



INNOVATION WITH INTENTION

MINDFULNESS, WORK, AND
COLLECTIVE VOICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

PROFESSIONAL ISSUES IN HIGHER
EDUCATION CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 17, 2025 | MEA HEADQUARTERS, EAST LANSING



MEA

MAHE

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION FOR
HIGHER EDUCATION

Advocating for Higher Education Employees Across the State



PROFESSIONAL ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE

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MAHE MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of MAHE is to serve, train, support, and advocate for higher education members of MEA.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

8-9 a.m.	Registration, Continental Breakfast and Coffee with a Lobbyist MEA 1350 building, 3rd floor
9-9:20 a.m.	Welcome and Introductions
9:35-10:35 a.m.	100 Series Conference Sessions
10:50-11:50 a.m.	200 Series Conference Sessions
Noon-1:15 p.m.	Lunch Keynote Speaker, Susan Nogan, JD, MA, MS Senior Research Analyst, NEA Research Department
1:30-2:30 p.m.	300 Series Conference Sessions
2:45-3:30 p.m.	400 Series Roundtables
3:30-4:15 p.m.	Meet the Author

For further conference information visit mea.org

Saun Strobel
Northern Zone Director
Director of Higher Education
Conference Coordinator
ssstrobel@mea.org

Lisa Fox
Conference Assistant
lfox@mea.org



HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Participants are responsible for their own hotel accommodations. Deadline to reserve a room is **Oct. 3, 2025**. A room block has been secured at a reduced rate for MEA:

\$104 per night + applicable taxes
(includes parking)

Hyatt Place Lansing
East 2401 Showtime Dr.
Lansing, MI 48912
(517) 679-7600

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- Registration deadline is Oct. 3.
- Registration fee is \$50, if received by Oct. 3.
- Late or on-site registration fee is \$75, if received after Oct. 3.
- All cancellations must be received by email to Lisa Fox at lfox@mea.org no later than Oct. 10.
- Transportation, and all non-conference meals must be paid by the local, region, MABO, or individual.
- Only MEA members in good standing may register.
- **Registration is solely online.** Paper forms will not be provided nor accepted.
- Log in to your MEA account at mea.org/members-only. Select Event Registration and choose 2025 HE Conference.
- **Confirm all credential information is correct**, including the email address to which your confirmation will be sent and click submit.
- Choose your fee type. Please be sure to select the correct registration fee.
- Choose your registration type.
- Please select all sessions you would like to attend.
- Please select all meals you will attend.
- Enter payment information and click submit.

CONFIRMATION EMAIL

After you have completed your registration online, a confirmation message will be sent to the email included on the conference registration form or on file for the member. **If you do not receive a confirmation email**, please contact the Conference Assistant, Lisa Fox — lfox@mea.org

DOWNLOAD THE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Professional Issues in Higher Education Conference announcement is located at mea.org/higher-education-conference.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lisa Fox, Conference Assistant
(800) 292-1934, ext. 4040
(517) 332-6551
lfox@mea.org

**Online registration is available
until Oct. 3 at 11:59 p.m.**

REGISTRATION LINK



ANNOUNCEMENT



8-9 a.m.	9-9:20 a.m.	SERIES 100 SESSIONS 9:35-10:35 a.m.	SERIES 200 SESSIONS 10:50-11:50 a.m.	Noon-1:15 p.m.	SERIES 300 SESSIONS 1:30-2:30 p.m.	SERIES 400 ROUNDTABLES 2:45-3:30 p.m.	3:30-4:15 p.m.
Registration and Continental Breakfast	Welcome and Introductions	<p>101 Keys to Wellness — Mindfulness, Movement, Sleep, and Nutrition</p> <p>102 AI for Educators — Discover, Design, and Do (Level I)</p> <p>103 Interpersonal Communications Role on Relationships and Collaboration — A Call for Soft Skills</p> <p>104 The Current State of Health Insurance — How to Navigate Rising Costs While Maintaining Quality Benefits</p>	<p>201 Financial Wellness Starts with Mindfulness</p> <p>202 AI for Educators — Discover, Design, and Do (Level II)</p> <p>203 Creating and Leading Effective Teams</p> <p>204 The ABCs of Bargaining — Strategies for Negotiating</p>	Lunch and Keynote Speaker	<p>301 Applying Stress Management Techniques</p> <p>302 Organizing with AI — Tools for Us, Tools Against Us</p> <p>303 Mentorship — The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly</p> <p>304 Higher Education Finance</p> <p>305 Understanding MEA's Strike Authorization Process and Policies</p>	<p>401 2025 Town Hall Attendees</p> <p>402 Two-year Colleges and Universities</p> <p>403 Four-year Colleges and Universities</p> <p>404 Potpourri of Melting Moments</p> <p>405 Public Policy and Politics — Blueprints for Reform</p>	Meet the Author

9-9:20 a.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Marcia Mackey, MAHE President; MEA Board Member; NCHE Vice President

9:35-10:35 a.m.

