NCURA Region 2 Virtual Fall Meeting
Sessions at a Glance

Clinical	
Building Trust and Protecting Participants: Maintaining Compliance with ClinicalTrials.gov	It is scientifically and ethically imperative for researchers to understand it is a key commitment to our research participants to report the results of the clinical trials, so that we can advance knowledge, make informed medical decisions about health care, and build trust collectively. This session will discuss the most recent federal mandates, requirements, and enforcement of clinical trials disclosure, as well as updates and best practice identified in the research community. The presenter will share the approach that Rutgers' Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) has taken to establish a robust program, identify key issues and facilitate investigators to maintain compliance with clinical trials registration and results reporting at their institution.
Compliance	
A Culture of Compliance: Research integrity through shared values	Research integrity is often treated as a box to check—policies, trainings, audits. But what if we treated it as a cultural opportunity instead of a compliance burden? This session explores how embedding shared values like transparency, curiosity, and accountability into the fabric of research teams can foster integrity more organically—and more effectively. Drawing on real-world examples from research administration and cultural change work at Carnegie Mellon, we'll examine the power of peer influence, storytelling, and rituals in creating environments where doing the right thing feels like second nature. Attendees will leave with strategies to move beyond enforcement toward engagement.
Achieving Compliance Through Compassion: An Innovative Cognitive-Based Shift in Research Administration	With increasingly rigorous regulations imposed on research institutions and investigators, ensuring integrity and compliance of research conduct has become even more challenging for key players. Scientific findings about cognitively-based compassion training may shed light on new ways research administration may achieve compliance. The speaker will discuss perspectives on the relationship between regulations and compassion, share case studies and anecdotes of practice through compassion training and the application of compassion in professional settings. Through dynamic interactions, the audience could expect to experience a taste of addressing research compliance challenges through cognitively-based compassion trained skills. Application of these skills have shown promise in overcoming obstacles of communication and management issues, ensuring delivery of quality assurance service, empowering investigators, furthering the desired research outcome, and collectively cultivating a culture of compliance.
Contracting	
Overcoming Negotiation Intimidation	It's one of the most feared events in a research administrator's life—the big negosh. In this session, you'll learn and practice negotiating techniques with your colleagues to make this intimidating process a bit more comfortable. Learn how to build rapport, compromise when needed, explain your position clearly, and avoid frustrating stalemates. Plus, we can all talk about our most challegning negotiation and what lessons we took away.
Attacking a Large Other Transaction Agreement or Federal Contract Head-on	We plan to provide participants the tools, tips, and skills necessary when facing the daunting task of processing a large Other Transaction Agreement (OTA) or Federal Contract. We will use our University experiences and some of our lessons learned through our awards. We will present best practices for approaching these agreements so that other institutions have the best experience possible. We will touch on the use of the Federal Acquisition Regulations and other regulations, etc. and the importance of a project manager or use of a CRO (for clinical trial situations).
Contract Management Management **WORKSHOP**	It's 4:30 on a Friday afternoon before a long weekend. You've reviewed and redlined the entire 47-page agreement and have one last sentence to edit before sending it back to the sponsor. For the past 23 minutes, you've been searching for that one email, from 4 years ago, with that one nugget of information that explains precisely how to edit this sentence. Did it go to the server 'cloud?' Did you delete it? The horror! If this has happened to you or if that paragraph makes you anxious about the possibility of it happening, join us for a workshop to help build a virtual reference library. This is a how-to for creating team resources to maintain consistent institutional reference material and streamline contract negotiations. We will demonstrate the tools our team utilizes to review terms and conditions, evaluate Microsoft-based applications, and discuss techniques to administer shared resources.
Contract Review: Break It Down	Reviewing a whole contract can be intimidating! In this session, we'll offer tips and tricks to break the process down into smaller steps.
Understanding Confidentiality and Material Transfer Agreements: Purpose and Application	Are you confident in guiding your Principal Investigator through Confidentiality and Material Transfer Agreements, or do you often defer to legal counsel for review and negotiation? As a research administrator, understanding these agreements is crucial. This session will provide a clear overview of the essential contracts that facilitate everyday collaboration between investigators, sponsors, and third parties. We'll delve into their purposes and examine the key components that make these agreements vital to the research process.
