wcet | Webcast

Can Microcredentials Re-engage 40.4 Million Learners?

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Hosted in partnership with:

Today's Moderator

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Speakers

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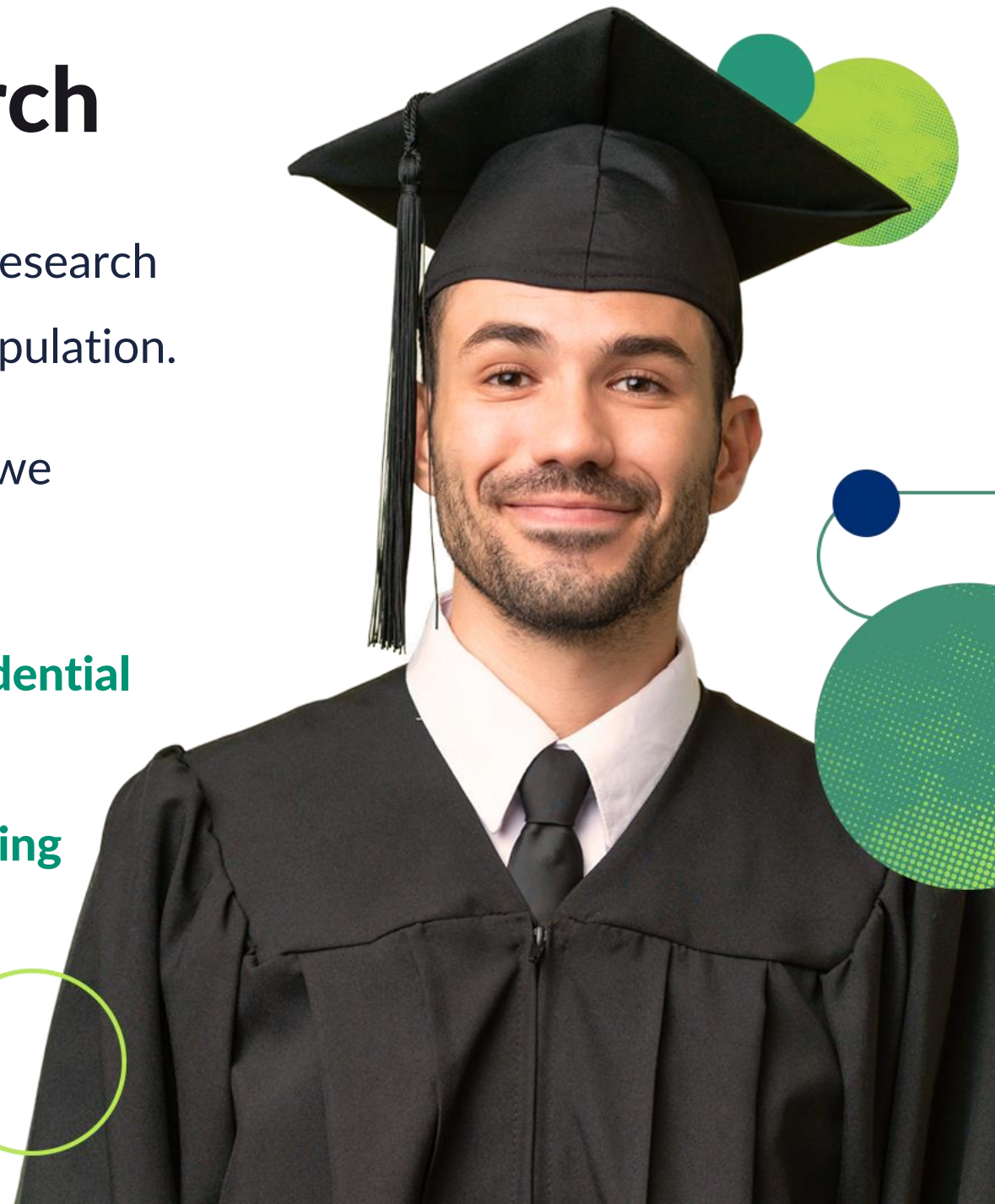University of Colorado Boulder

Amy Smith

Chief Learning
Officer

StraighterLine

Disengaged Learner Research

In 2021, StraighterLine conducted its first empirical research into the 40.4 million Some College, No Credential population.

