



National Association of Presidential
Assistants in Higher Education

39th Annual National Conference
and Business Meeting

Conference Schedule

Published March 9, 2026

March 11-13, 2026

Marriott Rivercenter

San Antonio, Texas



NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

Welcome to NAPAHE’s 39th Annual Conference and Business Meeting!

The Board of Directors and the Conference Planning Committee are excited to welcome you to San Antonio, TX, March 11–13, 2026, for **NAPAHE’s 39th Annual Conference and Business Meeting**. This year is especially meaningful—it marks NAPAHE’s inaugural independently hosted conference. While we honor the strong foundation of our past, we’re energized by what’s ahead. Guided by the feedback and ideas of our members, we continue to evolve to meet the needs of our community and to strengthen the connections that make NAPAHE such a valuable resource.

This year’s program brings together higher education colleagues from across the country and around the world to connect, share ideas, and explore topics that matter most to you. We have an exceptional lineup of speakers and facilitators ready to engage and inspire.

Throughout the conference, you’ll see Conference Ambassadors with blue “Ask Me” buttons—along with NAPAHE Board and Committee members—all ready to answer questions and help you navigate the sessions, events, and networking opportunities.

Be sure to visit our Sponsor Showcase and explore the “Sponsors” section of this app to learn more about the organizations that make this event possible. If you’re not yet a member, visit napahe.org to discover year-round benefits, from e-Roundtables and webinars to a robust professional network.

Here’s to an exciting new chapter—welcome to NAPAHE 2026!

Sincerely,

Rolanda Burney
Chair, NAPAHE Board of Directors

Rowena Clukey
Chair, NAPAHE Conference Planning Committee

Thank You to our generous 2026 Conference Sponsors!

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NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

