

————— Council of —————  
Regional Accrediting Commissions

A wide-angle photograph of the Chicago skyline. In the foreground, the Chicago River flows from the bottom towards the center. A red steel truss bridge spans the river. To the left of the bridge is a large, multi-story brick building with a prominent clock tower. The background is filled with various skyscrapers, including the Willis Tower. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

# 2025 C-RAC Retreat

## Connecting Our Values: Strengthening Our Impact

August 6 - 7, 2025 | Chicago, Illinois

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the **2025 C-RAC Retreat** – Connecting Our Values: Strengthening Our Impact. We are thrilled to have you join us in Chicago for two days of meaningful dialogue, shared learning, and community-building among accrediting agency professionals from across the country.

As we gather at a time of rapid change and growing complexity in higher education, this year's retreat is an opportunity to reflect on our shared values and reaffirm our commitment to quality assurance in service of the public good. As we connect, collaborate, and challenge ourselves to grow, we look forward to meaningful conversations and shared insights that strengthen our network and our purpose.

The goals of this retreat are to:

- **Foster a strong sense of community** among colleagues in accreditation
- **Share perspectives on national trends** and their implications for our work
- **Exchange ideas and innovations** that strengthen educational quality and institutional support
- **Highlight best practices** for navigating regulatory and structural change

Our program features plenary sessions led by national thought leaders, topical breakout sessions presented by peers, and ample time for networking, collaboration, and conversation. From engaging discussions to small-group dinners at some of Chicago's top restaurants, we hope this retreat inspires you both professionally and personally.

We are especially grateful to the **Lumina Foundation**, whose generous support has helped make this retreat possible. Lumina's commitment to equity, quality, and innovation in higher education is deeply aligned with our collective mission, and we are honored to feature a special plenary address from the Foundation in support of our professional development and shared goals.

This event is also the result of tremendous effort by many individuals. We extend our deepest appreciation to the **Retreat Planning Committee** for their leadership and vision in curating such a thoughtful and dynamic program. A special thank you must also go out to our **presenters and facilitators**, whose contributions are at the heart of this retreat's success.

Thank you for being here and for the work you do every day to advance educational quality. We look forward to the conversations ahead and to the collective energy we will bring back to our agencies and communities.

Warm regards,

Your Colleagues at ACCJC

*On behalf of the 2025 C-RAC Retreat Planning Committee*

\*2025 C-RAC Retreat Antitrust Reminder

*C-RAC members respect and are cognizant of antitrust rules, have been briefed on antitrust guidelines and will follow those guidelines. Each agency makes its decisions independently. All participants are reminded that this retreat is intended for professional development and collaboration, and not for discussing or coordinating on matters that could restrict competition among accreditors. Any conversation that could be construed as anticompetitive, such as setting fees, dividing markets, or standardizing services in a way that limits choice, must be strictly avoided.*

# Thank You

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## Retreat Planning Committee

ACCJC:

