



2025 Business Officers Conference

October 6-7
Hotel Fontenot, New Orleans

October 6 | 8:30 – 9:00 a.m.

Coffee and Conference check-in

October 6 | 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

The Hidden Cost of Financial Aid: How to Stop Over-Awarding and Under-Enrolling

When used strategically, financial aid can be one of your school's most powerful tools for growth. We'll explore how independent schools are re-thinking aid as a lever to optimize tuition revenue, boost enrollment, or both. From right-sizing awards to aligning aid strategy with enrollment goals, you'll get data-backed insights to help your school make aid work smarter—for families and your bottom line.

Katie Gunderman, Chief Operating Officer, Clarity Tuition

Program Level: Basic

CPE Hours 1.2

Prerequisites: None

Advanced Preparation: None

October 6 | 10:00 – 10:15 a.m.

Break

October 6 | 10:15 – 11:45 a.m.

From Compliance to Risk: Legal Updates That Matter Most

Running an independent school business office means navigating a minefield of legal issues that directly affect your role and your school. From contracts and compliance to employment challenges, student or family issues, and risk management, the legal landscape is constantly shifting. In this fast-moving session, independent school attorney Kristin Smith will cut through the noise and deliver the must-know legal updates for ISAS schools today. You'll walk away with practical insights, real-world examples, and a clear sense of what should be on your radar for the year ahead. Don't miss this chance to get the legal lowdown that every business officer needs to stay ahead of the curve.

Kristin Smith, Partner, Fisher & Phillips, LLP



Program Level: Basic
Prerequisites: None

CPE Hours 1.7
Advanced Preparation: None

October 6 | 11:45 – 12:45 p.m.

Lunch graciously sponsored by



October 6 | 12:45 – 2:00 p.m.

Designing & Implementing a Sustainable, Mission-Driven Compensation System

Faculty and staff compensation is in sharp focus as the world of work evolves in dramatic ways post-pandemic. How can schools attract and retain quality teachers with record numbers of teachers leaving the profession and colleges reporting declines in education majors? How can schools compete for staff in a changing labor market? This session will explore how to create a faculty and staff compensation system that is consistent, effective, and mission-driven. Topics include: types of salary systems, evaluation, professional growth, benefits, and implementation of a new system.

Cliff Kling, Senior Executive Compensation and Leadership Strategist for Leadership + Design

Program Level: Basic
Prerequisites: None

CPE Hours 1.5
Advanced Preparation: None

October 6 | 2:00 – 2:15 p.m.

Break

October 6 | 2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

From Complexity to Clarity: Insurance Strategies and Programs for Cost-Effective School Protection

In this session, we will explore the current insurance landscape for schools, highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities they face. We will also introduce an innovative program designed to help schools reduce their insurance premiums and maximize their resources.

Bryce Ledbetter, Senior Vice President, Marsh McLennan Agency
Stephen McCord, Executive Vice President, Marsh McLennan Agency

Program Level: Basic
Prerequisites: None

CPE Hours 1.2
Advanced Preparation: None



October 6 | 3:15 – 3:30 p.m.

Break

October 6 | 3:30 – 4:20 p.m.

ESA Updates for ISAS Schools

Join us for a discussion on updates to the new Texas ESA program and learn from experiences in other states.

Scott Griggs, Executive Director, ISAS

Program Level: Basic

Prerequisites: None

CPE Hours 1

Advanced Preparation: None

October 6 | 4:20 – 5:00 p.m.

Hear from Your Peers

Questions will be submitted by attendees in advance in 3 categories:

- Human Resources
- Fiscal Responsibility
- Campus Security

The questions will be posed to the room, and the group will answer them together during this session.

No CPE for this session

October 6 | 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Reception sponsored by



October 6 | 6:00 p.m.

Dinner and evening on your own in New Orleans

Day 2

October 7 | 7:30 – 8:30 a.m.

Breakfast



October 7 | 8:30 – 9:30 a.m.

