



**Renaissance Asheville
Downtown Hotel
March 22 - 24, 2026**

NCAIR 2026 Conference Schedule

Sunday, March 22

8:00 - 5:00	Conference Registration (Pre-function Corridor)
8:30 - 12:00	Pre-Conference Workshop: Building Resilience through Data Insights: A Hands on Workshop using Informer 5 (Salon C: 1)
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch Break (on your own)
1:00 - 4:30	Pre-Conference Workshop: UNC System Workshop and Working Session (Salon C: 2)
5:00 - 7:00	Welcome Reception and Complementary Hors d'oeuvres (Top of the Plaza)

Monday, March 23

7:00 - 10:00	Conference Registration (Pre-function Corridor)			
7:30 - 9:30	Grand Ballroom: Breakfast (7:30 - 8:30) and Welcome and Keynotes (8:00 - 9:30)			
	Salon C: 1	Salon C: 2	Windsor Ballroom: Salon A	Windsor Ballroom: Salon B
9:45 - 10:35	<p style="text-align: center;">Scaling Mount Compliance: An AI-Powered Guide to Support a Successful Accreditation Climb</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tim Metz (WCU)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Data-Informed Advocacy for Colleges: Transforming Numbers into Narratives</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Carolyn Mata (NCICU)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Impact of Registration Timing on Student Success</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Laura Boyles (CCCC)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Joint Consideration of Admissions Yield, Higher Ed Competitors, and Non-Consumerism</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jenna Tucker (UNCG)</p>
10:35 - 11:10	Snack Break Poster Presentation Pre-function Corridor (NC A&T)			
11:10 - 12:00	<p style="text-align: center;">Exploring AI Adoption in Assessment and Accreditation: A Survey of Higher Education Practices and Perspectives</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Leslie Larchin, Tia Marie Doxey & Becky Mussat-Whitlow (NCCU)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Unlocking the Power of Census PSEO: Showcasing Graduate Outcomes for North Carolina Colleges</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Carolyn Mata (NCICU)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Survey Insights about Students' Freedom of Expression and Responsibility</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thomas Kirnbauer & Brent Maher (Davidson)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Maximizing the Power of NSC for Institutional Insights</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Kailee Turner & Carl Cortright (WCU)</p>
12:00 - 1:50	Grand Ballroom: Complimentary Lunch and Business Meeting (open for all attendees)			
2:00 - 2:50	<p style="text-align: center;">Best Practices for Data Requests and How AI Agents Accelerate Institutional Decision Making</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wilson Bright</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Beyond the Cliff: Demographic Shifts, Migration Trends, and the New Reality for North Carolina Colleges</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Carolyn Mata (NCICU)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Empowering Decision Making: NCCCS Dashboards and Reports Supporting Propel NC</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Elizabeth Stoddard & Bill Schneider (NCCCS)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">"How will you use that?" The life cycle of a data request</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jackie Ross (NC State)</p>
2:50 - 3:10	Snack Break			

NCAIR 2026 Conference Schedule

Monday, March 23

	Salon C: 1	Salon C: 2	Windsor Ballroom: Salon A	Windsor Ballroom: Salon B
3:10 - 4:00	Amazon: QuickSuite Mitch Mello	Integrated Course Load Matrix (ICLM) Modeling and Use Cases Rick Sears (ASU) Michael Smith & Aleeta James (UNCW)	Emergency Aid as a Debt Reducer? Analysis of HEERF and Federal Debt Mark Umbricht (UNCSCO)	Structural Equation Modeling and Higher Education Elizabeth Davis (UNCSPA) & Kelly Smith (AEWAS Consulting)
4:10 - 5:00	Breaking the Mold: Modernizing Course and Institutional Survey Processes for Real Institutional Results Kyle Chapman (ECU) & Erin O'Connor (Explorance)	Developing a Program Margin Report: Assessing Costs and Revenues of Degree Programs Jeff Konz (UNCA)	Out-of-State Enrollment Caps and Student Outcomes in the UNC System Prasiddha Shakya (UNCSCO)	A Single Dashboard – A Million Questions Answered (More Dashboards Isn't Always the Answer) Alison Joseph (WCU)

Tuesday, March 24

8:00 - 8:50	Grand Ballroom: Breakfast			
	Salon C: 1	Salon C: 2	Windsor Ballroom: Salon A	Windsor Ballroom: Salon B
9:00 - 9:50	Predictive Analytics for Graduate Retention: Machine Learning and Strategic Modeling in Higher Education Vindhya Hegde (NC State)	The Quicker the Better? Timing of Admissions Decisions and Enrollment Mark Umbricht (UNCSCO)	Ten-Year Retention Dashboard: Tracking Student Success Through Data Raj Bhosale (NC State)	Propensity Score Matching and Higher Education Kelly Smith (AEWAS Consulting)
10:00 - 10:50	Implementing Early Momentum Metrics to Improve Retention in Engineering and Technology Programs Anne Oxenreider, Gretchen Dietz, Kristin Daiber & Jessica Ottie (WCU)	Exploring IPEDS: A Guided Tour of the "Use the Data" Tools Carolyn Mata (NCICU)	From Spreadsheets to Scripts: Modernizing IR/IE Workflows with R Logan King (HCC)	Diagnosing and Dealing with Stress the IR/IE Way Kelly Smith (AEWAS Consulting)
10:50 - 11:10	Snack Break			
11:10 - 12:00	UNC System Community of Practice	NC Community College System Community of Practice	NCICU Community of Practice	

NCAIR 2026 ~ RESILIENCE THROUGH INSIGHT

Dear NCAIR Members and Conference Attendees,

On behalf of the North Carolina Association of Institutional Research, it is my pleasure to welcome you to our Annual Conference in Asheville, NC!

Each year, these annual conferences provide a valuable opportunity for institutional research professionals, data leaders, and higher education colleagues from across North Carolina to come together to share knowledge. Through our exchange of ideas, the vital work done in support of student success, institutional effectiveness, and data-informed decision making is strengthened. The collective strengths of collaboration across higher education sectors will continue to help us meet the challenges of the evolving federal regulatory reporting landscape.

This year's conference reflects the continued growth and impact of our profession. Regardless of the challenge, our membership comes together to find solutions. Through engaging sessions, collaborative discussions, and networking opportunities, we explore innovative practices, emerging trends, and practical strategies that can be applied across our institutions. Most importantly, this conference allows us to learn from one another and reinforce the strong professional community that defines NCAIR.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to our conference planning committee, presenters, sponsors, and volunteers whose time and dedication made this event possible. The countless days and hours devoted to making this conference a success are truly appreciated. Their efforts ensure that this conference continues to be a meaningful and impactful experience for all attendees.

