BRIDGET BURNS
Chief Executive Officer, University Innovation Alliance

Named one of the “Most Innovative People in Higher Education” by Washington Monthly magazine, Dr. Bridget Burns is the founding CEO of the University Innovation Alliance (UIA), a multi-campus laboratory for student success innovation that helps university leaders dramatically accelerate the implementation of scalable solutions to increase the number and diversity of college graduates across the country. She has helped UIA campuses make significant progress on behalf of their students, including increasing their low-income graduates by 46%, and increasing graduates of color by 85%. Her work has been highlighted in national outlets like The New York Times, Fast Company, 60 Minutes, and she was featured in the documentary “Unlikely”.

CANDACE THILLE
Director of Learning Science, Amazon.com, Inc.

Candace was the founding director of the Open Learning Initiative (OLI) at Carnegie Mellon University and at Stanford University. At Stanford University, she was also an Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Education, faculty in the Neurosciences Interdepartmental Program, and a Research Fellow in the Office of the Vice Provost for Online Learning. Her focus is in applying the science of learning to the design and evaluation of technology mediated learning environments. Thille has served on the board of directors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities; as a fellow of the International Society for Design and Development in Education; on the Assessment 2020 Task Force of the American Board of Internal Medicine; on the advisory council for the Association of American Universities STEM initiative; and on the advisory council for the National Science Foundation Directorate for Education and Human Resources. She served on the working group of the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) that produced the Engage to Excel report and on the U.S. Department of Education working groups, co-authoring the 2010 and 2015 National Education Technology Plans.

LAURA HOPE
Associate Superintendent of Instruction and Institutional Effectiveness, Chaffey College

Dr. Laura Hope is an alumna, long-time employee, and the current associate superintendent of instruction and institutional effectiveness of Chaffey College. During Hope’s tenure, she has helped create numerous programs such as Basic Skills Transformation, the Faculty Success Center and the Classified Success Network. In her previous role as executive vice chancellor for educational services at the California Community College’s Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) she led major initiatives including Guided Pathways, the Student-Centered Funding Formula, and the Student Equity and Achievement Program.

MICHAEL DENNIN
Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning
Dean, Division of Undergraduate Education, University of California, Irvine

Michael Dennin has been Professor of Physics and Astronomy at UCI since 1997, and the Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning and Dean, Division of Undergraduate Education since 2015. Dennin has won numerous awards for research and teaching, including being elected a Fellow of the American Physical Society and has appeared on numerous television programs—including Science of Superman, Spider-man Tech, Batman Tech, Star Wars Tech, and Ancient Aliens. Dennin has been a guest on many podcasts, most recently serving as an expert on the podcast Fascinating Gadgets, Gizmos, and Gear-Based Technologies. Recently, he published a science outreach book on the intersection between science and faith: Divine Science: Finding Reason at the Heart of Faith, from Franciscan Media.

EDUARDO M. OCCHOA
President Emeritus, CSU Monterey Bay & Former Assistant Secretary of Education

Eduardo M. Ochoa was president of California State University, Monterey Bay from 2012 to 2022. During his tenure as president, CSUMB was the only public university to receive two awards from Governor Brown’s 2015 Innovation in Higher Education Awards competition, for a three-year BS in Computer Science program in partnership with a community college and for a path-breaking developmental Math program. Ochoa previously served as Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education in the Obama administration. In that post, he served as the secretary’s chief adviser on higher education issues and administered a budget of $2.3 billion and more than 60 programs supporting the nation’s colleges and universities. Prior to joining the Obama administration, Ochoa spent 39 years in the California State University, serving as a faculty member, dean, and provost at Fresno State, Cal State Los Angeles, Cal Poly Pomona, and Sonoma State University respectively.