Collaborating for What's Next: From Vision to Action

IUC Annual Collaborative Initiatives Summit

September 22, 2026

Ohio Farm Bureau 4-H Center (OSU)
2201 Fred Taylor Drive
Columbus, OH 43210

9:00 a.m.	Registration, Coffee, Supplier Showcase (AB Graham Hall)
9:45 a.m.	Welcome and Opening (Bob Evans Memorial Auditorium) *Laura Lanese, President, Inter-University Council of Ohio* *Jim Bennett, Chief of Staff & Senior Policy Advisor, Ohio Department of Higher Education*
10:15 a.m.	IUC Collaborative Initiatives Update *Jennifer March-Wackers, Executive Director, IUC Purchasing Group, and Staff Lead, IUC Collaborative Initiatives*
10:45 a.m.	Keynote: Becoming AI-Augmented: Expanding Human Capability in the Age of AI *Dr. Darren Pulsipher, Professor of Computer Science at Vanderbilt University and Chief Enterprise Architect* Artificial intelligence is changing how higher education operates, but the greatest opportunity is not replacing people—it is augmenting them. This keynote provides a practical framework for using AI to improve decision-making, productivity, and service delivery while maintaining integrity, accountability, and human judgment.
Noon	Lunch (Bob Evans Memorial Auditorium) Supplier Showcase and Networking (AB Graham Hall)
1:15 p.m.	Delivering Reliable and Defensible Work with AI (Gehres Room 214) *Dr. Darren Pulsipher, Professor of Computer Science at Vanderbilt University and Chief Enterprise Architect* Learn practical techniques for using AI to produce work that is accurate, transparent, and defensible. Participants will explore workflows, prompting strategies, and governance practices that help ensure AI-generated content can be trusted in purchasing, finance, HR, and other administrative functions.

From Prompt to Purchase: Using AI to Strengthen Strategic Procurement (Eastman Room 100)
Moderator: Katie Overholser, Strategic Procurement Manager, IUC Purchasing Group
Wesam Helou, Vice President of Information Technology & Chief Information Officer, Cleveland State University
Anthony Mansoor, Senior Director & Chief Information Security Officer, Cleveland State University
Nicole Meadows-Hale, Assistant Director of Procurement, NEOMED
Learn how colleges and universities are beginning to leverage AI to enhance purchasing processes and support strategic sourcing. Through presentations from member institutions and an open forum discussion, attendees will gain practical insights, exchange experiences, and identify opportunities to responsibly integrate AI into their own procurement practices.

Empowering People Operations with Artificial Intelligence (International Room 110)
Moderator: Dr. Amoaba Gooden, Vice President, Division of People, Culture and Belonging, Kent State University
Jessica Palatka, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, Miami University
Higher education HR teams face growing challenges in talent acquisition, employee engagement, workforce planning, and operational efficiency. This interactive session will explore how AI can help address these challenges through facilitated small-group discussions, collaborative problem-solving, and the sharing of practical ideas and experiences from across the IUC.

INVITATION ONLY: Ohio Higher Education Security Operations Center: Enhancing Protection Through Partnership (Bob Evans Memorial Auditorium): 1:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Moderators: James Yukech, Associate Vice President & Chief Information Officer, Youngstown State University
Justin Bettura, Chief Information Security Officer, Youngstown State University
Speaker: Craig Woolley, Chief Information Officer, Louisiana State University
Higher education institutions face increasingly complex cybersecurity threats that require coordinated solutions. This session will explore the vision for an Ohio Higher Education Security Operations Center, highlight emerging opportunities for collaboration, and engage stakeholders in identifying practical next steps to strengthen cyber resilience across Ohio's higher education community. Craig Wooley from Louisiana State University will provide a case study for their shared SOC.

2:00 p.m. COOKIE BREAK

2:15 p.m. Strategic Contract Negotiations: Winning on Price, and Everything Else (Eastman Room 100)
Moderator: Lawrence McWilliams, Director, Procurement Department, Kent State University
Matthew Grushon, Director, Procurement and Contract Services, Wright State University
Sara Harrison, Associate Vice President of Procurement Services, University of Cincinnati
Joshua Thomas, Senior Director, Infrastructure Engineering & Operations, Ohio University
Contract negotiations are about more than securing the lowest price. Through examples from IUC member institutions, this session will explore strategies for maximizing value through rebates, alternative contract structures, sponsorships, and supplier partnerships. Attendees will gain practical insights into evaluating total value and achieving stronger outcomes for their institutions.

Morale Matters: Supporting Staff Well-Being & Engagement (International Room 110)
Moderator: Dr. Amoaba Gooden, Vice President, Division of People, Culture and Belonging, Kent State University
Jessica Palatka, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer, Miami University
April Worrell, Director of Business Services, Rhodes State College
Employee morale does not always require a bigger budget. From co-created community agreements to Employee Appreciation Days and small everyday gestures, institutions across the

IUC are turning intentional, low-cost efforts into lasting improvements in culture, trust, and psychological safety. As workloads grow and raises, bonuses, and extra staffing may not always be on the table, this session brings together real examples of what has worked across the IUC and practical strategies for supporting staff well-being and keeping them engaged, even in times of austerity and change.

State Government Relations 101 (Gehres Room 214)
Moderator: Joseph Baker, Vice President for Policy and Operations, Inter-University Council of Ohio
Dr. Matthew Akers, Special Assistant to the President for Government Relations, University of Akron
Nick Ciofani, Executive Director, Government and Community Relations, Kent State University
Nicole Hoyer, Director of State Relations and Government Relations Network Manager, Miami University
This panel provides a practical introduction to Ohio state government, the legislative process, and the role government relations offices play in helping universities navigate policy, funding, and regulatory issues. Attendees will learn how to engage effectively with their institution's government relations team, understand emerging higher education policy trends, and strengthen their part in supporting legislative advocacy.

3:00 p.m. BREAK

3:15 p.m. Summit Recap and Closing Remarks (Bob Evans Memorial Auditorium)
Representatives from Breakout Sessions will recap take aways from their session.

3:45 p.m. Adjourn

Thank you for attending the 2026 IUC Collaborative Initiatives Summit! Please scan the QR code below to share your feedback on the event:

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