Thank you for being part of NCAIR and for the important work you do every day in advancing institutional research across North Carolina. Serving as your president has been a distinct privilege during this past year. I wish you a productive, engaging, and enjoyable conference.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vincent Castano
President
North Carolina Association of Institutional Research



Thank you for attending the NCAIR 2026 Conference!
Please scan the QR code or go to the URL below to share your thoughts and ideas for future conferences.
https://www.research.net/r/NCAIR_2026

NCAIR 2026 ~ RESILIENCE THROUGH INSIGHT

<p>PRESIDENT Vincent Castano Dean of Institutional Effectiveness Fayetteville Tech Community College</p>	<p>PAST PRESIDENT Dax Prather Senior Manager, IT Duke University</p>
<p>PRESIDENT-ELECT Holly Rewerts Data Analyst Campbell University</p>	<p>SECRETARY Meghan-Joy Woodall Director of Institutional Effectiveness William Peace University</p>
<p>TREASURER Andrew Walker Data Analyst Johnston Community College</p>	<p>WEBMASTER/COMMUNICATIONS Lindsey Tedder Institutional Research Analyst Central Carolina Community College</p>
<p>MEMBER-AT-LARGE - ALL INSTITUTIONS Daniel Barreiro-Talbert Assistant Director of Institutional Research East Carolina University</p>	<p>MEMBER-AT-LARGE - COMMUNITY COLLEGES Norma Jean Hatcher Director of Planning, Research, and IE James Sprunt Community College</p>
<p>MEMBER-AT-LARGE - PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS Carolyn Sloane Mata Director of Research NCICU</p>	<p>MEMBER-AT-LARGE - PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS Michael Smith Director, Institutional Research & Analytics University of North Carolina – Wilmington</p>

Nominations Committee

Dax Prather, Chair, Past-President
Vince Castano, President
Andrew Walker, Treasurer

Travel Grants Committee

Vince Castano, Chair, President
Dax Prather, Past-President
Andrew Walker, Treasurer
Carrie Mata, Member-at-Large - Private Institutions

Sessions Committee

Michael Smith, Member-at-Large - Public Senior Institutions
Norma-Jean Hatcher, Member-at-Large - Community Colleges
Larchin Leslie, Member

Conference Planning Committee:

Vince Castano, President
Holly Rewerts, President-Elect
Dax Prather, Past-President
Andrew Walker, Treasurer
Meghan-Joy Woodall, Secretary
Lindsey Tedder, Webmaster/Communications Coordinator
Danny Barreiro-Talbert, Member-at-Large - All Institutions
Norma-Jean Hatcher, Member-at-Large - Community Colleges
Carrie Mata, Member-at-Large - Private Institutions
Michael Smith, Member-at-Large - Public Institutions
Jeff Konz, Member
Julie Santiago, Member
Larchin Leslie, Member

**A very special thank you to members Ginny Moench for program assembly
 and Rhonda Belton for program printing!**

NCAIR 2026 ~ RESILIENCE THROUGH INSIGHT
Sunday, March 22, 2026

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM PRE-FUNCTION CORRIDOR

PRECONFERENCE WORKSHOP

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH DATA INSIGHTS:
A HANDS ON WORKSHOP USING INFORMER 5

8:30 AM - 12:00 PM
Salon C: 1

Lindsey Tedder & Laura Boyles
Central Carolina Community College

This hands-on workshop will lead participants through the use of Informer 5 to turn data into actionable insights which reveal key patterns and strengthen institutional resilience. The session begins with an introduction and guided tour of Informer 5, followed by creating a basic dashboard using provided IPEDS data from multiple community colleges. Participants then build more advanced dashboards with their own IPEDS data to compare and analyze trends. The workshop concludes with a demonstration of integrating Colleague data into an Informer 5 dashboard. Attendees will gain practical experience building data sets, designing visualizations, and developing dashboards to support their institution.

PRECONFERENCE WORKSHOP

UNC SYSTEM WORKSHOP
AND WORKING SESSION

1:00 PM - 4:30 PM
Salon C: 2

UNC System Office

All users of the UNC System Data Mart are encouraged to attend this user group meeting hosted by the System Office. Share practices, hear updates, and build skills in this workshop and working session. Current and future plans for the UNC data marts: student data (SDM), human resource (HRDM) and finance data (FDM) will be discussed, along with the Insight analytics platform. Meet members of the System Office UNCDM team and ask your questions.

WELCOME RECEPTION AND COMPLEMENTARY HORS D'OEUVRES
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM TOP OF THE PLAZA
FEATURING MUSIC BY JUCA CAMERA, UNC ASHEVILLE

2026 CONFERENCE SPONSORS



Monday, March 23, 2026

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

7:00 AM - 10:00 AM PRE-FUNCTION CORRIDOR

BREAKFAST

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM GRAND BALLROOM

WELCOME
KEYNOTE PANEL:
RESILIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

8:00 AM - 9:30 AM
Grand Ballroom
Dr. Kimberly van Noort
Dr. Paul J. Maurer
Dr. Shelley White



Dr. Kimberly van Noort, Chancellor of UNC Asheville

Dr. Kimberly van Noort is UNC Asheville's Chancellor, bringing over three decades of higher education experience to the role. She previously served as Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer for the University of North Carolina System, which she joined in 2016. Prior to joining the UNC System, she was at the University of Texas at Arlington where she served in various roles including Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, Director of University College, Associate Dean of Liberal Arts, and tenured faculty member in the Department of Modern Languages. Dr. van Noort received her bachelor's and master's degrees in French from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and earned a Ph.D. in French at Boston University.



Dr. Paul J. Maurer, President & CEO of Montreat College

Dr. Paul J. Maurer is the President & CEO of Montreat College with more than 30 years of leadership experience in nonprofit and higher education administration. Dr. Maurer's tenure at Montreat College has been marked by multiple years of record enrollment, a host of new academic programs, and dozens of physical campus upgrades. A published author and frequent speaker, Dr. Maurer co-wrote *The Code of Honor: Embracing Ethics in Cybersecurity* at the request of the National Security Agency (NSA). He earned his Ph.D. in political science from Claremont Graduate University, where he was an H. B. Earhart Fellow and a John M. Olin Fellow. He earned his B.A. from the University of Cincinnati and his Master of Divinity from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.



Dr. Shelley White, President at Haywood Community College

Dr. White joined Haywood Community College on January 1, 2020, as its seventh President. Dr. White, a 20-year resident of Haywood County, served as Vice President of Economic and Workforce Development at A-B Tech in Asheville for five years prior to joining HCC and was with the College for a total of 18 years. A graduate of Isothermal Community College, Dr. White received her Doctorate in Education with a concentration in Community College Leadership from Western Carolina University. She served as state-level President of the North Carolina Community College Adult Educators Association, an organization supporting the work of all workforce programs through professional development, networking, and advocacy. Dr. White is a member of Waynesville Rotary and serves on the boards of several community and regional organizations, including Haywood Regional Medical Center, the Economic Development Coalition of Haywood County, the Forest Restoration Alliance (FRA), Big Brothers Big Sisters of Western North Carolina and WNC Communities. She was named the 2025 President of the Year for the NC Community College System.

