

**H. KENT WELDON**  
CONFERENCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

**From College to Careers**  
Ensuring Value and Relevance of Higher Education

Tuesday, April 12, 2022  
Indianapolis Marriott North



INDIANA COMMISSION *for*  
HIGHER EDUCATION



# H. KENT WELDON CONFERENCE for HIGHER EDUCATION

From College to Careers: Ensuring Value and Relevance of Higher Education

**Tuesday, April 12, 2022**  
Indianapolis Marriott North

- 8:30 a.m. Registration**
- 9:00 a.m. Welcome**
- *Mike Alley, Chairman, Indiana Commission for Higher Education*
- 9:15 a.m. Keynote: Ensuring Value and Relevance of Higher Education**
- *Chris Lowery, Commissioner for Higher Education*
  - *Ruth Watkins, Ph.D., President of Strada Impact, Strada Education Network*
- 10:15 a.m. Break**
- 10:30 a.m. Breakout Sessions** <choose one>
- 11:30 a.m. Breakout Sessions** <choose one>
- 12:30 p.m. Lunch**
- 1:15 p.m. Closing Remarks**
- *Chris Lowery, Commissioner for Higher Education*

## Breakout Session Topics

### Connecting Education and Industry | Institute for Workforce Excellence ..... Porter

- *Todd Hurst, Ph.D., Executive Director, Institute for Workforce Excellence*
- *Sally Saydshoev, Assistant Director, Educator Engagement, Work and Learn Indiana*
- *Barbie Martin, Assistant Commissioner for Outreach*

### EPIC Advantage Internship Program | Earlham College ..... Miller

- *Anne Houtman, D.Phil., President, Earlham College*
- *Kristen Lainsbury, Vice President, Marketing and Communications, Earlham College*
- *Josh Garrison, Associate Commissioner for Legislation and Program Implementation*

### Academic Maps with Career Alignment | Complete College America..... Hart

- *Dhanfu Elston, Ph.D., Chief of Staff, Senior Vice President for Strategy, Complete College America*
- *Ken Sauer, Ph.D., Senior Associate Commissioner and Chief Academic Officer*

### Higher Education Value Campaign | VOX Global ..... Shields

- *Francesca Brady, Senior Vice President, VOX Global*
- *Charlee Beasor, Associate Commissioner for Communications and Outreach*

## Chris Lowery

### Indiana Commissioner for Higher Education

Chris Lowery was appointed in 2022 to serve as Commissioner for Indiana's Commission for Higher Education, the coordinating agency charged with ensuring the state's postsecondary education system is aligned to meet the needs of students and the state. Prior to joining the Commission, Lowery was senior vice president, workforce, careers and adult strategy at Ivy Tech Community College where he provided overall leadership of Ivy Tech workforce and career initiatives and organization. Before working in higher education, Lowery led public policy and engagement for Hillenbrand, Inc. and served as an aide to former Indiana Governor Robert D. Orr and then-Senator Dan Quayle.



As Commissioner, Lowery is committed to increasing college completion by improving the college-going rate, engaging adult learners and ensuring students of all ages understand the value proposition of higher education. He collaborates with policymakers, higher education leaders and community partners to maintain college affordability and guarantee quality higher education is delivered and tied to career relevance as the Commission continues its efforts to realize the state's goal of at least 60 percent of Hoosiers with quality education and training beyond high school.

Currently, Lowery is on the Board of Trustees of the Sagamore Institute think tank where he previously served as chair. Additionally, he serves on the Boards of Directors of AgriNovus Indiana and Shepherd Community. He's also a member of the Advisory Council for the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

Lowery was Chair of the Career Coaching and Navigation Action Team for Governor Eric Holcomb's Workforce Cabinet. He has served on various other boards of directors including Gleaners Food Bank, the Indiana Construction Roundtable Foundation, the Indiana Council for Continuing Education, the State Workforce Innovation Council, the Distinguished Alumni Council of the Indiana University O'Neill School of Public Affairs and the Batesville Community School Corporation. He is a regular speaker in Indiana and nationally on topics ranging from the future of higher education, the economy and workforce preparedness to innovation, leadership and social impact investing.

Lowery holds the degree of Bachelor of Science in Public Affairs from Indiana University and a Master of Science in Management from Indiana Wesleyan University.

## Ruth Watkins, Ph.D.

### President of Strada Impact, Strada Education Network

Ruth V. Watkins is president of Strada Impact, where she leads Strada Education Network's research, philanthropy, thought leadership, and policy efforts to help more individuals access and complete postsecondary education and training to improve their careers and lives.