Departmental	
Grow with Training Grants	This session will give RAs new to training grants a primer on navigating pre- and post-award best practices with training grants. Participants will explore key funding mechanisms of training grants. Using NIH T32s and NSF REUs as examples we will dive into training grant specific proposal requirements - including data tables and mentor training expectations. Then we'll walk through how to implement the training grant once it is awarded. Participants will discuss tracking expenses by trainee, compliance with unique budget categories, and keeping tabs on individual trainee requirements. Finally, assess training participant sense of belonging and ways to evaluate and improve the program.

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Research Administration Data Management: Make Excel Work for You	This session is designed to help research administrators use the power of MS Excel in your daily work life. Participants will learn how to use essential functions like XLOOKUP and VLOOKUP, SUMIF/SUMIFS, data validation using drop-down options, and other ways of simplifying complex data sets. We will also explore best practices for organizing information, including pulling multiple data sources together into something more robust and actionable. By the end of the session, attendees will be equipped with practical skills tailored to the unique needs of research administration. This is not a theoretical session. Data workbooks will be provided via a cloud drive on the day of the session for those who want to follow along. Learning Objectives: 1. Get insights into ways to better understand and streamline your data 2. Learn to organize, display, and analyze data effectively to support better decision-making
Research Support Services—An innovative approach to supporting your grant management office during high-volume periods and staff shortages.	In our session, we will explore common challenges faced by grant administrators and departments, such as being short-staffed, vacancies, and sudden surges in workload. We will also present the system that MGB Research Management implemented to effectively tackle these issues.
Mentor Me: Establishing Your Role: Departmental Post-Award Administration	This presentation will focus on Departmental Post-Award research administration roles. This presentation will explore defining your role as a post-award administrator in the sea of research administration. We will explore key differences between what central offices can do versus departmental, and how your role is vital bridge between PI and Central Offices.
Mentor Me: AI Strategies for the Reluctant Research Administrator	Discover practical ways to integrate AI into research administration pre-award tasks with minimal cost and training. This session highlights real-world strategies for proposal support, funding opportunity analysis, compliance checks, and reviewer simulations, while addressing ethical considerations and best practices for implementation. Participants will leave with actionable AI prompts and tools to enhance efficiency and support faculty success.

Updates and Miscellaneous Sessions	
NSF Update	Update from NSF
COGR: General Update	Join COGR for a session that explores the evolving federal regulatory landscape and its impact on research. This session will provide an overview of COGR's role in shaping national policy by "Advancing Effective Research Policy." Attendees will gain insight into recent and upcoming federal policy changes, COGR's ongoing initiatives, and opportunities to engage in open discussion on key challenges. Don't miss this chance to connect with peers and contribute to the conversation on policies that shape the future of research.
Generative AI in Research Administration	In this 90 minute hands-on session, participants will explore generative AI tools that might be useful in research administration work. We will highlight the limitations and costs of these tools and why to approach their use with care and skepticism. The session will promote the use of the TaMPER Framework to guide our exploration of various AI tools and applications.
COGR: Research Security Update	Join representatives from COGR for a focused discussion on the rapidly evolving federal landscape of research security. This session will cover recent and upcoming federal actions with direct implications for sponsored programs, including disclosure and reporting requirements, foreign influence considerations, data protection measures, and compliance oversight. Participants will also learn about tools and resources available through COGR to support institutional compliance and will have the opportunity to exchange perspectives and strategies with peers.
Senior Leadership Hot Topics **WORKSHOP**	This 2 ½-hour Senior Hot Topic workshop will provide a timely and in-depth look at two critical issues shaping research administration today. The session will begin with a presentation on the evolving FAIR Model for Facilities & Administrative (F&A) Costs, led by a panel of experts who will explore current debates, policy developments, and strategies for sustaining research infrastructure in the face of funding pressures. A second presentation will focus on Research Security, highlighting compliance requirements, risk management, and institutional strategies for safeguarding research integrity, along with Federal Agency requirements and how universities will meet these new requirements. Each presentation will be followed by a dedicated question-and-answer period, allowing participants to engage directly with our subject matter experts. The workshop will conclude with an open discussion forum, where attendees may raise additional questions or emerging concerns for dialogue with the expert panel and fellow senior leaders. This interactive format is designed to foster candid conversation, peer exchange, and practical insights on any other pressing challenges facing the research community.

