

## Reflections from Our 15th Anniversary Conference: WHAT WE LEARNED AND WHAT'S NEXT

The 15th Anniversary Conference was held in November in Washington, DC, a setting that proved quieter than expected due to the government shutdown. To mark this milestone, we had a dinner on Monday evening for which several past (retired) board chairs joined in our celebration of the Institute's history and impact. Our founder, Ken Hutchinson, provided a wonderful trip down memory lane to describe the beginnings of the organization.

The conference was well attended, with 45 of the organization's more than 70 members participating, including five members attending for the first time. The Board extends its sincere gratitude to the conference's grand sponsors—TIAA, Segal, and Caldwell—and to their representatives who joined us throughout the three-day event.

Conference evaluations indicated that program sessions were highly valuable, with networking and social opportunities receiving especially strong ratings. One of the highest-rated sessions focused on artificial intelligence, reinforcing the growing importance of this topic for CHROs. In response, the Board and the Learning Partners Committee are already exploring ways to further support members in their continued learning and adoption of AI.

At the start of the conference, members introduced themselves and shared one word that described the current year in higher education. Words such as challenging, changing, accountability, impactful, adapting, flexible, courage, and brave captured the collective experience of the group. Members also offered ideas for future conference topics, including AI, teams, benefits, succession planning, strategic priorities, athletics, workforce planning, and mental health. These and other suggestions will be considered by the Conference Planning Committee as it begins developing the 2026 agenda in Newport Beach, California.

## TRANSITIONS

**Christine Lovely** has moved from Cornell to UCLA. Below is the announcement from UCLA.

Christine Lovely has been appointed vice chancellor for campus human resources and chief people officer, effective December 18, 2025. In this role, Lovely will report directly to the chancellor and the executive vice chancellor and provost and will serve as a member of the Chancellor's Cabinet.

Lovely brings more than two decades of leadership experience in human resources across complex academic and public sector organizations. She previously served as vice president and chief human resources officer at Cornell University and prior to that she served as chief human resources officer at UC Davis, where she led major organizational initiatives in workforce planning, talent development, and labor and employee relations.

As UCLA's inaugural vice chancellor and chief people officer, Lovely will oversee the full scope of campus human resources and will provide strategic guidance to ensure that UCLA continues to recruit, develop, support and retain the talented staff who advance our mission of teaching, research and public service. She will work closely with leaders across academic and administrative units to build a cohesive and strategic approach to staff workforce development and organizational effectiveness.

**Amanda Bailey** left Boston University in August 2025, and is now the interim CHRO at Oregon State. Amanda has made significant leadership contributions to the ARU-HR Institute. We will miss her, and wish her well in her future endeavors.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**TBD**  
**Keith Sonderling, US Deputy Secretary of Labor**, was scheduled to speak at the 2025 Conference and had to cancel due to the government shutdown. He has graciously agreed to do a webinar presentation in 2026. You will receive an email invite when this event is scheduled. You are free to invite a few of your HR leaders to join you.

**July 29-31**  
**CHRO Academy** in Dallas at Deloitte University (nominations begin February)

**November 9-11**  
**Annual Conference** and Meeting in Huntington Beach, CA.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

It is an honor to begin my tenure as President of this remarkable organization. I am deeply grateful to Laurita Thomas for her incredible contributions and generous support during my onboarding. Her guidance has been invaluable, and I am reassured knowing she is always just a phone call away.

Having attended the inaugural conference 15 years ago, I know firsthand the importance of this network and the immense value it provides to each of you. After retiring from a fulfilling 40-year career in higher education and healthcare—including the last 15 years in CHRO positions—I am excited to support our goals for 2026 and the continued growth of our organization.

We are currently updating the ARU-HRI website to enhance your access to resources and connections within our community. Please visit the site, and reach out to me for support, resources, or to connect with fellow members.

I look forward to working together and supporting the mission that makes our organization so special.

*Betsy Rodriguez*



## FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

I'm excited and honored to step into the role of Board Chair for ARU-HRI, and I'm genuinely looking forward to the year ahead. This community continues to be a place where CHROs can learn from one another, think boldly about the future of our institutions, and support each other through the very real challenges of this work. I also want to begin by thanking Cheryl Reardon from the University of Iowa ("Go Hawks!") for her outstanding leadership as Board Chair in 2025. Her steady guidance and thoughtful stewardship positioned ARU-HRI well for the years ahead.

Our Board has set four clear goals for the year:

- Strengthening learning for CHROs and the CHRO leadership pipeline.
- Strengthening our financial foundation and administrative sustainability.
- Expanding strategic partnerships and ARU-HRI's influence as a thought leader.
- Deepening member engagement while increasing the visible value of membership.

Together, these goals reflect both where we've been and where we believe ARU-HRI can go next.

One of the most energizing signs as we begin the year has been the response to our committee interest process. By the time this newsletter goes out, more than half of our membership will have raised their hand to serve—an extraordinary level of engagement and possibly a new record. If you haven't yet expressed interest, there's still time, and we would love to hear from you.

I'm also especially excited about the return of the CHRO Academy, which directly supports our commitment to leadership development and succession planning.

I approach this year with optimism and gratitude, and I'm excited about what we'll accomplish together.

*Eugene Whitlock*



## 2026 BOARD MEMBERS

In order to provide more resources to the organization the board expanded to 13 members for 2026. Below are the names of the 2026 board members and the Committee (Co-) Chairs. Additional information about the board is available on the website.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Eugene Whitlock**

*Chair*

University of California-Berkeley

**Helena Rodriguez**

*Vice Chair*

University of Arizona

**Cheryl Reardon**

*Past Chair*

*Co-Chair, Partnerships Committee*

University of Iowa

**Jeff Herring**

*Treasurer*

*Chair, Finance Committee*

University of Utah

**Diana Dutton**

*Secretary*

McGill University

### BOARD MEMBERS

**Manuel Cuevas-Trisán**

Harvard University

**Shari Mickey-Boggs**

*Co-Chair, CHRO Academy*

University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign

**Melissa Curry**

*Co-Chair, CHRO Academy*

University of Florida

**Ramona Agrela**

*Co-Chair, Annual Conference Committee*

University of California-Irvine

**Romy Riddick**

*Co-Chair, Annual Conference Committee*

Princeton University

**Christine Lovely**

*Co-Chair, Learning Partners*

University of California-Los Angeles

**Ken Horstman**

*Co-Chair, Learning Partners*

University of Minnesota

**Patrick Sheehan**

University of Wisconsin