



Preliminary Agenda – Subject to Change (As of 2.9.26)

BUILDING RESILIENT AND INNOVATIVE ECOSYSTEMS: Partnership, People and Purpose

The ultimate masterclass convening industry experts. Plan to take critical topics and burning questions through interactive discussion. Learn from executive/C-Suite leaders and peers as you take part in the ultimate knowledge exchange.

Why Attend?: This high-impact program brings together thought leaders, economic developers, research park managers, and university and industry partners to unite and discuss the innovation of tomorrow. This is where the Community of Innovation comes to build our global network.

Monday, March 9, 2026

Recommendation: Tempe Mission Palms, 60 E 5th St., Tempe, AZ 85281
Group Rate: \$259/Night plus \$17.50 Resort Fee
<https://aurp.org/education/spring-training/hotel-travel/>

Closest Airport: Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport
Tempe Mission Palms offers complimentary airport shuttle service to and from the Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport

11:00 AM – 1:30 PM CHECK IN
Tempe Mission Palms Courtyard

1:30 PM – 2:00 PM OPENING REMARKS
Abbey Room

- Allison Madden, Chief Operating Officer & Corporate Secretary, University of South Florida Research Foundation; AURP President
- Harold Strong, Spring Training Chair; CEO, InnovTX



2:00 PM – 5:00 PM

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES SUPPORTING THE “SOFTWARE” OF INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

Abbey Room

University-anchored “innovation ecosystems” include research, technology development, technology transfer, funding sources, start-ups, spinouts, and corporate partnerships. The development of innovative ideas and technologies, and their subsequent delivery to end users, require multiple resources to collaborate effectively to deliver improvements to society’s standards of living.

In the past few years, several new and improved software technologies have emerged to support University Administrators and/or Innovation Managers in the process of tracking emerging innovations and connecting them to necessary resources. This session will rely on both university practitioners as well as the technology providers to separate hype from reality and share best practices.

- Brenda Berry, Director of Corporate Relations, University of Arizona
- Thomas Kissane, Enterprise Customer Success Manager, Halo
- Chuck Layne, Technology Advancement Director, Launch Tennessee
- J. Mark Nolan, Associate Vice President, Corporate Engagement, Georgia Institute of Technology
- Cody Pawloski, Co-Founder and CTO, FirstIgnite
- Justin Rerko, Growth Strategist, Tradespace
- Alec Sorensen, CEO and Co-Founder, Tradespace
- Alancia Wicks, Research and Sponsored Programs Office, I-CORPS lead, Tennessee State University
- Moderator: Jordan Peterson, Chief Operations Officer, Collaborative Real Estate

5:00 PM – 6:00 PM AURP MARGARITA HAPPY HOUR

6:30 PM INFORMAL GROUP DINE-AROUNDS

Guests to sign-up during registration and reception

Tuesday, March 10, 2026

6:30 AM – 7:30 AM OPTIONAL: JOURNEY UP ‘A’ MOUNTAIN

Meet in Tempe Mission Palms Courtyard

8:00 AM – 8:45 AM MVP Speaker

Abbey Room

Speaker: Mark Skinner, President and CEO, SSTI



9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

PIVOTS OVER TIME: WHEN PLANS DO NOT MEET MARKET REALITY

Abbey Room

This two-part module will examine several new models for research parks seeding support and execution.

Part 1: New Models for Research Parks

Participants will gain insight into the role of philanthropy and community impact in research parks, with practical strategies for enhancing funding models and deepening community engagement.

- Matthew Crommett, Managing Director, LH Capital, Inc. and Lyda Hill Properties
- Jeff Seymour, President and CEO, Oklahoma City Innovation District
- Moderator: David Snow, Executive Director, Pegasus Park

Part 2: Identifying the Gap and the Risk

The next part to this session will explore how some universities are partnering exclusively with third-party developers to deliver mixed-use districts, shifting development responsibility and capital risk while giving up certain levels of control common to innovation districts. With projects at various stages of development and redevelopment, the discussion offers an opportunity to compare approaches and share lessons learned among university leaders and development partners.

- Tishman Speyer Representative (invited)
- Rebecca Ivins, Research Parks Director, University of Virginia Foundation
- Misty Parsons, North Fork Marketing and Relationships Manager, University of Virginia Foundation
- Moderator: Mary Morris, Director Baltimore Fund, University of Maryland Baltimore

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM LUNCH

12:30 PM – 3:15 PM PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (P3s): CATALYZING RESEARCH PARKS AND INNOVATION DISTRICTS

Abbey Room

Billions of dollars across the US have been invested in Public-Private Partnerships (P3s) to develop student housing at our universities. But how can this funding and delivery mechanism be deployed to finance and build research parks and innovation districts? And exactly what is a P3 as opposed to just contracting to build a facility? As universities, cities and regions face challenges in finding ways to launch or expand innovation districts and research park facilities, learn how P3s are overcoming resource constraints. This module focuses on partner selection and advancements in procurement, design, financing, and operating and maintenance (O&M).

