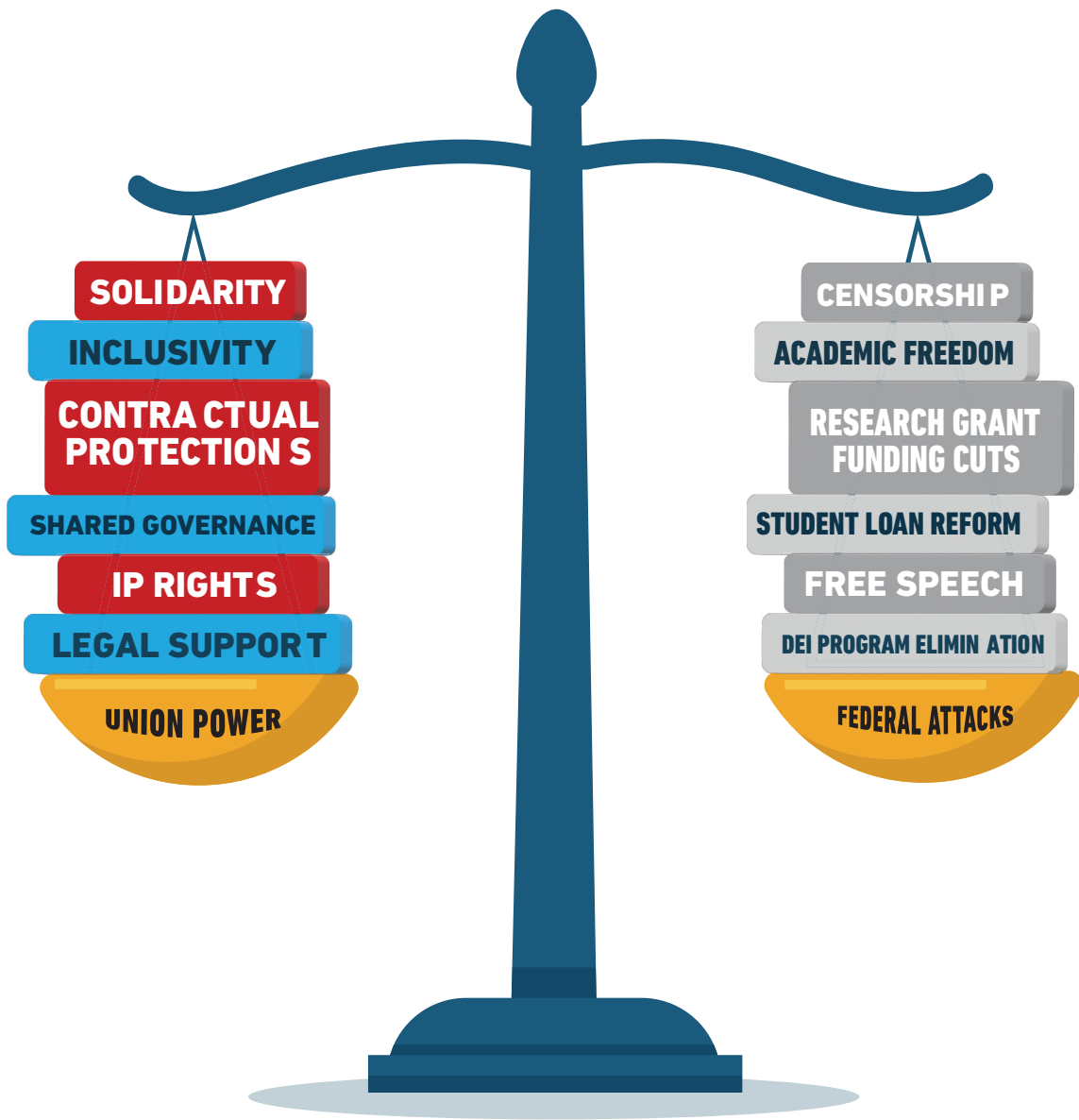




CIVIC PREPAREDNESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

We must do it!

**PROFESSIONAL ISSUES IN
HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

OCTOBER 9, 2026 | MEA HEADQUARTERS, EAST LANSING



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MAHE MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of MAHE is to serve, train, support, and advocate for higher education members of MEA.