Gohar Momjian & Alexandra Spring

HLC: Destiny Quintero

MSCHE: Rawan Abbasi

NECHE: Mark Nicholas

NWCCU: Heather Bennett

SACSCOC: Kelli Randall

WSCUC: John Hausaman & Linda Petersen

## Event Sponsor



**Lumina**<sup>™</sup>  
FOUNDATION

## Hotel Information

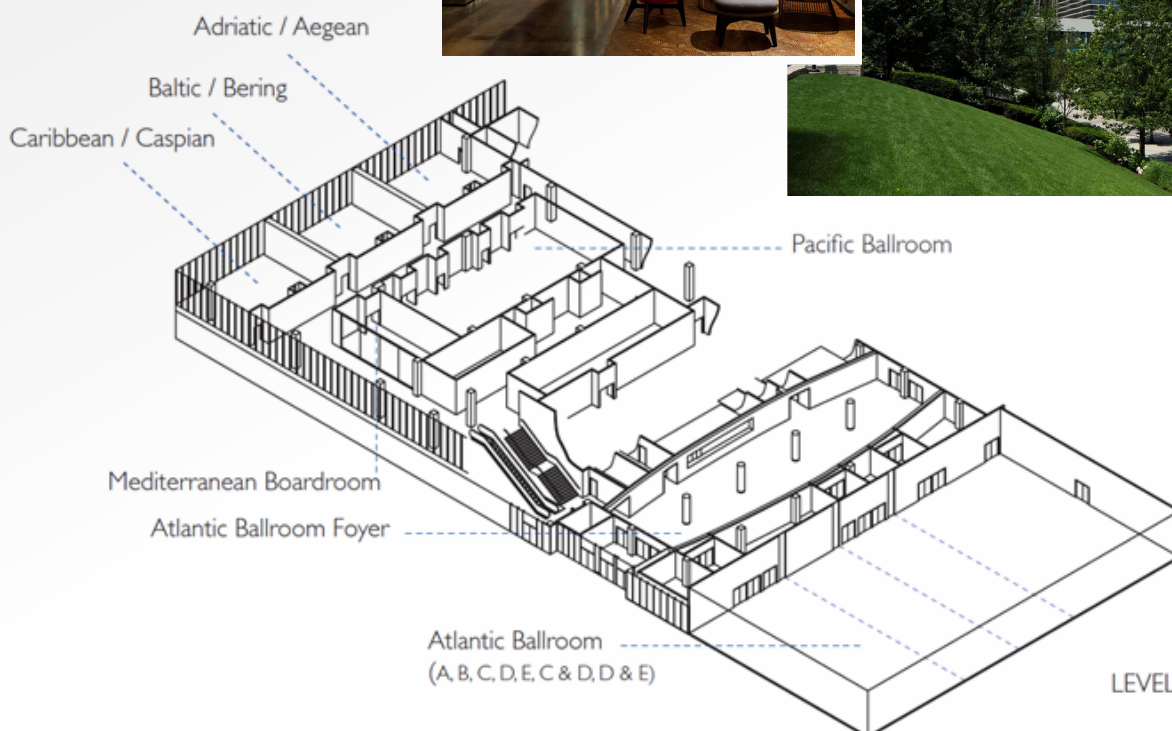
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### Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel, Chicago

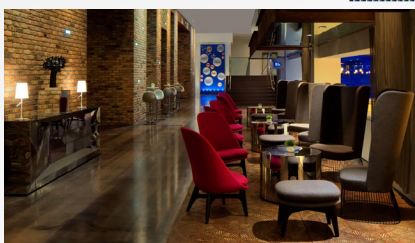
221 North Columbus Drive, Chicago, IL, 60601

(312) 638-6686 | [Hotel Website](#)

LEVEL TWO



LEVEL ONE



## 2025 C-RAC Retreat

### Connecting Our Values: Strengthening Our Impact

August 6-7, 2025 | Chicago, Illinois

#### Wednesday, August 6, 2025

8:00 am - 10:00 am	Check-in / Registration Desk Open	Atlantic Foyer
8:00 am - 10:00 am	Breakfast Buffet	Atlantic C
9:00 am - 10:00 am	New Member Orientation	Atlantic E
10:15 am - 11:45 am	Welcome & General Session 1	Atlantic D
Noon - 1:30 pm	Lunch Buffet	Atlantic D
12:30 pm	President's Discussion General Session 2	Atlantic D
1:45 pm - 3:15 pm	Breakout Sessions 1A - 1C	Atlantic Meeting Rooms
3:15 pm - 3:30 pm	Beverage and Snack Break	Atlantic Foyer
3:30 pm - 5:00 pm	Breakout Sessions 2A - 2B	Atlantic Meeting Rooms
5:00 pm - 6:15 pm	Opening Reception	Atlantic Foyer
6:45 pm - 10:00 pm	Small Group Dinners ( <i>pre sign-up required</i> )	Off-site Restaurants

#### Thursday, August 7, 2025

7:00 am - 9:00 am	Check-in / Registration Desk Open	Atlantic Foyer
7:30 am - 9:00 am	Breakfast Buffet	Atlantic C
8:00 am	Optional Small Group Conversations	Atlantic C
9:00 am - 10:45 am	General Session 3	Atlantic D
10:45 am - 11:00 am	Changeover/Refreshments	Atlantic Foyer
11:00 am - 12:30 pm	Concurrent Sessions 3A - 3B	Atlantic Meeting Rooms
12:30 pm - 1:45 pm	Lunch Buffet	Atlantic D
1:45 pm - 2:45 pm	General Session 4	Atlantic D
2:45 pm - 3:00 pm	Closing Remarks	Atlantic D

# Wednesday, August 6, 2025

Wednesday, August 6, 2025, 8:00 – 10:00 AM

## Breakfast Buffet

Room: Atlantic C

Wednesday, August 6, 2025, 9:00 – 10:00 AM

## New Member Orientation:

Welcome to the Table: Understanding C-RAC's History, Role, and Responsibilities

Presenters/Facilitators: **Paula A. Harbecke**, Vice President, NECHE; **Heather Perfetti**, President, MSCHE; **Mac Powell**, President, ACCJC

Room: Atlantic E

Join fellow new staff members of the Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions (C-RAC) for an essential orientation designed to ground you in the legacy, purpose, and operational guardrails of the organization. This session will offer a concise overview of C-RAC's history and evolution, its role in shaping national policy and accreditation practice, and the collective responsibilities of its members.