Speakers:

- Neil Calfee, Executive Director, Economic Development and Innovation Zones, Arizona State University
- Sarah Horta, MCFE, M.P.S., Director of Innovation & Strategic Partnerships, Maryland Economic Development corporation (MEDCO)
- Kevin Byrne, President and CEO, The University Financing Foundation
- Brian Naumick, Partner, Edgemoor Infrastructure & Real Estate
- Merry Hunter Caudle, Director, Economic Development, Georgia Institute of Technology
- Moderator: Brian Darmody, Chief Strategy Officer, AURP

3:30 PM – 5:30 PM

TOUR OF NOVUS INNOVATION CORRIDOR

Comfortable walking shoes recommended!



The group will depart the Tempe Mission Palms lobby at 3:30 to walk to the Global Futures Laboratory.

Prepare to get your steps in today! Estimated roundtrip walk...2.5 miles.

Plan to wear comfortable walking shoes for this 1.1-mile jaunt from the Tempe Mission Palms to the Global Futures Lab before experiencing a section of this Innovation Corridor. Our afternoon will conclude with a group dinner at Eureka!, followed by a return walk back to the hotel.

NOVUS INNOVATION CORRIDOR, one of ASU's eight Innovation Zones, is a public/private partnership between Arizona State University and Catellus Development. Strategically integrated with ASU's Tempe campus along Tempe Town Lake, the mixed-use development is home to Fortune 100 corporations, new technologies, medical research companies, start-ups, maker businesses and more, plus empowers access to world-class research and a highly educated and skilled workforce.

- 355 ACRES of commerce, urban living and recreation
- 34K NEW JOBS within Novus upon completion
- 5.4K RESIDENTS upon completion
- 1.25MM POPULATION within 10-mile radius by 2023
- 940K EMPLOYEES within 10-mile commute by 2023

[FACT SHEET](#)

5:30 PM – 7:30 PM AURP WELCOME DINNER
Location: Eureka!
Sponsored in part by Stiletto: Make a Point

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

6:30 AM – 7:30 AM OPTIONAL: JOURNEY UP 'A' MOUNTAIN
Meet in Tempe Mission Palms Courtyard

8:00 AM – 11:45 AM NEXT-GEN FINANCING APPROACHES FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
Abbey Room
This module explores the changing models for financing and building research infrastructure as changes in facilities and administrative (F&A) rates, shifting federal funding priorities, and evolving industry engagement strategies are driving new approaches to financing and sustaining research spaces. This session will explore how universities and companies are working together to co-invest in facilities, leverage public-private partnerships, and navigate policy changes to support cutting-edge research as well as approaches to financing that will enable research and innovation growth across a wide range of institutions. The session is organized around four core topics: financing fundamentals, emerging strategies by institutions, evolving overhead recovery models, and state-level funding approaches that support research parks and innovation ecosystems. Participants will gain insights in fundamental financing principles using a combination of qualitative and quantitative frameworks, risk-sharing strategies, and best practices for aligning infrastructure development with long-term research and workforce needs and examine how various investments can support sustainable research and innovation within their communities.



Agenda
March 9-11, 2026

- Kelvin Droegemeier, Professor of Atmospheric Sciences, Special Advisor to the Chancellor for Science and Policy, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
- Rahul Saxena, Director, CREATE-X; Associate Director, LAUNCH
- Larry Peterson, Executive Director, Texas Foundation for Innovative Communities
- Moderator: Kevin Byrne, President and CEO, The University Financing Foundation

11:45 AM – 1:15 PM

LUNCH RECEPTION

1:15 PM – 1:30 PM

AURP: THE YEAR AHEAD

Abbey Room

1:30 AM – 4:30

CORE FACILITIES AND STRATEGIC PROGRAMS TO DRIVE INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Abbey Room

Shared centralized research resources, often referred to as core facilities, enable access to expertise and sophisticated instrumentation creating opportunities to drive discovery and train the workforce. Despite the value they create, core facilities come with their own challenges, especially in an environment where F&A cuts are looming. We will take a deep dive into best practices for efficient operations, strategically growing a strong user base, engaging corporate partners, and supporting defense-related users with security needs. With effective execution, core facilities not only drive innovation and training, but also support business attraction and growth of regional economies.

Part 1: Fireside Chat

- Karen Dobos, Scientific Director, Colorado State University Regional Biocontainment Laboratory (RBL)
- Moderator: Amy Adams, Executive Director, Institute for Biohealth Innovation, George Mason University

Part 2: Panel Discussion

- Jeff Smith, Director, Research Parks, Michigan State University Research Foundation
- Russ Zarras, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Fraunhofer USA, Inc.
- Moderator: Matt Ballard, CEO/Executive Director, West Virginia Regional Technology Park Corporation

4:30 PM – 5:30 PM

CLOSING REMARKS

HAPPY HOUR

6:00 PM

INFORMAL GROUP DINE-AROUNDS

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