After learning why SCNC disengage from higher ed, we wanted to ask two ultimate questions:

1. **How can higher ed get the some college, no credential population to return?**
2. **What role do alternative credentials play in getting working adults to return to college?**

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Persona Insights: Disengaged Learners and Return Paths to Higher Education

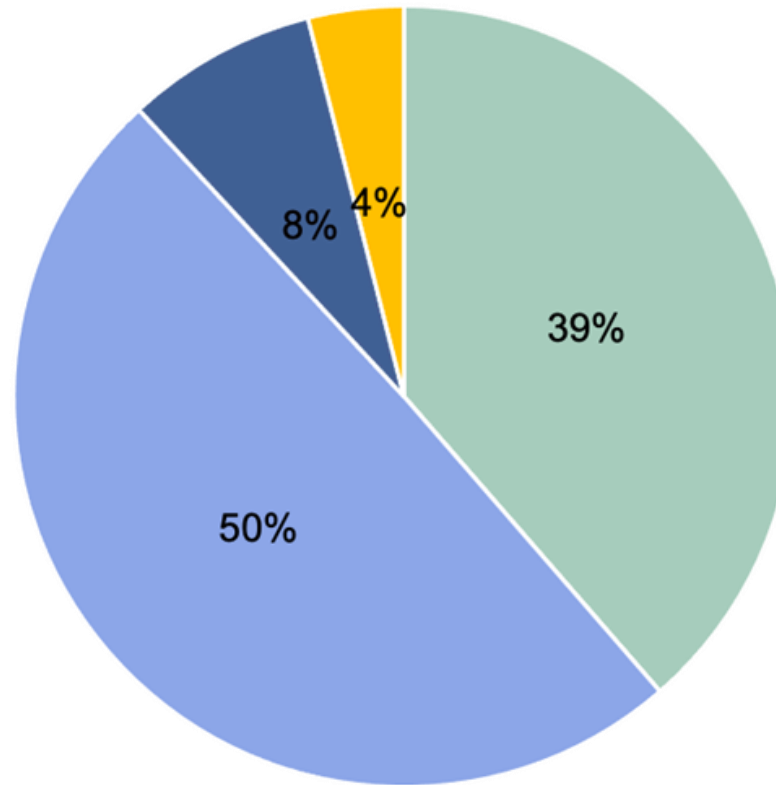|	Sean (n=305)	Whitney (n=372)	Sandra (n=336)	Frank (n=57)
Top Reason for Program Disengagement	Financial reasons (37%)	Financial reasons (58%)	Family reasons or commitments (41%)	Wasn't the right fit (28%)
Reached a Point in Career Where They Feel Stuck (Strongly Agree/Agree)	50%	54%	38%	32%
Likelihood to Pursue an Undergraduate Degree Through Degree Completion Program (Extremely/Very Likely)	35%	50%	7%	0%
Top Motivating Factor to Enroll in a Degree Completion Program	Improve salary (38%)	Improve salary (73%)	Personal goal (39%)	Love for learning (23%)
Effect of Credits for Prior Learning on Interest in Pursuing Undergraduate Degree (Greatly Increase/Increase Interest)	76%	96%	71%	20%
Effect of Stackable Microcredentials on Interest in Pursuing Undergraduate Degree (Greatly Increase/Increase Interest)	78%	94%	66%	14%

Current Careers

Career Level

Which of the following best describes your career level? (n=1,100)

- Early or entry-level: 39%
- Mid-level: 50%
- Director or senior level: 8%
- C-level: 4%