SERIES 100

SESSION 101: KEY TO WELLNESS — MINDFULNESS, MOVEMENT, SLEEP, AND NUTRITION

Mindfulness and Wellness — All

Over the years, the education profession has become increasingly stressful. Too much stress can negatively impact health and well-being, leading to chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and even some cancers. Attendees will learn the simple concept of negative stress and its effects on health. Attendees will gain insight into how using the principles of mindfulness, movement, sleep, and nutrition can lead to better health, prevent chronic disease, and support the ultimate goal of optimal wellness.

Presenter: Rhonda Jones, MESSA Health Promotion Consultant

SESSION 102: AI FOR EDUCATORS — DISCOVER, DESIGN, & DO (LEVEL I)

Embracing AI Across Campus — All

Curious about generative AI but not sure where to start — or ready to level up your skills? This interactive, two-part session is designed for higher education faculty and staff to explore AI's potential in teaching and professional workflows. Level I offers a supportive, hands-on introduction to AI tools through guided exploration and collaborative activities. No experience needed — just bring your curiosity. A laptop is recommended to make the most of this engaging, practical workshop.

Presenters: Gabrielle Likavec, Central Michigan University
Rebecca Renirie, Central Michigan University

SESSION 103: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS ROLE ON RELATIONSHIPS AND COLLABORATION — A CALL FOR SOFT SKILLS

Workplace and Bargaining — All

Attendees will take away the role that interpersonal communication skills and styles have on relationship development and collaborative exchanges in the workplace.

The purpose of the session is to present the results of the presenter's 2025 research that explored the perceptions of interpersonal communication's role in relationship development and collaborative outcomes in leadership and management teams. Key take aways include social behaviors (their role) on relationships and collaboration, implications of effective and ineffective interpersonal communications on organizational outcomes, and opportunities to effectuate change. Attendees can expect to learn about a single case study with embedded units of analysis that explored participant perceptions and experiences.

Presenter: Rick Caprario, Lansing Community College

SESSION 104: THE CURRENT STATE OF HEALTH INSURANCE — HOW TO NAVIGATE RISING COSTS WHILE MAINTAINING QUALITY BENEFITS

Workplace and Bargaining — All

This session will provide data and contextual information regarding the current state of increasing healthcare costs and the effects on your members. We will provide guidance on how to examine your current health insurance benefits to best fit your members' needs while working to modify your health plan offerings to reduce premiums.

Presenters: Abby Zarimba, MESSA Field Representative
Matt Zimmerman, MESSA Field Representative

10:50-11:50 a.m.

SERIES 200

SESSION 201: FINANCIAL WELLNESS STARTS WITH MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness and Wellness — All

Join us for a fun and informative time as we help members understand essential investment and insurance management. These insights will help you be more mindful of your financial wellness, which could result in putting more money in your pocket!

Presenters: Jason T. Diotte, MEA Financial Services
Amy Lothschutz, MEA Financial Services

SESSION 202: AI FOR EDUCATORS — DISCOVER, DESIGN, AND DO (LEVEL II)

Embracing AI Across Campus — All

This session will level up your skills with generative AI and is designed for higher education faculty and staff. Level II builds on foundational knowledge, helping participants apply AI meaningfully in course design, assignments, and everyday tasks. A laptop is recommended to make the most of this engaging, practical workshop.

Presenters: Gabrielle Likavec, Central Michigan University
Rebecca Renirie, Central Michigan University

SESSION 203: CREATING AND LEADING EFFECTIVE TEAMS

Workplace and Bargaining — All

Leadership teams often have unclear team boundaries, lack of compelling purpose, wrong team composition, unproductive meetings, insufficient organizational support, and teams getting stuck. The purpose of this session is to learn how to create and lead effective teams. Teams can achieve goals that an individual cannot. This session will discuss how to design a real team, with a compelling purpose and the right people. Also, this session will discuss the work design, organizational support, and team coaching that is necessary for an effective team.