Before joining Strada in 2021, Watkins built a strong reputation for supporting social change and community workforce needs as the 16th president of the University of Utah. In that role, she increased degree completion rates and research funding, established innovative student funding models, and built strong partnerships with community stakeholders. Uniting the campus as "One U," Watkins and her team drove innovation in research, education, and operational efficiency, and addressed major societal challenges, including in mental health and interpersonal violence.



Under Watkins' leadership, the University of Utah cultivated broad and deep connections to communities and was responsive to the state's workforce needs. During her tenure, the university produced more graduates in high-demand fields than any other state institution, and those graduates secured employment or proceeded to graduate or professional school at noteworthy rates.

Watkins previously served as the University of Utah's senior vice president for academic affairs for five years before being appointed president. Earlier in her career, she spent 20 years in leadership and faculty roles at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she served as dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, vice provost, and associate provost.

Watkins graduated with highest honors from the University of Northern Iowa with a bachelor's degree in speech-language pathology. She earned a master's degree and a doctorate in child language at the University of Kansas, where she was a National Institutes of Health predoctoral fellow. Her scholarship focuses on communication development and disabilities in young children.

## **Todd Hurst, Ph.D.**

### **Executive Director, Institute for Workforce Excellence, Indiana Chamber of Commerce**

Todd Hurst, executive director of the Institute for Workforce Excellence, holds a Ph.D. in educational studies from the University of Kentucky, as well as a Master of Arts in curriculum and instruction from the University of Indianapolis and an undergraduate degree from Ball State University. Most recently, he served as a senior consultant for the Indianapolis-based consulting firm, Resultant, where he led workforce strategy development and program oversight for the organization's public sector clients.

Todd has been heavily involved with workforce and education in Indiana for many years, serving as the Vice President of Education and Workforce for Regional Opportunity Initiatives as well as the Director of Education and Workforce Innovation with CELL at the University of Indianapolis. Todd's current role with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce is to lead a team of professionals driving programs, partnerships and practices related to education and workforce.



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## **Sally Saydshoev**

### **Assistant Director, Educator Engagement, Work and Learn Indiana, Indiana Chamber of Commerce**

Sally Saydshoev, assistant director of educator engagement, holds a Master of Science in college student affairs from Eastern Illinois University, as well as an undergraduate degree from Ball State University. Most recently, she served as the director of career services for Indiana University East in Richmond, Indiana where she supported the development of career readiness initiatives for students and served on committees to connect education and industry.

Sally has served in education for over seven years, with various universities throughout the country. Sally's current role with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce is to connect with educators across the state helping to develop strong programs and practices for students, employers, and educators centered around work-based learning.



## **Anne Houtman, D.Phil.**

### **President, Earlham College**

Anne M. Houtman, a distinguished educator, scientist, author, and higher education leader, became the 20th president of Earlham College and the Earlham School of Religion on July 1, 2019. She came to Earlham from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, where she served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. She holds a doctorate from the University of Oxford in Zoology and a master's degree in Anthropology from UCLA. She earned her bachelor's from Pomona College. Anne is a Quaker, and is the first woman to serve as president of Earlham.



Previously, Anne served as Dean of the School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering at California State University Bakersfield, and as head and professor at the Thomas H. Gosnell School of Life Sciences at Rochester Institute of Technology. Earlier in her career, she held faculty positions at California State University Fullerton, Soka University of America, and Knox College. She has authored numerous textbooks and articles on scientific and pedagogical topics.

Anne is a trustee of the College Board, a member of the Association of Governing Boards' Council of Presidents, and is a member of the Higher Learning Commission presidents working group on the future of accreditation.

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## **Kristen Lainsbury**

### **Vice President, Marketing and Communications, Earlham College**

Kristen Lainsbury joined Earlham College in February 2021 as Vice President for Marketing and Communications. In addition to serving on the president's Cabinet, Lainsbury leads branding, media relations, executive communications, marketing strategy, and Earlham's digital presence. Lainsbury came to Earlham from Providence College, where she had served as Senior Director of Marketing and Creative Services.

She previously worked as a writer and editor for the University of Maine's Office of University Relations, where she oversaw admission marketing, was a key contributor to UMaine Today magazine, and coordinated select media relations outreach. She also co-authored the University of Maine's 2012 strategic plan, The Blue Sky Plan.



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## Dhanfu Elston, Ph.D.