Financial Reporting to the Board

In this session, the panel will equip you with the essential skills to effectively communicate with your board. You'll learn how to transform complex financial data into clear, actionable insights, ensuring your presentations are not only transparent and accurate but also strategically aligned with the board's fiduciary responsibilities. The session will explore various reporting formats and dashboards, helping you translate data into a compelling narrative that supports high-level decision-making and strengthens financial governance.

Jeff Bingham, Casady School

Evelyn Cambria, Episcopal High School

Bryan Denney, Trinity Episcopal School

Katie Leto, The Hockaday School

Program Level: Basic

Prerequisites: None

CPE Hours 1.5

Advanced Preparation: None

October 7 | 9:45 – 10:00 a.m.

Break

October 7 | 10:00 – 11:15 a.m.

Enterprise Risk Management

This session focuses on best practices in enterprise risk management, looking holistically at the procedures your school has in place and evaluating where improvements can be made. Attendees will learn how to assess their schools on multiple levels and will be given a deep dive on the three areas of most concern to the group.

[Click here](#) to express your preferences.

Diane Havlinek, Chief Finance and Operations Officer, Presbyterian School

Alexandra Penry, Senior Director for Finance and Advancement, Headwaters School

Program Level: Basic

Prerequisites: None

CPE Hours: 1.5

Advanced Preparation: None

October 7 | 11:15 a.m.

Adjournment and Travel Home

2025 Business Officers Conference

Speakers

Jeff Bingham



Jeff Bingham serves as the Chief Financial Officer for Casady School, a 1,050 student PK-12 Independent School enjoying their 78th year serving student families in Oklahoma City.

Jeff has over 28 years' experience in both higher education and K-12 private financial management, following a decade in public accounting and corporate finance with Ernst & Young and Citigroup.

A CPA and MBA, Jeff has extensive experience in all areas of financial operations and strategic planning, as well as revenue growth modeling, project financing and development planning.

Jeff enjoys spending time with his granddaughter, travelling with his wife, and summer hiking in the Rocky Mountains.

Evelyn Cambria



Evelyn has been serving Episcopal High School (EHS) since June of 2008. In her current position as associate head for finance and operations, she oversees the business office and serves as the chief financial officer. She also oversees human resources, facilities, food service, admissions, and technology. She serves on the senior leadership team and is the staff liaison to the finance, endowment, and audit committees of the school's board of trustees.

Evelyn and her team can be credited for assisting the board meet their fiduciary responsibilities specifically in the areas of finance, facilities, human resources, and technology. She works strategically with the board to push forward and keep financial sustainability as an important area of focus and accountability.

Prior to joining EHS Evelyn spent 20 years of extensive accounting, finance and operations in manufacturing industries (plastics, steel and metals, and transportation). She has a BA in Accounting from Texas State University and a MA in Public and Private Management from Birmingham-Southern College. She is also fluent in the Spanish language.

Bryan Denney



Bryan Denney, CPA is serving in his 18th year as CFOO of Trinity Episcopal School, a PK-8th grade independent school with 654 students located in Austin, Texas. In addition to everyday school business and operations, Bryan has overseen significant growth and development at Trinity during his tenure, including several strategic land acquisitions, master planning, major construction projects, school systems improvement, and strategic planning efforts. Bryan also serves as the Treasurer of the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools (SAES). Before moving into the non-profit independent school world, Bryan led the finance and operation efforts of three different software companies following a two-year stint at Ernst & Young as an external auditor. Bryan holds a Master's in Professional Accounting and a Bachelor's in Business Administration from the University of Texas at Austin.

Scott Griggs



Scott Griggs is the Executive Director of the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS), where he leads the organization in supporting over 90 schools across six states—Arizona, Kansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. ISAS is dedicated to advancing excellence in education through a robust accreditation process and a diverse array of professional development opportunities for educators and school leaders.

Prior to ISAS, Mr. Griggs served as Head of School at Greenhill School, a PreK-12 school serving 1300 students in Dallas, Texas for eighteen years. Prior to Greenhill, Mr. Griggs was an administrator and teacher at Collegiate School in Richmond, Virginia, Landon School in Bethesda, Maryland, and The Columbus Academy in Gahanna, Ohio.

