UNIVERSITY INNOVATION ALLIANCE

# Annual Report 2025

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# Letter From the CEO

Dear Colleagues,

In 2025, the University Innovation Alliance crossed another threshold that matters.

Since our founding, UIA institutions have produced 183,500 additional graduates beyond projected baselines. Those gains include significant increases among low-income students and students from historically underserved backgrounds. This progress did not come from isolated pilots or temporary grants. It came from sustained collaboration, shared accountability, and a willingness among major public research universities to take collective responsibility for results.

**183,500**

Additional graduates beyond projected baselines

A decade ago, we asked a simple question: Could large public research universities innovate together and improve student outcomes at scale? The answer is now clear. Yes. And we have the data to prove it.

This year, our 19 member campuses continued strengthening student success systems, removing barriers to progression, and embedding innovation into core academic structures. Through Academic Recovery, Listening Labs, faculty-led course redesign, and governance alignment work, campuses moved from experimentation to durable implementation. Leaders shared what worked and what did not. They aligned policy, practice, and data. They built capacity that will outlast any single project.

The UIA model remains distinct in higher education. Presidents and provosts lead the work. Institutions commit resources and hold themselves accountable. The Alliance provides the infrastructure to accelerate learning, scale effective strategies, and openly diffuse what we build. We do not substitute for campus leadership. We strengthen it.

As you read this report, you will see evidence of disciplined execution across the network. Thousands of faculty, advisors, administrators, and students contributed to this progress. Their work reflects what is possible when universities refuse to accept that scale and access must compete, or that collaboration requires sacrificing institutional identity.

The next chapter is clear. **Completion is necessary, but not sufficient.** Student success must translate into mobility. In the years ahead, we will deepen our focus on career readiness, college-to-career alignment, and ensuring that degrees deliver measurable economic value for all students.

The work continues. The stakes remain high. And this network is built for long-term impact.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership.

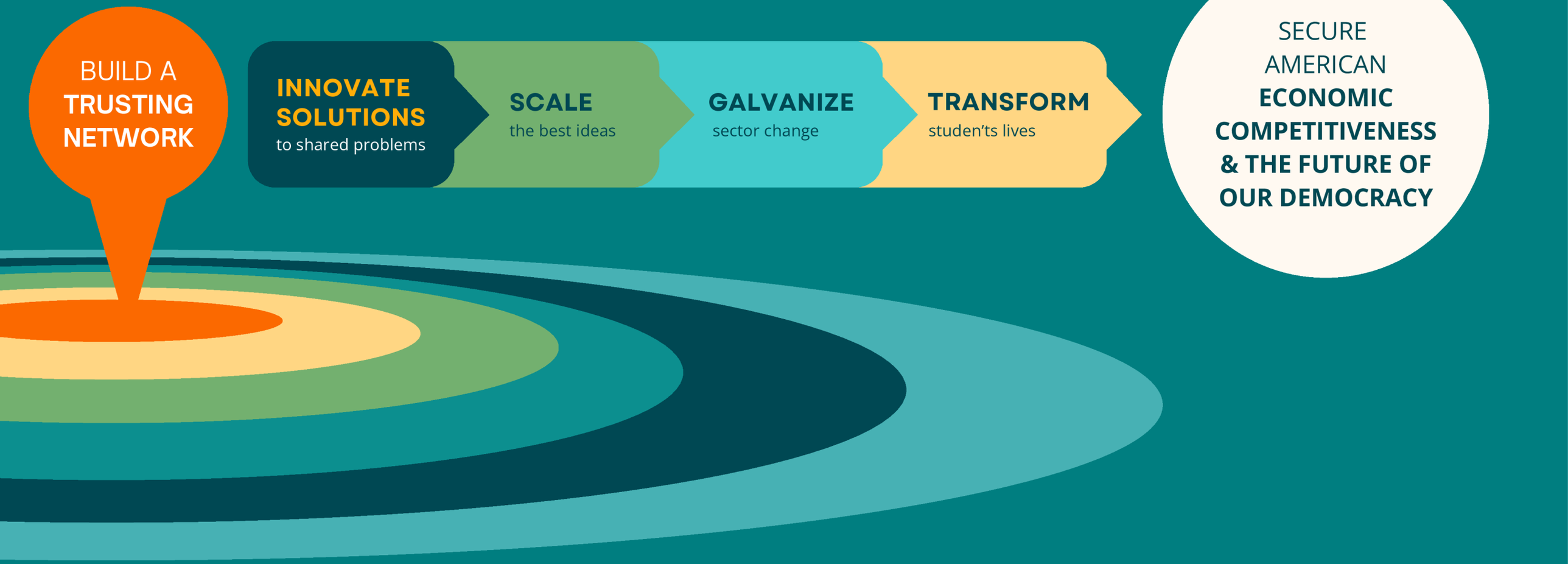
**Bridget Burns**
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