Monday, March 23, 2026

**SCALING MOUNT COMPLIANCE:
AN AI-POWERED GUIDE TO SUPPORT A SUCCESSFUL
ACCREDITATION CLIMB**

9:45 AM - 10:35 AM
Salon C: 1

Tim Metz
Western Carolina University

This presentation will cover WCU's development of an expert SACSCOC AI reviewer for the purpose of reviewing the quality of compliance reports being prepared for the reaffirmation of institutional accreditation. The reviewer was built in NotebookLM, and produces detailed and comprehensive feedback reports for each principle narrative, including determinations of compliance and non-compliance, and suggestions for report improvement. The same framework has been employed to build an AI reviewer to provide formative feedback on annual outcomes assessment reports.

**DATA-INFORMED ADVOCACY FOR COLLEGES:
TRANSFORMING NUMBERS INTO NARRATIVES**

9:45 AM - 10:35 AM
Salon C: 2

Carolyn Mata
North Carolina Independent Colleges
and Universities

In an era of increasing scrutiny and budget challenges, colleges must leverage comprehensive data to tell their story effectively. This session will explore the rich landscape of higher education data sources that can transform how we communicate the value, impact, and critical role of independent institutions to legislators, policymakers, and community stakeholders. Participants will discover how strategic data use, collection and presentation can illuminate the unique contributions of independent higher education to state economies, student success, and social mobility.

**IMPACT OF REGISTRATION TIMING
ON STUDENT SUCCESS**

9:45 AM - 10:35 AM
WB: Salon A

Laura Boyles
Central Carolina Community College

At Central Carolina CC, anecdotal information indicated that First-Time students who wait to register until close to the start of classes tend to be less successful. The VP for Onboarding and Advising submitted a data request to determine if evidence supported this conjecture. The IR Analyst used Chi-Squared Tests of Independence/Association to determine if success differed based on registration timing for three measures of success (Course Completion, Term GPA, and next term Retention). Additional tests between these and essential demographic variables were conducted. The results, summary of the key findings, and initiatives identified from the study will be shared during the session.

Monday, March 23, 2026

**JOINT CONSIDERATION OF ADMISSIONS YIELD,
HIGHER ED COMPETITORS, AND NON-CONSUMERISM**

9:45 AM - 10:35 AM
WB: Salon B

Jenna Tucker
University of North Carolina
Greensboro

Higher ed data analysts often study their institution's enrollment yield on admitted applicants, searching for insight into where recruitment efforts are succeeding or lacking. Yield analyses can be augmented with National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data to learn which colleges were chosen by admits who did not enroll at our home institution. The third and final piece of the pie are "non-consumers," admitted applicants who ultimately do not enroll in higher education at all. The group of non-consumers has grown as it has become increasingly common for recent high school graduates not to enroll in higher education, a pattern we have observed first-hand at UNC Greensboro.

This presentation will demonstrate how we combined internal data with NSC search results to jointly consider yield, losses to "competitor" schools, and non-consumerism rates among our admitted applicants. We will share some of the difficulties involved in using NSC data to identify non-consumers. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of the merits and challenges of considering these outcomes side by side.

**SNACK BREAK & POSTER PRESENTATION (NC A&T)
10:35 AM - 11:10 AM PRE-FUNCTION CORRIDOR**

**ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MODELING AND
CONTROL FOR TRUSTWORTHY ROBOT SYSTEMS
COURSE ON GRADUATE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND
CAREER DEVELOPMENT AT NC A&T UNIVERSITY**

10:35 AM - 11:10 AM
Pre-Function Corridor

Remi Ajani & Tae-Hee Kim
University of North Carolina A&T

This study was conducted as an evaluation as part of the Tri-State Consortium for Resilient Automation and Cybersecurity System, a project that is funded by the Department of Energy (DOE). The primary objective of this program is to develop competent and knowledgeable individuals working in the cybersecurity and automation field. This was done by collaborating among three HBCU universities while increasing awareness of the value and significance of nuclear facilities and workforce development in the field. The program evaluation process assessed the effectiveness and educational impact of a newly developed graduate course, Modeling and Control for Trustworthy Robot Systems, in the Department of Mechanical Engineering using both quantitative and qualitative data as a formative evaluation. Although no statistically significant differences were observed between pre- and post-test measures of students' intrinsic motivation ($t(7) = -.554, p = .59$) and career perspectives ($t(7) = .353, p = .73$) in the course, qualitative interview data indicated a positive impact of the course. In particular, students highly appreciated hands-on learning experiences, including visits to the National Lab, and suggested post course activities.

Monday, March 23, 2026

EXPLORING AI ADOPTION IN ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION: A SURVEY OF HIGHER EDUCATION PRACTICES AND PERSPECTIVES

11:10 AM - 12:00 PM
Salon C: 1

Leslie Larchin, Tia Marie Doxey, &
Becky Mussat-Whitlow
North Carolina Central University

The growing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education holds great potential to improve efficiency, accuracy, and accountability in assessment, accreditation, and academic program review. However, research on how widely AI is adopted in these areas is still limited. This study aims to assess whether, and to what degree, AI is being used in assessment, accreditation, and program review at higher education institutions.

Data will be gathered through a structured survey distributed to faculty, administrators, and institutional research professionals in the southern region. The survey measures the level of AI use, institutional readiness, perceived benefits, and barriers to implementation. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses will be performed to explore adoption patterns and examine relationships among professional roles, institutional features, and attitudes toward AI integration. The results will offer evidence-based insights into current AI practices and help develop strategies for enhancing quality assurance and ongoing improvement efforts across higher education institutions.

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF CENSUS PSEO: SHOWCASING GRADUATE OUTCOMES FOR NORTH CAROLINA COLLEGES

11:10 AM - 12:00 PM
Salon C: 2

Carolyn Mata
North Carolina Independent Colleges
and Universities

How can colleges demonstrate the real-world outcomes of their graduates without waiting years for state wage data or national surveys? The U.S. Census Bureau's Postsecondary Employment Outcomes (PSEO) initiative offers a secure, no-cost way for institutions to link degree completions to national wage and employment records. This session introduces how North Carolina colleges can leverage Census PSEO to showcase alumni success, strengthen workforce partnerships, and support accountability and accreditation efforts. Participants will learn how to help their institutions turn federal data into actionable insights for their campuses.



