

Nebraska Statewide Dual Enrollment Conference Speakers:



Dianne Lassai Barker

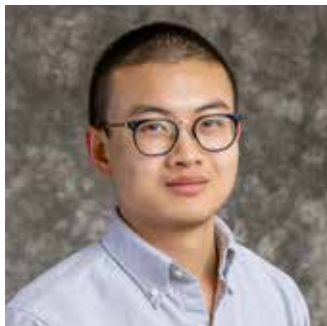
Deputy Executive Director of Policy and Program Strategy, National Association of Concurrent Enrollment Programs

Dianne Lassai Barker serves as Deputy Executive Director of Program and Policy Strategy for the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). With more than 25 years of experience in higher education, she brings extensive knowledge of dual and concurrent enrollment, state and system-level policy, career and technical education, and workforce-connected pathways.

In her role at NACEP, Dianne leads efforts to engage and support states, systems, and institutions through technical assistance, strategic guidance, and stakeholder collaboration. Her work focuses on strengthening dual and concurrent enrollment policy and practice and building stronger connections across secondary and postsecondary education systems.

Prior to joining NACEP, Dianne served as Director of Secondary Education Initiatives and Dual Enrollment for the Technical College System of Georgia, providing statewide leadership across Georgia's 22 technical colleges. She previously coordinated the dual enrollment program at Chattahoochee Technical College, giving her a perspective shaped by experience at both the institutional and state system levels.

Dianne regularly represents NACEP at national, state, and regional events, sharing her expertise and contributing to conversations about the future of quality dual and concurrent enrollment programs. Her work is grounded in a commitment to expanding high-quality opportunities for all student and strengthening pathways that successfully connect education, postsecondary attainment, and careers.



Dave Nguyen

Data Scientist, Nebraska Statewide Workforce & Educational Reporting System (NSWERS)

Dave Nguyen began his role as Data Scientist at the Nebraska Statewide Workforce & Educational Reporting System (NSWERS) in January 2023.

As Data Scientist, Nguyen works closely with the Assistant Director of Research and Evaluation and NSWERS' partner organizations to plan, organize, and execute research and evaluation functions. This includes both conducting and providing oversight for the technical quality of data analysis.

Additionally, he provides in-house research design and quantitative measurement expertise and creates a robust research dissemination approach to inform public policy and educational practice in alignment with NSWERS' research priorities.

Nguyen holds a bachelor's degree in biology from Eastern Washington University and a master's degree in statistics from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. He is currently in the biology doctoral program at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln. Nguyen is also a former dual enrollment student, having attended Clark College full time through Washington State's Running Start program during his junior and senior years of high school.

Nebraska Statewide Dual Enrollment Conference Speakers:



Dr. Kathleen Fimple

Academic Programs Officer, Coordinating Commission for
Postsecondary Education in Nebraska

Kathleen Fimple is the Academic Programs Officer for the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education. In addition to her academic duties, she is the state portal contact for SARA (State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement) and serves on the regional steering committee.

Before joining the Commission staff in 1993, she was chair of the social science department and professor of geography at Chadron State College in northwest Nebraska. Prior to that position she served as a cultural historian at the Nebraska State Historical Society. In 2008 she received an achievement award from the National Council for Geographic Education for her long-time support of geography in and out of the classroom. And in 2023 she received the Outstanding Service Award from the Midwestern Higher Education Compact. She earned her baccalaureate and doctoral degrees from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and her master's degree from South Dakota State University.



Dr. Anthea Sweeney

Vice President of Accreditation Relations, Higher Learning Commission

Anthea Sweeney joined HLC in 2013 as a Vice President of Accreditation Relations serving a portfolio of institutions. She was promoted in March 2018, served on HLC's Executive Leadership Team and led the Legal and Regulatory Affairs team until June 2023 before returning to her role as a staff liaison.

Dr. Sweeney previously worked as Assistant Dean for Academics at a law school in North Carolina, where she founded the Academic Success department and worked directly with at-risk students. She spent five years in private law practice in New York, specializing in banking and finance before transitioning to legal education.

Dr. Sweeney holds a B.A., magna cum laude, in Comparative Modern Languages and Political Science and an M.A. in Political Science, both from Long Island University, a J.D., magna cum laude, from Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center and an Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership and Policy from Peabody College of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University..

Nebraska Statewide Dual Enrollment Conference Speakers:



Dr. Jane Stavem

Deputy Commissioner, Nebraska Department of Education

Dr. Jane Stavem is the Deputy Commissioner at the Nebraska Department of Education, where she oversees the work of the Instructional Division. She began her career in the classroom, teaching music, sixth grade, and gifted education, before moving into leadership roles as an elementary principal, director of curriculum and instruction, assistant superintendent, and superintendent.

Dr. Stavem has had the opportunity to serve educators and students across Minnesota, Washington, South Dakota, and Nebraska. She is a published author of both a professional resource, *Student Mobility: Creating an Environment for Social and Academic Success*, and a children's picture book, *Flying V – The Alphabet Takes Flight*.

She holds a Master's degree in Educational Leadership from Bethel University, an Educational Administrative Licensure degree from St. Mary's University, and an Ed.D. in Educational Administration from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Jane enjoys blogging and sharing the humor of education on her website, youcantmakeitupeducation.com.



Dr. DeShawn Preston

Research Associate for MDRC

DeShawn Preston is a research associate in the Postsecondary Education policy area, where he discovers and disseminates strategies for student success and for connecting postsecondary education to the workforce. His work has mainly focused on guided pathways, dual enrollment, college success, and the postsecondary-to-workforce pipeline. He has edited books and authored several reports, articles, book chapters, and blogs on advancing HBCUs and other topics related to supporting students toward completion.



Jan Benitez

Program Officer for The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation

Jan Benitez serves as a College Access and Success Program Officer at the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation (STBF), which is dedicated to expanding pathways to and through postsecondary education for Nebraskans. The foundation views dual enrollment as a key strategy for supporting student access and success. With more than 15 years of nonprofit experience, Jan has focused on helping students access higher education and achieve their career goals. Jan grew up in Ralston, Nebraska, and studied Social Work and Public Administration at Metropolitan Community College and the University of Nebraska at Omaha.