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NAPAHE Sponsors

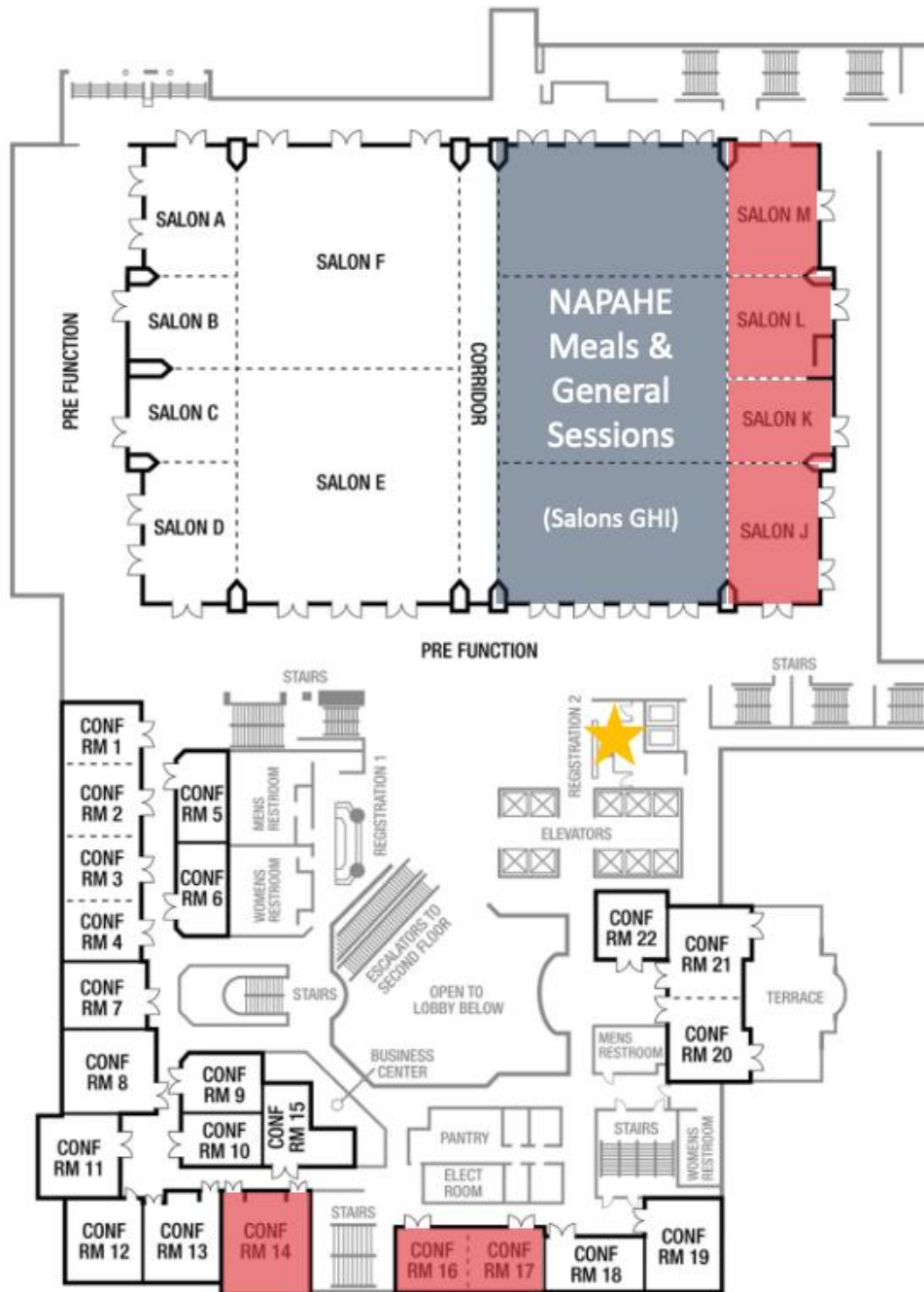


Special Thanks To
NAPAHE's Board of Directors
NAPAHE's Conference Planning Committee

Please visit <https://napahe.org/conference/sponsors> for more information.

Conference Map

THIRD FLOOR MEETING SPACE





NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

Conference Itinerary Overview

- We have attempted to structure start times on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, to allow for a 2-night hotel stay. All session times are listed in Central Time (CT).
- Be sure to download our conference app. This is the best way to view our agenda, session information, speaker biographies, presentation highlights, and much more. Printed programs will not be provided this year.
- NAPAHE has partnered with Go Rio Cruises for a private group networking activity! Join fellow attendees for a memorable evening on San Antonio's River Walk with a private chartered boat ride along the enchanting San Antonio River Walk. This one-hour River Cruise excursion offers the perfect setting to unwind, mingle, and build meaningful connections in a relaxed, picturesque environment. Ticketed attendees should be at the designated departure location by 7:00 p.m. for check-in. All boats will load and depart promptly at 7:15 p.m. on Wednesday, March 11. Separate, advanced registration and payment are required.
- Roundtable Sessions are facilitated discussions that provide an opportunity to network and expand on some of the content discussed during the conference and how it might apply to your work. These sessions will be offered on Friday and will cover multiple topics of interest. They are limited in size and carry the expectation that all participants have the opportunity to share in the conversation. Attendees will be able to join members from your geographic region for robust conversation
- NAPAHE's 39th Annual Business Meeting will be held on Friday, March 13, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. CT in the Ballroom of the Marriott Rivercenter hotel. Meeting materials will be available to members prior to the meeting. Join us for breakfast on Friday for The Annual Business Meeting and Transfer of the Gavel. All attendees are encouraged to attend. NAPAHE members are invited to vote.
- Missed a session or want to see it again? Vote for your favorite presentation within our conference app for the opportunity to see again as a "Back by Popular Demand" session on the final morning of the conference.



NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

Official Conference Schedule

All Registered Conference Attendees

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

12:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. CT **NAPAHE Registration Open for All Attendees**
Registration Desk 2 – Third Floor Meeting Space

Stop by the registration desk to receive your name badge, conference swag, and other important welcome information.

12:30 p.m.– 1:30 p.m. CT **Conference Ambassador Volunteer Training**

1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. CT **First-Time Attendee Orientation**

Welcome to NAPAHE2026! This session is for our first-time NAPAHE Conference attendees. It is designed to help you get the most out of your conference experience and provide opportunities for you to meet other first-time attendees as well as NAPAHE veterans.

2:30 – 4:30 p.m. CT **“Boots On, Game On” Drop-in Conference Preview**

4:30 – 5:00 p.m. CT **Official Conference Welcome**

5:00 – 6:00 p.m. CT **The Landscape of Higher Education**
Ballroom (Salons GHI)

The Landscape of Higher Education will explore contemporary issues facing higher education, including building trust in institutional leadership in today’s political climate, navigating financial and enrollment pressures, and reframing the value proposition of higher education.

7:00 – 8:30 p.m. CT **Go Rio NAPAHE River Cruise**

Pre-purchased tickets required. Start your conference experience with a memorable evening on San Antonio’s River Walk!

