our peers?
- Are we allocating resources appropriately?

How the Scenario Unfolds

Each table act as cabinet with various roles

ROUND 1
Explore

- Use the dashboards to read trends and peer comparisons
- Note what stands out: strengths, gaps, surprises

ROUND 2
Ask

- What questions should be asked next?
- What data beyond IPEDS would answer them, and who holds it?

ROUND 3
Connect

- Where is the opportunity for cross-institutional collaboration?
- Using RACI, who is Accountable and who must be Consulted?

Scenario Debrief

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What did the data reveal that surprised you?



Which question would you take to cabinet first, and why?



Where is the strongest opportunity for cross-institutional collaboration?



What data beyond IPEDS do you need, and who holds it?

LISTEN FOR

- Questions grounded in evidence, not assumptions
- Peer gaps read as mission choice or drift
- Academic, finance, and data voices all present
- Clear owners for the next question



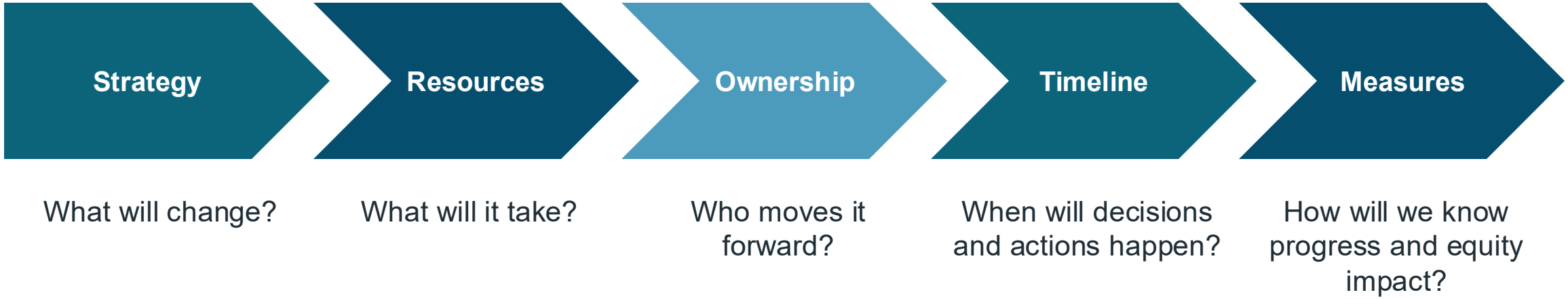
Session Break

Connecting Tools to Action

Drafting a tailored action plan for your institution

From Priority to Action Plan

Five elements every action plan needs



A strong action plan is specific enough to guide action and flexible enough to adapt.

It clarifies both the work and the conditions the work needs to succeed.

Plan for Barriers Before They Appear

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Barrier What could slow progress?	Signal How will we know it is happening?	Response What will we do if it appears?	Owner Who is responsible?
Faculty lack time for course redesign	Redesigned sections slip a term	Fund release time from reallocated dollars	Provost

Implementation barriers are not failures. They are conditions to anticipate and manage.

Action Planning Worksheet

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1. **Key takeaways**
   1–3 insights or strategies to explore or implement
2. **Focus your plan**
   Priority, tools, resource assumptions, and barriers
3. **Next 2 hours**
   Quick steps you can take today
4. **Next 2 weeks**
   Steps that build momentum for data-informed strategies
5. **Next 2 months**
   Steps that build institutional commitment and scale impact
6. **Accountability and support**
   Champions, collaborators, and how you will track progress



FINAL COMMITMENT

One concrete commitment you will make today to help your institution center students in its financial strategies

Reflection and Wrap Up

Key insights, commitments, and closing remarks

Session Takeaways

What can you do next?

See the system	**Trace one priority through various units and practices. The breakdowns are usually in the handoffs.**
Ask better questions	**Use the CIC and NACUBO toolkits to help frame questions for discussion with institutional leaders.**
Connect across areas	**Identify a cross-institutional collaboration opportunity to strengthen the alignment of data, strategy, and finance.**

Resources to Keep Going

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NACUBO Student Success Hub

Toolkits, diagnostics, use cases, and facilitation models that turn strategic finance into action.

- Financial resource optimization
- Student-centered planning and budgeting
- Data to inform decisions

Scan or visit
nacubostudentsuccess.org

CIC Insights Tool

Peer benchmarking dashboards for CIC members, with KIT- and FIT-style reports.

Consultations on interpreting dashboards are available through UQ Solutions.

reports.cic.edu

Closing Reflection

NACUBO



One insight that challenged or expanded your thinking



One conversation you will start back on campus, and with whom



One concrete commitment to center students in your financial strategies

Please complete the session evaluation before you leave.

Thank you for attending this session!



Thank you for your participation!

Kelli Rainey & Resche Hines | NACUBO
Ellen Peters | Council of Independent Colleges