

Welcome to Newport Beach, California!

On behalf of the 2026 ARU-HRI Conference Planning Committee, we are thrilled to welcome you to Newport Beach, California, for our 16th Annual Conference at the beautiful [Hyatt Regency Newport Beach](#). We have an exciting agenda in store for you, packed with timely topics and opportunities for lively discussion and collegial connection, including our Tuesday evening dinner during which we will have the opportunity to enjoy an off-site meal together and a carefree evening!

About Newport Beach

Newport Beach is a scenic coastal city in Orange County, California, celebrated for its sandy beaches, expansive recreational harbor, and relaxed coastal atmosphere. Located about 40 miles south of Los Angeles, the city offers a distinctive blend of beach culture, excellent dining, boutique shopping, and outdoor recreation. Our agenda is designed to give you time to enjoy the surrounding area and take in the best of this beautiful destination. Please see the flyer below for additional information about the surrounding area and attractions.

Attire for the conference is business casual, and we encourage attendees to consider Wednesday, the final day of the conference and the travel day home, school pride day, so be sure to don your school swag! We note that early November in Newport Beach brings mild, sunny days (upper 60s–70s°F) and cool evenings — pack a light jacket.

The airport closest to the conference hotel is the John Wayne Airport (SNA), Santa Ana, California. Alternative airports are available, but please note that traffic tends to be heavy and they are a significant driving distance to the Hyatt Regency.

We look forward to seeing you!

On behalf of ARU-HRI,

*Ramona Agrela 2026 Conference Co-Chair
Senior Vice President, UCI Health and
Vice Chancellor, Human Resources, UC Irvine*

*Romy Riddick, 2026 Conference Co-Chair
Vice President for Human Resources & CHRO
Princeton University*

NEWPORT BEACH & BEYOND

A Local's Guide for AAU-HRI Annual Conference Participants & Guests • Newport Beach, CA • November 2026

STEPS FROM THE CONFERENCE

- **Fashion Island** — Open-air shopping, restaurants, and ocean-view patios — a 5-minute rideshare from most Newport Beach hotels.
- **Balboa Peninsula & Fun Zone** — Classic boardwalk, arcade games, and the famous Balboa Bar; rent a bike or stroll the beach path.
- **Newport Pier & The Wedge** — Watch surfers and bodyboarders tackle one of the world's best-known shore breaks.
- **Lido Marina Village** — Boutique waterfront shopping and dining just across the channel from the peninsula.

ON THE WATER

- **Balboa Island Ferry** — A 3-car ferry to charming Balboa Island — walk Marine Avenue's shops and grab a frozen banana.
- **Sunset or Dinner Cruise** — Harbor cruises depart regularly from the peninsula, showcasing waterfront mansions and yachts.
- **Whale & Dolphin Watching** — Year-round tours spot gray whales, dolphins, and sea lions just offshore.
- **Catalina Island Ferry** — A scenic day trip to Avalon departs right from the harbor for those with an extra day.

COASTAL & OUTDOOR

- **Crystal Cove State Park** — Tide pools, bluff-top trails, and a historic beach cottage colony; ideal for an early-morning walk.
- **Corona del Mar State Beach** — Calm water, tide pools, and cliffside views — a short drive south of the harbor.
- **Sherman Library & Gardens** — A quiet botanical retreat in Corona del Mar, perfect for a relaxed hour between sessions.
- **Newport Back Bay** — A scenic nature preserve with walking and biking trails around the estuary.

WORTH THE DRIVE

- **Laguna Beach** — Art galleries, coves, and cliffside dining — about 20 minutes south.
- **South Coast Plaza** — One of the country's premier shopping destinations, 15 minutes north in Costa Mesa.
- **The Resort at Pelican Hill** — Iconic Newport Coast golf course and coastal-Italian architecture worth a look, even for non-guests.
- **Huntington Beach** — "Surf City USA" — a lively pier and boardwalk about 25 minutes northwest.
- **Disneyland** — About 30-45 minutes from the hotel.

GOOD TO KNOW: Early November brings mild, sunny days (upper 60s–70s°F) and cool evenings — pack a light jacket. Rideshare is the easiest way to get around; Balboa Island and Fashion Island are both an easy walk or short drive from most conference hotels.