



**A STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT FOR  
AN INDISPENSABLE ASSOCIATION**

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## A BOLD NEW PATH

Business officers play a critical role in the new world of higher education, at a time when massive forces are reshaping colleges and universities. As student demographics shift, state resources for higher education decline, and other financial pressures are emerging, fiscal officers must simultaneously serve as translators of complex financial information to boards and presidents, negotiators on campus and in communities, predictors of the future, and thought partners to colleagues.

Their responsibilities are increasing, far beyond oversight of annual financial statements. They are responsible for interpreting challenges, implementing solutions, and seeking opportunities. In a higher education landscape that is fluid, the business officer role must be steady and strong.

As the nation's premier association for higher education business leaders, NACUBO is dedicated to supporting business officers and their essential—and expanding—role in the sector. To this end, we are proud to share NACUBO's new Strategic Blueprint, in which we introduce our plan to support business officers and higher education and in doing so, to solidify our role as an indispensable 21st-century membership association.

Over the next three years, we will work tirelessly to achieve our vision for higher education to be valued by society as an outstanding investment. We will also position NACUBO as a catalyst for strategic leadership and innovation in higher education by striving for:

- A more inclusive future, where the professional pipeline for postsecondary business officers is intentionally broadened and continuously supported;
- Higher education transformations that ensure colleges and universities can achieve their missions, sustainably and responsibly;
- A community of chief business officers who are all equipped to be strategic leaders, contributing to their institutions' decision-making and supporting a data-informed culture;
- A broad advocacy platform that proactively supports higher education, enables all NACUBO members to engage their constituencies effectively around the business of higher education, and sustains our overall mission of educating students.

For more than 50 years, NACUBO has been providing business officers with the tools they need to excel at their jobs. What has not changed in those decades is our conviction in the difference a college degree can make for a student and the impact university-based research can have on our world. Guided by that certainty, NACUBO is resolutely dedicated to this strategic plan, and we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.



**Lynn V. Valenter**  
**Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations**  
Washington State University, Vancouver  
NACUBO Board Chair (2019-20)



**Susan Whealler Johnston, PhD**  
**President and CEO**  
NACUBO



# **NACUBO'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

## **Building a More Connected and Innovative Association**

NACUBO's Strategic Priorities were identified in 2017 after significant analysis and collaboration by the association's board and staff. In 2018, new President and CEO Susan Whealler Johnston asked the organization to develop the implementation plan for the Strategic Blueprint, building on existing work while also imagining a future in which NACUBO would be indispensable to higher education business officers and their staff.

NACUBO's Strategic Priorities anticipate a dynamic world in which higher education business officers are critical in all future-oriented conversations on their campuses and in their systems.

NACUBO will also pursue initiatives that strengthen the available pool of talented business leaders and highlight the strategic leadership role of the CBO. This work will include diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to ensure that able professionals, no matter their backgrounds, find leadership roles that benefit from their talent and professional experience.

While this plan has a three-year duration, these Strategic Priorities may, in fact, become enduring priorities for the organization. What follows in this document is a description of each Strategic Priority, along with the initiatives that support it. NACUBO's staff has crafted implementation plans with success metrics to gauge performance and determine future investment in this work. This Strategic Blueprint, like any good plan, is intended to be a living document that will be adjusted with time and influence from a data-informed culture. As the field evolves, so will NACUBO.

### **Strategic Priority 1:**

Engage higher education institutions in undertaking necessary transformations to strategically position themselves in the dynamic higher education environment.

### **Strategic Priority 2:**

Increase proactive advocacy.

### **Strategic Priority 3:**

Drive effective solutions in higher education.

### **Strategic Priority 4:**

Strengthen the strategic leadership role of the CBO.

### **Strategic Priority 5:**

Lead higher education's integration of analytics to achieve institutional strategic goals.

# TRANSFORMATIONS

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

**Engage higher education institutions in undertaking necessary transformations to strategically position themselves in the dynamic higher education environment.**

While virtually all higher education institutions are feeling the pressures of a changing world, leaders are uncertain of how best to ensure financial sustainability while remaining loyal to institutional mission. With this body of work, NACUBO identifies some of the key transformations needed and processes for achieving them. We will share this knowledge through several key initiatives. Our work will be strengthened by collaborations with thought partners, and we expect NACUBO to become synonymous with innovation, customization, and solutions-focused frameworks.

### Initiatives

- ***Reinvest in the Economic Models Project***, which helps institutions navigate their mission, structure, strengths, and resources to create viable models for economic sustainability.
  - » **Early Success:** The Economic Models Project Journey is an interactive website with a discussion guide for members to use to engage in critical conversations on their campus. Learn more at [emp.nacubo.org](http://emp.nacubo.org).
- ***Launch the Center for Higher Education Financial Leadership*** to bring NACUBO's expertise to bear on necessary higher education transformations, broadening awareness of its capabilities among other audiences, and enhancing its contributions to member institutions.

# ADVOCACY

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

### Increase proactive advocacy.

NACUBO is intentionally investing to ensure the association is recognized as a national thought leader that drives policymaking affecting higher education. This complex strategy involves a layered approach to shape both state and federal policy as well as to offer outreach and training to ensure more business officers are equipped to contribute. Higher education is regularly asked to articulate its value to individuals and society. NACUBO is prioritizing this activity, building tools for members to support the business case for funding higher education and present it as an outstanding investment.

