STUDENT DEVELOPMENT
LEADERS CONFERENCE

November 3-4, 2026 | Orlando, Florida

FORMATION BY DESIGN

Student development leaders shape far more than student activities. They influence campus culture, spiritual formation, institutional policies, conflict resolution, and the environments where students grow as disciples and future leaders. Every decision, system, and relationship contributes to the formation of students, whether by intention or by default.

The Student Development Leaders Conference equips leaders to approach that responsibility with greater purpose and confidence. Through practical presentations, interactive discussion, and collaborative learning, participants will explore how to design campus environments that foster student flourishing, strengthen institutional policies, navigate conflict with wisdom, support underserved students, and cultivate intentional spiritual formation. You'll leave encouraged, equipped, and prepared to strengthen student development at your institution.

This 1½-day conference begins at 9:00 AM on Tuesday, November 3, and concludes with lunch on Wednesday, November 4.

Who Should Attend?

Designed for vice presidents of student development, student life leaders, deans of students, residence life leaders, campus pastors, student success professionals, and others responsible for student development, campus life, and student engagement. Whether you oversee a large student life division or serve in multiple leadership roles, this conference provides practical guidance specifically for biblical higher education.

What You'll Gain

- Practical strategies for strengthening student development and campus life
- Fresh ideas for fostering student formation and engagement
- Meaningful conversations with fellow student development leaders
- A Personal Action Plan to guide your next steps after the conference

Conference Experience

This conference combines practical presentations, interactive Q&A, and peer discussion to help student development leaders strengthen the systems, relationships, and environments that shape students every day. Participants will engage experienced practitioners, learn from colleagues across biblical and Christian higher education, and leave with practical ideas they can begin applying immediately.

Pricing

On-Site Registration

ABHE Members: $500
Early Bird Member Rate: $450

Non-Members: $600
Early Bird Non-Member Rate: $550

Early Bird Deadline: October 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 November 2-3, 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 TUESDAY | NOVEMBER 3

9:00 – 9:15 **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

Eric Brandt, Leadership Academy Director | ABHE

9:15 – 10:00 **SESSION 1: DESIGNING CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTS FOR STUDENT FORMATION**

Andrew Martin Frazier, VP for Enrollment Management | Johnson University (TN)

Every space on campus shapes how students think, connect, and behave, whether or not anyone designed it that way. Student development leaders are positioned to shape physical, social, and spiritual spaces intentionally, within existing budgets. Learn to read your campus environment, identify high-impact spaces, and bring that perspective to institutional decisions.

- Understand how environments shape student behavior and formation on your campus
- Identify the spaces and places on your campus with the greatest impact on students
- Advocate for a seat at the table when institutions make decisions about campus design

10:00 – 10:30 **Q&A DISCUSSION**

10:30 – 10:45 **REFRESHMENT BREAK**

10:45 – 11:30 **SESSION 2: POLICIES, SCHMOLICIES: SERVING STUDENTS, PROTECTING THE INSTITUTION**

Rick Swift, VP of Student Life | Southern Wesleyan University (SC)

Policies are integral to student development leadership, providing clear direction, consistency, and protection in challenging campus situations. Are yours current, overdue for an overhaul, or recently revised after an incident? You'll leave with practical guidance for strengthening your policies, and your own experience may become a resource for a fellow ABHE colleague.

- Know which policies your institution needs for legal protection and student support
- Know the policy development process accreditors require to serve your institution
- Connect with colleagues who can help with ongoing policy maintenance

11:30 – 12:00 **Q&A DISCUSSION**

12:00 – 12:15 **A WORD FROM OUR CONFERENCE SPONSOR**

12:15 – 1:00 **LUNCH BREAK**

1:00 – 1:45 **SESSION 3: CONFLICT: FROM CONFUSION TO CLARITY**

Ryan Ward, Director of Academic/Church Initiatives & Resource Development | Relational Wisdom 360 (MT)

Conflict arises on campus—among students, staff, or faculty—threatening culture, growth, and mission success. It can be disorienting, complex, and historical, often involving sin that requires discipline and restoration. Student development leaders play a key role in resolving conflict. To guide others toward resolution, you should learn to:

- Identify the root causes, making needed remedies visible
- Separate personal from substantive issues, highlighting which resolution path to take
- Examine responses and heart motives to find God-honoring, lasting progress

1:45 – 2:15 **Q&A DISCUSSION**

DAY 1 CONTINUED

2:15 – 2:30 **REFRESHMENT BREAK**

2:30 – 3:15 **SESSION 4: EQUIPPING THE CALLED: DEVELOPING OVERLOOKED STUDENTS**

Tina Villarreal, VP of Student Engagement | Stark College & Seminary (TX)

Many students walking through your doors are first-generation, ministry-called, and underserved—often carrying burdens the higher education system wasn't built to ease. As a student development leader at an ABHE institution, you can be the difference. This session draws on frontline experience creating pathways for minority students where the traditional playbook doesn't fit.

- Identify barriers that most disrupt persistence for underserved students
- Apply equity-informed practices to student development aligned with your mission
- Champion underserved students in institutional decisions on access and formation

3:15 – 3:45 **Q&A DISCUSSION & WRAP-UP**

5:00 – 6:30 **DINNER**

DAY 2 WEDNESDAY | NOVEMBER 4

9:00 – 9:15 **INSIGHTS FROM THE WORD** — Eric Brandt

9:15 – 10:00 **SESSION 5: FORMED, NOT JUST INFORMED: STRUCTURES THAT MOVE STUDENTS TO PRACTICE**

Bethany Thomas, Senior VP of Student Development & Campus Services | Southeastern University (FL)

Christian college students want to grow spiritually and value spiritual disciplines, yet struggle to practice them. This is a design problem, not a motivation problem-and student development leaders are positioned to solve it. This session explores building intentional formation structures that move students from aspiration to practice.

- Understand the gap between students' spiritual desires and formation habits
- Design relational and programmatic structures for consistent spiritual engagement
- Integrate spiritual formation into your broader student development strategy

10:00 – 10:30 **Q&A DISCUSSION**

10:30 – 10:45 **REFRESHMENT BREAK**

10:45 – 11:30 **SESSION 6: ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION**

Discuss the most pressing issues you're facing with the panel of presenters and fellow attendees. Leave with your own Personal Action Plan, focused on the most significant and urgent takeaways to address when you return to campus.

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

12:00 – 1:30 **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.

REGISTRATION OPEN

abhe.org/conferences