Monday, March 23, 2026

**SURVEY INSIGHTS ABOUT STUDENTS' FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION AND RESPONSIBILITY**

11:10 AM - 12:00 PM
WB: Salon A

Thomas Kirnbauer & Brent Maher
Davidson College

This speaker session will describe Davidson College's recent effort to understand students' views on freedom of expression and personal and social responsibility. In light of the increasing political tensions across higher education, Davidson College convened a cross-campus working group composed of representatives from institutional effectiveness, student life, diversity and inclusion, and faculty to develop a student survey assessing the campus climate. Conducted in Spring 2025 with a 20% response rate, the campus-wide student survey contained newly developed items related to Freedom of Expression as well as previously established items from the discontinued Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI) survey. Findings revealed meaningful differences between students that are relevant for other institutions. During the session, we will share an overview of the survey administration, key results, and how we have leveraged these results to inform campus-wide conversations.

**MAXIMIZING THE POWER OF NSC
FOR INSTITUTIONAL INSIGHTS**

11:10 AM - 12:00 PM
WB: Salon B

Kailee Turner & Carl Cortright
Western Carolina University

When a student leaves your school, you're going to ask questions. Are they enrolling elsewhere, and if so, at what kind of institutions? When undergraduates leave, are they going on to grad school (at your institution or somewhere else)? When students are admitted but don't enroll, are they enrolling at other kinds of institutions, or forgoing college altogether? Are you competing for undergraduate admissions with institutions like yours or community colleges or flagships? The CATalytics team at Western Carolina University will share, from data prep to dashboards, how they're helping campus leaders understand subsequent enrollment and enrolled elsewhere patterns using National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) data.

COMPLIMENTARY LUNCH AND BUSINESS MEETING (OPEN TO ALL)

12:00 PM - 1:50 PM GRAND BALLROOM



The SAIR Conference will be held from October 24 - October 27, 2026 in Little Rock, Arkansas. The theme this year is *Tricks and Treats for Improving Institutional Efficiency*.



Monday, March 23, 2026

**WHAT 50+ INTERVIEWS REVEAL: BEST PRACTICES FOR
DATA REQUESTS AND HOW AI AGENTS ACCELERATE
INSTITUTIONAL DECISION MAKING**

2:00 PM - 2:50 PM
Salon C: 1

Block Survey
Sponsor Presentation

Data requests arrive through emails, phone calls, meetings, and conversations—each triggering clarification cycles that consume IR capacity and delay institutional decisions. What separates institutions that struggle from those that thrive? Based on 50+ interviews with IR/IE professionals across 19 U.S. states, this session maps the data request lifecycle and identifies where breakdowns occur. Our research found that 91.2% of institutions face request management challenges, with vague requests (73.5%), data fragmentation (82.4%), and dashboard underutilization (50%) as persistent barriers, regardless of team size. We introduce the IR Request Management Maturity Model, a three-level framework moving from reactive chaos to intelligent efficiency. Attendees will learn how AI agents transform the process: serving as the first point of contact to clarify requests, surface existing reports, ensure only complete requests reach IR, and preserve institutional memory that survives staff turnover.

**BEYOND THE CLIFF: DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS,
MIGRATION TRENDS, AND THE NEW REALITY FOR
NORTH CAROLINA COLLEGES**

2:00 PM - 2:50 PM
Salon C: 2

Carolyn Mata
North Carolina Independent Colleges
and Universities

The long-anticipated “enrollment cliff” is no longer a distant forecast—it’s here, shaped by demographic shifts, migration patterns, and changing student behavior. This session examines how these trends are reshaping enrollment realities for North Carolina's colleges and universities. Drawing on data from WICHE’s Knocking at the College Door, IPEDS migration tables, and state workforce and education reports, this session will connect national and regional forecasts to NC's unique context—rapid population growth, interstate student migration, and sector competition from expanding public universities. Participants will discuss strategic responses—from diversifying pipelines and improving retention to reframing institutional value and ROI narratives—to ensure colleges remain essential contributors to Texas’s talent and economic future.



In Person Conference
September 29 - October 2, 2026
Denver, Colorado

Online Conference
October 14 - October 15, 2026

Monday, March 23, 2026

**EMPOWERING DECISION MAKING:
NCCCS DASHBOARDS AND REPORTS
SUPPORTING PROPEL NC**

2:00 PM - 2:50 PM

WB: Salon A

Elizabeth Stoddard & Bill Schneider
North Carolina
Community College System

The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) is advancing its commitment to workforce alignment through the Propel NC initiative, a strategic effort to better connect community college programs with evolving labor market demands across the state. As part of this initiative, the System Effectiveness (SE) team has developed a suite of analytical tools designed to support data-informed decision-making among educators, policymakers, and community stakeholders. In this session, SE team members will introduce key resources that illuminate labor market outcomes for community college students. Highlights include: 1. Regional Labor Market Analysis Reports offering localized insights into employment trends and opportunities. 2. New public-facing dashboards that track wage outcomes for community college exiters. 3. Enhanced internal dashboards that provide deeper, more actionable data for institutional planning.

**“HOW WILL YOU USE THAT?”
THE LIFE CYCLE OF A DATA REQUEST**

2:00 PM - 2:50 PM

WB: Salon B

Jackie Ross
North Carolina State University

Sometimes a data request comes into an IR/IE office and you may think “how are you going to use that?” or even “I don’t think that question means what you think it means.” The disconnect between the requester and the IR/IE office is often the first barrier in the data request life cycle. Asking the right questions and working with the requester before pulling a single data point can be more productive than simply filling the request as quickly as possible. The goal of this presentation is to walk through the life cycle of a data request and how questions asked at the beginning of a request can improve the likelihood of that data being utilized. This can lead to increased trust built between internal stakeholders and an IR/IE office, stronger data literacy among stakeholders, and a more data-focused campus culture. By utilizing examples from both two year and four year institutions, the presentation will be applicable to a wider audience. For the two year example, we will track the life cycle of a data/survey request submitted by the automotive technologies program asking if they should add a hybrid car to the mechanics curriculum. For the four year example, we will track a data request from the civil engineering program to create benchmarks for success rates of five key courses first year students take and the rate of how often students repeat those courses for a passing grade.

Monday, March 23, 2026

SNACK BREAK

2:50 PM - 3:10 PM PRE-FUNCTION CORRIDOR

AMAZON WEB SERVICE:
QUICKSUITE FOR INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

3:10 PM - 4:00 PM
Salon C: 1

Mitch Mello
Amazon
Sponsor Presentation

Join us for a live demonstration of Amazon QuickSuite and see how institutions are replacing hours of manual reporting with AI-powered insights in seconds. You'll witness real-time data analysis through natural language queries, automated reporting, and custom AI agents that understand your institutional context—all while maintaining complete data security. In this session, you'll learn how IR offices can shift from data providers to strategic partners driving institutional transformation. Whether you're drowning in ad-hoc requests or looking to modernize your analytics infrastructure, this demo will show you practical solutions you can implement immediately.