Special emphasis will be placed on compliance with anti-trust regulations, helping new members understand the boundaries of appropriate collaboration and information sharing. Participants will explore the foundational values that guide C-RAC's work and learn about key opportunities for engagement, influence, and leadership within the retreat and beyond.

Whether you're new to the field or a seasoned professional stepping into this role, this orientation will help you step confidently into the retreat's conversations and into your role as a contributing member of C-RAC.

Wednesday, August 6, 2025, 10:15 – 11:45 AM

## 2025 C-RAC Retreat Welcome and Introduction:

Presenter: **Mac Powell**, President, ACCJC and **Heather Perfetti**, President, MSCHE

Room: Atlantic D

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## Opening General Session 1:

Understanding the Changing Higher Education Landscape and Evolving Federal Policy

Presenter: **Presenter TBD**

Room: Atlantic D

This session will feature a timely update from the U.S. Department of Education on current and forthcoming changes affecting higher education, with a focus on accreditation and the federal regulatory environment. The Department will provide insights into evolving priorities, new and proposed regulations, and their implications for institutional accreditors. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of the policy context shaping our work and have the opportunity to reflect on how federal developments intersect with the values and practices that guide quality assurance across sectors.

Wednesday, August 6, 2025, 12:00 – 1:30 PM

## Lunch Buffet

Room: Atlantic D

### Presidents' General Session 2 (to begin at 12:30 PM):

Navigating the Political and Regulatory Landscape Conversations with the C-RAC Presidents

Presenter: **Barbara Gellman-Danley**, President, HLC; **Selena Grace**, President, NWCCU; **Heather Perfetti**, President, MSCHE; **Mac Powell**, President, ACCJC; **Stephen Pruitt**, President, SACSCOC; **Lawrence Schall**, President, NECHE; **Maria Toyoda**, President, WSCUC

Room: Atlantic D

This panel of C-RAC presidents will offer reflections on the evolving political and regulatory environment and its implications for institutional accreditors. Panelists will share their perspectives on how agencies are navigating change, responding to emerging challenges, and upholding their missions in a complex and dynamic landscape. This candid conversation will provide space for shared learning and strategic thinking as we consider the path forward for accreditation and quality assurance.

Wednesday, August 6, 2025, 1:45 – 3:15 PM

## Breakout Session 1A:

AI and Accreditation: Maintaining Integrity in an Evolving Landscape

Presenters: **Jon Davenport**, Chief Information Officer, HLC; **Laura M. Gambino**, Vice President of the Commission, NECHE; **Amy Moseder**, Senior Vice President for Policy and Administrative Services, MSCHE; **Nickawanna Shaw**, Vice President, ACCJC

Room: Atlantic C

As artificial intelligence and large language models become embedded in everyday tools—word processors, search engines, and workflow platforms—accreditation professionals are increasingly faced with questions about their appropriate use. This interactive session invites participants into a reflective conversation about how AI might impact document review, data integrity, training protocols, and professional standards. Together, we'll explore practical scenarios, share emerging practices, and consider how transparency, oversight, and intentional pacing can guide engagement with these evolving technologies—ensuring they are used in accordance with the values and rigor that define integrity in the work of accreditation.

## Breakout Session 1B:

Managing Accreditation Processes

Facilitator: **Katie McCallister**, Chief Learning Officer, WSCUC

Presenters: **Kevin Bontenbal**, Vice President, ACCJC; **Rae Borden**, Director of Legal & Governmental Affairs, SACSCOC; **Jordan Kamai**, Director of Educational and Institutional Initiatives, NWCCU; **Geoffrey Klein**, Vice President, SACSCOC; **Allison Langford**, Director of Peer Corps Relations & Service, HLC; **Maureen Maloney**, Vice President, WSCUC; **Susan Opp**, Vice President, WSCUC; **Terence Peavy**, Lead Vice President, MSCHE

Room: Atlantic D

Representatives from the various associations will discuss their approaches to the accreditation process. The panelists will contemplate the synergies and points of distinction in their agency's processes around preparing for an evaluation, the evaluation itself, and decision making.