UNIVERSITY INNOVATION ALLIANCE

# About the UIA

The University Innovation Alliance (UIA) is a national consortium of innovative, forward-thinking institutions, serving as a national laboratory for student success innovation. Together, we are transforming higher education through bold collaboration, accelerating the implementation and scaling of proven strategies to dramatically improve student success—ensuring every student can graduate and contribute to America's economic competitiveness.

**A trusting network is the central enabler of the UIA's proven theory of change.**

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# Impact, Scale, & Growth

In twelve years, the UIA has moved from a pilot to systemic transformation at scale. The UIA was built to answer a question skeptics said couldn't be answered: **Can large public research universities actually collaborate, innovate together, and improve outcomes at scale?**

The answer is in the numbers.

**183,500 additional graduates** have been produced since UIA's founding, beyond what baseline projections predicted. These are students who might have stopped out, dropped off, or never finished. They finished.

Our 19 campuses now collectively graduate 127,000 students annually. Thirty percent are Pell-eligible. This is not a pilot program. This is system-level change.

**Among the original eight institutions since 2012-13:**

Total annual graduates: **+43%**

Low-income graduates: **+51%**

Graduates of color: **+110%**

These numbers matter because they represent something higher education has struggled to deliver: improvement for all students without trading off scale or institutional mission.

This is what disciplined collaboration produces.

Our new target is to achieve undifferentiated outcomes regardless of student background, ensuring that background no longer predicts outcome.

**Our north star is a world where**
**EVERY STUDENT GRADUATES CAREER-READY.**

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# How the Alliance Works

The UIA is not a traditional intermediary organization or consortium. We are a president-and-chancellor-led innovation network through which **public research universities take collective responsibility for national challenges.**

All initiatives are designed and led by member institutions themselves. Presidents, chancellors, and provosts set priorities, commit institutional resources, and remain accountable for results within their own universities. The Alliance provides shared infrastructure: alignment, measurement, and mechanisms for diffusion.

This institution-driven model enables deeper coordination among campus leaders, clearer governance structures, and more rigorous shared accountability. Innovation originates within universities, is tested through institutional practice, and is scaled through peer learning rather than centralized control. This structure ensures that reforms are durable, context-specific, and owned by institutions.

These shared practices ensure that innovations reach more students and deliver measurable improvements where they matter most.

**INNOVATE**

solutions to shared problems

We activate the creativity and expertise of our campuses to tackle shared student success challenges, using rapid learning cycles to identify the strategies with the greatest promise for impact.

**SCALE**

the best ideas to help students

When evidence confirms a strategy works, the UIA transforms it from a single-campus success story into a multi-state solution, reaching more students with each iteration.

**DIFFUSE**

learning across the sector

Through playbooks, live content, and the University Innovation Lab, our insights and tools travel far beyond this network, enabling faster progress across higher education.

Progress achieved reflects direct institutional action rather than intermediary delivery. Campuses lead implementation, integrate initiatives into their academic and operational systems, and measure outcomes against shared goals. This distinction is fundamental to the Alliance's effectiveness and essential to advancing public purpose, civic trust, and measurable impact across higher education.

# Current Scale Projects

**Collaborative scale projects** are the engine of the UIA's impact. They transform promising campus innovations into systemwide solutions, tackling shared challenges with bold, data-driven strategies.

These projects are advanced through annual events and communities of practice, where member campuses exchange insights, build skills, and share data through the UIA Lab and project lead meetings. The results speak for themselves — evidenced in the measurable outcomes and powerful stories from participating institutions.

In 2025, the UIA continued advancing large-scale initiatives that removed barriers to student momentum, strengthened teaching and learning, and elevated the voices of the students we serve. Across the Alliance, collaboration once again delivered progress that no institution could have achieved alone.

