



PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE

October 1-2, 2026 | Orlando, Florida

STEADFAST

Leading with Clarity in an Unsteady Season

The role of the president has never been more demanding. Institutional leaders are called to navigate cultural change, enrollment pressures, financial realities, public scrutiny, and strategic decision-making while remaining steadfast in their commitment to biblical truth and institutional mission.

The Presidents Conference brings together experienced leaders to explore the challenges facing today's presidents through the lens of faithful leadership. Through practical presentations, candid discussion, and peer collaboration, participants will strengthen their capacity to lead with clarity, wisdom, and conviction during seasons of both opportunity and uncertainty.

This 1½-day conference begins at 9:00 AM on Thursday, October 1, and concludes with lunch on Friday, October 2.

Who Should Attend?

Designed for presidents, chancellors, chief executive officers, and executive leaders responsible for guiding the mission, strategy, and long-term health of biblical and Christian higher education institutions. Whether you are new to presidential leadership or have served for many years, this conference provides practical encouragement, peer learning, and leadership insights for today's higher education landscape.

What You'll Gain

- ▶ Practical leadership insights for today's most pressing challenges
- ▶ Fresh perspectives on leading faithfully through change and crisis
- ▶ Meaningful conversations with fellow presidents
- ▶ Ideas to strengthen your leadership and institutional effectiveness

Conference Experience

This conference combines practical presentations, interactive Q&A, and candid peer discussion to help presidents navigate today's leadership challenges with wisdom and confidence. Participants will learn from experienced leaders, engage colleagues facing similar opportunities and pressures, and leave encouraged for the work ahead.

Pricing

On-Site Registration

ABHE Members: \$500

Early Bird Member Rate: \$450

Non-Members: \$600

Early Bird Non-Member Rate: \$550

Early Bird Deadline: September 1, 2026

On-site registration includes full engagement in the conference program, Q&A participation, networking and fellowship with attendees and presenters, access to video recordings after the conference, lodging at the nearby Hilton Garden Inn for the nights of September 30-October 1, all conference meals and refreshments, and access to conference resources.

Virtual Registration

ABHE Members: \$200

Non-Members: \$300

Virtual registration includes full engagement in the conference program, Q&A participation, access to video recordings after the conference, and access to conference resources.

Location

Conferences are held at: The ABHE Weber Center, 5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Suite 130, Orlando, FL 32822
Virtual participants will join via Zoom.

Cancellation Policy

In the event of a personal registration cancellation, fees paid in advance are refundable, less a \$50 cancellation fee, provided written notice is received by ABHE no later than three weeks prior to the event. No refunds will be granted after that date. No refunds are provided for no-shows.

DAY 1 THURSDAY | OCTOBER 1

9:00 – 9:15 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS — Philip Dearborn, President | ABHE

9:15 – 10:00 SESSION 1: CONFIDENT LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS

Jack Briggs, USAF (Ret.), Founder & Crisis Consultant | Front Right Strategies LLC (CO)

You don't need to learn how to make decisions; you've been doing that your entire career. This session will help you make the ten hardest decisions you'll face this year with greater clarity, confidence, and conviction. Drawing on a lifetime of leading in high-stakes environments, and grounded in a biblical view of leadership, it offers practical tools to steady your thinking, sharpen your judgment, and lead well when the pressure is highest.

- ▶ Gain a biblically grounded framework for steadying your thinking amid high-stakes institutional decisions
- ▶ Sharpen your judgment with practical tools for navigating this year's toughest calls with clarity and conviction
- ▶ Draw on lessons from a lifetime of leading in high-stakes environments to deepen your own confidence under pressure

10:00 – 10:30 Q&A DISCUSSION

10:30 – 10:45 REFRESHMENT BREAK

10:45 – 11:30 SESSION 2: THE DESPERATELY NECESSARY MEETS THE SUDDENLY POSSIBLE

Scott Beck, Co-Founder & CEO | Gloo (CO)

Christian higher education is facing a defining leadership moment. As presidents navigate rising complexity, cultural pressure, and deep responsibility for forming the next generation, this session explores how emerging technologies can be stewarded with discernment and conviction as a force for good, and what it means to lead with courage and mission clarity for lasting impact.

