

ACE/FIDELITY INVESTMENTS AWARD FOR INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

The American Council on Education (ACE)/Fidelity Investments Award for Institutional Transformation recognizes a college or university that, in a period of great change in higher education, has responded to challenges in innovative and creative ways that allow the institution to thrive. The award will be split into two categories: **Category 1**—Large Institutions (FTEs 12,001 and over) and **Category 2**—Smaller Institutions (FTEs up to 12,000).

The ACE/Fidelity Investments Award for Institutional Transformation will be presented to the current president or chancellor of the selected institutions during the ACE Experience 2027 (ACEx2027) in Washington, DC.

CRITERIA FOR AWARD

The Award for Institutional Transformation recognizes a college or university that raised, rallied, or repurposed its resources to achieve dramatic and successful changes over a relatively brief period of time that allowed the institution to fulfill its mission. This institutional transformation could involve academic, cultural, financial, teaching/learning, or other changes undertaken to address either threats to the institution's viability or opportunities to attain a new level of excellence. The intent is not to simply acknowledge the completion of a capital campaign, modification of a core curriculum, or the accomplishments of a particular unit of an institution—however significant—but rather to recognize the evolution of an institution.

Applicants for the award must address a specific time period of institutional transformation. While the transformation may still be underway, the expectation is that this period occurred during the past five years and that significant, demonstrable results have already been achieved. Applicants should submit as much qualitative and quantitative data as possible to demonstrate the transformation. If you have any questions as you work through the application, please email transformationaward@acenet.edu.

ENTRY GUIDELINES

Applicants should submit the following through the award website:

- A completed submission form via the application portal
- Application cover page which will not count toward the five-page narrative maximum
- A narrative description with supporting evidence of the threat or opportunity that the institution faced and the actions that have positioned the institution to thrive that should not exceed five pages, including qualitative data, and should be prepared in 12-point font. Please attach the narrative in pdf format: one cover page plus five pages maximum. Please use hyperlinks in your submission in lieu of appendices.

SELECTION PROCESS

ACE invites nominations for this award and encourages institutions that meet the criteria for eligibility to apply directly for the award without nomination.

Any U.S. higher education institution that is an ACE member is eligible to apply for this award. All applications must be submitted by the institution's office of the president or chancellor.

ACE will convene a panel of reviewers, consisting of highly regarded higher education leaders who represent all segments of higher education. The panel will review qualified applications, evaluate them against the stated criteria, and make a recommendation to the senior leadership of ACE.

The president or chancellor of the winning institutions will be informed in January 2027, and the formal presentations of the awards will be made in March at ACEx2027 in Washington, DC.

AWARD

Each winning institution will receive a cash award in the amount of \$10,000, which may be used at the discretion of the president or chancellor.

STIPULATIONS

The presidents or chancellors of the winning institutions must be present at ACEx2027 on Friday, March 5, 2027 in Washington, DC to receive this award in person. ACE will cover the cost of travel and lodging—within ACE travel guidelines—for the winning institutions.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Completed applications must be received by Tuesday October 13th 2026 at 11:59 p.m. (ET). All materials should be submitted as a single pdf document to the online application portal on the [ACE/Fidelity Transformation Award web page](#). Please select the category that best fits your institution.

QUESTIONS

Please read our Frequently Asked Questions below. If you have questions or need clarification about the award process, please contact transformationaward@acenet.edu.

ACE is grateful to Fidelity for its support of this award. The American Council on Education and Fidelity Investments® are independent entities and are not legally affiliated. The recipient of the American Council on Education/Fidelity Investments Award for Institutional Transformation is selected solely by ACE. Fidelity employees are not involved in any way in determining, selecting, or approving the recipient of any award.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS MAY APPLY FOR THIS AWARD?

Any individual institution that is an ACE member may apply, including all U.S. degree-granting colleges and universities that are accredited by a Council for Higher Education Accreditation–recognized accrediting agency. Systems may not apply, but any number of campuses within a system may apply. *It's important to note that the President or Chancellors' Office of the institution must be made aware of any submissions.*

DO YOU HAVE TO BE AN ACE MEMBER TO APPLY?

Yes, if an individual institution is not an ACE member it should seek ACE membership before the application deadline.

CAN YOU NOMINATE AN INSTITUTION?

Yes, anyone familiar with an institution's transformation story may submit a nomination. Please email the following information to transformationaward@acenet.edu by **September 28, 2026** to nominate a university:

- The contact information for the president's office
- A brief description of the threat or opportunity that the institution has faced
- The actions taken that have positioned the institution to thrive

DO YOU HAVE TO BE NOMINATED TO APPLY?

No, institutions may apply directly without nomination.

WILL RECEIVING A NOMINATION BE AN ADVANTAGE FOR OUR INSTITUTION?

No. The judges will not receive information on nominations. The nomination process is an effort to assure that all worthy institutions are aware of this award.

WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED IN THE ELECTRONIC APPLICATION?

- Page Allotment: one cover page plus a narrative of five pages maximum, double spaced (headers and footers may be single spaced)
- Font: use a standard 12-point font
- Margins: uniform margins at the top, bottom, left, and right of at least .75 inches
- Page numbers: number each page within either the header or the footer
- Page header: identify the applicant's name and institution on each page following the cover page

WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED IN THE ELECTRONIC APPLICATION?

- Name and address of the institution
- Name and title of president or chancellor
- Contact information for Office of the President or Chancellor, including email address
- Website URL
- Most recent FTE enrollment
- Other statistical information relevant to your application that you wish to share

WHAT INFORMATION SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE NARRATIVE?

The narrative should provide a brief and compelling story describing:

- The threats or opportunities that the institution faced
- The steps taken to consult stakeholders, devise a plan, and marshal resources
- The implementation of the plan, including obstacles overcome and assessment of the effort, which may be ongoing.
- How the actions taken resolved the challenges and repositioned the institution to thrive

CAN APPENDICES BE INCLUDED WITH THE APPLICATION?

No appendices are allowed. Any supporting evidence should be provided as part of the narrative. Please use links in your submission in lieu of appendices.

WHAT IF I CANNOT FIT MY NARRATIVE WITHIN THE FIVE-PAGE MAXIMUM?

Because the judges will only read the first five pages, you need to adhere to this guideline for your application to be reviewed in its entirety.

DOES OUR INSTITUTION'S EXPERIENCE MEET THE DEFINITION OF TRANSFORMATION?

Every institution's story is unique, so ACE cannot advise you on the quality of your transformative experience. If you have a compelling story to tell, we invite you to submit it to our panel of experts and allow them to react.