

NEWS RELEASES

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Service

Higher Education

Professionals

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Husch Blackwell Launches Husch Blackwell Consulting

HUSCH BLACKWELL CONSULTING TO ADD STRATEGIC, FINANCIAL, AND OPERATIONS ADVISORY SERVICES WITH INITIAL FOCUS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Colleges and universities are facing a raft of challenges, including a shrinking student-age population, a reduction in government support, and a wholesale transformation of the college athletics system. To help its clients respond, Husch Blackwell, a national Am Law 100 law firm, has launched a consulting firm to work alongside its nationally recognized higher education legal practice.

Husch Blackwell Consulting (HBC), a non-legal subsidiary of the law firm, provides data-driven strategic, financial and operations advisory services to help institutions fulfill their missions sustainably over the long term. The team is led by a longtime college president and features advisors with more than 100 years of combined senior-level experience in higher education finance, athletics, education, enrollment management, and external relations.

“Higher education leaders are facing an ever-shifting labyrinth of minefields and roadblocks,” said Hayley Hanson, partner and co-chair of Husch Blackwell’s higher education practice. “For decades, we have advised higher education leaders on their most challenging legal and regulatory issues. With the launch of HBC, we can now blend legal and consulting services into an unmatched package, each element of which strengthens the other to help clients manage the full range of interlocking issues they face. I don’t believe any other provider can offer the broad perspective and deep experience of our legal and consulting teams.”

Approximately two-thirds of all degree-granting public and private nonprofit colleges have exhibited at least one of the three key indicators of financial stress: consistently losing money, fewer students enrolled than a decade ago, or a decline in state appropriations or endowment value. Meanwhile, the seismic changes underway in the athletics environment create massive risk and uncertainty for schools. While most of the focus on athletics upheaval has been on the Power 4 schools, these changes will impact schools of all sizes, whether they are pursuing a “collegiate” or “professional” athletics model, and the enforcement, eligibility and compliance matters affecting student-athletes.

“We exist to help boards and senior leaders guide their institutions, clearly and confidently, to a sustainable future,” said Chuck Ambrose, leader of HBC, who spent 23 years as a college president. “HBC is designed to help schools unlock new opportunities for growth and long-term health and, working with Husch Blackwell lawyers, to navigate the legal and regulatory questions that inevitably arise along the way.”

The launch of HBC is the latest innovation for Husch Blackwell, a firm that has been recognized by the *Financial Times* as one of the nation’s most innovative law firms.

“HBC is the latest step in our commitment to expanding our capabilities beyond traditional legal services to help our clients navigate complex challenges and achieve their goals,” said Jamie Lawless, Husch Blackwell Chief Executive.

HBC is launching with a set of core services focused on the greatest current needs of colleges and universities, including:

Strategic Governance & Leadership

Financial Stability

Innovation Driven Partnerships and M&A

House Settlement Impact Assessment & Planning (for athletics)

HBC’s services are powered by a proprietary data and analysis tool, Campus Compass™, created by Ambrose, which helps leaders make informed, proactive decisions sufficiently and quickly to stay ahead of their challenges. It provides a clear, objective view of a school’s performance, both in absolute terms and relative to its peers. And it identifies the next level of analysis using tools like an academic portfolio and athletic value study to guide financial and operating decisions most critical to success and therefore most worthy of leaders’ focus.

Husch Blackwell Consulting Biography Capsules

Chuck Ambrose, Senior Education Consultant – Ambrose spent four decades in college presidents' offices, including 23 years as a president himself—most recently as president of the University of Central Missouri, where he earned the Governor's Economic Development Award for the creation of the Missouri Innovation Campus. He then served as chancellor of Henderson State University, where he arrived during a severe financial crisis and achieved the largest cost containment in the shortest amount of time for a four-year public university. Ambrose supports educational institutions and their leaders with a student-centered focus, helping them access and utilize new tools to build a sustainable future for higher education. He works with the firm's higher education clients as a consultant, focusing on policy, strategy, and enhancing institutional performance and outcomes. As the author of *Colleges on the Brink: The Case for Financial Exigency*, Ambrose understands that the paradigm for higher education has permanently shifted in recent years. Schools and their leaders are searching for new skills and tools to build a sustainable, data-driven model for the future.

Therese Scanlan, Education Consultant – Scanlan draws on decades of experience in every sector of higher education to help educational institutions respond to a changing landscape and plan for a successful future. Most recently, she served as president of Oak Point University, where she oversaw a 1,000% growth in student enrollment over eight years. Scanlan has worked with a wide variety of institutions, giving her a broad perspective on the many ways schools can change or approach situations differently. She consults with higher education clients of all sizes and types—from public and private to nonprofit and for-profit—and supports them in planning for a sustainable future. Her consulting is deeply future-oriented, focusing on how to handle change both in the short and long term, as well as on growth strategies, mergers, and affiliations. Her time at Oak Point gave her hands-on experience with rapid growth in an institution, as well as with the change of control process.

Billy Ebel, Athletic Consultant – Ebel is a former Division I volleyball coach. After 14 years at colleges and universities, he joined Husch Blackwell Consulting in 2025 amidst a rapidly changing landscape for collegiate athletics. As an Athletic Consultant, he works with schools of all sizes, assisting clients with matters such as athletics compliance reviews, NCAA infractions, student-athlete relations, Title IX questions, and name, image, and likeness (NIL) rules. Much of Ebel's current consulting work centers on advising institutions on the financial aspects of their decision whether to opt in or out of the *House* settlement.