

# Charles Ansell

## VICE PRESIDENT FOR RESEARCH, POLICY AND ADVOCACY

COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA  
RENO, NV | 2020-PRESENT

### WORK EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM OF NEW HAMPSHIRE | 2016-2020  
Chief Operating Officer  
CFO | Associate Vice Chancellor

CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO | 2011-2016  
Senior Associate Vice Chancellor – Academic Governance and Strategy  
Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives  
Senior Project Team Leader

MALCOLM X COLLEGE | 2009-2011  
IT Coordinator

### EDUCATION

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY  
Ed.D. Higher Education (presently dissertating)

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY  
M.S. Business IT

CARLETON COLLEGE  
B.A. Political Science

### CERTIFICATION

ITIL V3

### PUBLICATIONS AUTHORED WITH COMPLETE COLLEGE AMERICA

Guidebook and Tools for Data Management and the Postsecondary  
Data Partnership

Part-Time Students Must Be a Full-Time Priority

Building on Completion Gains

### ARTICLE PUBLISHED IN INSIDE HIGHER ED

Higher Education Needs Its Own Version of Moneyball



Charles Ansell has dedicated his career to educational justice and equity. In his current role at Complete College America, Charles uses research to advocate for legislation and resources that help students graduate college, closing socioeconomic, racial, gender, geographical or generational disparities that exist in college completion.

### SELECTED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Provided expert testimony, language, and guidance for state and federal policy change with legislatures, system leads, and congressional / US DoE staff
- Defined student success strategy, metrics, and targets for NH Community College system and oversaw region, leading +8 percentage point increase in graduation rates
- Directed student services operations for 60,000-plus students in City Colleges of Chicago, leading to ~15% increase in total degrees attained, ~80% jump in graduation rate, and ~25% growth in transitions from remedial to college-level coursework
- Led the development and execution of CCA's strategic research agenda, including scaled adoption of the Postsecondary Data Partnership
- Relentless advocate for favorable policy and legislation, tying data-driven student success agenda to evidence of institutional financial efficiency, resulting in significant increase in state appropriations



## CHANCELLOR FINALISTS



### COVER LETTER

Dear Members of the Board of Regents,

I am writing to express my interest in the position of Chancellor of the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE).

If there are only two things you take away from my application documents about my experience and style, let it be these two personal principles of mine:

*1. Team leadership matters most in the details.*

I have worked at the executive level for two separate systems of seven independently accredited colleges, leading student success efforts at the City Colleges of Chicago, and then student success, finance, and technology for the statewide Community College System of New Hampshire. In both instances, I collaborated

- laterally with seven college presidents to build consensus,
- upwards with Board members individually – and as a team – to rally towards a shared vision of equitable student success, and
- daily with dozens of college-based faculty, staff, and student leaders to assure that policies were designed and implemented effectively for the classroom, advising office, and all operational support services.

Accomplishing the above meant putting in the time to understand the details of each personal perspective to create mutual empathy. Only in this way was it possible to approximate and integrate multiple vantage points to create a shared vision of student success and accompanying strategic initiatives. This development of trust, steeped in shared accountability to common vision and results, was the most critical success factor in both jobs, as well as in my current role at Complete College America (CCA). This stance towards collaboration would be my starting point – and ongoing guiding principle – should I have the pleasure to serve as the next NSHE Chancellor.

*2. Thought leadership includes devising the right metrics in alignment with strategic priorities.*

In both Chicago and New Hampshire – and now in my present role leading policy and research at CCA – I worked with Board members, presidents, faculty, and staff to develop system-wide strategic objectives, and then high-level metrics, to quantify progress towards their achievement. From there, through team consensus as described at the three distinct levels above, I led the construction of predictors of college completion, and metrics around reform efforts and their costs that change daily and weekly. By instituting a strong measurement system, we identified data shortages in colleges to plug, and we brought all reform efforts into a tightly integrated, quantified system for decision support, so no new reform effort towards equitable gains in college completion became a mere fad; rather, they became entrenched in the systems of decision-making themselves. In this way, we could quantitatively predict that college graduation rates would climb in each system – and they did. This method of setting goals and achieving them is what I would instill in my team, as Chancellor, and play back to the Regents for feedback to meet the Board's needs.

In my present role at Complete College America, I apply both these principles, as I work with NSHE and 39 other states to institute policies that promote student success, including remediation reform, credit for prior learning, dual-credit and dual-enrollment coursework, and adequate funding for equitable college completion. This involves working with state and federal legislators to promote advocacy of a common college completion agenda.