## Breakout Session 1C:

### All Things PEP

Panel Chair: **Kelli V. Randall**, Vice President, SACSCOC

Panelists: **Gita Bangera**, Senior Vice President, NWCCU; **Aaron Perkus**, Assistant Vice President, NECHE; **Patricia Newton-Curran**, Vice President of Systems and Accreditation Services, HLC; **Kevin Sightler**, Director of Substantive Change, SACSCOC; **Anthea M. Sweeney**, Vice President of Accreditation Relations, HLC; **Robin Zuniga**, Coordinator of Substantive Change, SACSCOC

Room: Atlantic E

This session panel discussion will focus on “all things PEP.” Panelists from the represented accrediting organizations will share insights on policies, procedures, and guidance they provide their member institutions who offer prison education programs (PEPs). This panel seeks to engage the audience in a robust discussion of “all things PEP” to include prospectus substantive change submissions, oversight entity agreements, Pell grant aspects, substantive change visits, implementation of the PEP after approval, how to create and design the best interest determination 2-years after implementation, among other topics. Conversations will touch upon accreditors’ obligations and responsibilities surrounding PEPs as well as the importance of developing feedback mechanisms to member institutions and oversight entities who provide programming.

## Breakout Session 2A:

### Tools for Accountability: Monitoring for Institutional Improvement and Student Success

Presenters: **Heather Bennett**, Vice President for Institutional Innovations and Compliance, NWCCU; **Vince Coraci**, Director of Accreditation Processes, HLC; **Alison Garner**, Assistant Vice President, NECHE; **Godfrey Fuji Noe**, Coordinator of Training and Research, SACSCOC; **Melynie Schiel**, Vice President, ACCJC; **Judi Sciple**, Senior Vice President for Accreditation Relations and Services, MSCHE

Room: Atlantic C

This session will explore key practices in institutional accreditation monitoring to support institutional improvement, student success, external reporting, and accountability. Presenters will focus on the various internal and external tools used for financial screening, monitoring student success, providing public transparency, and ensuring regulatory compliance. The panel will discuss useful data sources, analytical software, forms and reports, and follow up on trends and concerns revealed by monitoring processes. We will also address the role of IPEDS, DAPIP reporting, and approaches to managing program inventory and substantive change.

## Breakout Session 2B:

### Applied Principles and Processes to Support Innovation in Higher Education

Presenters: **Elizabeth Dutton**, Accreditation Process Director, ACCJC; **Selena Grace**, President, NWCCU; **Ryan Hartnett**, Vice President, MSCHE; **John Hausaman**, Associate Vice President, Substantive Change, WSCUC; **Sandra Jordan**, Chief of Staff, SACSCOC; **Larry Schall**, President, NECHE

Room: Atlantic E

Join new colleagues to work on a case study – Interstellar Academy– led by Buzz Lightyear, this is the latest institution of higher education seeking accreditation with a mission to provide access to careers in science and technology through innovative means. Discuss your thoughts on how to support their journey in obtaining accreditation and evaluate their innovative approaches – AI faculty agents, multiple educational delivery methods, degree programs and noncredit certificates oh my! The panelists will also share their perspectives on principles and processes supporting innovations in three-year bachelor degree awards, competency-based education, and distance education.

## Opening Reception

Room: Atlantic Foyer

As the first day of the 2025 C-RAC Retreat comes to a close, we invite you to join us for an evening reception to unwind and connect. This informal gathering offers a relaxed setting to continue conversations sparked throughout the day. Whether you're reconnecting with familiar faces or meeting peers for the first time, the reception provides a valuable opportunity to strengthen professional relationships and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow staff members from institutional accrediting organizations. We look forward to welcoming you for a casual and convivial close to day one.

Hors d'oeuvres will be served; cash bar.

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## Small Group Dinners

Pre-sign-up required, reservations to begin between 6:45 - 8:00 pm

Locations: various restaurants in downtown Chicago

Following the opening reception, participants who pre-registered are invited to join small group dinners at top local restaurants. These dinners offer a relaxed setting to continue conversations and enjoy downtown Chicago. Attendees were encouraged to dine with peers from other accrediting organizations to foster new perspectives and strengthen cross-agency relationships.

**Transportation:** *Please make arrangements to arrive at the restaurant on time and transport yourself to dinner via taxi, rideshare, or by walking. Reservation times and restaurant locations are available on the sign-up sheet sent to all attendees.*

# Thursday, August 7, 2025

Thursday, August 7, 2025, 7:30 – 9:00 AM

## Breakfast Buffet with Optional Small Group Conversations

Room: Atlantic C

Ease into the day with coffee, conversation, and good company. This optional informal breakfast session brings together colleagues from across agencies for thoughtful dialogue on big-picture topics in higher education and accreditation—no agendas, just a chance to connect, reflect, and exchange ideas. If you'd like to participate, simply browse the table topics and join the one that piques your interest. Conversation starters will be available at the tables, but please feel free to let the discussion unfold naturally.

