



2025 HERO University Summit

Managing Change & Navigating Uncertainty in Higher Education: Organizational Strategies, Individual Support, and Collective Resilience

Tuesday, October 21st, 2025 | 10:30 AM – 2:30 PM CDT

A virtual convening

With thanks to our Sponsor:



As higher education continues to face rapid and complex challenges, from funding constraints and shifting workforce expectations to growing mental health needs, institutions must find new ways to adapt while supporting the people at the heart of their missions. This year's virtual University Summit invites practitioners, leaders, and researchers from academic institutions to explore how we can respond to uncertainty with clarity, compassion, and creativity. Through research-informed insights, real-world case studies, and practical tools, we will examine how universities are fostering psychological safety, promoting well-being, building resilient systems, and strengthening a culture of trust and belonging. Whether addressing structural change at the organizational level or implementing daily practices to support faculty and staff, this summit aims to provide a space for knowledge-sharing, reflection, and collaboration across the higher education landscape.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of this virtual summit, participants will be able to:

1. Explore institutional strategies and frameworks that promote adaptability, well-being, and connection across higher education settings during times of uncertainty and change.
2. Examine effective programs and interventions that support individual resilience and mental health among faculty, staff, and learners—particularly within resource-constrained or high-pressure environments.
3. Identify opportunities to strengthen organizational culture and psychological safety by leveraging research, lived experience, and innovative practices that foster trust, belonging, and human connection in academic workplaces.

AGENDA

Central Time

10:30 AM Welcome & Opening Remarks

Chair: Joni Troester, MBA

Senior Assistant Vice President and Deputy CHRO, The University of Iowa; Immediate Past Chair, HERO Board of Directors

10:35 AM **The Dr. Robert Winfield Memorial Keynote Presentation: “The Caring University”**

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Kevin R. McClure

Distinguished Professor of College Leadership and Organizational Change; Author of The Caring University; Columnist of Working Better at The Chronicle of Higher Education

11:00 AM **Panel: Leading with Intention during Uncertainty**

Panelists:

Jennifer Posa, PhD, Chief Wellbeing Officer, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)

Dane Friend, JD, Chief Human Resources and Well-Being Officer, Baylor College of Medicine

11:40 AM Break

11:50 AM **University Highlights: Programs and Interventions at the Individual Level**

Tiffany Shockley, PhD, MBA, CPHIMS, Associate Professor & Program Coordinator,
Queens University of Charlotte

Lara Hilton, PhD, MPH, Director, USC WorkWell Center, University of Southern California

Janet R Bezner, PT, DPT, PhD, FAPTA, Interim Associate Dean, College of Health
Professions, Professor and Chair, Department of Physical Therapy, Texas
State University

12:30 PM Breakout Groups & Share Out

How is your organization supporting employees during times of uncertainty and change?

12:55 PM Break

1:05 PM **University Highlights: Institutional Strategies and Organizational Culture**

Rachel Otwinowski, Director of Benefits & Well-Being, University of Notre Dame

Annie Laurie, MEd, Associate Director, Healthy OHIO, Ohio University

Kelcey J. Stratton, PhD, Chief Behavioral Health Strategist, University of Michigan

1:45 PM Breakout Groups

What strategies, initiatives, or frameworks is your organization implementing at the organizational level to support and sustain the workforce during periods of uncertainty and change?

2:05 PM Lessons Learned

2:15 PM Sponsor Spotlight and Raffle

2:20 PM Wrap Up and Thank You

2:30 PM Adjourn

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