Mr. Griggs serves as a leader on multiple boards, including as Chair of the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA), Treasurer of the Educational Records Bureau (ERB), and Chair-Elect of One Schoolhouse.

A native of Ohio, Mr. Griggs holds a B.S. in Physics from Centre College in Kentucky, where he was co-captain of the varsity basketball team that reached the NCAA Division III Final Four. He earned a Master's in Educational Administration from Ohio State University.

Katie Gunderman



Katie Gunderman is the Chief Operating Officer at Clarity, a leading financial aid and tuition platform for K–12 private and independent schools. She joined Clarity in 2024 to oversee the growth of its sales, client success, marketing, and family support teams. Katie brings deep expertise in revenue optimization, strategic planning, team building, and operational efficiency, drawn from her experience scaling operations at high-growth tech companies such as Groundspeed Analytics and EasyPost. She is passionate about helping schools streamline processes so they can focus on supporting students and families.

Diane Havlinek



Diane Havlinek is in her seventh year at Presbyterian School in Houston as the chief finance and operations officer and in the second decade of her career in independent schools. She received bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering from Cornell University and spent five years doing engineering design work in the oil and gas service industry. To expand her professional horizons, she pursued an MBA with a concentration in finance, operations and nonprofit business from Yale University. Upon graduation, Havlinek returned to Houston and oil and gas for another five years before moving into nonprofit work at Rice University and then on to independent schools. She spent five years working internationally for independent schools in Canada and England, during which time she traveled extensively, before returning to Houston in 2012. Havlinek has worked in finance and operations at two Houston area independent schools. Her favorite part of the job is fixing processes and systems that don't work or are inefficient. In her spare time, she enjoys traveling with the goal of never visiting the same place twice and visiting more destinations off the beaten path. She recently visited both poles, in Antarctica and the Arctic Circle.

Cliff Kling



Cliff Kling, J.D. is Mission & Data's Senior Executive Compensation and Leadership Strategist. Cliff brings a unique background and skill set to his work having practiced public accounting with KPMG as a CPA, practiced law with a large law firm, served 13 years as Chief Financial Officer and General Counsel of an independent school, and served 11 years as President of two independent schools, including the fifth largest NAIS school, Gulliver Prep in Miami, FL with an enrollment of 2,230 students. Cliff has also served on numerous boards, including the search and compensation committees of those boards. Given his broad experience, he understands school

operations and governance from many perspectives: legal, accounting and tax, school budget constraints, the board's fiduciary and stewardship responsibilities, and from knowing well the demands and challenges of sitting in the head's seat. Cliff graduated from Georgetown University where he majored in accounting, and he earned a Juris Doctor from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Bryce Ledbetter



Bryce Ledbetter- Senior Vice President, co-leads the Mission Driven Team for the Southwest Region, which is a team dedicated exclusively to supporting non-profit organizations. With a deep passion for education, Bryce specializes in helping schools navigate the complex and ever-evolving insurance landscape. He believes that every dollar spent on insurance is a dollar that could be directed toward fulfilling the mission of educating our nation's future leaders. In addition to his regional leadership, Bryce serves on MMA's National Education Practice Advisory Team, contributing his expertise to shape strategies that benefit schools nationwide.

On most mornings you will find Bryce riding his bike throughout the DFW metroplex. He and his wife, Nicki, have been married for 5 years. They are expecting their first child, a boy, in November 2025.

Katie Leto



Katie Leto, CPA, is on her fourth year as Chief Financial Officer at the Hockaday School after serving as the Director of Finance for two years. Prior to coming to Hockaday, she was an Audit Manager at a Dallas public accounting firm. Katie has over twelve years of experience with not-for-profit and independent school accounting and finance. Katie ensures daily oversight and strategic direction for financial, accounting, risk management and business office operations along with the many other hats an independent school CFO wears. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and a Master of Science in Accounting from Oklahoma State University.