INTEGRATED COURSE LOAD MATRIX (ICLM)
MODELING AND USE CASES

3:10 PM - 4:00 PM
Salon C: 2

Rick Sears, Michael Smith, & Aleeta James
Appalachian State University &

Institutions increasingly face misalignment between student demand and instructional capacity, particularly as enrollment patterns shift and resources remain constrained. Induced course load matrix (ICLM) modeling offers a structured approach for linking student course-taking behavior to instructional demand, enabling more transparent and data-informed academic planning. This session presents co-facilitated case studies of ICLM modeling at two universities: one with a long-standing model and another that adopted the approach through cross-institutional mentorship. Presenters will outline the conceptual framework of induced course load modeling, demonstrate how the model surfaces instructional bottlenecks and capacity risks, and discuss how outputs are used to support course scheduling, staffing, and enrollment planning decisions. Attendees will gain practical insights into implementation strategies, data and governance considerations, and the value of peer mentorship in accelerating adoption and institutional buy-in. The session is designed for institutional research and planning professionals seeking applied methods to better align instructional supply with student demand.

ANALYTICS DAY IS COMING IN JUNE 11, 2026!
SCAN THE QR CODE TO SIGN UP FOR EMAIL ALERTS



Monday, March 23, 2026

**EMERGENCY AID AS A DEBT REDUCER?
ANALYSIS OF HEERF AND FEDERAL DEBT**

3:10 PM - 4:00 PM
WB: Salon A

Mark Umbricht
UNC System Office

The COVID-19 Pandemic disrupted students and institutions across the country. In an effort to support and provide emergency funding to higher education, the federal government passed the CARES Act in March 2020. This law included the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), which allowed institutions to spend funding on a variety of needs including student support. Many institutions in the UNC System received these funds and used at least part of the funding to support students financially. As the funding has ended and the UNC System tracks debt at graduation for all students, there is some fear that the debt metric will rise over time. This study examines data at several UNC institutions that dispersed HEERF through financial aid to determine whether the amount of HEERF funds received decreased federal loan debt. This is done by exploiting the variation within students said before, during, and after HEERF dollars were available. Early findings suggest that HEERF did not impact federal debt at graduation and would not have a significant impact on the debt at graduation metric.

**STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING
AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

3:10 PM - 4:00 PM
WB: Salon B

Elizabeth Davis & Kelly Smith
UNC School of the Arts &
AEWAS Consulting

Structural equation modeling (SEM) can be a powerful tool for working with educational data because SEM combines the power of regression and factor analysis. Regression explores relationships within data but is limited to observable variables. Factor analysis identifies underlying, or latent, structure of a dataset, effectively reducing data to a smaller number of factors. This session's introduction to SEM includes examples of its use in higher education and resources for working in Python, R, SAS, and SPSS.

**BREAKING THE MOLD: MODERNIZING COURSE AND
INSTITUTIONAL SURVEY PROCESSES FOR REAL
INSTITUTIONAL RESULTS**

4:10 PM - 5:00 PM
Salon C: 1

Kyle Chapman & Erin O'Connor
East Carolina University & Explorance

In the evolving landscape of higher education, actionable feedback and efficient analytics are essential to driving organizational excellence and student success. This session offers an inside look at how East Carolina University (ECU) transformed its course evaluation process by adopting Explorance Blue, a platform purpose-built for higher ed feedback analytics. Attendees will discover how integrating Explorance Blue with existing systems like Canvas and leveraging advanced features such as automated data synchronization elevated ECU's ability to collect, report, and act on student and faculty insights. The presentation also explores the redesign of key survey projects—including dean and chair annual evaluations—showcasing how centralized survey administration can streamline processes while supporting strategic improvement. Join us to learn practical strategies for maximizing data quality, fostering engagement, and connecting feedback initiatives directly to institutional outcomes.

Monday, March 23, 2026

**DEVELOPING A PROGRAM MARGIN REPORT:
ASSESSING COSTS AND REVENUES
OF DEGREE PROGRAMS**

4:10 PM - 5:00 PM
Salon C: 2

Jeff Konz
University of North Carolina Asheville

In the face of budget difficulties, UNC Asheville hired a consultant in Spring 2024 to undertake an Academic Program Margin analysis to identify programs that warranted a deeper review. This analysis included comparison of the revenues generated by student enrollment with the costs associated with the delivery of those courses and was one of the sources of information used in an ensuing academic portfolio review which resulted in discontinuation or curtailment of five programs. However, the consultant's analysis was constrained by data limitations which affected the perceived legitimacy of the results. In response, after academic portfolio review was completed, I developed an in-house report that accounted for many of those data limitations and organized the information differently. This presentation will discuss the development of the report, how data refinements affected the findings, our intended use of the findings, and lessons learned in the development, interpretation, and presentation of the report to both senior leadership and the faculty.

**OUT-OF-STATE ENROLLMENT CAPS AND STUDENT
OUTCOMES IN THE UNC SYSTEM**

4:10 PM - 5:00 PM
WB: Salon A

Prasiddha Shakya
UNC System Office

The University of North Carolina (UNC) System has traditionally capped the out-of-state enrollments to 18% of total enrollment. In recent years they have relaxed those caps at targeted institutions, which raises questions about the impact of this policy change. This study examines the effects of increases in out-of-state enrollment caps at select UNC institutions on admissions, student composition, academic outcomes, financial aid, and post-graduation pathways. Using longitudinal administrative data and a difference-in-differences framework that exploits variation in cap changes across campuses and cohorts, we analyze outcomes for both resident and non-resident students. We find no meaningful changes in resident application, admission, or enrollment patterns following cap increases, nor evidence of shifts in incoming students' academic characteristics, including high school GPA, standardized test scores, or class rank. First-year performance measures—GPA, credits earned, and fall-to-fall retention—also remain stable. In addition, increased non-resident caps do not seem to be significantly affecting institutional aid awarded to resident students contrary to findings from other states.

Monday, March 23, 2026

**A SINGLE DASHBOARD –
A MILLION QUESTIONS ANSWERED
(MORE DASHBOARDS ISN'T ALWAYS THE ANSWER)**

4:10 PM - 5:00 PM
WB: Salon B

Alison Joseph
Western Carolina University

Campus stakeholders have so many basic questions about academic data. They are asking these questions for a huge range of activities – from evaluating performance, to allocating resources, engaging in program review, and responding to grant applications. But trying to train program directors and department heads on a whole suite of dashboards can be tricky and burdensome for everyone involved. To solve this issue, the CATalytics team at Western Carolina University built a comprehensive Academic Operations dashboard, using only one data source, which answers questions related to program enrollment, student demographics, credit hour production, course offerings, grades, degree conferrals, and faculty workload. With this powerful tool, we were able to retire 9 existing dashboards – making life easier for those seeking and those producing data. The session will offer a tour of the dashboard with a focus on how it was built to maximize utility and minimize end-user confusion.