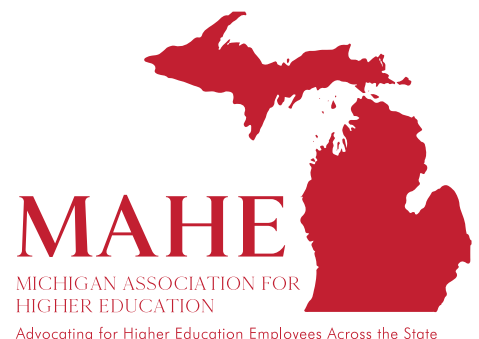
CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

8 – 9 a.m.	Registration, Continental Breakfast and Coffee with a Lobbyist
9 – 9:15 a.m.	Welcome and Introductions
9:30 – 10:45 a.m.	100 Series Conference Sessions
11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Plenary
12:30 – 2 p.m.	Lunch
2:15 – 3:30 p.m.	200 Series Conference Sessions

For further conference information visit mea.org

Saun Strobel
Northern Zone Director
Director of Higher Education
Conference Coordinator
ssstrobel@mea.org

Lisa Fox
Conference Assistant
lfox@mea.org



HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Participants are responsible for their own hotel accommodations. Deadline to reserve a room is **Sept 24, 2026**. **A room block has been secured at a reduced rate for MEA:**

\$95 per night + applicable taxes
(includes parking)

Fairfield by Marriott
3320 Preyde Blvd
Lansing, MI 48912
517-374-6500

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

- Registration deadline is Oct. 1.
- Registration fee is \$50, if received by Oct. 1.
- Late or on-site registration fee is \$75, if received after Oct. 1.
- All cancellations must be received by email to Lisa Fox at lfox@mea.org no later than Oct. 8.
- Transportation, and all non-conference meals must be paid by the local, region, MABO, or individual.
- Only MEA members in good standing may register.
- **Registration is solely online.** Paper forms will not be provided nor accepted.
- Online Registration is available until October 1 at 11:59 p.m.
 1. Log in to your MEA account at mea.org/members-only. Select Event Registration and choose 2026 HE Conference.
 2. Confirm all credential information is correct, including the email address to which your confirmation will be sent and click submit.
 3. Choose your fee type. Please be sure to select the correct registration fee.
 4. Choose your registration type.
 5. Please select all sessions you would like to attend.
 6. Please select all meals you will attend.
 7. Enter payment information and click submit.

CONFIRMATION EMAIL

After you have completed your registration online, a confirmation message will be sent to the email included on the conference registration form or on file for the member. **If you do not receive a confirmation email**, please contact the Conference Assistant, Lisa Fox — lfox@mea.org

DOWNLOAD THE ANNOUNCEMENT

The Professional Issues in Higher Education Conference announcement is located at cll.mea.org/higher-education-conference.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Lisa Fox, Conference Assistant
800-292-1934, ext. 4040
517-332-6551
lfox@mea.org

**Online registration is available
until Oct. 1 at 11:59 p.m.**

REGISTRATION LINK



ANNOUNCEMENT





CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

8-9 a.m.	9-9:15 a.m.	SERIES 100 SESSIONS 9:30-10:45 a.m.	11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	12:30-2 p.m.	SERIES 200 SESSIONS 2:15-3:30 p.m.
Registration, Continental Breakfast, and Coffee with a Lobbyist	Welcome and Introductions	101 Beyond Premiums: Understanding Insurance Costs and Bargaining Strategies	Plenary Stacy Hickox Samuel Dunietz	Lunch	201 Accessible by Design: Practical Steps for Meeting Digital Accessibility Requirements
		102 Using Civil Discourse to Unify and Champion Local Members in Higher Education			202 Bargaining the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technology in Higher Education Institutions
		103 Higher Ed Financial Positions and Future Impact on Employees			203 Defending the Profession: Shared Governance and Academic Freedom Under Attack

101: BEYOND PREMIUMS: UNDERSTANDING INSURANCE COSTS AND BARGAINING STRATEGIES

This session will help local leaders and higher education bargainers better understand the factors driving rising insurance costs, including plan design, utilization trends, employer contributions, and broader pressures in the health care market. Participants will explore practical strategies for addressing these costs at the bargaining table while protecting quality coverage for members. The session will also highlight ways to communicate complex insurance issues clearly, build member engagement around benefit decisions, and develop bargaining approaches that balance affordability, transparency, and long-term sustainability.

Presenters: Adam Bedwin, MEA Bargaining Consultant
Brian Makowski, MEA Insurance Strategy & Development Consultant
Abby Zarimba, MESSA Field Representative

102: USING CIVIL DISCOURSE TO UNIFY AND CHAMPION LOCAL MEMBERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Civility, or free speech and respectful discourse, is a bedrock value in American higher education. Civic preparedness requires motivating and unifying rank and file union members as well as generating recognition and social support from the larger community. Civic power is achieved through unification. This session will focus on civil discourse strategies that union leaders can employ to unify members, build a positive image of their local, influence organizational culture, change organizational values, and prepare membership for contract bargaining.