Human Capital & Professional Development	
Delivering a Professional Elevator Pitch and Networking on the Fly	Whether you're networking, interviewing, or introducing yourself in professional settings, a strong elevator pitch can open doors. In this interactive virtual workshop, participants will learn how to craft and deliver a clear, compelling, and confident introduction in under 60 seconds. Participants will learn the elements of a successful pitch, hear tips for speaking with authenticity and poise, and leave with a polished pitch of their own.

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Building a Career in Research Administration **WORKSHOP**	Research administration is a dynamic and impactful field that plays a critical role in advancing science, scholarship, and innovation. Whether you're new to the profession or looking to grow in your current role, this workshop offers a practical roadmap for building a successful and fulfilling career in research administration. Participants will explore key career pathways, essential skillsets, professional certifications, networking strategies, and opportunities for advancement across various institutional settings. We'll also discuss how to align your career with personal values, organizational mission, and the evolving research landscape. Join us to gain insights, inspiration, and tools to navigate and thrive in this rewarding profession.
Workload Measurements–A More Realistic Approach to Staffing Our Offices **WORKSHOP**	Why is it that even when fully staffed, our workloads are still so overwhelming? Simply put, because “fully staffed” is not the same thing as “adequately staffed”. If there are no vacancies and our employees are still overwhelmed, the problem may be rooted in a miscalculation of the number of positions needed to handle the workload in the current environment. Traditional methods of measuring the staffing needs of a department often neglect significant realities around the cognitive nature of the work we do, the amount of non-transactional activities we engage in, and most importantly the high variability of knowledge and experience within the workforce. A more robust and sustainable model of staffing is possible when we start thinking and talking about our profession and the workforce in a more comprehensive, reality-based way. This workshop presents a bold new way of assessing the needs of research administration offices that will result in more balanced workloads, greater employee retention, and more compliant operations. During this interactive workshop, attendees will apply concepts learned in the context of their own office arrangements. We will assess the composition of their current workforce and determine the capacity FTE (capFTE) of their employees. We will discuss at a high level how to more comprehensively assess the workload of their offices and strategize ways to advocate for additional positions using data points translated to dollars. Attendees will leave with a foundation from which to build more thoughtful workload assessments and staffing models.
Lead with Confidence in Post-Award Management: Valuing Your Research Administration Expertise	This session is designed to empower post-award professionals to recognize their critical role in research administration. Participants will share strategies for leading with confidence, communicating their value, and navigating complex collaborations where their expertise may be overlooked. This discussion group will provide a collaborative space for research administrators to share experiences, exchange insights, and strengthen their expertise through open dialogue. Learning Objectives: Highlight the unique contributions post-award teams make to research administration and project success, focusing on their ability to support faculty effectively while ensuring compliance with institutional and sponsor requirements. Share strategies of post award compliance to lead with confidence and advocate for your role as a subject matter expert.
Next-Level Interviews	Whether you're applying for a new position or looking to move up with a promotion, it's crucial to nail your interview. Matt Herrick has provided media training to Cabinet Secretaries, CEOs, and non-profit leaders as well as career mentoring for 20+ years. He'll provide a framework for the interview, how to tell your unique and authentic story, how to tackle tricky questions with ease and confidence, and more tips to make your interview sizzle!
Mentor Me: Riding the Roller Coaster of Change and Transition: How to Make the Most of It	It is inevitable that change occurs, but how we manage the transition of change can be challenging. Although change can lead to short-term uncertainty, in the long run, it can ultimately strengthen both individuals and teams. This discussion will center around identifying how you and team members may handle the process of transition and come out stronger on the other side.
Using In-Box Zero to Improve Research Administration	In-Box Zero can improve your day-to-day work in research administration by ensuring that nothing "falls through the cracks." Paradoxically, a full in-box can cause you to lose track of emails, but filing emails in a manner that makes sense for controlling deliverables reduces this possibility. An added benefit to this method is peace of mind, something that is greatly needed in our deadline driven occupation.
Performance Reviews: Now With 50% Less Dread!	Are you a manager? Do you think performance appraisals are the worst? Are you someone who has a supervisor? Do you think performance appraisals are the worst? This session will give some tips and best practices to maximize the annual performance review for both managers and those who do self-appraisals.