- ▶ Explore how to steward emerging technologies with discernment and conviction
- ▶ Consider what it means to lead with courage and mission clarity under pressure
- ▶ Learn to shape students and institutions for lasting, next-generation impact

11:30 – 12:00 Q&A DISCUSSION

12:00 – 12:15 A WORD FROM OUR CONFERENCE SPONSOR — Gloo

12:15 – 1:00 LUNCH BREAK

1:00 – 1:45 SESSION 3: CHRIST, CRAFT, AND CULTURE: REDESIGNING THE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE VALUE PROPOSITION

Connor Champion, Founding President | Austin Christian University (TX)

Enrollment and trust pressures are pushing Christian colleges to prove their value to skeptical students and parents. This session examines a model built around spiritual formation paired with marketplace competence and entrepreneurial training, using ACU's "Christ, Craft, Culture" framework and startup accelerator as a working case study. Discussion focuses on adapting these elements within existing programs and accreditation constraints, without requiring a full institutional rebuild.

- ▶ Articulate a market-tested value proposition linking faith formation to career outcomes.
- ▶ Identify entry points for entrepreneurship training within existing degree programs.
- ▶ Evaluate faculty and governance changes needed to sustain this integration.

1:45 – 2:15 Q&A DISCUSSION

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DAY 1 CONTINUED

2:15 – 2:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

2:30 – 3:15 SESSION 4: (LESSONS FROM) LEADING UNDER FIRE

Steve Brown, President | Columbia Bible College (BC)

No president expects to face a public crisis, but every leader should prepare for one. This session offers a candid reflection from a new college president whose leadership was suddenly tested by intense social media pressure, media scrutiny, and cultural controversy. You'll come away with personal and practical lessons about leadership, faith, crisis management, and resilience.

- ▶ Develop a proactive crisis readiness posture that prepares your institution, board, and team
- ▶ Gain firsthand insight into navigating social media pressure, media scrutiny, and cultural controversy
- ▶ Discover how faith, resilience, and Christlike character anchor presidential leadership under intense public pressure

3:15 – 3:45 Q&A DISCUSSION & WRAP-UP

3:45 – 4:00 A WORD FROM OUR CONFERENCE SPONSOR — CampusEDU

5:00 – 6:30 DINNER — Sponsored by CFO Colleague

DAY 2 FRIDAY | OCTOBER 2

9:00 – 9:15 INSIGHTS FROM THE WORD — Philip Dearborn

**9:15 – 10:00 SESSION 5: SOLDIER, ATHLETE, FARMER:
A PICTURE OF PRESIDENTIAL FAITHFULNESS**

Todd Williams, President | Cairn University (PA)

In his second letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul hands his young protégé three vivid pictures of faithful service: the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. This session applies that same charge to the particular demands of institutional presidency, where staying focused on mission amid political and cultural pressure, holding to integrity when competitors cut corners, and tending the slow work of stewardship are not abstractions but daily decisions. This pattern both helps a president ensure the weight of the call and provides a template that, lived out faithfully at the top of an institution, shapes the kind of graduates it ultimately produces.

- ▶ Examine 2 Timothy 2:1-9 as a working framework for presidential focus, integrity, and long-term stewardship
- ▶ Identify the political, donor, and cultural pressures most likely to pull an institution off mission, and develop personal safeguards against that drift
- ▶ Consider how a president's faithfulness to this calling shapes the institutional culture that forms graduates in turn

10:00 – 10:30 Q&A DISCUSSION

10:30 – 10:45 REFRESHMENT BREAK

10:45 – 11:30 SESSION 6: ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: CHARTING YOUR PATH FORWARD

Discuss the most pressing presidential issues you are facing with both the panel of presenters and attendees. Draft your own Personal Action Plan based on the most significant and urgent issues you should address following the conference.

11:30 – 12:00 Q&A DISCUSSION & WRAP-UP

12:00 – 12:15 A WORD FROM OUR MEAL SPONSOR — Caylor Solutions

12:15 – 1:00 LUNCH

Questions?

For registration or conference questions, email conferences@abhe.org or call us at (407) 207-0808

With Appreciation

ABHE gratefully acknowledges the sponsors and partners whose support helps make this Leadership Development Conference possible.



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