WEI SYMPOSIUM 2026 Advancing Equity and Student Success

SPEAKER BIOS – draft as of 4.28.26

Brian Durham, Ed.D.

Dr. Brian Durham, Executive Director for the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), began his career at the agency in 2001 in workforce development. He was recently appointed by Governor JB Pritzker to serve on the Illinois State Attainment Working Group to establish statewide goals to prepare Illinois' workforce for the jobs of the future. He serves on the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB), the IWIB Executive Committee, the P-20 Council, and as the Board liaison to the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents, among many other areas of service. Dr. Durham holds a B.A. from the University of Evansville in Political Science, an M.A. from Southern Illinois University Carbondale in Political Science, and an Ed.D. from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where he focused on Education Policy, Organization and Leadership with a concentration in Higher Education.

Jennifer K. Foster

Jennifer K. Foster is the Deputy Executive Director at the ICCB. She served as the State Director for Adult Education and Literacy and High School Equivalency. Jennifer leads the administration efforts for the Workforce Empowerment Initiative (WEI). She has been with the ICCB for more than 25 years, has worked in adult education for over 30 years, and is the team lead for the SUCCESS Equity Plan Consortium. Jennifer is a past chair of the National Adult Education Professional Development Consortium and the National Council of State Directors of Adult Education (NCSDAE). She is also a member of the State Workforce Board and the Chicago Workforce Board.

Dr. Lenore P. Rodicio

Lenore Polo Rodicio, Ph.D., Achieving the Dream's incoming president and CEO, is a nationally recognized leader in higher education with over 20 years of experience advancing student success, academic innovation, and institutional transformation. A native of Miami, Florida, and daughter of Cuban immigrants, Rodicio has focused her career on expanding economic and social mobility for underserved students.

She has served as an evaluation partner for Gates Foundation–funded Transformation Initiatives, a senior fellow at the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, a senior fellow for Postsecondary Systems Change and Governance at Our Cause, and a leadership and strategy coach with Achieving the Dream, guiding college leaders nationwide on governance, strategy, and capacity building.

At Miami Dade College, one of the nation's largest and most diverse community colleges,

	Rodicio held leadership roles including executive vice president and provost. She led nationally recognized initiatives in advising reform, guided pathways, developmental course redesign, and holistic student supports, helping MDC earn the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence in 2019. Rodicio has advised Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, and the American Council on Education on credential attainment. Her honors include the 2021 Association for General and Liberal Studies Award for National Leadership in Education and the 2020 Hispanic Leadership Award in Education. She holds a Ph.D. in chemistry from Louisiana State University and a B.S. from Barry University.
	Arnitria Karen Shaw-Whitfield Arnitria Karen Shaw-Whitfield is Vice President of Workforce Development and Community Vibrancy at Illinois Central College. She provides leadership, guidance, and support for students and programs that have been historically underserved and underrepresented in higher education. Her responsibilities include grants, programs, and departments related to ICC's workforce training, micro credentials, adult education and literacy, college and career-readiness, early college and dual degrees, and ICC's initiatives related to diversity, community vibrancy, and workforce equity. Arnitria is currently pursuing her doctorate in Higher Education at Illinois State University (Fall 2026). A Chicago native, Arnitria came to Peoria in 1997, where she began her career in education as a 7th and 8th-grade English teacher at Von Steuben Middle School. Having made Peoria her home for nearly 30 years now, she serves on the boards of Junior Achievement of Central Illinois and Peoria Promise. She is also a member of the Peoria Safety Network, the Al Hooks Black

