

HEALTH & WELL-BEING LEADERS SECTION NEWSLETTER

OUR STRATEGY

Purpose: A multidisciplinary group of professionals across higher education who seek to advance the role of the executive wellness/well-being leader to ensure a whole community/whole person approach to the well-being of the institutions we serve.

Vision: To grow campus health leaders to advance the strategic integration of health and well-being for the institutions they serve.

Mission: To provide advocacy, education, and collaborative opportunities for higher education executive leaders in health and wellbeing to advance their knowledge, skills, and abilities in executive leadership.



A Note from the Chair: New Year, New Goals, and 500+ Members Strong!

Well... we did it! Just over a year ago, the Health and Well-being Executive Leaders (HWEL) Section was just an idea. Fast-forward to today, and we are now a community of over **500 members and growing!**

As your new HWEL Section Chair, I'm honored (and honestly humbled) to be following in the footsteps of **Dr. Anna Courie**, our inaugural Chair and trailblazer extraordinaire. Anna's leadership set the gold standard: thoughtful, strategic, and filled with heart. Because of her vision and the collective brilliance of our founding leadership team, HWEL has evolved into a vibrant, trusted space for executive and aspiring leaders to grow, collaborate, and reimagine health and well-being across higher education.

Our **2025–2026 HWEL Executive Leadership Team** is already hard at work planning the next wave of opportunities to support you in your roles. I couldn't be prouder to work alongside this dynamic group of leaders. From quarterly webinars and leadership roundtables to conference programming and a renewed focus on member engagement and visibility, we are investing in the tools, spaces, and relationships that make this work sustainable and deeply impactful.

Here's to what's ahead: **more growth, more learning, more laughter** (because let's be real, we all need it), and **more bold leadership** to elevate well-being as a strategic priority in higher ed.

Thanks for being part of this movement. Let's make this year our most impactful yet.

C. Oliver Tacto, DSW, MSW, MPH, CHES
Dean of Student Wellness, Maryville University
Chair, Health and Well-being Executive Section

MEET THE 2025–26 HWEL EXECUTIVE TEAM!

Chair: C. Oliver Tacto, *Maryville University*

Past Chair: Anna Fitch Courie, *Clemson University*

Chair-Elect: Michael LaFarr, *University of Denver*

Secretary: Anu Räisänen, *Elon University*

Planner: LaNika Wright, *East Carolina University*

Planner-Elect: Laurel Halsey, *Colorado State Univ.*

Member-at-Large: Kristin Traskie, *Michigan State University*

Additional Support:

◆ **ACHA Liaison:** Robyn Buchsbaum

◆ **Board Liaison:** Michele Richardson, *Bowie State University*

Webinar Series: Fundraising as a Leadership Imperative: A Conversation with Brian J. O'Rourke, VP Advancement, Clemson University



Amid shifting financial landscapes and ongoing economic pressures, the ability to raise private support has become a defining skill for higher education executives.

This session will explore why fundraising is no longer a peripheral task but a core competency for college and university executives. Brian J. O'Rourke, Vice President of Advancement at Clemson University, will share practical tips, real-world examples, and leadership lessons for executives looking to strengthen their advancement impact.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand why advancement skills are essential to today's higher education executive role
- Identify and begin cultivating key fundraising competencies as an institutional leader
- Gain practical strategies for engaging in donor conversations with confidence and authenticity



Format: Internet live
Date: September 10, 2025
Time: 12:00 pm–1:00 pm ET
Register: [ACHA Events](#)

Brian J. O'Rourke is Vice President of Advancement at Clemson University and a member of the University's Executive Leadership Team. He directs the Advancement Division which includes Alumni Relations, Development, Donor Relations, Business Business Intelligence and the University Foundation. These areas work in conjunction to bring in more than \$200 million annually.

Through the Will to Lead campaign, Clemson became the first public university in America with an alumni base of less than 150,000 to raise more than \$1 billion.



Member Spotlight: Dr. Rae Chresfield

—
*Leading with
Purpose,
Grounded in
Empathy*

Dr. Rae Chresfield, Assistant Vice President for Health and Wellbeing at the University of Maryland Baltimore County, brings 15 years of higher education experience and a deep commitment to compassionate leadership.

🧘 Her favorite wellness practice? A daily 15-minute morning meditation to start the day with intention and calm.

🌟 Her leadership superpower? **Empathy**—creating trust, connection, and authentic collaboration across her teams.

Known affectionately by students as “Dr. Rae,” she embodies the kind of heart-forward leadership we’re proud to celebrate in the HWEL community. ❤️



Call for ACHA 2026 Annual Meeting Conference Proposals and Posters

The theme for the ACHA 2026 Annual Meeting in Denver is **Uplifting Resilience: Strategies in Campus Health and Well-Being**. Submit your program proposals and posters today!



UPLIFTING RESILIENCE
Strategies in Campus Health and Well-Being

DENVER | MAY 26-30

Call for Programs and Posters
Due September 22, 2025
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