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Finally, beyond the two approaches above, I hope it is clear from my resume and other documents that I have leadership expertise beyond student success, including in information technology, facilities management, and other enabling, supportive operations. I gained valuable experience in financial administration and budget management before my present job at Complete College America, and I am confident in my ability to establish practices for the financial administration of the NSHE, develop and present the NSHE budget to the Legislature, and assure that all budgets are executed in accordance with the intent of the Board of Regents and the Legislature.

I am excited about the opportunity to contribute my skills and experience to the Nevada System of Higher Education as Chancellor. I am confident that my background, expertise, and passion for higher education make me a strong candidate for this role.

Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to further discuss my qualifications with you.

Sincerely,

Charles Ansell

## PHILOSOPHY STATEMENTS

### I. Leadership

I strive to operate at the highest level in four competencies of leadership: self-leadership, thought leadership, team leadership, and managing-up. I also instill these in my reports. Each is described below, with the headers also serving as hyperlinks to the book that most informed the specific leadership philosophy element.

#### **Self-leadership: A clear approach to getting things done**

The hallmark of effective executive leadership lies in the ability to tackle changes at a systems level in a well-ordered way that facilitates decision-making and execution. It is incumbent upon the Chancellor to bring coherence to complexity and to empower all employees to confidently chart their own courses towards collective success. By skillfully managing resources, streamlining processes, and prioritizing objectives, a strong leader relies on organization to facilitate the achievement of long-term objectives with efficiency and precision. This is typically a self-evident competency, hopefully manifest in all candidates for the Chancellor role.

#### **Thought leadership: Expert analysis and communication to drive a vision forward**

Strong executives are known for their innovative ideas and unique insights, derived from expertise and active listening. In the Chancellor's role, this individual should build trust, credibility, and influence, not just within Nevada, but across the country, building a postsecondary profile recognized as at the vanguard of new academic and student success solutions. Getting there requires an expansive view of student reality, and the development of mutually exclusive strategic levers to effect comprehensive success. By using empirical principles of covering all aspects of a problem while breaking down its complexity into smaller, non-overlapping parts, a thought leader uncovers root causes and inductively reasons to critical hypotheses, recommendations, and implementation plans. This thought leadership is directly proportional to communication skills and should be modeled by the Chancellor for all employees.



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### **Team leadership: Building trust as the foundation for getting things done collective**

The Chancellor must build trust with all stakeholders – from boardroom to classroom – by encouraging all to share fears and mistakes, and by modeling vulnerability to foster stronger relationships. This, in turn, creates healthy conflict that is the hallmark of constructing solutions bigger than the sum of individual perspectives. From there, a strong team leader instills commitment to a shared vision, even if disagreement remains. Finally, team members in such an environment should understand who is accountable for what and maintain a shared attention to results (see management philosophy on how to maintain that attention).

### **Managing Up: Act as trusted advisor to key constituencies**

The Chancellor reports to many supervisors – the students, the Board, faculty and staff unions, K-12, the legislature, the business community, the governor, and more. To act as a trusted advisor, a strong leader in the Chancellor role will empathize with – and ask open-ended questions of – all stakeholders, provide valuable and data-driven insights, be transparent and honest (including about mistakes), and remain consistent and reliable, maintaining a track record of following through on commitments, meeting deadlines, and delivering on promises.

## **II. Management**

My approach to management follows principles in a publication my team and I recently authored, linked to here. Although management competencies – from modeling an excellent work ethic, to remaining adaptable and calm in stressful environments, to mastering delegation and conflict resolution – are critical in the Chancellor position, they are all tactics in the service of setting goals for student success and measuring progress towards those goals. To manage well, the Chancellor must, above all else:

### *1. measure what matters*

Quantified depiction of student reality is, primarily, a *democratic* approach to problem-solving. Although individual anecdotes and descriptions provide needed emotional resonance to moving teams of people towards systems change, data on overall trends must be in the foreground. By forgoing pedestaling the most recent or stark student story in favor of understanding comprehensive trends, all students served in Nevada receive consideration and treatment; the reality of all students end up depicted, and so can be improved. This requires, first, determining which metrics are most in service of statewide strategic objectives (e.g., graduation rates, median earnings in program of study), then what metrics predict those and change more frequently (e.g., retention rates every semester), and then which change on a daily or weekly basis (e.g., percent of students turning in their first homework assignment) to influence the predictors, and, in turn, the top-line goals for completion and post-completion success.

