



**NCHER Legislative and Leadership Conference  
February 6-8, 2023  
The Westin Washington, DC City Center**

**Program Agenda**

**Monday, February 6, 2023**

**8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**Registration Open**

**8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

**NCHER Board of Directors Meeting**

The NCHER Board will meet to receive reports from the Chair, Treasurer, and President on the organization’s advocacy, communications, and regulatory strategies. The meeting is open to all members of NCHER.

**12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**Bootcamp on NCHER’s Advocacy Priorities for 2023**

NCHER has developed a comprehensive list of advocacy priorities geared toward improving federal student aid and private loan programs for students and families. During this session, the NCHER staff will hold a bootcamp for its members to discuss the policy and political environment and review NCHER’s Advocacy Priorities for 2023 in advance of Capitol Hill and Agency visits.

**12:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**NCHER Members Hold Capitol Hill and Agency Visits**

NCHER members are reminded to take this time to make appointments with their Congressional delegations, especially members of the House Education and Labor Committee and Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, to talk about their advocacy priorities for 2023. The NCHER staff is available to help members make appointments with House and Senate staff.

**5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.**

**Welcome Reception**

**Tuesday, February 7, 2023**

**7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Registration Open**

**7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.**

**Breakfast**

**8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.**

**Welcome**

The NCHER leadership will welcome members to the conference and briefly discuss the conference program for the day.

**Speaker**

**Christiana Thornton**, Chair

National Council of Higher Education Resources

President and Chief Executive Officer

New Hampshire Higher Education Assistance Foundation Network

**8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.**

**Federal Update Impacting the Higher Education Finance Industry**

It has been two years since the Biden Administration took office. Since then, the White House and U.S. Department of Education have extended the federal payment, interest, and collections pause put in place to assist borrowers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic; announced a new federal student loan forgiveness program using waiver authority under the HEROES Act; announced the creation of a new Income-Driven Repayment Program; enacted borrower friendly changes to the federal student loan program such as revisions to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program and the borrower defense to repayment process; announced that it will allow defaulted borrowers to get a fresh start back into repayment; and issued Dear Colleague Letter GEN 21-03, which requires guaranty agencies to assign those loans that defaulted during the pandemic to the agency. Recently, the U.S. Department of Justice announced new guidance governing how its attorneys will implement the “undue hardship” standard for borrowers in bankruptcy. With the start of the new Congress, divided government is back. Republicans enjoy a small majority in the U.S. House of Representatives while Democrats have a similar slim majority in the U.S. Senate – leading most observers to wonder what higher education policy will get enacted this year. This session will provide an update on federal developments and the outlook as we begin 2023.

**Moderator/Speaker**

**Alex Nock**, Principal

Penn Hill Group

**Speakers**

**Lauren Maddox**, Senior Policy Advisor

Holland & Knight LLP

**Christopher Murray**, Partner

Thompson Coburn LLP

**9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

**Break**

**10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.**

**Higher Education Priorities of the U.S. Department of Education**

From preparing student and parent borrowers for the restart of repayment to enacting new regulations around borrower defense to repayment, gainful employment, and Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program to carrying out new requirements passed by Congress to share taxpayer information to simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, 2023 is sure to be a busy one for the U.S. Department of Education. During this session, Education Deputy Under Secretary Ben Miller will speak about the Department's policies and priorities, including reforms to the federal student loan program.

**Introduction**

**Angela Baier**, Chief Executive Officer  
College Assist/College Invest

**Speaker**

**Ben Miller**, Deputy Under Secretary, Office of the Under Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education

**10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

**Break**

**11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

**Higher Education Priorities in the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress**

House Education and the Workforce Committee Chairwoman Virginia Foxx (R-NC) will discuss her higher education priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress, including ideas to improve federal and private student loan programs and college access and success initiatives.

**Introduction**

**Wendy McAlister**, President  
College Foundation, Inc.

**Speaker**

**The Honorable Virginia Foxx (R-NC)**, Chairwoman  
House Education and the Workforce Committee

**11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**Lunch and Celebration of Shelly Repp's Work with NCHER on Behalf of its Membership**

**1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**

**Enrollment Trends in Postsecondary Education**

Preliminary data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center saw higher education enrollment decline 1.1 percent in the fall of 2022, following a 2.1 percent drop in the preceding fall. These enrollment losses, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, represents a two-year decline of 3.2 percent since the fall of 2020. Both undergraduate and graduate enrollment decreased by 1.1 and 1.0 percent, respectively, while freshmen enrollment declined this fall by 1.5 percent after last year's increase of 2.2 percent. This session will review recent research and reports on postsecondary education enrollment and discuss current and anticipated trends at the public and private institutional level.

