"Stronger Together: How West Virginia's Higher Ed Heroes Are Powering Student Success!"

Dr. Justin Rader, WVASPA President

In the journey of higher education, success is never achieved alone. It is built on the shoulders of mentors, educators, administrators, and community leaders who believe in the power of collaboration, compassion, and commitment to student growth. This year, we gather under the inspiring theme: **"It Takes a Village: Uniting West Virginia's Higher Education Partners to Advocate for Student Success."**

Student success is not just an institutional goal—it is a shared responsibility. It thrives in environments where partnerships flourish, where barriers to education are dismantled, and where students feel seen, supported, and empowered. Through this conference, we embrace the collective strength of West Virginia's higher education professionals, working together to build networks that uplift students and ensure their dreams remain within reach.

The challenges facing students today are complex—financial constraints, mental health struggles, career uncertainties—but together, we create pathways to opportunity. By fostering deeper relationships between campuses and communities, strengthening mentorship programs, expanding access to essential resources, and advocating for policies that support student needs, we reaffirm our commitment to education as a force for transformation.

This conference is more than just discussions and sessions—it is a call to action. It is an opportunity to recommit ourselves to the belief that every student deserves the tools to succeed. As we come together to share strategies, amplify voices, and build solutions, we remind ourselves that the future of education in West Virginia is shaped by those willing to work together for something greater.

The work we do each day has a profound impact on the students we serve. But true student success isn't built in isolation—it thrives when we embrace **cross-functional collaboration** and **break down the silos** that keep us from working together. While each of us brings excellence to our own roles, our greatest strength lies in unity.

We are here to uplift and support the students at our institutions, and by joining forces, we create an environment where they can thrive. **Together, we are unstoppable. Together, we are stronger.**

See you at the conference!

-Dr. Justin Rader