# Academic Recovery Initiative

*Strengthening momentum in critical gateway courses*

Modeled on Georgia State University's Accelerator Academy, eleven campuses implemented structured retake pathways for students who earned a D, F, or W in foundational courses. A D, F, or W grade in a gateway course can derail a student's entire trajectory, yet these outcomes are often treated as individual failures rather than institutional challenges.

These were not simply second chances. They were redesigned learning experiences that included subsidized retake sections, supplemental instruction, and proactive academic coaching.

In 2025, the initiative supported more than **1,400+ students across 18 gateway courses.** Pass rates improved significantly. More importantly, campuses built sustainable infrastructure for catching students before they fall out of the system entirely.

**1,400+** students participated in 18 courses

**83%** **retention rate** vs 53% at peer institutions

| Participating Campuses |
|---|
| Arizona State University |
| Georgia State University |
| North Carolina A & T |
| Oregon State University |
| Purdue University |
| University of California, Riverside |
| University of Central Florida |
| University of Colorado Denver |
| University of Illinois Chicago |
| University of Utah |
| Virginia Commonwealth University |

## The Breakthrough

**The Assumption:**

Students fail because they lack academic preparation

**The Reality:**

Students fail because of work schedules, family obligations, health crises, and life complexity

## What Worked

- Instructor **quality** & **intentional assignment**
- **Required** (not optional) **embedded supports**
- Faculty **sharing their own struggles**
- **Course redesign**—not course repeat
- **Text messages from professors,** not scholarship offers

"Unbelievably valuable learning lesson coming from a group that had not done this work before. It would have taken us much longer if there was not the support from the UIA, the playbooks, the willingness to give us some funding to support it, as well as access to other people and institutions to get their lessons and help us think through this and address issues we encountered. **Having a cohort to work through, ask questions, and share experiences enabled us to move more quickly and with greater confidence.** Without that network and shared learning environment, the work would have been significantly more difficult and slower."

**– Jim Agutter,** University of Utah

Ascendium
Frederick A. DeLuca FOUNDATION

We are grateful to **Ascendium Education Group and the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation** for their support of this project.

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# Listening Lab for Transformation

*Student voice shaping strategy and redesign*

Surveys tell you what students select from a menu. Focus groups tell you what they actually think. The Listening Lab project trains campuses to hold facilitated conversations that surface barriers, friction points, and opportunities that quantitative data misses.

Thirteen campuses listened to **404 students across 85 focus groups. Forty-five new moderators** were trained during the second phase. What emerged was not a critique of institutions, but a clearer picture of where communication breaks down, where students feel unseen, and where small adjustments could make large differences.

One participant captured the shift: "If we want this work to have actual implications, it's important that we examine the systems that create these issues, as opposed to individual people."

That systems-level thinking is exactly what Listening Labs are designed to produce.

**404** students participated in 85 focus groups

**45** moderators trained

> “I just like the whole aspect of this focus group— getting to **get the stuff off my chest that I didn't think I could**. And also being here with people who kind of had the same experience as me, it just makes me feel not alone in the whole process...Now that I know that there are people, not just in this meeting, but just in general that have experienced the same thing, it helps.”
>
> **— Focus Group Participant**

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

**We are grateful for a grant from the Kresge Foundation to support this work.**

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# Scaling Faculty-Led Academic Innovation

*Faculty transforming learning where it matters most*

Course redesign only works when faculty own it. Fifty-five faculty members across 14 campuses implemented and evaluated new teaching strategies in high-impact STEM courses, redesigning 24 foundational courses and **improving learning experiences for more than 7,200 students**.

This is not about mandating new pedagogy. It is about giving faculty the space, support, and peer community to experiment, learn, and iterate. The result is instructional improvement that lasts because it belongs to the people who teach.

| Participating Campuses |
| --- |
| Arizona State University |
| Iowa State University |
| Michigan State University |
| North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University |
| Purdue University |
| University at Buffalo |
| University of California, Riverside |
| University of Colorado Denver |
| University of Illinois Chicago |
| University of Maryland, Baltimore County |
| University of Massachusetts Amherst |
| University of New Mexico |
| University of Utah |
| Virginia Commonwealth University |

## The Breakthrough

**The Assumption:**

Faculty innovation happens through individual heroics and spontaneous creativity.

**The Reality:**

Faculty innovate at scale when given structure, time, peer accountability, and shared tools.