#### Initiatives

- **Expand advocacy to include state-level reporting and guidance**, building on NACUBO's respected federal reputation and responding to member-identified needs.
- **Develop a cohort of authoritative business officer voices in higher education** ready and able to serve as persuasive proactive and responsive spokespersons for their institutions and the sector on matters related to the business of higher education.
  - » **Early Success:** NACUBO published its first annual report, "2019 Perceptions and Priorities," on *Medium*. The post thoughtfully examines key points of conflict in the state of higher education, with more than 50 accompanying slides on research findings and the value colleges and universities provide to students and society.
- **Equip NACUBO members to communicate the value of higher education** by investing in videos, infographics, and customizable op-eds to help CBOs and other campus leaders share the tremendous impact their institutions have on students and society.
- **Recast the "NACUBO in Brief" podcasts** to focus on areas of interest to business officers, such as economic trends, financial aid, accounting and reporting changes, and NACUBO's annual endowment study.

# SOLUTIONS

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

### Drive effective solutions in higher education.

NACUBO will ensure community members can access the high-quality resources they need, when they need them. We will do this by placing members at the center of our content. We will actively crowdsource practices that have proven effective, rely on research and policy experts, and implement the best technologies to connect business officers to each other and to the resources and tools they need. This Strategic Priority advances a trifecta:

- **Targeted Learning:** Offering high-quality, bite-sized educational tools.
- **Community:** Providing a space for members to engage in dialogue with each other as they seek expert advice about a rapidly evolving landscape.
- **Sustainability:** Helping business officers identify opportunities and create solutions that link business strategies with environmental sustainability.

#### Initiatives

- **Personalize NACUBO's website** to provide tailored access to resources and materials that provide insight, advance ideas, and support effective solutions in higher education.
- **Develop microlearning opportunities** to help business officers gain specific leadership skills and technical competencies in short, accessible modules.
  - » **Early Success:** Our new microlearning program, which received a 2019 ASAE Foundation Innovation Grant, has launched with a series of short videos on leadership competencies for chief business officers.
- **Build a robust, online solutions center** for members to access resources, provide support on emerging issues, find volunteer opportunities, and contribute to Q&A—all in one place.
- **Train business officers on dashboards and visualizations**, building institutional capacity to measure and track a variety of indicators related to institutional performance, all with a focus on intentional improvement.
- **Help business officers link strategies and sustainability**, leveraging business office expertise to strengthen environmental initiatives and outcomes.

# LEADERSHIP

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

### Strengthen the strategic leadership role of the CBO.

Higher education institutions are under enormous pressure from shifting revenue streams, rapid innovation, and significant public scrutiny. In this environment, CBOs must be able to manage their day-to-day obligations as well as drive strategic conversations around the business model, future forecasts, and major issues influencing all aspects of the enterprise.

These realities also demand a deliberate strategy around building and supporting the CBO of the future: growing the pipeline of eligible business officer candidates, supporting diverse and otherwise nontraditional candidates, offering development for professionals in all roles within the business office, and ensuring institutions of higher education are able to access the strategic CBOs they need to be successful in a changing world.

#### Initiatives

- ***Define the CBO of the future***, identifying the skills, abilities, and backgrounds needed to thrive in higher education and to serve its business needs.
- ***Create a credential*** that ensures business officers and others who obtain it have acquired the necessary skills to advance their careers and their ability to contribute meaningfully to the future of their institutions.
- ***Offer a high-impact, transformative leadership development experience*** for high-potential finance and business office staff at colleges and universities.
- ***Design a sector-wide initiative to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion principles*** in the higher education business community.

# ANALYTICS

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

**Lead higher education's integration of analytics to achieve institutional strategic goals.**

NACUBO's focus on business practices in higher education positions it to guide institutions and other associations in the use of cutting-edge business tools, including analytics. The use of analytics in strategic decision-making is increasingly expected in higher education, but many institutions do not have the expertise on staff to build and implement the necessary data systems and analytics tools.

NACUBO will focus on growing its body of knowledge in analytics and collaborating with key partners to share expertise and ensure members have the tools necessary to take strategic action. NACUBO will share best practices, equipping business officers to become trusted advisors during strategic decision-making processes.

### Initiatives

- **Expand collaboration efforts** with other organizations to leverage NACUBO's endeavors.
  - » **Early Success:** NACUBO has collaborated with the Association for Institutional Research and EDUCAUSE on a statement and website on the importance of analytics in higher education.
- **Embed analytics content in all NACUBO conferences and workshops**, ensuring analytics becomes a core activity of the association.
- **Leverage business partnerships to develop analytics tools**, reviewing high-quality work already done in this space and sharing it with NACUBO members.
- **Grow NACUBO's data-informed culture**, becoming the leading higher education association in the use of analytics to enhance business development and member engagement.

## STRATEGIC PLAN ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NACUBO's Strategic Blueprint was informed by hundreds of individuals including staff members, board members, and NACUBO volunteers who contributed their time and insight to designing this bold path. During this process, areas of consensus and innovation emerged and were then tested with community members. The end result is an enterprising and exciting plan that adds value to NACUBO membership and advances the value of higher education.

This Strategic Blueprint was approved by NACUBO's board of directors on July 12, 2019.

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The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), founded in 1962, is a nonprofit professional organization representing chief administrative and financial officers at more than 1,900 colleges and universities across the country. NACUBO works to advance the economic vitality, business practices, and support of higher education institutions in pursuit of their missions.

For more information, visit [www.nacubo.org](http://www.nacubo.org).

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