

UMACRAO

UPPER MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND ADMISSIONS OFFICERS

2026 UMACRAO Annual Conference

Nov. 2–4, 2026

Courtyard by Marriott Fargo Moorhead

Schedule Updated: Sept. 23, 2026

Each session is marked with an engagement level provided by the presenter(s) to help attendees gauge the amount of participation they might expect.

-  Zero: Lecture-style presentation with optional audience questions
-  Low: Mostly presentation with a few brief activities, like introductions or low-stakes small group discussion
-  Medium: Closer to half of the session will include interactive elements
-  High: More than three-quarters of the time will be spent in breakout groups, audience discussion, or interactive activities

Monday, Nov. 2

Check-in available 3:00–7:00 PM (Main Floor Hallways)

3:30–4:00 PM	First-Time Attendee Session <i>Sponsored by Gold Sponsorship</i>	<i>Red River Meeting Room</i>
4:00–5:30 PM	Welcome Session AACRAO Update • Philanthropy	<i>Grand Ballroom - Salon G</i>
5:30–7:00 PM	Opening Session & Dinner Buffet Committee Showcase • Vendor Introductions	<i>Grand Ballroom - Salon G</i>

7:00–8:30 PM	Engagement Mixer <i>Sponsored by Platinum Sponsorship</i>				<i>Grand Ballroom - Salon G</i>
	Vendor Area Open: 3:00 PM–8:00 PM Silent Auction Opens: 5:00 PM–Tuesday Cash Bar: 5:00 PM–8:30 PM				
Tuesday, Nov. 3					
<i>Check-in available 7:00-10:30 AM (Main Floor Hallways)</i>					
<i>UMACRAO Unplugged</i> is available during concurrent session times in the Great Plains Meeting Room					
7:00–8:00 AM	Continental Breakfast (breakfast provided by UMACRAO) <i>Sponsored by Gold Sponsorship</i> Announcements: 7:45 AM				<i>Grand Ballroom - Salon G</i>
8:00–9:00 AM	Roundtable 1A	Roundtable 1B	Roundtable 1C	Roundtable 1D	Roundtable 1E
	Private Institutions	Community Colleges & Technical Schools	Admissions	Small & Medium Public Institutions	Large Public Institutions
					
	<i>Salon A</i>	<i>Salon C</i>	<i>Salon D</i>	<i>Salon F</i>	<i>Red River Room</i>
9:10–10:00 AM	Session 2A	Session 2B	Session 2C	Session 2D	
	Neurodivergence: It’s a Feature, Not a Bug	Modernizing the Registrar's Office: Lessons, Challenges, and Opportunities	Stop Pitching. Start Talking: The Art of the College Recruitment Conversation	A Registrar’s Guide to Making Friends (building relationships, increasing visibility, and	

				becoming a trusted campus partner)
				
	<i>Salon A</i>	<i>Salon C</i>	<i>Salon D</i>	<i>Salon F</i>
10:00–10:30 AM	Break - Sponsored by Gold Sponsorship			
10:30 AM–Noon	Plenary Session <i>Melissa Marshall</i>			<i>Grand Ballroom - Salon G</i>
Noon–1:30 PM	Lunch & Business Meeting (lunch provided by UMACRAO) Relevant Business Meeting documents can be accessed in the Guidebook app.			<i>Grand Ballroom - Salon G</i>
1:40–2:30 PM	Session 3A	Session 3B	Session 3C	Session 3D
	The Librarian is In: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Registrar's Office	Career Plot Twists: 10 Things I Wish I'd Known Before	The Great Document Cleanup: A Journey to Digital Accessibility	Managing Ghost, Fraud, and Sleeper Students
				
	<i>Salon A</i>	<i>Salon C</i>	<i>Salon D</i>	<i>Salon F</i>
2:40–3:30 PM	AACRAO Competency Framework <i>Dr. Annetta Stroud</i> <i>Dr. Rhonda Kitch</i> <i>Dr. Rebecca Mathern</i>			<i>Grand Ballroom - Salon G</i>
3:30–3:50 PM	Coffee and Recharge Break – Sponsored by Gold Sponsorship			

	Session 5A	Session 5B	Session 5C	Session 5D
3:50–4:40 PM	The Credentialing Ecosystem: Paradigm’s Vision for a Fully Integrated Future	When Curriculum and Catalog Work Together: SMSU’s Path to Student Success	TBD	TBD
				