NOTES



Tuesday, March 24, 2026

BREAKFAST

8:00 AM - 8:50 AM GRAND BALLROOM

PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS FOR GRADUATE RETENTION:
MACHINE LEARNING AND STRATEGIC MODELING IN
HIGHER EDUCATION

9:00 AM - 9:50 AM
Salon C: 1

Vindhya Hedge
North Carolina State University

This study leverages a decade of institutional data to analyze and forecast graduate student retention trends through an integrated approach combining exploratory data analysis, statistical modeling, and machine learning. This work examines historical patterns of persistence, withdrawal, and completion across graduate programs to determine the most influential drivers of student outcomes at both the college and degree levels. Clustering techniques further classify programs with comparable retention dynamics, highlighting differences in completion efficiency and risk profiles. Scenario-based simulations assess the impact of targeted changes in withdrawals or completion rates on overall retention performance to facilitate decision-making. The resulting insights provide university leaders with a forward-looking framework for proactive enrollment management, strategic planning, and continuous improvement of graduate education outcomes.

THE QUICKER THE BETTER?
TIMING OF ADMISSIONS DECISIONS
AND ENROLLMENT

9:00 AM - 9:50 AM
Salon C: 2

Mark Umbricht
UNC System Office

Higher education institutions across the United States are facing increased competition for students due to the Demographic Cliff, forcing many public institutions to seek additional applicants from out of state to counteract declining high school completions. With this increased pressure, many institutions and state systems are trying to find ways to increase the likelihood of students enrolling at their institutions. Over the past year in public meetings, the UNC System Board of Governors has questioned whether UNC institutions take too long to provide admissions decisions for applicants, arguing faster decisions from other universities will lead our local applicants to attend elsewhere. Using data from 13 UNC institutions, this study examines this whether timing of admissions decision is related to enrollment at that institution. Findings suggest that faster admissions decisions are not strongly related to student enrollment. This trend holds for early action, regular decision, and rolling decision admissions models and timing did predict shifts across sector (public, private, out-of-state). We found admission to a more selective institution was negatively correlated with enrollment.

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

**TEN-YEAR RETENTION DASHBOARD: TRACKING
STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGH DATA**

9:00 AM - 9:50 AM
WB: Salon A

Raj Bhosale
North Carolina State University

Graduate student success is a cornerstone of a university’s academic mission, and retention plays a crucial role in sustaining that success. To better understand and improve the graduate education journey, we developed a comprehensive 10-Year Retention Dashboard that enables stakeholders to select specific student cohorts and visually track their progression over time; from initial enrollment to program milestones and final outcomes. By consolidating data across multiple sources, the dashboard reveals year-over-year trends, highlights patterns in student persistence, and provides clarity into when and why attrition may occur. Decision-makers can filter by department, demographic attributes, and entry year to pinpoint opportunities for intervention and align support mechanisms with student needs.

This presentation will showcase the methodology behind the dashboard’s development, demonstrate its core capabilities, and discuss how data-driven retention strategies can strengthen graduate programs, enhance student experience, and support universities in achieving long-term educational goals.

**PROPENSITY SCORE MATCHING
AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

9:00 AM - 9:50 AM
WB: Salon B

Kelly Smith
AEWAS Consulting
Speaker Presentation

The gold standard of research is a true experimental study. However, higher education is generally not conducive to experimental research due to ethical considerations and the difficulty in controlling extraneous variables. Pseudo-experimental methods such as propensity score matching (PSM) offer an opportunity to approximate the gold standard through the assignment of research subjects based on demographic and/or other factors. With PSM, the researcher can create two groups of similar subjects where the primary difference between the groups is the “experimental treatment.” This session’s introduction to PSM includes examples of its use in higher education and resources for working in Python, R, SAS, and SPSS.



**April 19 - 21, 2026
Newport, Rhode Island**



Tuesday, March 24, 2026

**WORK IN PROGRESS: IMPLEMENTING EARLY
MOMENTUM METRICS TO IMPROVE RETENTION IN
ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAMS**

10:00 AM - 10:50 AM
Salon C: 1

Anne Oxenreider & Gretchen Dietz
Western Carolina University

This work-in-progress project explores the application of the Early Momentum Metrics (EMM) Framework to improve student retention in the College of Engineering and Technology (CET) at a predominately undergraduate institution. EMM indicators, such as gateway course completion, credit accumulation, and term-to-term persistence, have proven predictive of long-term student success, particularly in STEM disciplines. Drawing on institutional data from Fall 2021–2023 cohorts, the CET observed a 61.9% third-term retention rate, below the university-wide average of 75.5%. Analysis revealed that completion of MATH 153 (Precalculus) and enrollment in 15+ credits during the first term were critical predictors of persistence, especially for Engineering Technology (ET) and Electrical and Computer Engineering Technology (ECET) majors. Building on these insights, the CET proposes a pilot retention initiative for Fall 2025 that integrates targeted advising, early academic interventions, and program belonging strategies. The initiative includes proactive outreach to students with unsatisfactory early grades or those not enrolled in MATH 153, peer-led engagement events, and structured advising to promote momentum milestones. This paper outlines the logic model guiding the intervention and shares preliminary design elements. Future phases will assess the impact of these strategies on retention and degree efficiency, contributing to broader efforts to operationalize EMM in engineering education.

**EXPLORING IPEDS: A GUIDED TOUR OF THE
“USE THE DATA” TOOLS**

10:00 AM - 10:50 AM
Salon C: 2

Carolyn Mata
North Carolina Independent
Colleges and Universities

The IPEDS “Use the Data” page offers a powerful suite of free public tools for exploring, analyzing, and downloading higher education data—but many institutional researchers only scratch the surface of what’s available. This session provides a live demonstration of the most useful IPEDS data tools, including Compare Institutions, Summary Tables, Data Trends, and Custom Data Files. Participants will learn how to select the right tool for their task—whether benchmarking peer institutions, exploring faculty salary trends, or creating visual tables for reports. The session also previews features for saving sessions, uploading variable lists, and accessing data efficiently.