### *2. create regular conversations about data at all levels*

Regularized, dashboard-driven conversations should happen at all colleges in Nevada, at all hierarchical levels, in all functional areas. The frequency of meeting will correlate with the level of the organization and the metric – i.e., the Board receives quarterly KPI-based updates, with the ability to drill-in as needed, while an advising office may compare enrollment rates across caseloads in near real-time. Only through consistent, structured, data-driven conversations can all employees understand their own performance and address areas for improvement. This applies to all personnel, not just student-facing faculty and staff. A finance department, for instance, may have top-line KPI's related to raising the reserve ratio, which can be tracked by a weekly forecast on progress towards year-end targets or year-on-year comparators. These conversations must incorporate DEI principles, including the need to disaggregate and contextualize performance measures.



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### *3. reward competence to avoid weaponizing data*

Everyone must participate in these performance conversations, including explaining when data is not present and deliberating progress on getting needed data to populate the metrics that matter. These conversations should reward understanding of why metrics are where they are. An employee who can compellingly explain underperformance on a given measure and suggest insights for improvement is more valuable than one who does not understand why a given indicator for which they are accountable shows impressive performance. By rewarding metrics fluency and data competence peers learn from one another and conversation leads to action.

### **III. Education**

My approach to higher education is student-centric and steeped in principles of what good teachers do. Each of the five listed elements of my philosophy described below relate one to the next, each applicable as much towards education in the classroom as in meeting learning outcomes for the tutoring center, the advising one-stop, the financial aid center or any other student-facing functional area. They also apply in most cases to talent development for employees.

#### *1. Establish high expectations for student success.*

This requires setting challenging yet attainable goals for students. Corequisite-driven remediation, which NSHE recently adopted statewide, is an excellent example of pushing students to high goals while providing the necessary guidance and resources to help achieve them.

#### *2. Cultivate depth of knowledge in subject matter.*

To achieve these goals, professors that help students align subject matter into broader frameworks and lived experiences – instead of merely promoting memorization of facts and formulas – will have alumni who remember their material after graduation and apply it to real-world settings.

#### *3. Catalyze critical thinking and rigorous problem-solving.*

Knowledge grows inductively as students deploy multiple dimensions of understanding towards problem-solving. For students to learn how to learn, they must master competencies in analyzing information, evaluating evidence, and generating solutions to complex problems. Such independent, critical thought is important to imbue not just in humanities and social sciences disciplines, but in STEM ones and in vocational learning degree programs, such as those at technical colleges. No student should be denied the opportunity to learn how to learn because of the program of study chosen. This means putting high primacy on the general education core and assuring its transferability with no credit loss between community colleges and four-year colleges and universities, and it demands ensuring that all programs meet accreditor standards for quality and effectiveness at the highest levels.

#### *4. Model passion for the subject matter.*

Students are more likely to succeed at something when they are interested in it. This interest catalyzes the critical thinking and problem-solving processes, above, in service of subject matter proficiency and elevated expectations. Passion should be cultivated by professors who demonstrate a genuine love for teaching and for their subject matter, osmotically inspiring students to become as engaged with the material in their respective academic journeys.

#### *5. Create inclusive learning environments that foster intellectual curiosity.*

This last element is the most critical one. Good teachers establish welcoming, supportive atmospheres that allow students to feel comfortable asking uncomfortable questions and exploring uncomfortable ideas. Only by creating such a setting for learning can passion and problem-solving flourish. Professors must deploy different teaching methods and incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy to address diverse needs and learning styles. By helping students in distinct ways based on individual needs, teachers are more likely to effectively target



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students most at-risk of failure and thus bring up course pass rates and assessment measures while simultaneously enhancing educational quality for all.

With the proliferation of online coursework, it is critical to have safeguards in place – such as individual, in-person check-ins – to avoid erosion in educational quality. Such work should be informed by DEI principles and conducted in concert with accreditor input from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