	Salon A	Salon C	Salon D	Salon F
4:45–6:15 PM	Banquet (dinner provided by UMACRAO) Dinner • Awards • Philanthropy Raffle			Grand Ballroom - Salon G
5:30 PM	Philanthropy Silent Auction Ends The silent auction will open at the start of the conference. Get your winning bid in place by 5:30 PM on Tuesday! Silent auction winners will need to coordinate cash, check, or credit card payment with the Philanthropy Committee in order to secure their item.			Grand Ballroom - Salon G
7:00–10:00 PM	Evening Social Event – Courts & Pints <i>Sponsored by Platinum Sponsorship</i> Light snacks and non-alcoholic beverages will be provided. Our event rental includes an event space, as well as pickleball courts, so there's space for everyone to join, even if you don't want to play. We'll even have an instructor available for those interested in learning more! Courts & Pints is approximately a half-mile, 10–15-minute walk or a very short drive from our conference hotel.			Courts & Pints
Wednesday, Nov. 4				

***UMACRAO Unplugged is available during concurrent session times
in the Great Plains Meeting Room***

7:00–8:15 AM	Breakfast (on your own)			N/A
8:30–9:20 AM	Session 6A	Session 6B	Session 6C	
	Small Habits, Big Impact: Everyday Project Management for Higher Education Professionals	Who Gets a Seat? Navigating Course Access and Registration Controls	Rules of Engagement: How Policies Help Create the Culture We Want	
				
	<i>Salon A</i>	<i>Salon C</i>	<i>Salon F</i>	
9:30–10:20 AM	Session 7A	Session 7B	Session 7C	Session 7D
	Fundamentally Different Culture	The Accidental Project Manager: Leading Change in the Registrar's Office	From Procession to Confetti: Solving Commencement Challenges Together	The SCO Survival Guide: Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices
				
	<i>Salon A</i>	<i>Salon C</i>	<i>Salon D</i>	<i>Salon F</i>
10:30–11:45 AM	FERPA Brunch (brunch provided by UMACRAO) <i>Sponsored by Gold Sponsorship</i>			<i>Grand Ballroom - Salon G</i>
11:45–Noon	Closing Session – What Can UMACRAO Do for You?			<i>Grand Ballroom - Salon G</i>

2026 UMACRAO Annual Conference

Tentative Presentation Overview – Updated 9/24/2026

UMACRAO Unplugged is available during concurrent session times
in the Great Plains Meeting Room

UMACRAO Unplugged is intended to provide an alternative to the interactive sessions as needed. Participants can find passive activities such as art projects, puzzles, coloring pages, and self-serve relaxation exercises.

We ask that this space remain tech-free.



Session 1: Institutional Roundtables • Tuesday, 8:00 AM

A UMACRAO tradition: A completely open-ended session in which anyone can pose a question to the group. Attend the session that fits your institution's description, or any session that strikes your interest.

1A	Private Institutions	<i>Salon A</i>
1B	Community Colleges & Technical Schools	<i>Salon C</i>
1C	Admissions	<i>Salon D</i>
1D	Small & Medium Public Institutions	<i>Salon F</i>
1E	Large Public Institutions	<i>Red River Room</i>

Session 2 • Tuesday, 9:10 AM

2A	Neurodivergence: It's a Feature, Not a Bug <i>Caroline Jens, University of Iowa</i> <i>Elissa Thoman, University of Iowa</i> Working in higher education is rewarding, challenging, inspiring... and rarely boring. For professionals who are neurodivergent, it often means juggling	<i>Salon A</i>
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	deadlines, emails, meetings, and big ideas while relying on sticky notes and sheer tenacity to keep everything moving forward. This roundtable is a chance to connect with colleagues who "get it": to share experiences, exchange strategies, and discover that you're far from alone in the journey. While many conference sessions focus on research, theory, or formal presentations, this roundtable centers on conversation and connection. Participants are encouraged to bring questions, lessons learned, tips, tricks, and even humorous stories from their own experiences. Sometimes the best professional development comes from realizing you're not the only person who has opened a browser tab to complete a task and somehow ended up learning all about the 8th continent, Zealandia.	
2B	Modernizing the Registrar's Office: Lessons, Challenges, and Opportunities <i>Caroline Kinney, Grinnell College</i> When was the last time you stopped to ask "why?" about a process or procedure in your office? For many of us, the daily demands of managing student records leave little time to step back and ask, "Is this really the best way to do this?" Yet those questions are often the catalyst for meaningful change. At Grinnell College, we've embarked on a multi-year effort to modernize our registrar's office and reduce customization within our student information system. From redesigning our academic program structure to eliminate recurring National Student Clearinghouse reporting errors to allowing first-year students to register online for the first time, we've challenged long-held assumptions about how registrar work gets done. Join us as we share lessons learned, projects completed, initiatives on the horizon, and how we've reshaped our staffing model to support a more modern registrar's office.	Salon C
2C	Stop Pitching. Start Talking: The Art of the College Recruitment Conversation <i>Tom Reburn, Minnesota State University</i> We spend an enormous amount of time trying to get students to engage with us, but once we have their attention, are we actually having a conversation?	Salon D