### Chief of Staff, Senior Vice President for Strategy, Complete College America

Dr. Dhanfu E. Elston (pronounced: dah-nee-foo) serves as Complete College America's Chief of Staff and Senior Vice President for Strategy where he utilizes his national policy and campus expertise for practical application, implementation, and scaling of CCA strategies at institutions throughout the United States. He provides oversight of national external partnerships and has led CCA's pathways initiatives, the Purpose First career alignment strategy, 15 To Finish national campaign, technology Seal of Approval, and scaling standards to close achievement gaps. Elston has also coordinated relationships with Governor's Offices, higher education state-wide systems, and national partners in their college completion efforts. Recently, he launched a national initiative with the Thurgood Marshall College Fund to amplify completion efforts at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority-serving institutions.



Prior to his current role with CCA, Dr. Elston held the position of Executive Director of Student Success and Transition at Purdue University Calumet. Under Elston's leadership, Purdue Calumet (now Purdue Northwest) experienced exponential gains in first-year retention, graduation rates, and enrolled credit hours. Elston has also served Georgia State University the Faculty Assistant Director for Undergraduate Studies. Earlier in his career, he held positions Georgia State and Clark Atlanta University. Dr. Elston earned a Ph.D. in Educational Policy Studies from Georgia State University where he conducted research in student retention, intercultural relations, learning communities, leadership development, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. He earned both an M.A. in Educational Leadership and B.S. in Biology from Clark Atlanta University. Elston is a member of and has held leadership roles in numerous professional associations.

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## Francesca Brady

**Senior Vice President, VOX Global** Francesca works with organizations to design and execute communications campaigns that shift belief and change behavior in the public interest. She helped start VOX Global's Behavioral Insights practice to develop communications strategies focused on eliciting social and consumer change. Francesca brings extensive experience in journalism, education policy and advocacy communications to her role at VOX. As co-chair of the firm's education and nonprofit practice group, she collaborates extensively with foundations, governments and nonprofit clients that view communications as a tool for driving change.



Prior to joining VOX, Francesca served as Vice President of Policy and Communications for The Mind Trust, a nonprofit focused on improving K-12 education in Indianapolis. Francesca began her career as a reporter for the Indianapolis Star and the Indianapolis Business Journal, where she covered state and local government. Francesca has been a mentor through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Indiana for six years. She's an alumna of the Stanley K. Lacy Executive Leadership Program (Class XXXVI). She lives in Indianapolis' Butler Tarkington neighborhood with her husband, Ryan, and two toddlers, Jack (4) and Gina (2).

# REACHING **HIGHER** IN A STATE OF CHANGE

In 2012, Indiana set a goal that 60% of working-age Hoosiers will have a quality college degree or credential by the year 2025. The Commission for Higher Education facilitates the state's progress by providing actionable and meaningful statistics on postsecondary education outcomes.

[Reaching Higher in a State of Change](#) is the Commission's fourth strategic plan. It is the guiding document for Indiana to reach the goal of at least 60 percent of Hoosiers with education and training beyond high school by 2025. With the priorities of completion, equity and talent, its "Blueprint for Change" outlines action steps to achieve Indiana's attainment goal.



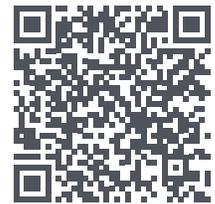
The [College Value Report](#) provides a clearer picture of the returns a college degree yields after graduation and beyond, both to the individual and the state. These benefits include greater earnings, job security, enhanced social mobility, increased civic engagement, improved health and wellness, a higher quality of life and more.



The [College Readiness Reports](#) help local schools and communities understand how their students are performing in college while informing policies that increase college readiness and success.



The [College Certificate Report](#) dives deep into certificate completions and includes analysis of student demographics, certificate types and terminology. Special focus is given to the Workforce Ready Grant program results.



The [College Completion Reports](#) provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture of college completion in order to advance Indiana's collective efforts to boost educational attainment.



The [Early College Credit Report](#) offers an in-depth analysis of dual credit, Advanced Placement and the broader landscape of earning college credits in high school, showing more Hoosier students than ever are earning college credit while in high school.



The [College Equity Report](#) disaggregates demographic data from the Commission's College Readiness and Completion reports to highlight outcomes in Indiana for race and ethnicity, gender, geography and socioeconomic status. The report also tracks the state's progress in closing the educational achievement gaps in Indiana.





# INDIANA COMMISSION *for* HIGHER EDUCATION

## MISSION

The Indiana Commission for Higher Education is a 14-member public body created in 1971 to define the missions of Indiana's colleges and universities, plan and coordinate the state's postsecondary education system, administer state financial aid, and ensure that Indiana's higher education system is aligned to meet the needs of students and the state.



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