



Biography of Lori Erica Varlotta

Lori Erica Varlotta, PhD, is the Incoming President of Antioch University and Incoming Executive Vice President of the Coalition for the Common Good. She comes to Antioch with four decades of higher education experience at institutions large and small, public and private, faith-based and secular, system-embedded and standalone. Though different in size and type, all the universities she has served are—like Antioch—mission-driven ones that prioritize student centrism, experiential learning, and the rigorous yet respectful pursuit of truth. She has found that her visionary yet approachable leadership style makes her a good fit for such institutions.

Most recently, Varlotta served as the President of California Lutheran University, where she was the first woman to hold that role. Her Cal Lutheran tenure coincided with one of the most challenging eras in modern higher education: a global pandemic, shifting demographics, and heightened demands for racial equity. Varlotta led with clarity and courage during a period of unprecedented challenge—safely reopening the campus post-pandemic, addressing financial constraints, resolving complex legal matters, and strengthening institutional accreditation, all while laying the foundation for long-term sustainability and growth.

Prior to California Lutheran, Varlotta served as President of Hiram College in Ohio. There, too, she was the institution's first woman president. At Hiram, she led a bold turnaround and repositioning effort that included negotiating the forgiveness of \$8 million in debt, restructuring the academic structure, rebranding the College's identity, creating a new tuition model, and logging six years of record-setting fundraising results.

Before her presidential appointments, Varlotta held director and dean roles at multiple universities before being recruited to California State University, Sacramento. By the end of her eleven-year tenure at Sac State, she served as the university's only senior vice president. Her broad portfolio included student affairs, enrollment management, Division I athletics, diversity and belonging, and strategic planning.



A nationally respected scholar-practitioner, Varlotta writes and speaks on topics such as communities of difference, shared governance, educational innovation, and leadership for change. She holds the title of Distinguished Professor of Higher Education Leadership at Cal Lutheran and is currently on the first research leave of her career—time that has allowed her to write, to give presentations, and to advise university presidents and boards across the country.

Varlotta holds an interdisciplinary PhD in Educational Leadership and Feminist Philosophy from Miami University, an MS in Cultural Foundations of Education and Curriculum from Syracuse University, and a BA in Philosophy from the University of Notre Dame. She is grateful for the opportunities that those credentials have helped her earn. She is quick to add, however, that she has learned life's most important lessons from her blue-collar family and others from her hometown of Pittsburgh, PA.

When she is not working, she and her partner, Eric Premack, often leave their Sacramento loft and head up to their Truckee cabin. After trail running, hiking, or cross-country skiing, she is known to devour a huge meal and a good book...sometimes in the same sitting.