Evening **Dinner on Own**



NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

Thursday, March 12, 2026

- 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. CT **“Lone Star Strollers” Morning Walking Group (Thursday)**
Meet in Hotel Lobby
- Start your day with movement, history, and connection! Join fellow attendees for a refreshing morning walk through the vibrant streets of San Antonio.
- 7:30 – 9:30 a.m. CT **Thursday Breakfast**
Ballroom (Salons GHI)
- 7:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. CT **Registration & Info Desk Open**
Registration Desk 2 – Third Floor Meeting Space
- 9:00 – 9:15 a.m. CT **Quick Welcome**
Ballroom (Salons GHI)
- 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. CT **Concurrent Session Block #1**
See Concurrent Session Schedule
- 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. CT **Concurrent Session Block #2**
See Concurrent Session Schedule
- 12:00 – 12:30 p.m. CT ***Don’t forget to turn in your BINGO cards***
- 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. CT **Thursday Lunch**
Ballroom (Salons GHI)
- 1:00 – 1:30 p.m. CT **NAPAHE Awards Ceremony**
Ballroom (Salons GHI)
- 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. CT **I Do Number Two:
The Critical Role of Second-in-Command Leaders**
Ballroom (Salons GHI)

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2:30 – 3:30 p.m. CT

Sponsor Showcase & Coffee Break
Pre Function

Take a moment to recharge and connect! This one-hour midday break is the perfect opportunity to explore our Sponsor Showcase, where you can learn about innovative products and services that support higher education professionals. Light snacks will be provided.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m. CT

Concurrent Session Block #3
See Concurrent Session Schedule

4:30 – 5:00 p.m. CT

Afternoon Coffee Break

Recharge, refuel, and reconnect! Join us during these scheduled breaks to enjoy fresh coffee and meaningful conversations with peers. These informal moments are perfect for networking, sharing insights from sessions, and building relationships that strengthen our NAPAHE community. Take a pause, grab a treat, and make the most of this time to connect and collaborate.

5:00 – 6:00 p.m. CT

Concurrent Session Block #4
See Concurrent Session Schedule

7:00 – 7:45 p.m. CT

Evening Vinyasa Yoga with Chericce
Conference Rooms 16-17

A feel-good flow designed to celebrate connection, self-love, and community. Everyone and all experience levels are welcome!

8:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. CT

The Saga – San Antonio Light Show
(FREE – Optional Networking Activity)
Meet in Hotel Lobby

Join us for a relaxed evening outing to experience San Antonio | The Saga, a stunning outdoor light show in the heart of downtown. Group walk departs the hotel at 8:30 p.m. Light show begins promptly at 9:00 p.m.

Evening

Dinner on Own



NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

Friday, March 13, 2026

Spirit Day! Attendees are encouraged to wear their school gear/sweatshirt today.

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. CT | “Lone Star Strollers” Morning Walking Group
<i>Meet in Hotel Lobby</i> |
| 7:30 – 9:00 a.m. CT | Friday Breakfast
<i>Ballroom (Salons GHI)</i> |
| 7:30 – 12:00 p.m. CT | Info Desk Open
<i>Ballroom (Salons GHI)</i> |
| 8:30 – 9:00 a.m. CT | NAPAHE’s 39th Annual Business Meeting
<i>Ballroom (Salons GHI)</i> |
| 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. CT | Conference to Campus Roundtable Conversations
<i>See Roundtable Schedule</i> |
| 10:30 – 11:00 a.m. CT | Morning Coffee and Snack Break
<i>Pre Function</i> |
| 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. CT | Back by Popular Demand |
| 12:00 p.m. CT | Conference Concludes |

Plenary Presentations

Session Descriptions

General Session #1 (Wednesday, March 11, 2026, at 4:30 PM)

The Landscape of Higher Education

The Landscape of Higher Education will explore contemporary issues facing higher education, including building trust in institutional leadership in today's political climate, navigating financial and enrollment pressures, and reframing the value proposition of higher education.

Panelists:



Dr. Charlie McCormick,
President, Schreiner University



Marta Diffen,
Special Assistant to the President,
Schreiner University,
and NAPAHE member



Dr. Clarence Wyatt,
Special Advisor to the President,
Trinity University



Dr. Kristina Campos-Davis,
Chief of Staff and Assistant Secretary to the Board,
Trinity University

Moderator:



Dr. W. Joseph (Joey) King, Founder and Principal, Academic Innovators; President, Presbyterian Pan American School

General Session #2 (Thursday, March 12, 2026, at 1:30 PM)

I Do Number Two: The Critical Role of Second-In-Command Leaders

Session Description: In a moment when higher education is being reshaped by innovation, community partnership, and bold leadership, Huston-Tillotson University is stepping confidently into the future. This presentation invites the audience on an energetic journey through HT's transformational vision—where technology, collaboration, and student-centered design merge to build a campus that inspires.