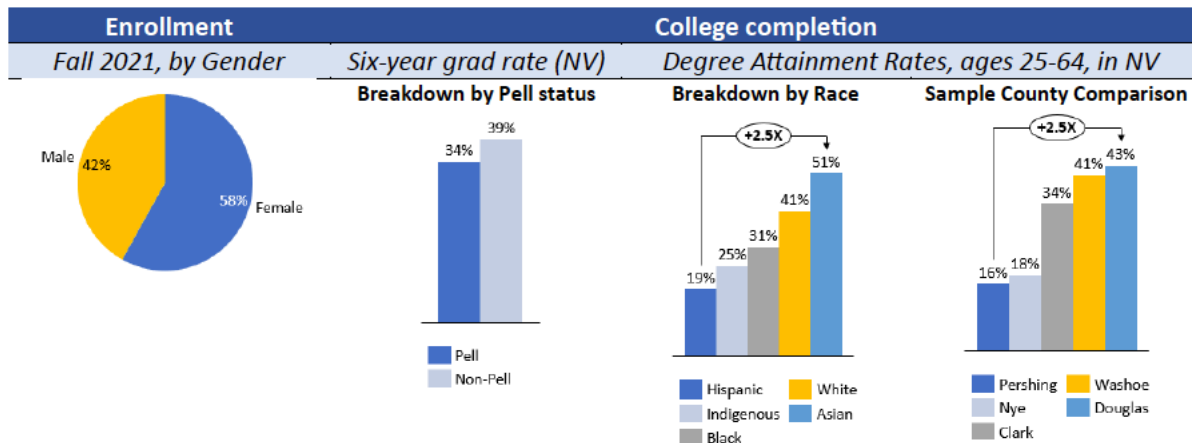




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### IV. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

My philosophy on diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education administration involves identifying demographic gaps that may exist in college attainment and running down all avenues to close them, recognizing the distinct challenges specific groups face and tackling these individually. Gaps range in demographic type - gender, generation status, orientation, rurality, household income background, and race/ethnicity – and intersect, sometimes requiring distinct solutions at intersections. Here are some examples of gaps in Nevada:



When it comes to achieving equitable educational experiences, colleges and universities must tackle the gaps above – and many others – by going beyond mere profession of dedication to their closure. To help underrepresented students with actions that lead to genuine change, all students must have access to resources, opportunities, and support systems enough for success, which requires reassessment of approaches to policy, practice, and resource allocation, ensuring that they are all driven by genuine commitment to DEI principles. The movement of closure of the gaps in Nevada higher education attainment requires, at minimum, the consideration of causes and potential solutions along the following dimensions.

People: DEI competency	Process: Academic   student success reforms	Technology: Educational access in post-COVID world	Policy and Resources: Funding for completion
Democratized access to data that describes gaps, and talent development mindful of DEI principles.	Use of a targeted universalistic approaches to apply pinpoint strategies for gap closure for specific demographics and intersections, ipso facto raising attainment rates overall.	Overcoming digital divide in technology access, especially between rural and urban areas; deploying asynchronous learning options strategically to help working learners overcome difficulties in balancing work and life obligations against academic ones.	Assure state appropriations and student financial aid support gap closure by adequately funding the talent development, student success strategies, and technological necessities described to the left.

My approach as Chancellor would be to get practical about DEI immediately, employing a comprehensive, data-driven snapshot of demographic gaps and leading the charge to unpack causal factors and itemize all we can do – in terms of people, process, technology, and policy / resources – to close them. This would rely heavily on my management philosophy to get things done.



## RESUME

# Charles Ansell

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September 2019 - Present

**Ed.D. in Higher Education**  
Northeastern University  
(Presently dissertating)

- Student Success
- Policy
- Finance
- Data
- Information Technology

September 2008 – June 2010

**M.S. in Business IT**  
DePaul University

*Native English speaker,  
intermediate proficiency in  
Spanish reading / writing*

September 2000 – June 2004

**B.A. in Political Science**  
Carleton College

2020 - Present

**Vice President – Research, Policy, and Advocacy**  
**Complete College America (CCA)**

Advance CCA's system, state, and federal policy agenda and evidence base for equitable postsecondary attainment across Alliance of 39 states and 10 systems.

- Provide expert testimony, language, and guidance for state and federal policy change with legislatures, system leads, and congressional / US DoE staff
- Author | publish [field-moving reports](#) on [current-state of higher education reform](#) efforts

2016 - 2020

**Chief Operating Officer**  
**Community College System of New Hampshire**

Led academic, student success, finance, IT, and research operations for statewide system of 7 colleges | 13 campuses | 25k+ students

- Defined student success strategy, metrics, and targets, and oversaw region leading +8 pp increase in graduation rates.
- Accountable for all financial operations, overseeing 50 percent growth in reserves, doubling of debt coverage

Before this, *CFO | Associate Vice Chancellor* for Community College System of New Hampshire

2011 – 2016

**Senior Associate Vice Chancellor – Academic Governance and Strategy**  
**City Colleges of Chicago**

- Directed student services operations for 60,000-plus students, leading to ~15% increase in total degrees attained, ~80% jump in graduation rate, and ~25% growth in transitions from remedial to college-level coursework

Before this, *Executive Director, Strategic Initiatives and Senior Project Team Leader* at City Colleges of Chicago; *IT Coordinator* at Malcolm X College