## What We Built

- Innovations Inventory
- Evaluation Rubric & Redesign Toolkit
- National faculty community of practice
- Replicable implementation framework
- e-Learning modules

**Early outcomes:**

- Higher attendance, improved pass rates, reduced anxiety, stronger confidence

axim collaborative

**We are grateful to Axim Collaborative for their support of this project.**

# Scaling Innovation in Higher Education

*Building the infrastructure for change that lasts*

Higher education has long struggled to take effective student success innovations to scale across institutions. Promising interventions emerge regularly, yet few achieve sustained, systemic impact.

The Scaling Innovation work directly addresses this gap by **building a practical governance framework that aligns leadership strategy, institutional policy, and decision-making structures**. It equips leaders, governing boards, funders, policymakers, and change agents with the tools to embed innovation into how an institution actually operates.

This is the least glamorous work we do. It is also the most important.
If you cannot embed innovation into how an institution actually operates, the innovation will not survive. This project ensures that it does.

**Download the Playbook**

**Try Self-Paced e-Learning**

Gates Foundation

We are grateful to **the Gates Foundation** for their support of this project.

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# University Innovation Lab

*Building capacity for student-centered change at scale*

The University Innovation Lab is where practitioners build the skills that make campus transformation possible. In 2025, the Lab reached a milestone: **1,000 members across more than 30 campuses,** with **316 new members** joining this year alone, **a 40% year-over-year increase.**

This is not a passive resource library. Lab members engage in structured learning experiences, hands-on cohorts, and cross-institutional problem-solving. In 2025, the Lab delivered 15 structured learning experiences and 10 information sessions, reaching more than 260 practitioners. Eighty-nine leaders completed intensive training in process mapping, focus group moderation, and academic recovery support.

Cohort-based learning has become the Lab's signature offering. What began as two cohorts in 2023 grew to eight in 2025, with seats consistently filling and waitlists forming. Participants report that these experiences provide accountability, peer feedback, and direct application to their work.

Lab membership now spans all 19 UIA campuses and includes practitioners from 10 non-UIA institutions. This is diffusion in action: UIA methods reaching campuses beyond our network, accelerating progress sector-wide.

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# Lab Impact Spotlight

## ACADEMIC RECOVERY COACHING COHORT

In February, the Lab piloted its first Academic Recovery Coaching Cohort. Nineteen leaders from Texas Tech University, University of North Florida, and University of Arkansas completed a five-week intensive designed to help campuses launch structured supports for students navigating academic setbacks. Participants learned to analyze course data, select target courses, build recruitment strategies, and map implementation plans. This extended the impact of UIA's Academic Recovery Initiative beyond Alliance membership, deepening project impact and diffusing methods across the sector.

## EMPOWERED IN MATH WORKSHOP AT PURDUE

In September, the Lab partnered with Purdue University to deliver a two-day cross-functional workshop focused on improving student outcomes in foundational math courses. Participants from faculty, staff, and K-12 partner organizations identified pain points, surfaced systemic barriers, and co-created pilotable solutions including human-centered syllabi and improved placement strategies. The workshop fostered meaningful collaboration and laid a foundation for sustainable improvement in math education outcomes.

## PROCESS MAPPING COHORT AT UMASS AMHERST

In Fall 2025, the University of Massachusetts Amherst completed a six-week process-mapping cohort. Participants from 12 offices across campus learned to map and improve processes that affect students and staff, identifying bottlenecks and redesigning systems for better service. Spearheaded by UIA Liason and Associate Provost for Student Success Carolyn Bassett, this initiative demonstrates how institutions can build campus-wide capacity for continuous improvement.

# Diffusion to the Field

The UIA's impact does not stop at member campuses. Through media, events, and direct knowledge-sharing, we ensure that what we learn reaches practitioners and policymakers across higher education.

# Innovating Together Podcast

Broadcast in partnership with Inside Higher Ed, the Innovating Together podcast has become a trusted resource for higher education leaders. Each episode features honest conversations with practitioners and presidents who are translating ideas into action. The series consistently ranks among the top 8% of higher education podcasts.

**199** episodes

**300K+** Total Downloads

We are grateful to **Mainstay** and the **Carnegie Corporation of New York** for sponsoring the podcast.

