



September 16 & 17, 2025

SPEAKER BIOS:

Brigid Harrington

Senior Attorney

Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP

Brigid is a member of Hunton Andrews Kurth's higher education team. She has extensive experience in Title IX, VAWA, ADA, Title VI, Title VII, and athletics compliance, and guides clients through complex issues of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Brigid excels in developing non-discrimination and harassment policies, conducting Title IX investigations, and training university communities on compliance obligations.

Before entering private practice, Brigid was the Director of Civil Rights at the University of Massachusetts. There, she led a team of investigators and deputy coordinators in implementing comprehensive processes surrounding Title IX policies and sexual and gender-based harassment and ensured such policies, investigations, and trainings were in compliance with federal and state law. She also served as an Investigator at Harvard University's Office of Dispute Resolution. Prior to her work in higher education, Brigid was an Assistant District Attorney in New York City.

Omar Torres

Coordinator and Director Services, Hazing & Student Conduct

Grand River Solutions

Omar is a seasoned higher education professional with over 20 years of experience working at various colleges and universities. As a subject matter expert in student conduct, hazing

prevention, and Title VI compliance, Omar brings extensive knowledge and strategic insight to navigating complex campus issues. In addition to expertise in student conduct and Title VI, Omar has significant experience providing support and technical guidance on Title IX and Clery Act compliance. Omar earned a Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) from Northeastern University.

Martha Compton

Regional Director of Client Relations and Engagement

Grand River Solutions

Martha Compton is a Regional Director of Client Relations and Engagement at Grand River Solutions. Martha has over 20 years of experience in higher education, specifically investigating and resolving student conduct, sexual misconduct, and interpersonal violence matters. Martha is a nationally recognized expert in student conduct and has held leadership positions within the Association for Student Conduct Administration, including President. Martha has trained thousands of individuals across the country on program and policy development as well as conducting investigations, hearings, and informal resolutions.

Kristen Shahverdian

Program Director of Campus Free Speech

PEN America

Kristen Shahverdian is the program director of Campus Free Speech at PEN America. In her role she advocates for free expression and academic freedom in higher education and leads a team of educators who help campus leaders, faculty, staff and students uphold free speech and academic freedom while maintaining inclusive campuses. She regularly provides commentary and speaking engagements related to free expression in higher education and has authored numerous blogs, statements and articles including, “Campuses for All: How Free Speech Education Can Protect and Enrich Colleges and Universities” for Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, and “How campuses can protect free speech and student safety amid the Israel-Hamas war” in Higher Ed Dive.

Before joining PEN America, Shahverdian was a senior lecturer at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia and an adjunct professor at Rowan University and Temple University. She received her BA from Hamilton College, her MFA from Temple University, and her MA in socially engaged art from Moore College of Art & Design. She spent twenty years as a

practicing artist and teacher - both roles that led to her current role advocating for free expression in higher education. She is also a writer and editor for the Philadelphia-based online dance journal thINKingDANCE.

Neal Hutchens

Professor and Chair

University of Kentucky Department of Higher Education

Neal Hutchens is a University Research Professor and faculty member in the Department of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at the University of Kentucky. His research centers on topics dealing with the intersections of higher education law, policy and practice, with much of his scholarship centered on issues of free speech and academic freedom. Among his publications, Neal is on the author team for the seventh edition of *The Law of Higher Education: Essentials for Legal and Administrative Practice*, a leading treatise on higher education law. Alongside his academic writings, he has written for publications that include *The Conversation*, *The Hechinger Report*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Inside Higher Ed*. He is regularly asked to comment on stories involving legal issues in higher education, including for *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Inside Higher Ed*. Neal earned his Ph.D. in education policy from the University of Maryland and his J.D. from the University of Alabama School of Law.

Michelle N. Deutchman

Executive Director of the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement

University of California - Irvine

Michelle N. Deutchman is the inaugural executive director of the UC National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement (Center). In this role, she oversees the Center's operations, programming and research including its multidisciplinary national fellowship program. Deutchman, a leading expert on expression in higher education, facilitates workshops for staff, students, administrators and law enforcement on First Amendment principles and how to safeguard free speech at universities while simultaneously maintaining a safe and inclusive campus climate. Her work to study and shape the discourse on expression and engagement touches all 10 UC campuses as well as the national conversation about higher education.

Before joining the Center, Deutchman served for 14 years as western states civil rights counsel and national campus counsel for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a non-profit

organization that combats bigotry, prejudice and anti-Semitism. From 2014-2018, Deutchman taught a law seminar at UCLA School of Law on Contemporary Free Exercise Issues. She earned her Juris Doctor from the University of Southern California Gould School of Law, and is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate in Political Science from the University of California at Berkeley where she met her husband as an undergraduate. They now have two children and a dog named Berkeley.