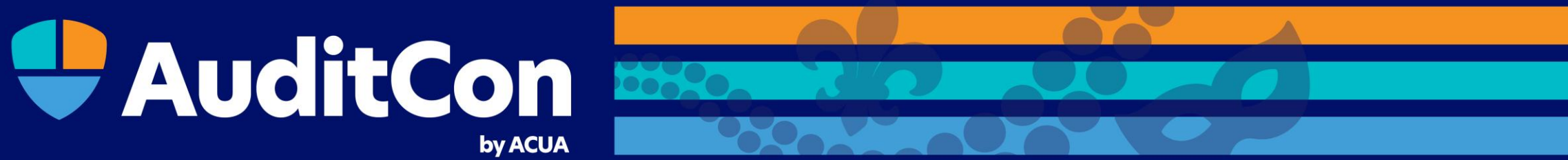
AUDITING WHEN EVERY DOLLAR MATTERS



New Orleans, Louisiana | September 27 - October 1, 2026

ACUA

Consider This

"Your university is facing declining enrollment, a budget deficit, and rising operational costs. Leadership just announced a 10% budget reduction and internal audit (IA) is not exempt. What do you do?"

#1 Trend and Top Risk: Erosion of Higher Ed Revenue Model

Deloitte Higher Education Trends, Feb 2026

42% of Chief Business Officers expect to share administrative functions with another institution.

Inside Higher Education, Jul 2026

70% of Chief Business Officers say they have too many academic programs compared to enrollment.

Inside Higher Education, Jul 2026

What We're Covering Today

Dr. Evonne Thompson
Executive Director / Chief Audit Executive
Southern Illinois University System



01 **Prioritize Sustainability**

Apply a strategic risk perspective to audit planning and engagement activities for alignment of IA work to the institution's sustainability priorities.

02 **Create Strategic Value**

How to move IA function beyond compliance-focused activities to provide strategic insight and value creation.

03 **Communicate Impact**

Communicate emerging risks and operational impacts more effectively to support informed decision-making for leadership and boards.

IA Plan Approach: Prioritize Sustainability

Traditional Audit Plan ----------→ **Sustainability-Linked Audit Plan***

- Payroll
- Procurement Services
- Financial Aid
- Academic Affairs
- Campus Cash Counts
- Information Technology

- Academic Innovation
- Academic Program Review
- Deferred Maintenance
- Staff Reduction Compliance
- Revenue Diversification
- Budget Reduction

*Note: Tied to institution's strategic and sustainability goals

Create Strategic Value

Enrollment Decline

Tuition Revenue Decline

Cost Cutting Decisions

Where does internal audit intersect?

Revenue Forecasting
Assumptions & Controls

New Revenue Streams
Controls & Oversight

Workforce reductions
Process & Compliance

Scenario Discussion

CURRENT AUDIT PLAN

- Cash Receipting
- Travel & Expense
- IT Access Controls
- Research Compliance
- Title IX Process Review
- Construction Project Oversight

UNIVERSITY PROFILE

- Enrollment down over 5 years
- $10M structural budget deficit
- Hiring freeze
- Program consolidations
- Rising costs
- Board ask: Find $5M savings

Q1
What is most urgent and why?

Q2
What is missing that represents a real risk?

Q3
What would you cut and add to replace?

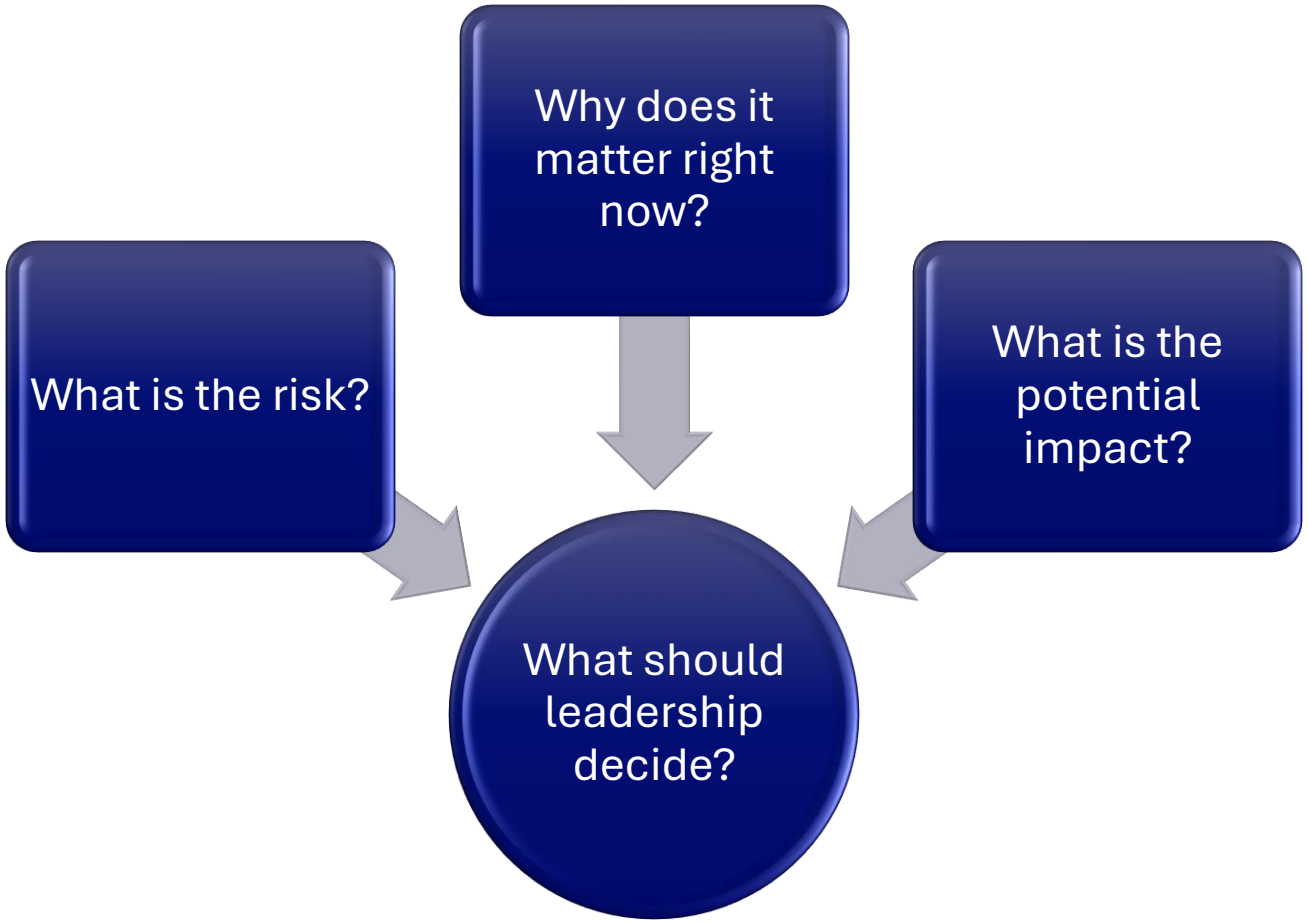
Communicate Impact

STANDARD LANGUAGE

ABC Vendor does not have defined performance metrics and requirements. Management should establish KPIs and a monitoring framework consistent with policy XYZ to ensure compliance.

IMPACT LANGUAGE

ABC Vendor has no performance metrics in place, which is central to $2M in projected tuition revenue. If targets are missed, the University is unable to remediate or exit. The Board should direct management to create KPIs within 60 days.



Questions?

THANK YOU!