Presenter: Suzanne K. Clark, MEA UniServ Director

SESSION 204: THE ABCS OF BARGAINING — STRATEGIES FOR NEGOTIATING

Workplace and Bargaining — All

This session provides a focused overview of the contract bargaining process in higher education. Participants will learn how to effectively prepare for bargaining, craft proposals, and build union strength at the table. Key legal concepts such as impasse, tentative agreements, mediation, fact-finding, and retroactivity will be explained in practical terms. The session also covers strategies for engaging and unifying members throughout negotiations. Whether you are an experienced bargainer or new to the process, this session will help you advocate more effectively for your members.

Presenters: Chet Jessick, North Central Michigan College
Kurt Murray, MEA UniServ Director

Noon-1:15 p.m.

LUNCH AND KEYNOTE:

Blueprints for Reform — The Far Right's Agenda for Higher Education

Many of us have heard of Project 2025, the far-right agenda to reshape America. In this session, Susan Nogan, a Senior Research Analyst at NEA, will review the less-well-known Blueprints for Reform, which focus specifically on higher education. By raising awareness of the threats, and the motives of those who advance them, advocates will be better equipped to organize in opposition.

Keynote Speaker: Susan Nogan, JD, MA, MS
NEA Senior Research Analyst

1:30-2:30 p.m.

SERIES 300

SESSION 301: APPLYING STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Mindfulness and Wellness — All

Are your stress levels like a bathtub overflowing or an erupting volcano? We have all heard about various techniques to manage stress. This session will provide tips and strategies for effectively applying those techniques on a regular basis which in turn will help level out our emotions.

Presenter: Pam Davis, Lansing Community College

SESSION 302: ORGANIZING WITH AI — TOOLS FOR US, TOOLS AGAINST US

AI; Workplace and Bargaining — All

This session explores how AI tools can both strengthen organizing initiatives and undermine worker power. We will demonstrate ways that members can use AI tools for communication and mobilization, and we will examine how universities are deploying AI in hiring, surveillance, and decision making. Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions, discuss uses, and share experiences, as well as time to practice using AI tools.

Presenters: Sarah Freye, Michigan State University
Lisa Batchelder, Michigan State University

SESSION 303: MENTORSHIP — THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

Mindfulness and Wellness; Workplace and Bargaining — All

Mentorship happens at many crossroads in our lives. From a teacher back in elementary school, a college professor, or a good friend, this session will look at all aspects of mentorship. What defines mentorship? How do we find a mentor? Are we a good mentor to others? These are some of the questions we will explore. If you have a good mentorship story, either as a mentor or mentee, please bring to share!

Presenter: Eva Menefee, Lansing Community College

SESSION 304: HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCE

Workplace and Bargaining — All

This session will give attendees a basic understanding of how Michigan's public Universities and Community Colleges are funded. Attendees will learn how to track their institution's financial capacity over time by examining audited operating revenue, non-operating revenue, expenses, and net position. (There is no requirement to bring anything, but attendees may consider a laptop to follow along on their institution's audit.)

Presenter: Tanner Delpier, MEA Labor Economist

SESSION 305: UNDERSTANDING MEA'S STRIKE AUTHORIZATION PROCESS AND POLICIES

Workplace and Bargaining — All

We will do a detailed review of the MEA Crisis Policy, what is involved in conducting a quality Crisis Assessment Team analysis, and the role of MEA officers, managers, and MEA Board Members in approving a local for CAP fund eligibility. Processes and procedures to have in place with your local crisis efforts to best ensure MEA support of a Job Action will also be reviewed.

Presenter: Craig Culver, MEA Bargaining Consultant

2:45-3:30 p.m.

SERIES 400

The roundtable series is designed for in-depth conversations related to specific topics impacting higher education faculty and staff.

SESSION 401 — 2025 TOWN HALL ATTENDEES

Facilitators: David Schneider, Saginaw Valley State University
Kandy Slack, Michigan State University

SESSION 402 — TWO-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Facilitators: Brian Littleton, Mott Community College
Eva Menefee, Lansing Community College

SESSION 403 — FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Facilitator: Rachelle Belanger, University of Detroit Mercy

SESSION 404 — POTPOURRI OF MELTING MOMENTS

Facilitator: Paul Bedard, St. Clair Community College

SESSION 405 — PUBLIC POLICY AND POLITICS — BLUEPRINTS FOR REFORM

Facilitators: Alec Thompson, (title)
Susan Nogan, NEA Senior Research Analyst

3:30-4:15 p.m.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Josh Cowen, Michigan State University

"The Privateers: How Billionaires Created a Culture War and Sold School Vouchers"

Michigan Education Association

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The mission of the MEA is to protect, advocate and advance the rights of all education professionals to promote quality public education for all students.