With a blend of storytelling, real examples, audience engagement, and a touch of humor, Dr. Melva K. Wallace will explore HT's evolving campus master plan, the impact of major philanthropic investments, and how intentional leadership can turn big dreams into practical, sustainable growth. Attendees will be encouraged to think creatively, ask big questions, and imagine alongside HT what it means to build a future-ready HBCU.

Get ready for an upbeat, interactive, and insightful conversation—one that celebrates progress, elevates community voice, and highlights how Huston-Tillotson is boldly reimagining what's possible.



Dr. Melva K. Wallace
President and CEO
Huston-Tillotson University



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Concurrent Session Schedule

Session #1 – Thursday, March 12 at 9:30 – 10:30 AM

Behind the Search: Unwritten Rules for Managing Executive Searches	Steve Frieder
Building an AI-Ready Campus: The Presidential Assistant's Playbook	Josh Schwartz Element451
High-Volume, High-Impact: Scaling Executive Event Planning with Technology and Institutional Knowledge	Paula Garza
Lessons on Influence and Followership	Trina Smith
The Strategic and Complex Role of Chiefs of Staff	Don-Terry Veal

See Conference App for Session Locations



NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

Concurrent Session Schedule

Session #2 – Thursday, March 12 at 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Beyond the Org Chart: Strategies for cross-boundary leadership in a matrixed management environment

Kendall Barton, Ed.D., PMP
Jason James, Ed.D., LSSGB

Blueprints for Growth: Building Your Professional Development

Sarah Myers
Brynne Pulver

Building an AI-Ready Campus: The Presidential Assistant’s Playbook

Josh Schwartz
Element451

Congress, the Administration and Higher Education – A Washington Perspective

Mark Burnham

From Preparation to Partnership: Best Practices for Supporting Searches in Higher Education

Jenny Carron
Kara Miller

See Conference App for Session Locations



NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

Concurrent Session Schedule

Session #3 – Thursday, March 12 at 3:30 – 4:30 PM

From Transition to Transformation: Strategic Leadership
Amid Shifting Institutional Landscapes

Dr. Bonnie Taylor

Lessons Learned the Hard Way

Heather Fehn
Steve Frieder

Postmortem with Purpose: A Change Model Approach to
Project Management

Madison Merrifield

A Taste of OnBoard

Jody Carlson
Becca Meshberger
OnBoard

The Speed of Trust

Sheri Sargent

See Conference App for Session Locations



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Concurrent Session Schedule

Session #4 – Thursday, March 12 at 5:00 – 6:00 PM

Building a Professional Community Within and Across Higher Education Kathryn Enke

Measuring Impact and Advocating for Yourself Eddie Cullinane

The Art of Executive Onboarding: A Panel Discussion Morgan Fradenburgh
Jill Lange
Gem Perkins
Trina Smith

The AI-Powered Executive Office: Tools and Ethical Guidelines for the Future of Support Paula Garza

The Power of Presence: Executive Communication and Influence in Complex Systems Dr. Bonnie Taylor

See Conference App for Session Locations



NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

Roundtable Discussions

Conference-to-Campus Roundtables

On the final morning of the conference, join us for this energizing wrap-up session designed to help you transform conference takeaways into campus impact. In small, peer-led groups organized by geographic region, you'll reflect on key learnings, share strategies, and identify actionable steps to elevate your role and strengthen your office. This semi-guided conversation is the perfect opportunity to network, exchange ideas, and leave with a clear plan for applying what you've gained—ensuring the conference experience continues to make a difference long after you return.

Region 1: Northeast

Location: Conference Room 16

Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia

Region 2: Midwest

Location: Salon K

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin

Region 3: Southeast

Location: Salon M

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee

Region 4: South Central

Location: Salon J

Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas

Region 5: West

Location: Salon L

Alberta, Alaska, Arizona, British Columbia, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

See Conference App for Session Locations



NAPAHE 2026 Conference Program & Schedule

Stay Connected with NAPAHE!

Find us on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram to join the conversation using #NAPAHE2026.

NAPAHE Mission Statement

NAPAHE strengthens the professions of its members through programming, networking, and professional development opportunities that address the broad range of roles fulfilled by professionals who support higher education's senior leaders.

NAPAHE Vision Statement

To be the association of choice for professionals who support leaders in higher education.

To Learn More, Visit:

<https://napahe.org/>