# Weekly Wisdom and Social Media

Through our Weekly Wisdom series, now in its seventh year, we share leadership lessons from sitting presidents and chancellors. This year, we posted more than 650 times, broadcast 46 livestreams, and reached more than 275,000 screens. Across platforms, UIA content has generated more than 9 million lifetime impressions and built an audience of 29,000+ followers.

# Newsletter

**Our newsletter** reaches more than 10,000 practitioners working to improve higher education. Nearly half open each issue, a sign that the content is landing where it matters. Readers come for practical ideas, stories that spark imagination, and tools they can use immediately.

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# Leadership Advancing the Mission

Across the UIA, leadership is distributed. Presidents and chancellors set the vision. Provosts translate strategy into academic priorities. Liaisons drive implementation. Fellows and campus teams build the infrastructure that turns innovations into student impact. Together, this network of leaders is the engine that drives progress.

## Board of Presidents and Chancellors

Our Board ensures the UIA remains bold in purpose and accountable in outcomes. These presidents and chancellors champion collaboration across institutional boundaries, reinforcing that student success is a shared national priority.

**President Michael Crow,** Arizona State University, Chair
**President M. Brian Blake,** Georgia State University
**President Wendy Wintersteen,** Iowa State University, Co-Vice Chair
**Chancellor James R. Martin, Jr.,** North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
**President Alexander Cartwright,** University of Central Florida, Co-Vice Chair
**President Jayathi Murthy,** Oregon State University
**President Mung Chiang,** Purdue University
**President Kevin Guskiewicz,** Michigan State University, Executive Committee
**Chancellor S. Jack Hu,** University of California Riverside
**Chancellor Marie Lynn Miranda,** University of Illinois Chicago, Executive Committee
**President Valerie Sheares Ashby,** University of Maryland Baltimore County
**President Michael Rao,** Virginia Commonwealth University
**Chancellor Kenneth Christensen,** University of Colorado Denver
**President Satish Tripathi,** University at Buffalo
**President Garnett Stokes,** University of New Mexico
**President Taylor Randall,** University of Utah
**Chancellor Javier Reyes,** University of Massachusetts Amherst
**President John Fry,** Temple University
**President Michael Amiridis,** University of South Carolina

**In 2025, Temple University and the University of South Carolina joined the Alliance.**

Since 2020, the UIA has selectively expanded by identifying institutions that share our commitment to data-driven improvement, transparency, mutual accountability, and ambitious improvement in student outcomes for all students.

## Governance Evolution

In 2025, the UIA formalized its distributed leadership structure by launching the Provost Advisory Council and the Liaison Advisory Council. These bodies strengthen shared decision-making, reinforce campus ownership of reform efforts, and ensure coordinated execution across programs. During a year of significant leadership transitions across the network, this governance model enabled member institutions to sustain momentum on learning redesign and student success priorities while positioning the Alliance to scale its work with rigor and accountability.

# Looking Ahead

The UIA's next chapter is rooted in a simple but ambitious conviction: student success must translate into social and economic mobility.

Building on a decade of improving completion outcomes, our campuses are now exploring new opportunities to better support students at both ends of the educational journey: the transition into higher education, where choices about institution and major shape long-term outcomes, and the pathway beyond graduation, where degrees must connect to careers and economic value.

In the year ahead, the Alliance will deepen its work where students face the highest stakes: navigating college choice and major selection, gaining real momentum toward careers while still in the classroom, and strengthening partnerships that align talent development with regional economic opportunity.

We will continue sharing what we learn through new public playbooks and resources designed to help institutions accelerate progress for more students.

The UIA remains committed to innovation that helps students not only earn a degree, but build the lives they envision. Completion opened the door. Mobility is what lies beyond it.

# Thank You to Our Partners

**We are grateful to the philanthropic leaders who invest in innovation across the Alliance. Their partnership enables us to accelerate progress, extend our impact, and ensure more students thrive in higher education.**

Ascendium

Michael & Susan Dell Foundation

Gates Foundation

Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation

axim collaborative

ECMC Foundation

The Kresge Foundation

Carnegie Corporation of New York

Lumina Foundation

# Our Member Institutions

**Most importantly, we thank our 19 member institutions. Your commitment to collaboration and to the students who inspire this work every day makes the UIA possible.**

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# Connect With Us

UNIVERSITY INNOVATION ALLIANCE

Stay connected as we continue advancing student success together.

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