Bridging The Divide of Multigenerational Pre and Post Research Administration	When it comes to creating a cohesive pre and post award there are often communication barriers that seem impossible to overcome. Add the multigenerational dynamics and you get each team posturing for culpability and getting nowhere. Do your team members shy away from having interactions with PIs? How do we mitigate the inevitable challenges caused by differences in work style, communications preferences, and technological proficiencies? This session will explore the communication issues surrounding research administration. We will outline strategies to aid in conversations, meetings and communications with your staff and constituents. This session will discuss building communication strategies and networks that will improve service.
CRA Exam Prep Q&A	Preparing for the Certified Research Administrator (CRA) exam can feel overwhelming, but you don’t have to navigate the process alone. This interactive session, CRA Exam Prep Q&A, will begin with a brief overview of the exam structure, application process, and what to expect on test day. From there, the session will transition into an open question-and-answer format, allowing participants to dig deeper into study strategies, recommended resources, and insights from personal experiences. Whether you are just beginning your preparation or fine-tuning your study plan, this session is designed to provide practical guidance, clarity, and encouragement as you work toward earning your CRA credential. Becca recently passed the CRA Exam, and Jeff is a former Chair of the Research Administrators Certification Council.

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Mentor Me: Playing in F Major, and Singing in F-sharp"**: Communicating (Improvising) Toward a Common Goal	Communication is a lot like musical improvisation: ideally, everyone is working with and around any "wrong notes" in order to understand each other enough to accomplish the task at hand (a product that is pleasing to the ear!). I will go over some common styles of communication, methods for understanding and working with these styles of communication, and, lastly, some coping/self-control tips for the inevitable, frustrating conversation in which everyone seems to be "improvising" individually in F Major, F-sharp Major, or something else. **In reference to Tim Minchin's song "F Sharp"
Preparing Grad Students for Research Administration Careers: an Overview of the Pathways for Graduate Students Pilot Program	In 2024, Lehigh University launched the GRANTED: Pathways for Graduate Students into the Research Enterprise program ("Granted"). Granted is an NSF-sponsored program offering 1-2 year paid graduate assistantships and internships for senior doctoral students to provide the training and direct work experience necessary to prepare for a career in research administration, research development, research compliance, or technology transfer. As universities continue to prioritize research growth, and proposals and awards become increasingly complex, there is a rapidly growing national need for professionals trained in administrative research roles to support grant-seeking and award management. Workforce development in this area is increasingly recognized as a priority by funding agencies and universities. Participants in this conference session will learn about the structure and design of the Granted program, results from our first year, adjustments we have made to the program in response, our challenges and successes, and plans for ongoing implementation. Participants will learn strategies for providing training opportunities that efficiently and effectively prepare grad students for in-demand careers in research administration.
Embracing Compassion: Reimagining Research Administration **WORKSHOP**	In today's fast-paced research environment—marked by increasing workloads, tight deadlines, complex regulations, and diverse interpersonal dynamics, research administrators are challenged to lead with clarity, resilience, and purpose. To navigate these demands effectively, embracing compassion is not just a personal choice but a professional imperative. This interactive workshop invites participants to explore the power of compassion—including self-compassion—as a transformative force in research administration. Through reflective exercises and experiential activities, attendees will gain insight into our shared human nature and innate capacity for compassion. We will review scientific findings on the benefits of compassion training across various settings, highlighting its impact on well-being, decision-making, and professional growth. Participants will also learn practical tools and perspectives that can be cultivated through intentional practice. By the end of the workshop, participants will be equipped with evidence-based strategies to foster a more compassionate work culture—one that supports personal well-being, enhances collaboration, and contributes to a more equitable and just professional landscape.
Enduring in Hard Times	Enduring in Hard Times is a thoughtful and practical session designed to support us through life's challenges and transitions. We will explore the emotional impact of difficult seasons, the importance of processing what we are experiencing, and the inner strength that can grow through adversity. This session offers practical tools and strategies to help us manage stress, stay grounded, and build simple, sustainable habits that foster resilience and well-being.
Leading Where You Are: The Power of Managing Up	In research administration, we find that leadership often happens without a formal title. Whether we are supporting faculty, managing compliance, or coordinating across departments, we are influencing decisions every day. This session is about recognizing and embracing that influence by using managing up as a practical leadership skill to lead from wherever we are. It will explore what managing up really means, focusing on clear communication, aligning with leadership goals, and building mutual trust. Through real-world examples such as helping a new principal investigator navigate institutional systems, managing up during a grant deadline crunch, and advocating for process improvements with leadership teams, the session will examine how these skills show up in day-to-day work. Participants will learn actionable strategies to anticipate supervisors' needs, adapt communication styles for greater impact, offer solutions instead of simply pointing out challenges, and navigate issues like unclear expectations or difficult personalities with professionalism and confidence. The session will include a mix of presentation, reflection prompts, and interactive Q&A. It will also introduce tools such as communication frameworks and prioritization techniques to help participants become key players in contributing to the
Benchmarking for Impact: Driving Institutional Growth, Innovation, and Competitive Advantage	In today's fast-paced and competitive higher education landscape, staying ahead requires a deep understanding of your institution's strengths, gaps, and untapped opportunities. Benchmarking—comparing institutional performance against peers—is a proven strategy to gain this insight. Let's delve into comparative institution selection and data interpretations and then discuss how benchmarking can be an opportunity for growth.

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The Cost of Prestige: Examining Bottom-Line Mentality in Research Administration	As research institutions face increasing pressure to secure funding, maintain top-tier rankings, and enhance their global reputation, a bottom-line mentality (BLM) has emerged as a dominant force shaping research administration practices. While prioritizing institutional success is essential, an unchecked focus on prestige-driven outcomes can lead to unethical pro-organizational behaviors (UPB), leniency for high performers, and governance challenges. This session will explore the prevalence and consequences of BLM in research administration, highlighting how the pursuit of prestige influences decision-making, ethical standards, and workplace culture. Attendees will gain insights into how BLM manifests in funding allocations, compliance oversight, faculty evaluations, and research reporting. The discussion will also examine real-world case studies where BLM-driven pressures have resulted in research misconduct, grant misreporting, and reputational damage for institutions. Through interactive discussions, participants will explore strategies to balance institutional ambition with ethical governance, ensuring that research administration structures support integrity, accountability, and sustainable success. This session is ideal for research administrators, compliance officers, institutional leaders, and faculty members committed to fostering ethical and effective research environments.
Navigating Offices of Research Administration	The many moving pieces and parts of Research Administration can be overwhelming to a new research administrator. This session will lay the foundation for navigating the various offices of research administration in your institution and provide space for discussion and conversation to help new research administrators navigate the maze within their own institutions.
Mentor Me: Imposter Syndrome and Management	Imposter Syndrome is something most of us have felt but isn't often discussed openly. This session will review what imposter syndrome is, how it affects our work (and home) life and how it can be managed in ourselves and those we work closely with.
Post-Award	
Research Administration Jeopardy: Post Award Edition!	Join us online for a lively and interactive session of Research Administration Jeopardy: Post Award Edition! This virtual game show-style presentation brings post-award grant management to life with engaging questions across categories like compliance, financial reporting, subawards, and effort certification. Participants will team up, test their knowledge, and compete for virtual prizes and bragging rights—all from the comfort of their own workspace. Whether you're a seasoned pro or just getting started in research administration, this session offers a fun and collaborative way to reinforce key concepts and share best practices. Cameras on, buzzers ready—let the games begin!
Making the Case for Allowability	Yes, pre- AND post-award folks need to know about allowable costs. Why? Because everyone needs to know what costs are and aren't allowable since not only shouldn't they be approved, but unallowable costs shouldn't be put into proposals in the first place. This discussion group will share ideas on how to define and determine allowable and reasonable costs by understanding sponsor guidelines, federal regulations, and institutional policies. The facilitator and participants will highlight and discuss their own unique situations they've encountered in determining allowability of costs and discuss the current audit environment and findings as they relate to Uniform Guidance Subpart E: Cost Principles.