Stephen McCord



Stephen McCord – Executive Vice President | Real Estate – at Marsh McLennan Agency, brings over 15 years of experience in the insurance industry. As Co-Chair of the MMA National Real Estate & Hospitality Practice, he specializes in serving clients within these dynamic sectors. Stephen is passionate about finding innovative solutions to the complex challenges faced by his clients in the real estate and hospitality industry. He excels at helping them navigate the ever-changing landscape of insurance coverage, ensuring they are well-protected and informed.

His deep understanding of the industry allows him to provide tailored advice and strategies that meet the unique needs of each client. Stephen is committed to fostering strong relationships and delivering exceptional service, making him a trusted partner in the insurance space.

Stephen also spends a large amount of his time mentoring the next generation of insurance professionals. However, you will find him the happiest when he is spending time with his wife and two daughters.

Alexandra Penny



Alexandra Penny joined Headwaters in 2019 and has over 12 years of independent school experience, including at a boarding school in Indiana and a K-8 Quaker school in Massachusetts. She currently serves on the NBOA Net Assets Advisory committee and has been a frequent presenter and contributor to Net Assets magazine. She is passionate about bringing customer service and long-term strategy to the Business Office.

Outside of work life, Alexandra can be found running marathons (both on the road and chasing after Charlie (3) and Harry (almost 1), playing with the family's golden retrievers Jamaica and Indiana Bones, refinishing furniture, and traveling anywhere and everywhere with her husband Josh.

Kristin Smith



Kristin Smith's practice with Fisher & Phillips LLP focuses exclusively on independent and private schools. She advises, counsels and represents religious and secular schools, including those serving pre-kindergarten-grade 12, kindergarten-grade 8, grades 6/7 – 12, and grades 9 – 12.

Kristin assists schools in a variety of areas, including student and employee discipline; faculty, staff and student contract drafting; handbook and policy drafting, implementation, and enforcement; LGBTQ issues, including transgender students and employees; board governance and training; discrimination claims and EEOC charges; administration and faculty training and development; school entanglement in family court proceedings; and investigations, litigation, arbitration and mediation.

She is a frequent presenter to independent school associations on current legal issues.



2025 Business Officers Conference: Learning Objectives

The Hidden Cost of Financial Aid: How to Stop Over-Awarding and Under-Enrolling

Participants will learn how to align financial aid strategy with institutional mission, use data-driven tools to optimize aid allocation, and implement sustainable policy changes that boost enrollment and revenue while supporting both new and current families.

From Compliance to Risk: Legal Updates That Matter Most

The learning objectives of this session are:

- Arm independent school business officers with knowledge they need to navigate and mitigate legal risk at their school.
- Gain practical approaches they can implement in their roles as business officers.
- Identify emerging legal issues and trends affecting independent schools across the ISAS region and nationally.

Designing & Implementing a Sustainable, Mission-Driven Compensation System

- Participants will learn about the current labor market for faculty.
- Compensation systems utilized by schools to pay faculty and staff will be reviewed with participants understanding the pros and cons of each system.
- Participants will learn a process for creating a new compensation system for their school.

From Complexity to Clarity: Insurance Strategies and Programs for Cost-Effective School Protection

- Attendees will learn about the current insurance landscape for schools.
- Items to be highlighted include the unique challenges and opportunities faced by independent schools in the insurance landscape.
- Attendees will learn about an innovative program to reduce insurance premiums and maximize resources.

ESA Update for ISAS Schools

The learning objectives of this session are to

- Explore the components of the new Education Savings Account (ESA) program in Texas.
- Learn the various differences in programs among ISAS states.



Best Practices for Reporting to Governing Boards: Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe the CFO's role in financial reporting to governing boards and the expectations for transparency, accuracy, and strategic insight.
- Evaluate how to tailor financial presentations to address the strategic concerns and fiduciary responsibilities of board members.
- Apply techniques for translating complex financial data into clear, actionable insights that support decision-making at the board level.
- Compare various reporting formats, dashboards, and performance metrics to determine effective tools for financial oversight and governance.

Enterprise Risk Management

By the end of the session participants will be able to

- Identify the key components of enterprise risk management
- Understand how to prioritize and assess risk
- Apply practical frameworks to strengthen resilience within our schools
- Learn to move beyond reactive risk response, toward proactive risk planning