



Higher Education and Student Success Conference June 8 - 10, 2026

Hilton Clearwater Beach Resort | Clearwater Beach, Florida

Preliminary Agenda

(as of March 16, 2026, subject to change)

Monday, June 8, 2026

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Registration Open

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Meeting of the NCHER Board of Directors

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

12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Lunch and Time on Your Own

2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Membership Meeting

NCHER members will participate in the annual membership meeting. More details will be circulated to NCHER members directly.

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Refreshment Break

3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Washington Update: Legislative and Regulatory Changes Affecting Higher Education

Session Description Join several D.C. insiders for a deep dive analysis of the federal legislative and regulatory landscape shaping higher education finance. Panelists will unpack the latest developments in Congress, negotiated rulemaking, and interagency agreement implementation timelines—along with what they mean for students, institutions, and finance organizations. Attendees will gain practical insights on how to prepare for policy changes and strategically navigate an evolving federal environment.

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Welcome Reception

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Registration Open

7:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

7:45 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Small Group Break-Out Sessions (By Industry Sector)

Before the conference programming begins, attendees will break off into small groups where attendees can hear from their peers - or share with each other - on what is going on at their organization, the biggest opportunities and challenges that they are currently facing across business lines, what type of assistance they foresee needing over the next year to ensure that they are prepared for success, and other important issues. The four informal discussion break-out sessions include the following:

- Federal Family Education Loan Program Participants
- Private Lending
- Student Loan Servicing
- Institution and Student Success

8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Break

9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Conference Welcome

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

Speakers:

Scott D. Giles, Chair, NCHER Board of Directors
Executive Director and CEO, Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA)

Alex Ricci, President, NCHER

9:15 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

INVITED - Department of Education Update

Session Description: Hear directly from leadership at the U.S. Department of Education on the Department's current priorities, regulatory initiatives, and operational updates affecting institutions and student finance organizations. This session will provide attendees with the Department's key areas of focus for the coming year.

9:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

INVITED - Department of Labor Update

Session Description: Workforce policy and higher education are increasingly intertwined. An official from the U.S. Department of Labor will provide an update on its inter-agency agreement with the Department of Education, workforce development initiatives, apprenticeship programs, and federal strategies aimed at strengthening education-to-employment pathways. Learn how institutions and finance

organizations can better align with workforce policy priorities.

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Break

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

HOLD - An Update from Another Federal Agency

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Panel #1 - Ask the Lawyers: 2026 Legal Landscape

Session Description: Regulatory and legal risks are evolving rapidly across higher education finance. In this interactive session, leading attorneys will break down the most important legal developments affecting student lending, servicing, financial aid administration, compliance, and consumer protection. Bring your toughest questions as experts discuss emerging litigation trends, regulatory scrutiny, and practical strategies for navigating the 2026 legal landscape.

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Lunch

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Keynote Adress (to be announced)

2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Break

2:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Panel #2 – Student Financial Wellness and Boosting College Completion

Session Description: Financial stress is one of the most significant barriers to student persistence and completion. This session will explore an emerging financial wellness competency framework and how institutions can embed financial capability into the student experience—from enrollment through graduation. Panelists will discuss innovative funding models, campus partnerships, and program designs that help students manage costs, build financial confidence, and ultimately finish their programs.

3:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Panel #3 – Preparing Borrowers for the July 1, 2026, OBBBA Transition

Session Description: Major policy changes taking effect on July 1, 2026, will significantly affect borrower repayment strategies and overall student loan program administration. This panel brings together relevant stakeholders to discuss how their organizations are preparing borrowers for the transition. Learn how institutions and finance organizations can communicate effectively with borrowers—particularly parents and other groups impacted by policy changes—to ensure they understand their options and avoid repayment challenges.

3:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Break

4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Panel #4 – Supporting Students Financially in a Post-H.R. 1 Environment

Session Description: As federal policy evolves, institutions are exploring new ways to financially support students and promote persistence. This panel will examine how institutions are adapting funding strategies to meet student needs. Panelists will discuss institutional aid optimization, grant management strategies, and emerging financing tools that help close affordability gaps.

5:00 p.m.

Wrap-Up and Conference Adjourns for the Day

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

7:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Registration Open

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Conference Welcome

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

8:45 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

HOLD - An Update from Another Federal Agency

9:15 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Panel #5 - Investor Perspectives and Market Dynamics in Education Finance

Session Description: Leading capital markets experts will share insights on current market conditions for education finance securities, including both FFELP and private loan portfolios. The panel will discuss investor sentiment, structural considerations for new issuances, pricing trends, and innovative financing approaches gaining traction in the market. Attendees will gain valuable perspective on optimizing their capital markets strategies in the current environment.

10:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Panel #6: Serving the Contemporary Student

Session Description: Today's learners are more diverse in age, career stage, and educational goals than ever before. This session will explore how the ecosystem is evolving to support modern learners. Panelists will discuss strategies for aligning education with employer demand, supporting working learners, and building pathways that lead to meaningful career outcomes.

10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Panel #7: Solving the College Cost Equation: How Organizations Can Make Education More Affordable

Session Description: The public broadly believes college costs are high and increasingly out of reach, but little consensus exists on what policies and programs actually reduce the overall price for students and families. This panel will explore approaches that reduce financial barriers and

increase student completion. Panelists will highlight real-world examples of programs that measurably improve persistence and degree attainment.

11:30 a.m.

Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks