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### Letter from the Chair



As summer winds down and the rhythm of fall classes and football picks up, I wanted to share a quick update as we enter the final stretch of the year.

#### Highlights from the Past 8 Months:

- We kicked off the year with sessions on executive orders impacting higher ed, leaning on each other for insights and support – one of our community’s greatest strengths. We’ve hosted 8 sessions, with strong participation (52 members have attended at least one of the sessions). Special thanks to our colleagues at Caldwell, Segal, Huron, Deloitte, and CUPA.
- Two CHRO Academy cohorts reconvened this summer for professional development with colleagues from Deloitte. Learning Partners sponsored two sessions on Legislative Outlook and Executive Orders: **Impact on CHROs** and **What is the Role of Higher Ed HR Professionals Now?**
- A major focus has been exploring future options for ARU-HRI. After thoughtful discussions – including with founding members – the board voted in August to remain independent, strengthen governance by adding two board seats, and two new executive committee members.

#### Looking Ahead:

Our November conference in Washington, DC is quickly approaching, and I encourage everyone to make attending a priority. We’ll also begin the important process of selecting a new president for ARU-HRI. Laurita Thomas, has been outstanding in her role as president of ARU-HRI and is ready to retire. With a wealth of experience and visionary leadership, she has led us to a stronger, more engaged organization. Her wisdom, wealth of knowledge, national presence is second to none. Her leadership has strengthened our community, and we are grateful for her service.

As we enter the final stretch of the year, we remain a strong community of leaders. The road ahead includes important milestones – from our November conference to the presidential transition – and I’m confident we’ll navigate them successfully. Thank you for your continued engagement, insight, and dedication to advancing HR in higher education.

Cheryl Reardon, *Chair*  
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

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## From the President



Dear Colleagues  
and Friends,

Serving as your President over the past six years has been one of the greatest honors and joys of my professional life. Together, we've grown ARU-HRI

into a more strategic, connected, and resilient community – one that I am deeply proud of and forever grateful to be part of.

Through challenges like the pandemic, we adapted with grace – launching virtual annual conferences and expanding opportunities for learning and sharing. Our membership flourished, engagement soared, and we built new bridges through partnerships with CUPA-HR and the AAU. We created the Inform newsletter, sustained major sponsorships, and brought the CHRO Academy to life. We also laid the foundation for long-term sustainability with a thoughtful financial strategy and membership model. But beyond the milestones, what I will cherish most are the relationships we've built. I've been inspired by your leadership, your commitment to excellence, and your generosity of spirit. Supporting you in your journeys as world-class CHROs has been a privilege I will never forget.

As I prepare to fully retire at the end of December, I do so with a full heart and deep confidence in the outstanding Board of Directors. The search for your next President is in the capable hands of Eugene Whitlock and the Board's Executive Committee, and I will be here to ensure a smooth and supportive transition.

I hope to see many of you at our annual conference in Washington, DC, November 10-12, 2025 – one more opportunity to celebrate our shared journey and the friendships that will last well beyond titles and roles.

You will always have a fan in me.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Laurita Thomas  
President, ARU-HR Institute  
[president@aru-hrinstitute.org](mailto:president@aru-hrinstitute.org)  
734-355-2404

## Upcoming Webinar: September 10, 2025 at Noon ET

### *Igniting Teams: A People Analytics Blueprint for Collaboration and Change*

Please join Todd Lingle of Caldwell Analytics, along with Eugene Whitlock for a discussion on how we can help our teams unlock hidden value, work more cohesively and efficiently together, and thrive through periods of unprecedented change.

Senior executives in higher education have a tough job that is getting tougher all the time. Having survived a global pandemic, leaders today face new headwinds: geopolitical and policy uncertainty, stagflation, shifting trade policies, budget deficits, and countless other disruptions. Any one of these is enough to derail a leader's agenda; taken together, it's a more difficult operating environment than any we can remember.

Human Capital leaders, their teams, and their client teams are feeling the weight of current market volatility, decreased budgets, executive orders and evolving regulations, and the pressure to adapt quickly. A focus on budget-driven restructuring can lead to disengagement, burnout, and a lack of team cohesion that has a real impact on performance.

- On our best days, leaders and their teams experience feelings of accomplishment, alignment, connection, and high levels of trust and psychological safety.
- In challenging times, they experience overload, stress, anxiety, confusion, isolation, and operational friction that has a negative impact on the team's ability to deliver outcomes.

*“To enable institutional agility, higher education leaders must ensure that resources are allocated in a mission-focused way that supports the institution's long-term goals.” – Deloitte*

Synergizing team strengths brings out the best in everyone. Leaders must focus on the big picture and help connect individual abilities to create a high-performing team.

People & Culture teams are so focused on their clients that they often fail to invest in themselves. They want to support client teams as they restructure, and help the team leaders build or rebuild team culture.

People & Culture teams and their client teams can all benefit from understanding how they can work together more cohesively and efficiently. Caldwell recommends developmental programs focused on:

- **Self-Awareness** – Deepen understanding of individual motivations, strengths, and growth areas
- **Team Awareness** – Gain insight into collective behavioral dynamics to align talent with mission
- **Alignment** – Apply insights and strategies to connect individuals and teams around shared goals
- **Advancement** – Leverage new skills to strengthen collaboration, navigate institutional change, and sustain performance.



## See you in D.C. November 10-12, 2025!!!

Our 15th annual conference – **HR in Higher Education: Driving Partnership, Innovation and Resilience** – will be at The Royal Sonesta Washington D.C., Capital Hill on November 10-12. The conference agenda will be posted on our website: [aru-hrinstitute.org](http://aru-hrinstitute.org) the first week of September. Members will receive an RSVP confirmation form for your attendance the first week of September as well. Then you should make your travel arrangements! There are many highlights to plan for:

### KEYNOTE:

**President Barbara R. Snyder**, AAU

### FOUNDER'S SESSION:

**Keith Sonderling**, United States Deputy Secretary of Labor

### POST-CRISIS LEADERSHIP:

**Ralph Gigliotti, PhD.**, Rutgers University

There are many opportunities to listen and share with your peers on the fast changing world of HR and Higher Education

We encourage you to plan ahead to visit with your government relations staff on Wednesday afternoon while you are in D.C. These are important CHRO collaborations, especially now. Our conference planning team led by Romy Riddick, Princeton and Diana Dutton, McGill University, are eagerly planning a productive and meaningful time together. *See you soon!*



## Advancing CHRO Leadership in Higher Education:

### ARU-HRI Launches Next-Gen Academy Experience

Under the leadership of Board Members, Manuel Cuevas-Trisán and Shari Mickey-Boggs, and with continued partnership from Deloitte Consulting, ARU-HRI has taken a bold step forward in 2025 to evolve its CHRO Academy into a next-generation leadership experience. Building on two successful years and cohorts, the Academy merged its 2023 and 2024 participants to launch a refreshed format, beginning with a dynamic virtual session in June.

This inaugural session focused on 2025 Higher Education Trends and Managing Change, offering participants a forward-looking lens on the evolving landscape of higher ed and the HR function. We were honored to feature insights from Kat Ladd of Deloitte, alongside a distinguished panel of sitting CHROs:

- **Felicia Washington**, University of Pennsylvania
- **Manuel Cuevas-Trisán**, Harvard University
- **Patrick Sheehan**, University of Wisconsin–Madison
- **Richard Holcomb, Jr.**, University of Michigan

Their generous contributions helped frame a rich dialogue around the strategic challenges and opportunities facing HR leaders today.

### KEY THEMES EXPLORED:

- **Caring for Ourselves and Our Teams**  
Elevating well-being and resilience as foundational leadership competencies during times of transformation.
- **Adapting the Higher Education Business Model**  
Responding to financial pressures with innovative, sustainable institutional strategies.
- **Navigating a Shifting Labor Market**  
Enhancing agility and responsiveness to meet evolving workforce expectations and talent dynamics.
- **Responding to Leadership Changes**  
Managing transitions in senior university leadership and their ripple effects on culture and strategic direction.
- **Harnessing AI Across Campus**  
Exploring the integration of artificial intelligence to enhance operations, learning, and decision-making.
- **Embracing Systemness**  
Leveraging system-wide approaches to drive collaboration, efficiency, and shared value across institutions.

For those interested in a deeper dive into the broader trends shaping higher education, the Deloitte 2025 Higher Education Trends Report is available on their website.

We look forward to continuing this important work with our Academy cohorts during our second virtual session, scheduled for November 2025.

## Transitions

**You will be missed, thank you for your service in ARU-HRI. Best wishes in your next venture.**

**Cleo Rucker** has transitioned from his role as CHRO at Vanderbilt University.

**Dr. Sydney Savion**, Vice Chancellor for People, Culture, and Belonging will be the new contact (sydney.savion@vanderbilt.edu). During these complex and challenging times, Sydney is deeply committed to ensuring that Vanderbilt remains focused on driving the meaningful change that lies at the heart of ARU-HRI's shared mission.

## Job Posting: President – ARU-HR Institute

**Remote Position, Part-time, Contractual relationship, Executive Leadership**

*Reports to: ARU-HR Institute Board of Directors*

### About ARU-HR Institute

The ARU-HR Institute is a premier membership organization dedicated to advancing excellence in human resources, organizational leadership, and workforce development. We are committed to shaping the future of HR practice, research, and education by empowering Chief Human Resource Officers at the most important research universities in the U.S. and Canada, fostering innovation, and building strong partnerships. See: <https://aru-hrinstitute.org/>.

### Position Overview

The Board of Directors invites applications and nominations for the role of President of ARU-HR Institute. The President will serve as the chief executive officer, and in partnership with the Board of Directors, is responsible for setting strategic direction, ensuring operational excellence, strengthening the institute's academic and professional reputation, and building impactful partnerships.

### Key Responsibilities

- Provide visionary leadership to advance the mission, values, and strategic goals of ARU-HR Institute.
- Lead the development and execution of long-term strategies to expand the institute's membership services principally professional development programs.
- Represent the institute to internal and external stakeholders, including government agencies, corporations, professional associations, and international partners.
- Drive financial sustainability through developing sponsors, partnerships, and responsible resource management.
- Foster a culture of innovation, inclusivity, collaboration, and continuous learning.
- Oversee governance, compliance, and risk management in alignment with best practices.
- Inspire, mentor, and empower members and students to achieve excellence in their fields.

### Qualifications

- Experience as a CHRO in a highly complex research University.
- A degree in Human Resources, Business Administration, Organizational Leadership, Education, or a related field, or the equivalent professional experience.
- Minimum of 10-15 years of senior leadership experience in higher education, research institutes, or professional organizations.
- Demonstrated success in strategic planning, and internal and external relationship management.
- Strong understanding of human resources trends, workforce development, and organizational leadership.
- Proven track record of financial stewardship, and partnership building.
- Exceptional communication, negotiation, and interpersonal skills.
- Commitment to welcoming, ethical and respectful leadership.

### How to Apply

Interested candidates should submit a cover letter, detailed resume, and a statement of leadership philosophy to [president@aru-hrinstitute.org](mailto:president@aru-hrinstitute.org) by September 15, 2025.

