2018 TIAA Institute
Theodore M. Hesburgh Award
for Leadership Excellence in
Higher Education

Honoring Dr. Paul J. LeBlanc
President, Southern New Hampshire University
“Paul LeBlanc is among today’s most innovative and visionary university presidents. Throughout his career, he has championed new learning platforms, forged alternative pathways to degree completion, and expanded access to quality education. His success is an inspiration to campus leaders everywhere.”

Stephanie Bell-Rose
TIAA Senior Managing Director and Head of the TIAA Institute
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Dr. Paul J. LeBlanc, President,
Southern New Hampshire University

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Classroom revolutionary

In his 14 years at the helm of Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU), Paul LeBlanc transformed a small, largely unknown regional institution with 2,500 students into the nation’s second largest nonprofit provider of online higher education, generating a 12-fold increase in revenues. SNHU today serves nearly 100,000 students, many from underserved populations, and offers the nation’s first competency-based degree program approved both by a regional accreditor and the U.S. Department of Education.

SNHU’s success has not gone unnoticed. In 2012, Fast Company magazine ranked SNHU #12 among the “World’s Fifty Most Innovative Companies”—the only university included on the list. New Hampshire Business Review called Paul one of “New Hampshire’s Most Influential People,” Forbes named him one of 15 “Classroom Revolutionaries,” and Washington Monthly included Paul among “America’s 10 Most Innovative University Presidents.”
Expanding opportunity

With change happening faster than ever before, and technology fundamentally reshaping every aspect of society, education can be the deciding factor in determining who reaps the rewards of transformational change and who gets left behind. To help expand the scope of educational opportunities available to everyone, Paul created:

- **SNHU Advantage**, which cuts annual tuition by two-thirds, groups all classes in the morning to help working students, and provides wraparound support services.
- **Degree-in-Three**, a competency-based program that reduces the time to degree completion by one year while shaving 25% off the cost of a degree.
- **College for America**, the nation’s first direct-assessment competency-based education program, which now serves more than 6,000 students.
- **SNHU Center for New Americans**, an inner-city collaboration with the YMCA providing educational and other services for refugees and recent immigrants.
- **The Refugee Initiative**, which seeks to replicate SNHU’s successful work in Rwanda’s Kiziba Refugee Camp in three other locations: Lebanon, Kenya and South Africa.

“I am humbled and honored to receive this award, named for one of the great leaders in higher education, Rev. Hesburgh. I hope to follow in his footsteps to help make the world a better and more just place through higher education.”

Dr. Paul J. LeBlanc
President, Southern New Hampshire University
Rethinking the modern university

Besides promoting innovations centered on direct service to students, Paul has brought his drive and creativity to many other aspects of SNHU’s administration, including:

- **Alternative Energy.** SNHU developed a wind energy purchasing program to offset all its carbon use, making it New Hampshire’s first carbon-neutral campus and earning the university two EPA awards.

- **Technology Investments.** SNHU partnered with Rethink Education to launch an early stage investment fund that provides up to $1 million in funding for promising education-technology startups.

- **Motivis Learning.** A wholly owned for-profit subsidiary of SNHU, Motivis offers a groundbreaking competency-based education platform currently being rolled out across K-12 and higher education.

- **Sandbox Collaborative.** SNHU’s innovation lab, Sandbox acts as an internal consultancy to SNHU’s operating units, conducting research on new business models, education technologies, and teaching and learning practices.

- **Data Analytics.** SNHU’s 75-person data analytics team provides predictive scoring on all new students, monitors every section of every course 24/7, and supports a student-success effort that has driven graduation rates far higher than those of peer institutions.
Taking a stand

A bold and respected voice on national issues, Paul sits on the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Board on Higher Education and Workforce, focusing on artificial intelligence and automation. He has served as senior policy advisor to former Under Secretary of Education Ted Mitchell, promoting competency-based education, innovation and new accreditation pathways. Additionally, he chairs the Association of Governing Boards Council of Presidents; serves on the Board of the American Council on Education; and was appointed by Senator Patty Murray to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity.

Paul’s optimism and curiosity have shaped in many ways the larger culture of SNHU. He has instilled across campus a deep-seated faith in the power of knowledge, an impatience with “we’ve always done it this way” attitudes, and the courage to stand up for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. He is a tireless advocate for the institution he leads and for bringing the benefits of higher education to as many people as possible.
About the award

The Hesburgh Award is named in honor of the late Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., (1917-2015) former president of the University of Notre Dame and longtime member of the TIAA and CREF Boards of Overseers. A world-renowned educator and humanitarian, Father Hesburgh was one of the most influential figures in the modern history of higher education and a lifelong champion of human rights, the cause of peace and care for the poor. He received both the Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor.

As a tribute to Father Hesburgh’s lasting legacy, the TIAA Institute grants the Hesburgh Award to a current college or university president or chancellor who embodies Father Hesburgh’s commitment to higher education and society at large. The award is presented each year at the annual meeting of the American Council on Education (ACE). Recipients are chosen by an independent panel of judges, and ACE administers the award on the Institute’s behalf.
About the TIAA Institute

For 20 years, the TIAA Institute has helped advance the ways individuals and institutions plan for financial security and organizational effectiveness. The Institute conducts in-depth research, provides access to a network of thought leaders and enables those it serves to anticipate trends, plan future strategies and maximize opportunities for success. To learn more, visit www.tiaainstitute.org.

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About TIAA

TIAA (www.tiaa.org) is a unique financial partner. With an award-winning track record for consistent performance, TIAA is the leading provider of financial services in the academic, research, medical, cultural and government fields. TIAA has $1 trillion in assets under management (as of 12/31/2017) and offers a wide range of financial solutions, including investing, banking, advice and guidance, and retirement services.

About Southern New Hampshire University

Southern New Hampshire University is a private, nonprofit, accredited institution with more than 3,000 on-campus students, over 80,000 online students and an alumni network of over 84,000, making it one of the fastest-growing universities in the nation. Since its founding in 1932, SNHU has transformed from a school of accounting and secretarial science into an institution offering over 200 programs, from certificates to doctoral-level degrees in business, education, liberal arts, social sciences and STEM. For more information, go to www.snhu.edu.