



Coalition of  
Urban Serving Universities

# Annual Report

July 2023 - June 2024

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# Letter from Leadership

It has been an exciting and inspiring first year serving as Executive Director of the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU). Since stepping into this role in September 2023, I have been deeply focused on listening and learning—gaining a richer understanding of the coalition’s remarkable history, its bold vision, and the collective impact we’ve made across campuses and communities nationwide.

This past year, we undertook a strategic positioning process to reflect on who we are, what we do best, and where we can have the greatest influence. Through dozens of conversations with members and stakeholders, we reaffirmed our commitment to driving equity, innovation, and student success at urban-serving institutions. This work has given us the clarity and momentum we need as we prepare to launch a full strategic planning process in the coming year—one that will chart an ambitious course for USU’s next chapter.

I could not be prouder of the work we’ve done together this year, and I am energized by what lies ahead. From groundbreaking collaborations to evidence-based practices that are transforming student outcomes, our coalition continues to be a driving force for change in higher education. Thank you for your partnership, your passion, and your unwavering commitment to the students and communities we serve.



**Jennifer Keup, PhD**  
Executive Director, USU  
Vice President, APLU



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# About USU

The Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) is a network of public urban research universities that represents every region of the United States. University presidents created the Coalition to leverage the intellectual capital and economic power of urban universities, thereby improving urban life and America's competitiveness in the global economy.

USU's agenda focuses on the role of urban research universities as "anchor institutions" to drive workforce and career development, equitable student success, impactful campus-community partnerships, and economic and community health. USU advances this work through membership activities and grant-funded initiatives. The Coalition partners with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) to jointly lead an urban agenda for the nation's public universities.



USU is a 501 (c) 6 membership organization, which has established a permanent partnership with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) to share a joint USU/APLU Office of Urban Initiatives.

# Board of Directors



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Colorado, Denver



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**Past Chair**  
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California - Riverside



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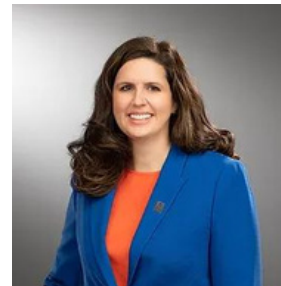
**Erica Beck**  
California State  
University, Northridge



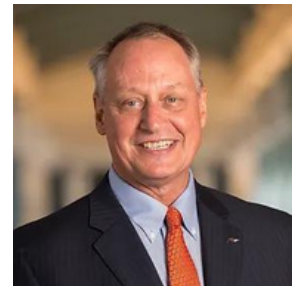
**Michael Rao**  
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Commonwealth  
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University of  
Central Florida



**Jennifer Cowley**  
University of Texas  
at Arlington



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**Havidán  
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University at  
Albany



**Keith Whitfield**  
University of Nevada  
Las Vegas



# Members

**USU supports a highly engaged and connected membership community of 39 urban research universities.**

USU members are public urban research universities that are located in metropolitan areas with populations of 100,000 or greater. They enroll 10 or more doctoral students per year and conduct a minimum of \$10 million in research and demonstrate a commitment to their urban areas.

Research Dollars  
**\$8+ billion**



Students Served  
**1.2 million**

FTFT Retention Rate  
**76%**



Faculty and Staff  
**235,482**



# Initiatives & Projects

## **Collaborative Opportunity Grant (COG)**

COG is a grant project, funded by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, designed to support emerging and innovative university-community partnerships to improve 21st-century skills delivery, acquisition, and transferability to the workforce. USU has awarded grants to 15 different member institutions to develop and scale collaborations with external organizations such as other four-year universities, community colleges, school districts, businesses, or local governments.

## **Federal Investments in University Success**

Funded by Arnold Ventures, FIUS provides resources, networking, and training to USU and APLU member institutions applying to the Department of Education's Postsecondary Student Success Grant. It aims to elevate evidence-based student success strategies, promote collaboration and knowledge sharing among peers, and offer technical assistance to support universities interested in applying for federal funding.

## **Partnerships for Adult Learner Success (PALS)**

PALS is a three-year grant funded by the Lumina Foundation to innovate and build more inclusive, agile, and comprehensive student success pathways and supports for adult learners of color. The grant-funded PALS project hosted its final convening at Fresno State in April 2024.

## **Student Experience Project (SEP)**

The Student Experience Project (SEP) is a collaborative of university leaders, faculty, researchers and national education organizations committed to innovative, research-based practices to increase degree attainment by building equitable learning environments and fostering a sense of belonging on campus. This initiative is funded by the Raikes Foundation.

# Our Team



**Jennifer Keup**

Executive Director



**Sam Levine**

Director



**Jimmy McClellan**

Associate Director



**Julia Boyer**

Senior Associate



**Jennifer Danek**

Senior Strategic  
Advisor



**Rico Reed**

COG Project  
Director



# Work with Us

There are several opportunities for institutions and organizations of different kinds to work with the Coalition. Please contact us to discuss membership inquiries or other collaboration opportunities.

## Find Us



Email Address

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Address

1220 L St NW, Suite 1000  
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