### **Introduction**

**Nathan Hench**, Senior Vice President of Strategy and Public Affairs  
Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency

### **Speaker**

**Aaron Pevitz**, Research Analyst  
National Student Clearinghouse

**2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.**

### **Refreshment Break**

**2:15 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.**

### **Viewpoint: Observations from College and University Leaders**

Colleges and universities are on the front-line of working with students and families to ensure that they enroll in and then graduate from postsecondary education. As higher education and the workforce changes, colleges and universities must keep pace. In this session, college and university leaders will discuss what they are seeing on their campuses, including enrollment trends, and innovative approaches to create educational opportunities for a diverse student population to meet current and future workforce needs. The panel will provide perspectives on a range of current topics such as learner access, affordability, accountability, student outcomes, and value measures.

### **Moderator**

**Bryan Ashton**, Chief Strategy and Growth Officer  
Trellis Company

### **Speakers**

**Robert Collins**, Vice President of Financial Aid  
Western Governors University

**Dr. Sue Ellspermann**, President  
Ivy Tech Community College

**Jamie Fasteau**, Vice President, Policy and Advocacy  
Southern New Hampshire University

**3:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

### **Viewpoint: Managing During Uncertainty**

The past year has been a time of unprecedented change and uncertainty for NCHER members. While we may have little to no control over many of the issues being released by the U.S. Department of Education, each of us still has to manage Board expectations and our staff's anxiety, while planning for an unknown future. In particular, as we await a decision on federal student loan forgiveness from the U.S. Supreme Court, additional details on the implementation and impact of Fresh Start, and confirmation on the future funding models and Voluntary Flexible Agreements for guarantors, we must continue to provide quality programs and services to students, borrowers, and families. In this

session, a panel of industry leaders will share how they are managing Board and staff through this period of ongoing uncertainty and change, ensuring their organizations stay true to their mission and business while exploring new opportunities. Audience discussion and participation is encouraged.

**Moderator/Speaker**

**Kathleen Smith**, Senior Vice President, Director of Federal Relations  
Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency

**Speakers**

**Diana Barber**, Executive Vice President  
Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority

**Debra Chromy**, Ed.D, President and Chief Executive Officer  
Trellis Company

**Chad Tate**, President  
ECMC Group

**4:30 p.m.**

**Conference Adjourns**

**Wednesday, February 8, 2023**

**7:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

**Registration Open**

**7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.**

**Breakfast**

**8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.**

**Welcome**

The NCHER leadership will welcome members to the conference and briefly discuss the conference program for the day.

**Speaker**

**James P. Bergeron**, President  
National Council of Higher Education Resources

**8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.**

**Examining State Policy Impacting Higher Education Finance**

Over the last year, numerous states have enacted new laws regulating private education loan programs on top of existing laws that require federal and private student loan servicers to obtain a license and meet competing requirements to protect borrowers. In this session, a panel of experts will discuss state consumer protection efforts impacting the higher education finance industry.

**Moderator/Speaker**

**Phillip Wambsganss**, Executive Director  
Higher Education Servicing Corporation

**Speaker**

**John L. Culhane, Jr.**, Partner  
Ballard Spahr

**9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

**Break/Hotel Check Out**

**10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

**Congressional Staff Panel on Higher Education Policy**

With the recent election, there are major changes coming to the House and Senate. Republicans now lead the House Education and the Workforce Committee while Democrats and Republicans have new leadership on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. During this session, Democratic and Republican Congressional staff will discuss their higher education priorities for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and whether there are consensus areas for enactment of improvements to federal student aid programs.

**Moderator**

**Ron Gambill**, Executive Vice President of Student Lending and Legislative Affairs  
ELFI (Education Loan Finance Inc.)

**Speakers**

**Amaris Benavidez**, Professional Staff Member  
House Education and the Workforce Committee – Democratic Staff

**Chance Russell**, Professional Staff Member  
House Education and the Workforce Committee – Republican Staff

**11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

**Conference Wrap Up and Closing Remarks**

**Speaker**

**James P. Bergeron**, President  
National Council of Higher Education Resources

**12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

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