Career Stagnation

Please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I've reached a point in my career where I feel as though I'm stuck or don't have the opportunity to advance. (n=1,100)
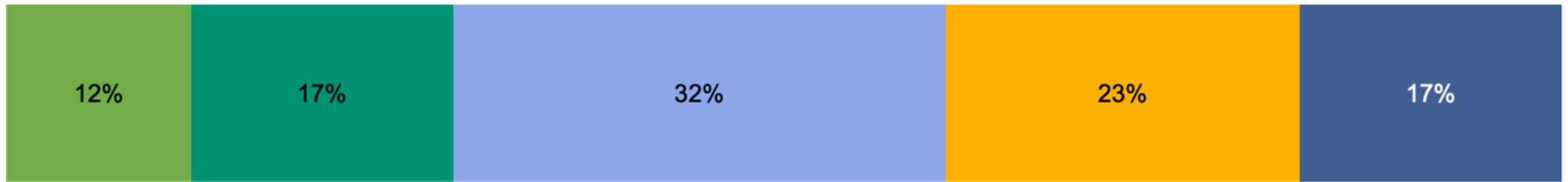
20%	26%	29%	16%	9%

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

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Interest in Degree Completion Programs

Likelihood of Pursuing a Degree Completion Program

How likely would you be to pursue an undergraduate degree through a degree completion program? (n=1,097)

12%	17%	32%	23%	17%

■ Extremely likely   ■ Very likely   ■ Somewhat likely   ■ Not very likely   ■ Not at all likely

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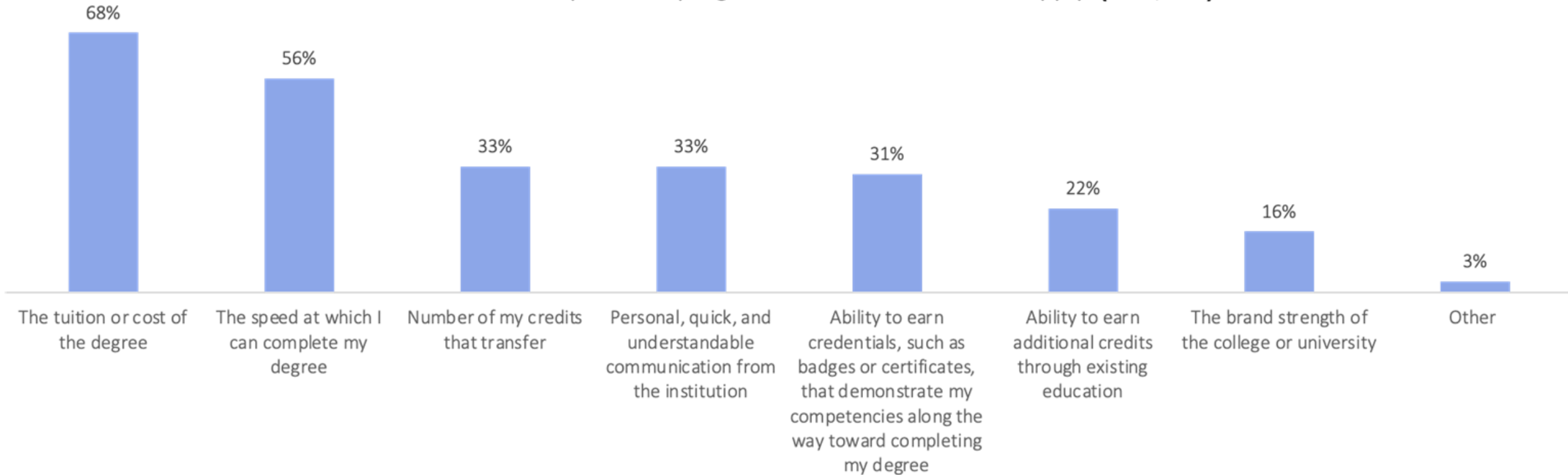# Reasons for Considering a Degree Completion Program

Which of the following would be motivating factors or goals if you were to enroll in a degree completion program? Please select all that apply. (n=1,086)

- Improve salary: 48%
- Personal goal: 44%
- Career advancement: 32%
- Career change: 29%
- Love of learning: 27%
- Strengthen job security: 25%
- Reskill: 15%
- Reenter the workforce: 15%
- Other: 4%