2D	A Registrar's Guide to Making Friends (building relationships, increasing visibility, and becoming a trusted campus partner) <i>Brittany Benda, University of Iowa</i> <i>Sara Morelli, University of Iowa</i> What can you do when your office is frequently asked to solve challenges it had limited opportunity to help prevent? At the University of Iowa, we decided to make some friends! Join us to make friendship bracelets as we share the strategies that strengthened our campus partnerships, elevated staff expertise, and improved collaboration across the university. Attendees will gain practical tools for increasing their office's visibility, building trust with stakeholders, and positioning their team as an essential partner in institutional success.	Salon F
Plenary Session • Tuesday, 10:30 AM		
	Keynote Speaker - Melissa Marshall Melissa Marshall doesn't just talk about transformation; she lives it. As the owner of Dale Carnegie of North Dakota and Northwest Minnesota, she's spent 20 years helping leaders and teams break through barriers and unleash their genius. A student of business, life, and the school of hard knocks, she brings raw authenticity, humor, and an unshakable belief in human potential. She meets people where they are, helping them sharpen communication, lead with confidence, and create real, lasting impact.	Grand Ballroom – Salon G
Session 3 • Tuesday, 1:40 PM		
3A	The Librarian is In: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Registrar's Office <i>Veronica Ruse, University of Iowa</i> This conference presentation will focus on the interdisciplinary nature of working in a Registrar's office. I will explore three foundational ideas in library and information science (LIS) and provide examples of how a background in LIS can provide useful, relevant, and transferable skills for staff. This presentation will	Salon A

	focus on how concepts such as the reference interview, information literacy, and a user experience (UX) approach can help improve customer service, policy development, and website design in the Registrar's office and beyond.	
3B	Career Plot Twists: 10 Things I Wish I'd Known Before <i>Shawna Saad, University of Iowa</i> <i>Amber Tiarks, Iowa State University</i> Most professionals enter higher education with a plan, but few careers unfold exactly as expected. Opportunities, setbacks, difficult decisions, and unexpected lessons shape the path along the way. In this interactive session, participants will explore ten career lessons drawn from real-world leadership experiences in higher education. Topics include the long-term impact of salary negotiations, the value of building a professional network beyond one institution, and strategies for navigating career growth with greater confidence and intention. The session challenges common assumptions about advancement, professional development, workplace loyalty, and leadership while offering practical, actionable advice. Whether participants are early-career professionals, emerging leaders, or experienced administrators, they will leave with insights to help them make informed career decisions, strengthen their professional trajectory, and avoid common career pitfalls.	Salon C
3C	The Great Document Cleanup: A Journey to Digital Accessibility <i>Brittany Benda, University of Iowa</i> Digital accessibility can feel overwhelming, especially when years of documents need attention. Faced with Title II ADA requirements, the University of Iowa Registrar's Office developed a structured approach to making our office's digital documentation accessible, tracking progress, communicating goals, and holding ourselves accountable throughout the process. Join us as we share our project plan, tracking methods, communication strategies, and lessons learned. Participants will gain practical takeaways for	Salon D

	managing accessibility initiatives, building team engagement, and turning a large compliance challenge into an achievable project.	
3D	Managing Ghost, Fraud, and Sleeper Students <i>Jackie Schluchter, North Dakota State University</i> Come together to share insights, questions, and best practices to manage this new reality.	<i>Salon F</i>
AACRAO Competency Framework • Tuesday, 2:40 PM		
4A	AACRAO Competency Framework <i>Dr. Annetta Stroud</i> <i>Dr. Rhonda Kitch</i> <i>Dr. Rebecca Mathern</i> Session information coming soon*	<i>Grand Ballroom – Salon G</i>
Session 5: Vendors • Tuesday, 3:50 PM		
5A	The Credentialing Ecosystem: Paradigm’s Vision for a Fully Integrated Future <i>Shawn Owen, Paradigm</i> Explore Paradigm’s end-to-end credentialing solutions—from beautiful diplomas and tamper-proof digital certificates to future-ready tools like ScholarRecord, ApostilleConnect, and digital transcripts. Learn how we streamline registrar workloads, fight fraud, and empower student mobility across formats. Enter for a chance to win in our live raffle!	<i>Salon A</i>
5B	When Curriculum and Catalog Work Together: SMSU’s Path to Student Success <i>Kali Slaymaker, CourseLeaf</i> While student success is the goal of higher education, institutions can create barriers when their systems aren't integrated, flexible, and student-centered. Join us for this exciting dive into how SMSU made these more student-centered processes with CourseLeaf. We will explore catalog and curriculum management	<i>Salon C</i>

