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Environmental Scan and Trends Report Companion Piece

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Introductory Letter to Readers

Dear Colleagues,

The *2025-2026 AUPHA Environmental Scan and Trends Report* offers a comprehensive, data-driven view of the forces reshaping healthcare and healthcare management education. To complement that analysis, AUPHA commissioned a companion report to bring forward the lived experiences, judgments, and concerns of leaders who are navigating these shifts in real time. This report draws on in-depth interviews with academic and industry healthcare leaders across a range of roles, institutional types, geographies, and program models. Together, their insights add nuance and texture to the trends documented in the *Report*.

Across these conversations, both industry and academic leaders described a landscape undergoing profound and accelerating change. Industry leaders emphasized mounting workforce pressures, financial and reimbursement volatility, and the need for leaders who can operate effectively amid sustained uncertainty. Academic leaders, in parallel, pointed to shifting student expectations, enrollment pressures, and the growing challenge of delivering rigorous, relevant education within increasingly constrained institutional environments. Many leaders also highlighted the expanding role of technology, analytics, and artificial intelligence, not as ends in themselves, but as tools that must be paired with sound judgment, ethical leadership, and systems thinking. Leaders consistently underscored that today's challenges are interconnected: workforce strain influences educational demand, financial pressures shape both organizational strategy and program design, and misalignment between industry needs and educational models risks weakening the leadership pipeline at a time when healthcare systems can least afford it.

This companion report is organized to mirror the structure of the *Environmental Scan and Trends Report* while elevating the lived experiences and strategic insights of leaders across sectors. By integrating viewpoints from health systems and universities, this report aims to reveal areas of shared concern, points of divergence, and opportunities for alignment between education and the evolving needs of the healthcare workforce. Our hope is that this qualitative companion not only enriches the *Report* but also equips readers with forward-looking insights that can inform strategic planning, program design, and the continued strengthening of our field.



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