Factors for Selecting a Degree Completion Program

When thinking about degree completion programs, what factors would be important when making your decision about a potential program? Please select all that apply. **(n=1,086)**
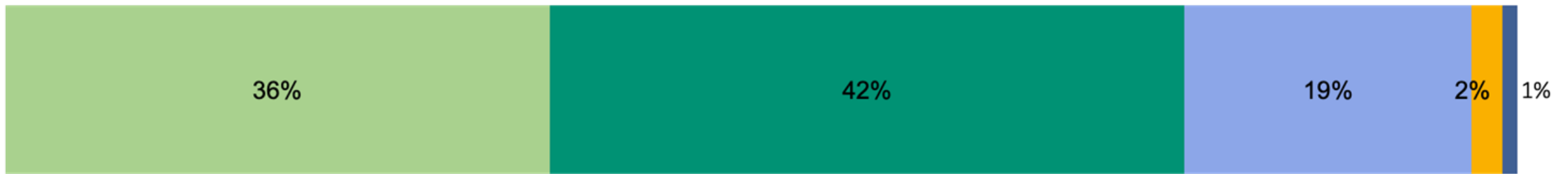
68%	56%	33%	33%	31%	22%	16%	3%
The tuition or cost of the degree	The speed at which I can complete my degree	Number of my credits that transfer	Personal, quick, and understandable communication from the institution	Ability to earn credentials, such as badges or certificates, that demonstrate my competencies along the way toward completing my degree	Ability to earn additional credits through existing education	The brand strength of the college or university	Other

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Strategies for Enrollment

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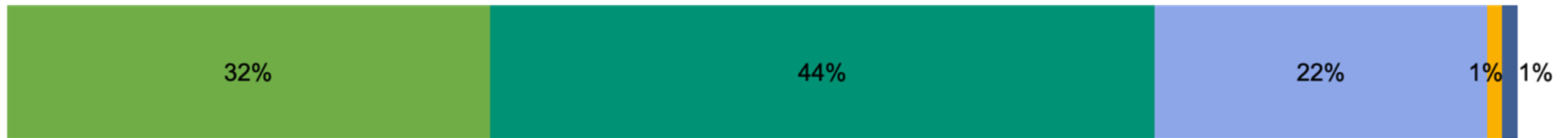
Credit for Prior Learning Interest

If an institution offered credit for prior learning, where you could earn credit toward your degree or credential based upon knowledge and skills you've earned outside the classroom, what effect would that have on your interest in pursuing an undergraduate degree? (n=1,074)

Greatly increase interest	Increase interest	No effect on interest	Decrease interest	Greatly decrease interest
36%	42%	19%	2%	1%

Legend: ■ Greatly increase interest ■ Increase interest ■ No effect on interest ■ Decrease interest ■ Greatly decrease interest

Stackable Microcredentials Interest

For the purpose of this research, alternative or microcredentials are defined as any credential, outside of a degree, that signals an individual's knowledge or skills within a particular subject area. If an institution offered alternative or microcredentials that were stackable, that is to say that courses and certificates could build upon each other and count as credit toward each subsequent credential, ultimately building to a full degree, what effect would that have on your interest in pursuing an undergraduate degree? (n=1,074)

| 32% | 44% | 22% | 1% | 1% |

■ Greatly increase interest ■ Increase interest ■ No effect on interest ■ Decrease interest ■ Greatly decrease interest

The Take Aways

- **46%** of respondents feel they are **stuck in their careers** without opportunities to advance.

- **29%** were **very/extremely likely** to pursue a **degree completion program**.

- **Traditional degree completion programs** alone are **not enough** to entice learners to return to higher education.

- **76%** of respondents said **stackable microcredentials** would **increase/greatly increase** their interest in a degree program.

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Questions from the Audience

Contact Information

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Additional Information and Resources

The webcast recording and additional resources will be available in the next week: wcet.wiche.edu/events/webcasts.

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Distance Ed at a Crossroads: The Changing Landscape of New Regulations

July 30-31, 2024 | St. Louis, Missouri

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Join us October 8-10 in Long Beach, CA!

Registration opens May 9

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