



THE CURRENT

KACRAO'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026



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Ad Astra 1st Generation Students Conference

BY KRISTI YUEN

Several Butler Community College staff and students attended the yearly Ad Astra conference held on January 30th at Wichita State University. The conference focuses on first-generation students. Here are a few takeaways from the conference.



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A key theme was the emotional weight of being a first-generation student. There's a lot of bravery involved in being a trailblazer without a clear path to follow, and that can feel isolating. Many first-gen students carry additional stress, trauma, and mental health challenges, which makes self-care and mental wellness essential. The reminder that “you can't pour from an empty cup” really stood out — taking care of yourself is part of being successful, not separate from it.

Elizabeth Moore - Social Media Manager
College Relations & Marketing

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The session I enjoyed most was because it focused on adult learners and ways to connect with them that is different from a traditional student. Adult learners are usually very driven, practical, and bring life experiences to the table that is a benefit to all parties. This I want to make sure to incorporate when advising an adult learner. I have had adult learners mention feeling awkward about going back into the classroom and I want to encourage them that while they benefit from going back to school, other students in the classroom can benefit from the life experience they bring that enriches learning.

Cassidy Ice - Academic Advisor

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My favorite session was with Brooke Allen, Director of TRIO DSS called, “A Holistic Approach to Supporting First-Generation Students.” What stood out most was the emphasis on meeting students' foundational needs; emotional, financial, social, and logistical (“students have to Maslow before they can Bloom”), before expecting academic growth or persistence. The presentation clearly showed how advising that acknowledges students as whole people, rather than just course schedules or GPAs, leads to stronger relationships, greater trust, and ultimately better outcomes. The message was both compassionate and practical, reinforcing the idea that holistic advising is not “extra work,” but essential work.

Tiffany Sowa - Enrollment Coach

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KACRAO Kernels: Plant the Seeds

BY TERRI VAN SLYKE

KACRAO Vice President for Professional Development



KACRAO Kernels is a new monthly professional development column designed to provide members with important leadership tips to plant, grow, cultivate, and use in your professional and personal life.

When I worked at Penn State York, I wanted to help our Lion Ambassadors deepen their leadership knowledge during our bi-monthly meetings. To support this effort, I introduced what I called a “leadership nugget,” a short, focused leadership insight presented during the final 15 minutes of each meeting. This dedicated time gave students practical insights they could apply immediately and reinforced the idea that leadership development is an ongoing, intentional process.

One of my first leadership nuggets was about kindness. I shared this quote, “treat others with kindness, not because they are kind, but because you are.” Working with students, we often assume the advice we give is going in one ear and out the other. Although I had this concern, I continued to share the leadership nuggets. When I accepted my position to work as a Student Recruiter for KU School of Nursing, I received a video from many of my former Penn State York Lion Ambassadors wishing me well as I came home to Kansas. One former ambassador from a few years prior said, “I always remember you sharing a leadership nugget about being kind. And you said, ‘be kind to people, not because they are, but because you are.’ That has always stuck with me, and it is a motto I try to live by.”

Moral of the story: Plant the seeds. Farmers must trust that when they plant seeds, the seeds will take root and grow. Just like a farmer, we as leaders must have faith the seeds we plant will take root in the people we have been entrusted with to lead. You never know who needs to hear your message. Do not be afraid of your own voice. Your impact matters. Share your knowledge. The seeds do not typically sprout overnight. Investing in others takes time. We are cultivating their potential. We are creating an environment where those we lead can rise, flourish, and eventually grow into the leaders they are meant to be. You may never see the harvest but continue to plant the seeds.

If you have a suggestion for a KACRAO Kernel, please contact Terri Van Slyke at professionaldevelopment@kacrao.org.

TIME FOR A
BRAIN BREAK

WORD SEARCH

E K C V R C Y V J M Z S U N H
 T A A O A P U K N Z G S N T Q
 W A D N M C J Q V V Y T K X S
 I B B M S M D W R A K U C U K
 X L E L I A I S F P A D O E C
 E T K J E S S T P P R E L X X
 R E P A X C S Q T L W N L E Q
 E C C R C R L I B E B T E C H
 G H S X K R B O O M E S G U Q
 I S W I W I A N T N O U E T J
 S C A I E S X O T H S P P I G
 T H G K N N F Q P U R P Y V P
 R O M R M N S U N F L O W E R
 A C T Y H R J Z Z I F R L U D
 R L S M E E S G J D X T O X V

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|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| STUDENT SUPPORT | ADMISSIONS | TECH SCHOOL |
| SUNFLOWER | COMMITTEE | KANSAS |
| EXECUTIVE | KACRAO | COLLEGE |
| APPLE | REGISTRAR | CPC |
| SWAG | TABLE CLOTH | |

WHAT COLLEGES DO THESE LOGOS BELONG TO?



S A V E

T H E

D A T E

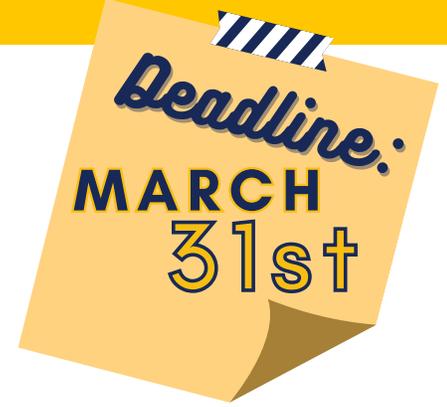
KACRAO Summer Drive-In Workshop

Join us at the 2026 KACRAO
Summer Drive-In Workshop
"Riding the Wave: Elevating the
Student Experience"

July 14, 2026 at Hutchinson
Community College

Registration info coming soon!

26-27 Executive Council Nominations



Nominations for the 2026-2027 KACRAO Executive Council are now open. Open positions include:

- **President Elect**
- **Vice President for Outreach**
- **Vice President for Professional Development**
- **Treasurer**
- **Secretary**
- **Admissions Advocate-At-Large**
- **Records/Registrar Advocate-At-Large**

Who can be nominated?

Eligible nominees must be an active, KACRAO Institutional member (employed by a Kansas institution) and have experience as a Committee Coordinator/Chair or have served multiple years on a KACRAO Committee. Exceptions to the experience criteria are for the Secretary, Admissions Advocate and the Records/Registrar Advocate-At-Large positions.

Position descriptions and additional details are available on our website. Refer to your email for nomination instructions.

You can submit a nomination for one position or multiple positions. Self-nominations are welcome and encouraged—sometimes the best leaders raise their own hands.



2026 KACRAO CONFERENCE INFO



2026 KACRAO ANNUAL CONFERENCE
SEPT 23-25 | HILTON GARDEN INN | MANHATTAN
Manhattan

2026 Call for Sessions

The 2026 KACRAO Program Committee invites you to submit a session idea/topic for the annual conference, this September in Manhattan, KS. Whether it's something you'd like to present or would love to learn more about, please use the link below to let us know!



Submit your sessions ideas



#KACRAO Voices

Got something to celebrate at your institution?
A win, a resource, or a wellness tip worth
sharing?

📣 Send it our way at kyuen@butlercc.edu and you
might see it featured in next month's newsletter!



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