From Concept to Collaboration: Launching Research Support Services in Higher Education	Lehigh University embarked on the implementation of a new process for proposal development which was to utilize departmental/college support to initiate and build a proposal in coordination with faculty. Unfortunately, the initial uptake was not as successful as hoped and as a result our central sponsored programs office built a Research Support Services Team. This session will provide the background and foundation for building our support services, discuss the challenges of these changes, the successes and where we are going next in our research support journey.
Pre-Award	
The Just In Time Handoff; A case study of proposal transition from pre-award to post-award	This session will focus on case study approaches to methods for transitioning proposals from a pre-award team to a unit's post-award grant manager. The presenters Stephanie Scribner, pre-award specialist, and Shannon Corrigan, post-award manager, work in a shared services model out of the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences Dean's Office of Research at the University of Maryland. They will discuss the methods they have put in place to assist in a smooth transition, specifically focusing on Just in Time requests and award set up. These cases will include their interactions with faculty, department representatives, and central offices to ensure they are both recognized as points of contact for the project's life cycle from proposal to award.
Smarter Submissions: Leveraging AI in the Pre-Award Process	This session will explore practical applications of AI in pre-award services, with a focus on how these tools can improve efficiency, reduce administrative burden, and enhance proposal competitiveness. I will share examples of how AI can support funding searches, generate standard content, and assist with formatting and compliance checks. At the same time, the session will highlight critical risks and considerations, including data privacy, accuracy, ethical use, and the need for clear institutional guidelines.

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Racing to the Finish Line: The Critical Roles of Your Pit Crew	The Research Administrator (RA) is a crucial part of the Principal Investigators (PI) team in their pursuit of research funding. RAs are essential during the research cycle (aka The Racetrack) of an award, through prepping the proposal, supporting its implementation, and all the follow up reporting. This interactive session will provide RAs with an overview of the aspects of collaboration needed between Pls, Department Administration, Central Offices, and Sponsors to navigate the conditions of the racetrack. We will focus on following faculty and their team through a proposal race from the solicitation starting line to the final submission. When the PI just wants to drive, and the central office and sponsors are laying down regulations, department administrators play a critical role in bridging the gap so everyone can reach the checkered flags. The goal for this session is to provide perspectives of each side of the pre-award process and an overview of the tools and strategies used to effectively communicate. We will look at different scenarios, such as proposal timelines, science driven budget needs, sponsor policies, post award implementation, and more. During these examples, we will focus on Pl and RA communication, collaboration and ways to streamline the process. Participants will feel confident they can win the race and leave with stronger communication skills and a deeper understanding of PI perspectives.
Thriving in Academia: Early Career Research Development Essentials	We will present best practices for early career research development from the perspective of an R1, MSU (almost an R1), a PUI, and ERI. The session will be formatted as a panel discussion administrators from varying types of IHE discussing how they support faculty in creating a plan and strategies for thriving in academia.
Predominantly Undergraduate Institutions (PUI)	
Identifying Strengthens and Barriers in Implementing Research Development at PUIs and ERIs	We will provide an update on BANNER-PUI, our NSF GRANTED convenings grant, focused on developing practical tools and ideas for overcoming barriers to deploying research development practices at PUIs and ERIs. This project aimed to develop recommendations to explore, demonstrate, and evaluate pathways to mitigate the challenges of research development for sponsored STEM research at PUIs and ERIs, which represent approximately 1700 institutions of higher education. Summaries from three regional, in-person two-day workshops and one virtual workshop took place in late summer 2024 with 67 participants will be presented. A tool for assessing the Grant Development Ecosystem will be included.
Arranging Deck Chairs on the Titanic: A Community College Experience	The year 2025 has been one of the most volatile in the history of sponsored programs in the United States, affecting all types of institutions. Montgomery College (MC) in Maryland is a large multi-campus institution in the Washington, DC suburbs with a robust level of external funding from federal and state agencies. Our federal grant portfolio includes several awards from the Department of Labor, Department of Education, Department of Homeland Security, and National Science Foundation (NSF). As of May 2025, one award has been cancelled outright, and two of our programs were identified as “questionable” projects funded by NSF. This session will reveal how MC’s grants team has worked with principal investigators, administrations, and collaborators to forecast and mitigate the risks created by executive orders and other adverse actions. We will provide concrete actions and strategies that are relevant to community colleges and other undergraduate institutions, and that can be helpful for other postsecondary institutions facing cancellations and similar challenges.