	best practices, software features that can make all the difference, and key insights on how the registrar's office can support critical campus goals.	
5C	TBD	<i>Salon D</i>
5D	TBD	<i>Salon F</i>
Session 6 • Wednesday, 8:30 AM		
6A	Small Habits, Big Impact: Everyday Project Management for Higher Education Professionals <i>Maureen Owens, University of Iowa</i> Project management is often part of the job, even when it isn't part of the title. This session explores simple, adaptable practices that can help higher education professionals stay organized, communicate effectively, and keep initiatives moving forward. Participants will discover how a few intentional habits can make projects more manageable and successful. The focus is on practical approaches that can be adapted to fit a variety of projects, teams, and institutional environments.	<i>Salon A</i>
6B	Who Gets a Seat? Navigating Course Access and Registration Controls <i>Caroline Kinney, Grinnell College</i> When demand for key courses exceeds available seats, institutions must make difficult decisions about access, priorities, and course planning. Join this roundtable discussion to share and learn how colleges and universities are forecasting enrollment demand, managing registration restrictions, allocating seats, and helping students stay on track academically. Participants are encouraged to bring their challenges, questions, and successful practices as we explore a variety of approaches to balancing student needs with institutional resources.	<i>Salon C</i>

6C	Rules of Engagement: How Policies Help Create the Culture We Want <i>Shawna Saad, University of Iowa</i> Workplace culture is shaped by more than values and intentions. It is built through the policies, practices, and expectations that guide everyday work. This session explores how the University of Iowa Office of the Registrar uses transparent policies and clear communication to foster trust, equity, and collaboration. Through real examples, including flexible work arrangements, travel-to-and-from-work expectations, domestic out-of-state remote work guidelines, technology standards, annual review protocols, and employee recognition practices, participants will learn how thoughtful policy and guideline development can reduce assumptions, strengthen engagement, and create a culture where employees feel valued, supported, and connected to a shared purpose.	Salon F
Session 7 • Wednesday, 9:30 AM		
7A	Fundamentally Different Culture <i>Rebecca Ringham, Minot State University</i> A discussion of the 30 fundamentals from the book Fundamentally Different by David J. Friedman which sets a structure for a successful office or organizational culture.	Salon A
7B	The Accidental Project Manager: Leading Change in the Registrar's Office <i>Caroline Kinney, Grinnell College</i> Most registrar professionals don't have "project manager" in their job title, yet they regularly lead complex initiatives that require planning, coordination, communication, and change management. Whether implementing new technology, revising policies, redesigning business processes, or navigating compliance requirements, registrars often find themselves at the center of institutional projects.	Salon C

	This session explores the project management skills every registrar needs to successfully lead change. Learn practical strategies for prioritizing competing initiatives, building stakeholder support, managing timelines, and balancing project work with the demands of daily operations. Through real-world examples and lessons learned, participants will gain tools and techniques to move projects forward, avoid common pitfalls, and drive meaningful improvements in their offices and across campus.	
7C	From Procession to Confetti: Solving Commencement Challenges Together <i>Elissa Thoman, University of Iowa</i> <i>Kristan Hellige, University of Iowa</i> Commencement is one of the most visible and complex events in higher education, requiring coordination across academic, operational, and ceremonial functions. From ticketing and name pronunciation to accessibility, security, stage management, and last-minute changes, every institution faces unique challenges. This interactive roundtable invites attendees to share practical solutions, lessons learned, and creative approaches to planning and executing successful ceremonies. Participants are encouraged to bring current challenges, questions, and innovative ideas for discussion. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies, fresh perspectives, and a network of colleagues who can serve as ongoing resources for future commencement planning and problem-solving.	Salon D
7D	<i>The SCO Survival Guide: Tips, Tricks, and Best Practices</i> <i>MaTina Clark, Wartburg College</i> <i>Jodie Chadima, Coe College</i> Being a School Certifying Official means juggling regulations, deadlines, and student support—all at the same time. Join us as we share practical tips, helpful shortcuts, and best practices for managing certifications, staying compliant, and navigating common challenges. Whether you're new to the role or have years of experience, this session offers ideas and strategies to help make the day-to-day work of an SCO a little easier.	Salon F

FERPA Brunch • Wednesday, 10:30 AM

FERPA Brunch (brunch provided by UMACRAO)

*Session information coming soon**

*Grand
Ballroom –
Salon G*

Closing Session • Wednesday, 11:45 AM

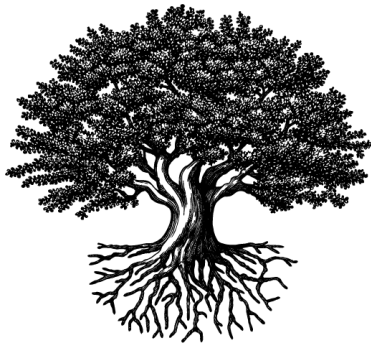
What Can UMACRAO Do For You?

Colleen Harms, Minnesota State University

*Grand
Ballroom –
Salon G*

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