April 26 - April 29, 2026 in Austin, Texas

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

**FROM SPREADSHEETS TO SCRIPTS:
MODERNIZING IR/IE WORKFLOWS WITH R**

10:00 AM - 10:50 AM
WB: Salon A

Logan King
Haywood Community College

Excel remains the dominant tool for many institutional research and effectiveness tasks, but manual workflows introduce copy-paste errors, version control issues, data size limitations, and tedious processes that consume valuable time. This session will demonstrate how R and IDE's like RStudio and Positron can transform common IR/IE processes into reproducible, efficient, and scalable workflows. Through practical examples, participants will see how common IR/IE tasks done in Excel can be seamlessly transformed into an R script or Quarto report. Attendees will learn to identify which of their own workflows could be migrated based on factors like repetition frequency, data volume, and error risk. This session provides an honest assessment of both advantages and challenges in transitioning to R, including learning curves, implementation time, and organizational considerations. No programming experience is required! Participants will leave with resources and actionable first steps to begin their Excel-to-R transition.

**DIAGNOSING AND DEALING WITH STRESS
THE IR/IE WAY**

10:00 AM - 10:50 AM
WB: Salon B

Kelly Smith
AEWAS Consulting
Speaker Presentation

It's an understatement to say higher education professionals are experiencing more stress than ever. But just how much stress are we dealing with? And once we know, what can we do to alleviate or at least better cope with the stress? Explore both parts in this session. After starting with four quick instruments to identify and measure stress levels in yourself and your office, we'll look at research-based options for dealing with work stress. Whatever your role, this session is for you.

SNACK BREAK
10:50 AM - 11:10 AM PRE-FUNCTION CORRIDOR

11:10 AM - 12:00 PM

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

SALON C: 1

SALON C: 2

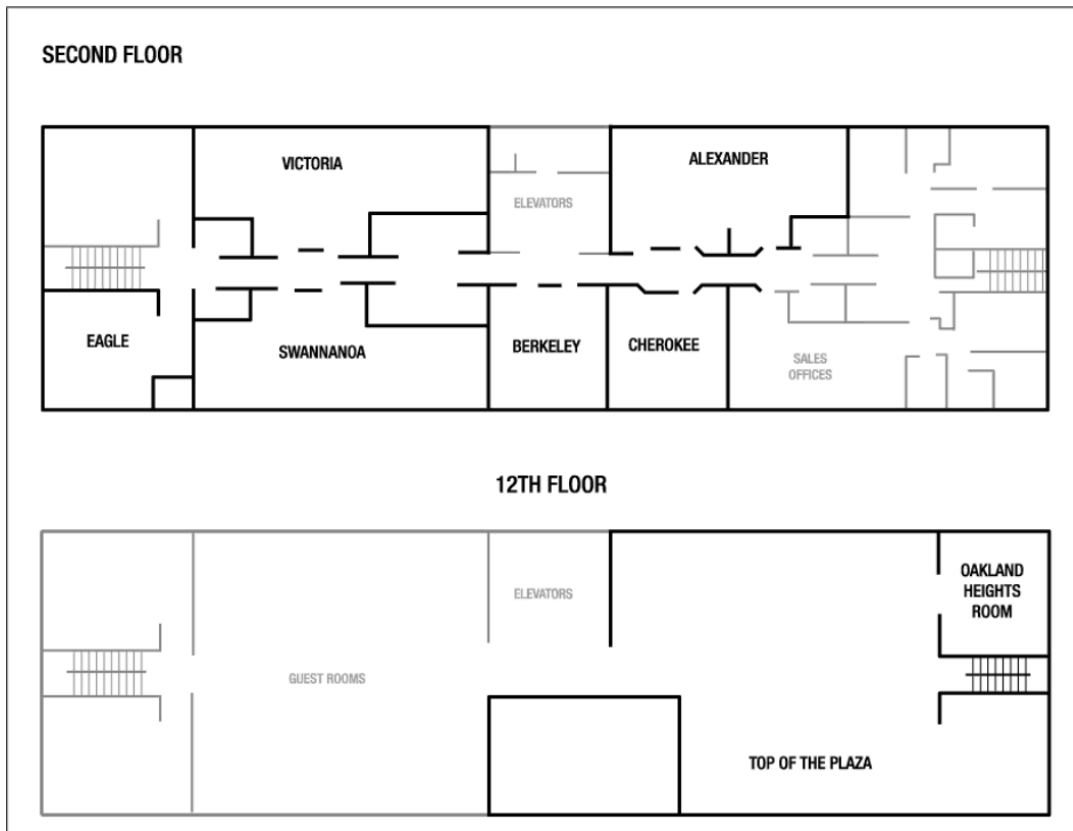
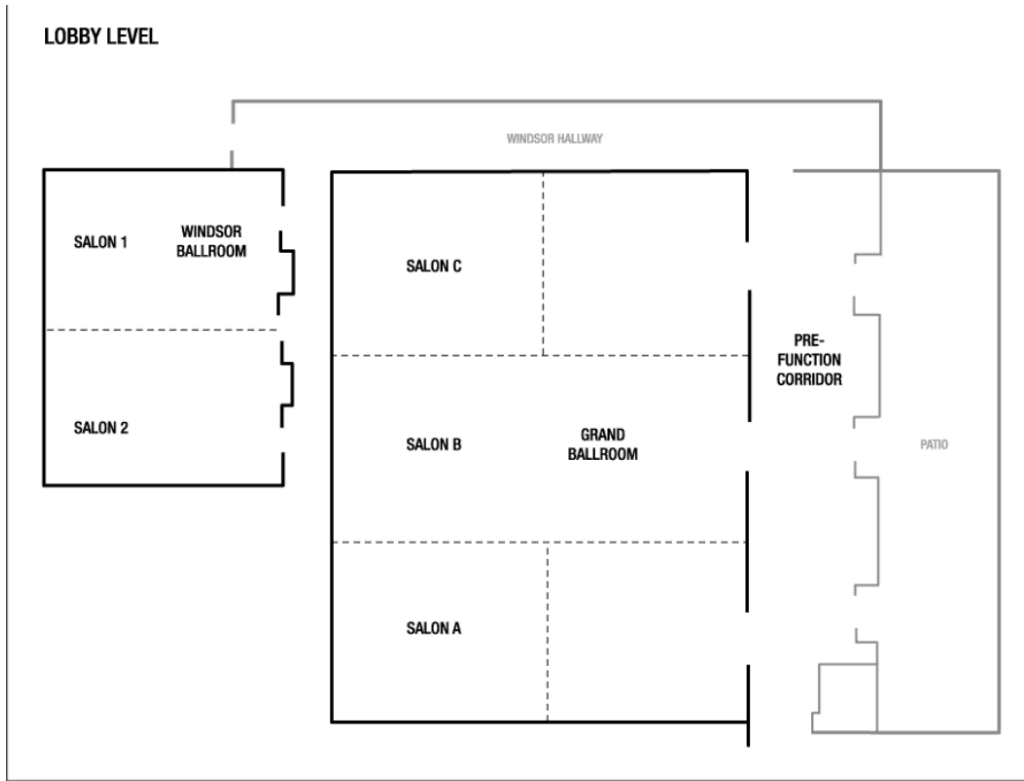
WB: SALON A

UNC SYSTEM

NC COMMUNITY COLLEGE
SYSTEM

NORTH CAROLINA
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES
AND UNIVERSITIES

Venue Maps



Service Project - MANNA FoodBank

During this year’s annual conference, we will participate in a service project benefiting the local community by supporting MANNA FoodBank! MANNA serves the sixteen counties of Western North Carolina by working to provide meals to those facing food insecurity across our region, especially neighbors in our mountain communities still recovering and rebuilding after Hurricane Helene. MANNA FoodBank’s primary facility was devastated during Hurricane Helene, but their service to the region was uninterrupted. Rather than collecting food, their primary need is for financial support. Please join us in supporting the work of MANNA FoodBank at our upcoming conference!

