



Thursday, February 15

12:00 – 1:00 pm

Virtual

Be a part of the conversation! [Conversations with Cara](#) is our panel series designed to bring together civic, business, and nonprofit leaders for discussions on the issues we face in Cara Collective's work to eradicate poverty. Conversations with Cara is a year-long series – with multiple free, virtual offerings held throughout the year and a signature in-person event held each June.

Our next theme is: The Intersection of Education and Workforce Development. As the workforce continues to evolve, so must the ways we prepare current and future generations of workers. With the increased focus on credentialing, upskilling, and practical work experience, the perception that a four-year degree is the only option for long-term career success is no longer accurate. Through this conversation, we will explore how education and workforce development institutions are working together to build more inclusive pathways to gainful employment. This virtual conversation will center around four main topics:

- How a history of systemic racism at the national and local levels has led to gaps in opportunity for quality education in our Black and Brown communities.
- How higher education is creating more onramps for historically disinvested communities.
- How job requirements are expanding from traditional four-year degrees to more diverse (and often more accessible) means of training/credentialing.
- How Cara Collective is partnering with other organizations and higher-ed institutions to create opportunities that lead to community- and individual-level transformations.

Our Panel:

- Dr. Kathleen St. Louis Caliento (moderator) – President & CEO, Cara Collective
- Michele Howard – Chief Program Officer, Hope Chicago
- Dr. Eddie Phillips – Provost and Senior Vice President, National Louis University
- Dr. Maurice Swinney – Chief Innovation Officer, Chicago Beyond

Meet our panel on the next page.

Event Format:

Conversations with Cara will take place on Thursday, February 15 from 12 – 1 pm. It is a free, virtual discussion hosted on [Cara Collective's YouTube channel](#).

This is a free, virtual discussion live-streamed on Cara Collective's YouTube channel.

RSVP requested at www.caracollective.org/conversations

Our Panel



Dr. Kathleen St. Louis Caliento (moderator) has spent nearly three decades focused on issues of social justice, including educational equity, workforce development, and economic empowerment. She currently serves as President & CEO of Cara Collective, a social impact enterprise dedicated to transforming the lives of individuals affected by poverty and promoting a more inclusive economy. Cara Collective produces nearly 1,000 jobs annually, surpassing national retention norms by nearly 20 points. Prior to her role at Cara Collective, Dr. Caliento served as the Chief Learning and Design Officer at the Academy Group. She helped students land coveted mentorship and internship opportunities throughout Chicago. Her impact extends to her time at Spark Program, where she held multiple leadership roles and led a 3x increase in revenue, corporate investment, and workplace apprenticeships. A published author, Dr. Caliento earned her Master of Arts and her Doctor of Philosophy in Secondary Science Education from Columbia University.



Michele Howard is a data informed and visionary leader born and raised on the south side of Chicago. As the Chief Program Officer of Hope Chicago, a pioneering two-generation scholarship model offering a debt-free solution for postsecondary pathways, under the leadership of renowned educator and national leader Dr. Janice K. Jackson, Michele continues to foster new generations of “hope” in Chicago. With a background in supporting, managing and driving systematic change to better serve the 380,000 children of the Chicago Public Schools District, ensuring students had access to scholarship and postsecondary opportunities as the Senior Scholarship Manager within the Office of College & Career Success has been her focus for almost a decade with the district. Over her tenure in Chicago Public Schools she was responsible for securing over 200 scholarship providers annually, establishing critical partnerships that directly impacted student access to scholarship and postsecondary funds and increasing scholarship offers to over \$1B each year since the class of 2017. Prior to this role, Michele supported 60 south side elementary and high schools within CPS as a College and Career Specialist for Networks 9 & 12. The work has pushed her into a position of leadership and advocacy for the most underserved CPS students.



Dr. Eddie Phillips serves as the Provost and Senior Vice President at National Louis University. As Provost, Dr. Phillips is responsible for the academic enterprise of the University. This includes the institution's academic portfolio, academic policy and operations, faculty leadership and engagement in teaching service and scholarship, faculty development, accreditation and compliance, and a host of several shared governance functions. Before becoming Provost, Dr. Phillips served as the Vice Provost of Academic Programs and Accreditation at NLU. Prior to joining National Louis University, Phillips worked at Kennedy-King College, City Colleges of Chicago, where he held several leadership roles, including Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Dean of Instruction, Associate Dean of Instruction, and Registrar. Dr. Phillips has also served in various roles at Northern Illinois University, Malcolm X College, and Rush University Medical Center. Dr. Phillips holds a B.A. and M.A. in Sociology and Criminology as well as an Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership and Administration all from Northern Illinois University.



Dr. Maurice Swinney is the Chief Innovation Officer at Chicago Beyond, a philanthropic organization that addresses systemic inequity by exponentially increasing the impact of community-backed solutions. In this role, Maurice leverages his experience, passion for equity, and skills in innovative design to create more equitable systems for communities. A nationally recognized equity leader in education, Dr. Swinney previously served as Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) first-ever Chief Equity Officer and the interim Chief Education Officer. While leading CPS' Office of Equity, Dr. Swinney led the creation of the district's first equity framework, which opens up greater opportunities for students and serves as a model for how large urban school districts can drive equity. Dr. Swinney also shifted funding to underserved schools and co-led the policy redesign process, making over 20 district policies more equitable. Dr. Swinney's accomplishments grew out of his 21 years of experience in education, serving as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal. He earned his Ed. D. in public school administration and a master's in Educational Leadership/School Principalship.