Thursday, August 7, 2025, 9:00 – 10:45 AM

## Welcome/Announcements/Plenary Introduction:

Presenter: **Mac Powell**, President, ACCJC and **Heather Perfetti**, President, MSCHE

Room: Atlantic D

## General Session 3:

Navigating the New Credentialing Landscape: The Role of Accreditors in Workforce Development



Moderator: **Kermit Kaleba**, Strategy Director, Two-Year Credentials of Value, **Lumina Foundation** ([Moderator Biography](#))

Panelists: **Nicole Bieber**, Chief of Staff, MSCHE; **Patricia Donat**, Senior Vice President, SACSCOC; **Laura Gambino**, Vice President, NECHE; **Karen Solomon**, Vice President and Chief Transformation Officer, HLC

Room: Atlantic D

Learners, employers, and policymakers are increasingly interested in non-traditional postsecondary educational pathways and credentials as a tool to achieve economic prosperity. However, these alternatives often fall outside the scope of accreditation, meaning there can be limited tools for assessing quality and relevance of programs. As we move to a more skills-based economy, how are accreditors working with their member institutions and other stakeholders to support innovation while protecting consumers? This panel will feature insights on how different accreditors are keeping pace in a rapidly changing environment and highlight key issues on the horizon.

Thursday, August 7, 2025, 11:00 – 12:30 PM

## Breakout Session 3A:

Communicating Difficult Decisions: Sanctions, Closures, Mergers, Acquisitions

Presenters: **Jessica Glowinski Garfield**, Director of Communications, HLC; **John Hausaman**, Associate Vice President, WSCUC; **Jay Marr**, Vice President, SACSCOC; **Marla Morgen**, Vice President and General Counsel, HLC; **Tracey Schneider**, Senior Vice President for Legal Affairs and General Counsel, MSCHE

Room: Atlantic C

Communicating to external audiences about the routine matters of accreditation can be a challenge, and it becomes even more so when it involves situations such as institutional closures, mergers, or even policy changes. Join with colleagues to engage in dialogue about how accreditors at various agencies approach communication efforts for high profile situations and their attempts to clarify misconceptions when developing communication strategies for multiple external audiences.

Thursday, August 7, 2025, 11:00 – 12:30 PM continued...

## Breakout Session 3B:

Strengthening Accreditation through Strategic Data Use: From Development to Meaningful Adoption and Continuous Improvement

Moderator: **Mark Nicholas**, Vice President, NECHE

Panelists: **Jon Davenport**, Chief Information Officer, HLC; **Stephanie Huie**, Vice President, WSCUC; **Tiffany Lee**, Vice President for Institutional Field Relations, MSCHE; **Godfrey Fuji Noe**, Coordinator of Training and Research, SACSCOC

Room: Atlantic E

This session explores how HLC, MSCHE, SACSCOC, and WSCUC have bolstered the accreditation review process, deepened a data driven culture focused on student success, and advanced institutional improvement through the strategic use of data. Their efforts focus on providing access to learning outcomes metrics, comparisons to peer benchmarks, analyzing student post-college financial outcomes and key performance indicators that enable institutions to assess performance relative to accreditation standards and support peer evaluators.

End user adoption of metrics and tools is critical, as such, panelists will examine strategies for promoting adoption including engagement and training of constituents, and integration of data into accreditation processes. This session will also highlight how user feedback is critical to understanding how data informs institutional improvement. After the initial presentations, Mark Nicholas, Vice President, NECHE will lead the panelists in a discussion of challenges with data availability, benchmarking, post-graduation outcomes, and future directions.

Thursday, August 7, 2025, 12:30 – 1:45 PM

## Lunch Buffet

Room: Atlantic D

Thursday, August 7, 2025, 1:45 – 3:00 PM

## Closing General Session 4:

A New Congress and Administration: Forecasting Potential Impacts on Higher Education



Presenter: **Emmanuel A. Guillory**, Senior Director, Government Relations, American Council on Education ([Presenter Biography](#))

Room: Atlantic D

A new Administration and a new Congress brings new ideas and approaches to addressing the needs and concerns of students, families, and institutions of higher education. Since January, we have seen some major shifts in policy proposed by the Administration and Republican lawmakers. As the Republicans continue to lead the House, Senate, and the White House, come learn about the sweeping changes impacting higher education today.

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## Closing Remarks, Thank You

Presenter: **Mac Powell**, President, ACCJC and **Heather Perfetti**, President, MSCHE

Room: Atlantic D