

Maverick Conference on Financial Wellness
Minnesota State University, Mankato
April 17, 2026

Tentative Program

CSU Ballroom

- 10:30 am Registration and Check-In
11 am Welcome and Opening Remarks
 Ishuan Li Simonson, Co-Director, Maverick Center for Financial Success
 Seung Bach, Dean, College of Business, Minnesota State University,
 Mankato
 Keynote Speaker: Marie Buchli, Vice President of Regional Operations, Junior
 Achievement North
11:30 am Lunch

Concurrent Sessions

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

SPARKTalks

Location: Ballroom

SPARKTalks are short presentations using visual and brief texts to deliver clear expositions of research topics. In this session, you will learn about labor markets in the age of AGI, financial wellness, skills, and literacy differences across race, and whether programs designed to improve financial literacy and economic education for college students actually work.

Session Organizer: Ishuan Li Simonson, Minnesota State University, Mankato

JA Finance Park: The Student-Centered Simulation for Real-World Money Decisions

Location: CSU 201

Junior Achievement Finance Park Mobile is a student-centered, experiential simulation where learners step into an adult role and make real-world financial decisions. Participants will see how this hands-on model boosts engagement while building financial capability and career readiness through budgeting and choice-based decision-making. Educators will walk away with concrete next steps to bring the simulation to their students, and community partners will see how to get involved in expanding access to this experience.

Session Organizer: Haley Geinnotta, Junior Achievement North

Build Your PH&D Skills: AKA Your Competitive Edge
Location: CSU 202

The term "soft skills" fails to capture the critical competencies that actually drive workplace success. This interactive session introduces the PH&D Model: Professional Skills that boost job performance, Human Skills that enable collaboration, and Durable Skills that sustain long-term career resilience. As AI continues reshaping the workplace, understanding which skills become more valuable is essential for financial professionals navigating career growth and stability. Participants will complete a self-assessment to identify their current skill profile, then analyze results to uncover strengths to leverage and gaps requiring development.

Session Organizer: Shane Bowyer, Minnesota State University, Mankato

MCFS Coaches Financial Lightning Round
Location: CSU 203 (1:00 pm – 2:30 pm)*

MSU students will have the opportunity to get personal financial guidance from MCFS coaches.

Session Organizer: Daniel Hiebert, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Why We Buy: The Psychology of Spending & Self
Location: CSU 204

Explore how emotions, identity, and social influence drive what (and why) we buy. Learn to recognize internal vs. external motivators, resist persuasive marketing tactics, and align purchases with personal values.

Session Organizer: Amanda Weister, Minnesota State University, Mankato

2 pm – 3:00 pm

Financial Planning Panel Discussion
Location: Ballroom

This is a panel session made up of 4-7 MSU alumni financial planners who will answer questions from MSU about careers in financial planning.

Session Organizer: Daniel Hiebert, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Understanding work benefits with individual planning

Location: CSU 201

Northwestern Mutual, Mankato will explore the various types of work benefits—such as health insurance, retirement plans, and paid leave—and how to evaluate their value relative to your personal and career goals. Attendees will learn strategies for comparing benefit packages and aligning choices with long-term financial and life-planning objectives.

Session Organizer: Maria Pinero, Northwestern Mutual

The Art of Asking: Salary Negotiation Strategies that Work

Location: CSU 202

Effective salary negotiation is both a strategic skill and an essential form of professional advocacy. This session will equip participants with practical techniques for preparing, framing their value, and navigating negotiation conversations with confidence. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to maximize their earning potential and achieve more equitable compensation outcomes.

Session Organizer: Katie Jolicoeur, Career Development Center, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Bank Smarter: No More Guesswork

Location: CSU 203 (2:30 pm – 3:15 pm)*

College is often the first-time students are fully responsible for their own money, but most have never been taught how banking actually works. Bank Smarter: No More Guesswork gives students the confidence and practical know-how to control of their finances. This session breaks down the essential's students need right now: how checking and savings accounts really work, strategies to avoid common fees, tips for using online and mobile banking tools effectively, and best practices to protect themselves from fraud. By the end, students leave with actionable skills they can use immediately, including no more guesswork.

Session Organizer: Melissa Diegnau, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Leading with Purpose: Women's Role in Financial Growth and Community Building

Location: CSU 204

This panel includes four women who are all members of the "Book Club", a women's investment club that launched 10 years ago. Facilitator Dr. Brenda Flannery will facilitate conversations with panelists Christina Ohlke '01, Market President Bank Vista, Melissa Bradley '10, Owner/General Manager/CFO Snell Motors; and Heidi Boyum, Retired Jarraff Industries Owner about why and how investment clubs can be a place for women to find support for financial and personal well-being. Other conversation topics include the panelists' professional

careers in finance and business ownership as well as their experiences and roles in financial growth and community building.

Session Organizer: Brenda Flannery, Minnesota State University, Mankato

3 pm – 4:00 pm

Financial Planning Networking Event

Location: Ballroom

MSU students have the opportunity to network with financial advisory firm leaders and financial professionals.

Session Organizer: Daniel Hiebert, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Appetizer and refreshment will be served. Stop in anytime to network with industry leaders.

Post College Factors on Financial Wellness

Location: CSU 201

Graduation from a college or university requires a strategic approach to managing new financial responsibilities. This session explores the critical factors of financial wellness after graduation, including decoding employer benefits, managing for the unknown, and understanding the behaviors and attitudes that drive our money habits.

Session Organizer: Jason Kley, Sequoia

Financial Aid and Loan Repayment: Workshop

Location: CSU 202

Do you know how you are covering the costs of college? What does student loan repayment look like after graduation? In this interactive session, we will discuss the different ways to reduce loan indebtedness during college and cover strategies for financial success after graduation.

Session Organizer: Rachel Sherlock, Business Office, Minnesota State University, Mankato

Financial Literacy & College as a First-Generation Student

Location: CSU 203 (3:15 pm – 4:00 pm)*

This session addresses a critical gap in first-generation student support: The period after college admission but before students feel comfortable navigating higher education by themselves. Our goal in this session is to guide students through these next stages after committing to college. This session will work to address confusion, reduce stigma, and empower students to proactively seek answers and support.

Session Organizers: Abdurrahman Guantai and Iqra Mahamud, Minnesota State University, Mankato

4:00 pm – 4:15 pm

Closing Remarks: Ishuan Li Simonson, Maverick Center for Financial Success

Location: CSU Ballroom

Our conference sponsors will draw the name of three student attendees as recipients of their generous gifts.

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and
Maverick Conference on Financial Wellness
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