Presenters: Jennifer Chaytor, Saginaw Valley State University

103: HIGHER ED FINANCIAL POSITIONS AND FUTURE IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES

Bargaining teams need accurate financial information for the purpose of negotiating a strong contract. This session will examine the impact of inflation on faculty salaries over the last decade as well as compare recent faculty salary data among similar institutions within Michigan. Learn to research and understand your institution's financial position by identifying money available for compensation, comparing administrative and faculty expenses. Effective strategies for using this information in the bargaining process will be shared.

Presenter: Arthur Martin, Saginaw Valley State University

DEFENDING THE PROFESSION: SHARED GOVERNANCE AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM UNDER ATTACK

Public higher education across the country is facing threats from both state and federal efforts designed to restrict academic freedom, bypass shared governance, and change the composition of who is teaching and how. From politically motivated attacks on research and peer review, to the effect of AI implementation, these policies have the potential to change much of higher education as it stands today.

This plenary session will discuss the impact of these threats and how educators, institutions, and alumni are pushing back. We will break down the current policy and legal challenges facing our institutions, detail how the NEA and its partners are fighting these battles in the courts and statehouses, and spotlight local advocacy wins.

PLENARY SPEAKERS:

Stacy Hickox, Staff Counsel, National Education Association



Stacy Hickox is Staff Counsel with the Office of General Counsel at the National Education Association. Her work focuses on promoting inclusive schools and protecting the interests of both educators and students. Prior to coming to NEA, Stacy served on the faculty in the School of Human Resources & Labor Relations at Michigan State University (MSU) where she taught courses on labor and employment law. She has taught various professional development courses for both MSU and Cornell University, in addition to several courses for NEA. Stacy received her bachelor's degree from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University and her law degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

Samuel Dunietz, Senior Policy Analyst, National Education Association



Samuel Dunietz is a Senior Policy Specialist with NEA's Education Policy and Implementation Center where he leads policy strategy and serves as policy content expert on higher education and career and technical education (CTE). His work at the NEA centers on defending academic freedom, raising the voice of higher ed members within NEA, addressing postsecondary affordability, and advancing student loan forgiveness. A key contributor to policy on emerging technologies in education, he co-authored the NEA's foundational report and recommendations on artificial intelligence, and he collaborates with Education International on global higher education policy and advocacy. Prior to joining the NEA, he worked with Advance CTE and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), where he directed the annual AAUP Faculty Compensation Survey. His work continues to connect policy and practice with the direct needs of NEA membership.

Lunch – 12:30-2:00 p.m.

2:15-3:30 p.m. – Series 200

201: ACCESSIBLE BY DESIGN: PRACTICAL STEPS FOR MEETING DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

New digital accessibility requirements are prompting colleges and universities to take a closer look at course materials, documents, and other digital content—but knowing where to begin can feel overwhelming. This session will provide a practical overview of the updated accessibility expectations affecting higher education and help participants identify common barriers in the materials they create and share. Participants

will explore simple strategies and tools for checking documents and course content, practice recognizing accessibility concerns, and learn concrete steps for improving materials over time. The emphasis will be on building a manageable, sustainable approach to accessibility rather than trying to fix everything at once.

Presenters Katie Edmiston, Central Michigan University
Gabrielle Likavec, Central Michigan University

202: BARGAINING THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

This session will review the key concepts and principles surrounding the use of AI in education. This includes new technology definitions, implementation and adoption criteria, as well as protection of educator autonomy and employment rights. This session will also present examples of existing contract language that has been bargained across the nation.

Presenter: Suzanne K. Clark, MEA UniServ Director

203: DEFENDING THE PROFESSION: SHARED GOVERNANCE AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM UNDER ATTACK

This break out session will address how MEA members in higher education can push back against threats from both state and federal efforts designed to restrict academic freedom, bypass shared governance, and change the composition of who is teaching and how. We will discuss the potential for addressing these threats through litigation, addressing legislative and regulatory changes, and through collective bargaining and institutional policy.

Presenter: Stacy Hickox, Staff Counsel, National Education Association
Samuel Dunietz, Senior Policy Analyst, National Education Association



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CHANDRA MADAFFERI, PRESIDENT • ROBERT CALLENDER, VICE PRESIDENT
AARON ELING, SECRETARY-TREASURER • ERIK EDOFF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The mission of the MEA is to protect, advocate and advance the rights of all education professionals to promote quality public education for all students.