	Leadership Initiative, and Delta Sigma Theta Incorporated - Peoria Alumnae Chapter. Arnitria also volunteers for ART Inc., the Peoria MLK Jr. Holiday Planning Committee, St. Paul Baptist Church, and Garry Moore's theater programs. A proud product of both the public school system and Chicago's Englewood neighborhood, Arnitria is ever grateful to those who supported her educational journey and never judged her aptitude for success by her zip code. For these reasons, she finds her purpose in service to others and is inspired by the quote from Mary Church Terrell, "I will not shrink from undertaking what seems wise and good because handicaps or obstacles of any kind confront me. . ."
	Keith Cornille, Ed.D. Dr. Cornille began his tenure as President of Heartland Community College in July 2018. Prior to joining Heartland, he spent 18 years at Madison Area Technical College, elevating to Executive Vice President/Chief Student Services Officer. Also, during his 40+ year career in higher education he has served in various roles at Indiana University-Southeast (New Albany, IN), College of DuPage (Glen Ellyn, IL), and Richard J. Daley College in Chicago. Keith earned a Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Edgewood College, a Master's in Education Administration from Northeastern Illinois University, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Eastern Illinois University, and earned an Associate of Arts from the College of DuPage. Keith currently serves as Past Chair of the Illinois Community College Council of Presidents, is a member of the NJCAA Presidents Advisory Committee, and is active in the community serving on various Boards during his tenure including the Chamber of Commerce, United Way of McLean County, Boys and Girls

	Community Advisory, NJCAA Presidents Advisory, McLean County Museum, BN Economic Development Council, Greater Livingston Community Economic Development Council just to mention a few. Keith also volunteers his time at Midwest Food Bank and provides other community service on a regular basis throughout the region. Keith and his wife Falicia live in Bloomington, Illinois and their adult children, Justin and Dakota both live in the Madison, WI and Joelle in Oak Park, Il. And this December, became a grandfather for the first time to little Felix.
	Dr. Lynette D. Stokes Dr. Lynette Stokes is an accomplished educator and public service leader with over 25 years of experience in child welfare, higher education, and community advocacy. Since October 2018, she has served as President of South Suburban College, becoming the first African-American woman to lead the institution in its nearly century-long history. As President, she oversees major institutional operations, including a multimillion-dollar budget, construction initiatives, grant funding, and the success of thousands of students and staff. Before becoming President, Dr. Stokes served as Vice President of Academic Services at South Suburban College and spent over a decade with City Colleges of Chicago, where she held leadership roles focused on improving educational quality and student success. She earned her doctorate in Educational Leadership and Organizational Change from Roosevelt University in 2004. Her early career included impactful work in child welfare, particularly with Ada S. McKinley Foster Care, where she trained hundreds of foster families and supported youth transitioning to

	independence. Having grown up in foster care herself, Dr. Stokes brings personal insight and advocacy to her work, demonstrating resilience and a lifelong commitment to helping others. Dr. Stokes has received numerous honors recognizing her leadership and service, including awards for educational excellence, community impact, and a Lifetime Achievement Award presented in collaboration with Joe Biden. She is actively involved in civic and professional organizations, serving on multiple boards and contributing to community development initiatives. A member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., she also supports scholarship programs and service-learning efforts. Overall, Dr. Stokes' career reflects a deep dedication to education, equity, and community empowerment, guided by her belief in living a life of purpose, compassion, and impact.
	Mary-Rita Moore Mary-Rita Moore has served as President of Triton College since 2015, with more than four decades of dedicated service to the institution. She began her career in enrollment services and academic advising and subsequently held leadership roles as Associate Dean of Student Services and Dean of Enrollment Services, where she spearheaded initiatives focused on improving student retention, completion, and access. In 2012, she was appointed Associate Vice President of Strategic Planning, where she oversaw institutional effectiveness, instructional excellence, and innovation. In this role, she led the development of the college's strategic plan and played a pivotal role in accreditation efforts.

	Under her presidential leadership, Triton College has strengthened its academic quality and student success outcomes, including establishing the division of Early College and Supporting Workforce Development. The institution earned a 10-year reaffirmation of accreditation, recognition as an Achieving the Dream Leader College, and designation as an Aspen Prize eligible institution. A native of Norridge, Illinois, Moore earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from Dominican University. She remains committed to student-centered leadership, institutional innovation, and community engagement.
	Whitney Thompson Whitney Thompson serves as the Deputy Director for Workforce Education for the Illinois Community College Board. Whitney has worked at the agency in various roles for the last twelve years. In her current capacity, she provides leadership to the community college system on workforce initiatives including postsecondary career and technical education, adult education, statewide program review and evaluation, and apprenticeship programming. Whitney holds a B.S. in Education from Illinois College, a M.A. in Political Science from the University of Illinois and is currently a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Administration program at Illinois State University.