Let’s Fill the Shelves Together!

**SUPPORT MANNA
FOOD BANK TODAY**



**MANNA FoodBank is the recipient of NCAIR’s
2026 service project!**

MANNA serves the sixteen counties of Western North Carolina by working to provide meals to those facing food insecurity across our region, especially neighbors in our mountain communities still recovering after Hurricane Helene.



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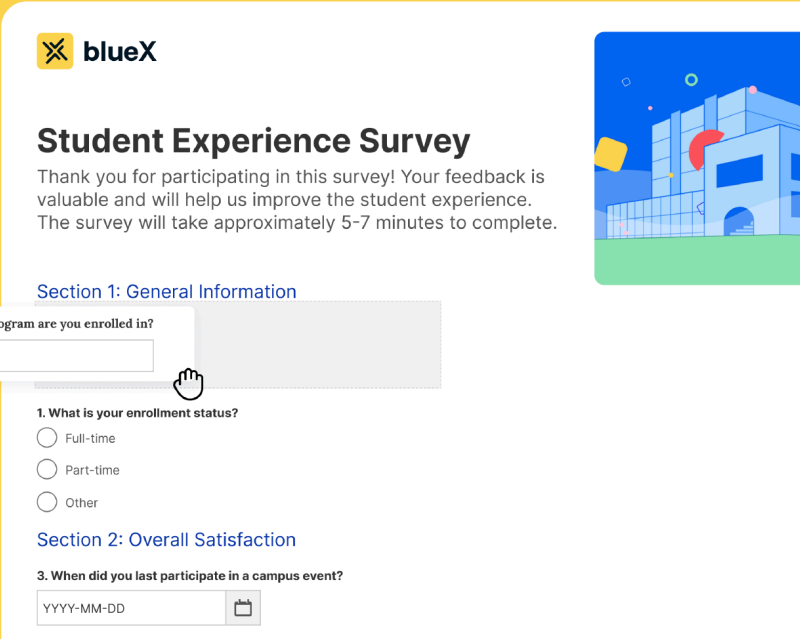
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NCAIR 2026 ~ RESILIENCE THROUGH INSIGHT

NCAIR Past Conferences

Charter: Chapel Hill: UNC General Administration January 24, 1973	20. Atlantic Beach: Sheraton March 24-26, 1993	39. Winston-Salem: Graylyn International Conference Center March 12-14, 2012
1. Charlotte: Downtowner East October 31 – November 1, 1973	21. Asheville: Grove Park Inn March 21-23, 1994	40. NCAIR/SCAIR Joint Conference Charleston, SC: Francis Marion Hotel March 3-5, 2013
2. Winston-Salem: Hyatt House November 6-7, 1974	22. Charlotte: Marriot Executive Park March 6-8, 1995	41. Concord: Embassy Suites Hotel March 24-26, 2014
3. Boone: ASU Center for Continuing Education November 5-6, 1975	23. Nags Head: Ramada Inn March 20-22, 1996	42. Asheville: Double Tree Hotel by Hilton April 13-15, 2015
4. Greensboro: Holiday Inn Four-Seasons November 3-4, 1976	24. Clemmons: Ramada Limited March 25-27, 1997	43. Wilmington: Hilton Wilmington Riverside March 14-16, 2016
5. Asheville: Great Smokies Hilton November 2-3, 1977	25. New Bern: Sheraton Grand March 23-35, 1998	44. Durham: 21C Museum Hotel March 13-15, 2017
6. Charlotte: Sheraton November 1-2, 1978	26. Myrtle Beach, SC: Wyndham Oceanfront Golf February 22-24, 1999	45. Cherokee: Harrah's Casino April 15 - 18, 2018
7. Raleigh: Royal Villa October 31 – November 1, 1979	27. Asheville: Great Smokies Holiday Inn Sun Spree Resort March 20-22, 2000	46. Wrightsville Beach: Blockade Runner Hotel March 24-27, 2019
8. Wrightsville Beach: Holiday Inn November 12-14, 1980	28. Atlantic Beach: Sheraton Ocean Front Hotel April 13-14, 2001	47. Virtual Summer Zoom-In July 21, 2020
9. Charlotte: Quality Inn Downtown October 28-30, 1981	29. Greensboro: Four Season Sheraton March 18-20, 2002	48. NCAIR/SCAIR Virtual Joint Conference February 26, 2021
10. Raleigh: Plantation Inn November 10-12, 1982	30. Elon: Elon University March 26-27, 2003	49. Virtual Zoom-In April 7, 2022
11. Burlington: Burlington Inn April 4-6, 1984	31. Sunset Beach: Sea Trail Golf Resort and Conference Center February 16-18, 2004	50. Asheville: Renaissance Asheville Hotel April 2–4, 2023
12. Wrightsville Beach: Sheraton May 14-16, 1985	32. Charlotte: Sheraton Airport March 9-11, 2005	51. Winston-Salem: Benton Convention Center April 7–9, 2024
13. Kill Devil Hills: Ramada Inn April 30 – May 2, 1986	33. Boone: Broyhill Inn and Conference Center March 22-24, 2006	52. Wilmington: Embassy Suites Wilmington Riverfront March 9–11, 2025
14. New Bern: Sheraton Hotel and Marina April 22-24, 1987	34. Wilmington: Riverside Hilton March 5-7, 2007	53. Asheville: Renaissance Asheville Hotel March 22–24, 2026
15. Southern Pines: Sheraton Inn March 28-30, 1988	35. Asheville: Renaissance Asheville Hotel April 7-9, 2008	
16. High Point: Radisson April 2-4, 1989	36. Southern Pines: Pine Needles Lodge & Golf Club March 16-18, 2009	
17. Atlantic Beach: Sheraton March 28-30, 1990	37. Kitty Hawk: Hilton Garden Inn March 15-17, 2010	
18. Wilmington: Hilton April 3-5, 1991	38. Boone: Broyhill Inn and Conference Center April 4-6, 2011	