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A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

Dear PBSN Members,

On behalf of ACCT's board, staff and membership, please accept our sincere appreciation for the work you do as liaisons to your college boards.

We understand that your positions require you to wear many hats and not just to be able to do but be the best at carrying out a broad variety of responsibilities.

We know that you are committed to your institutions' missions of offering access to high-quality higher education to all students, and to empowering your students to advance in this world. Your commitment and your work are central to our collaborative work to change lives for the better.

All of us at ACCT are grateful for everything you do.

ACCT will be launching some exciting new services in the coming year, including new ways to connect our entire membership, and we hope to expand and deepen our relationship with professional board staff members as we move forward together. You are vital to the work this association does, and we hope we are valuable assets in your work as well. Reach out to any of us anytime and let us know how we can help.



Dear CEOs and Trustees: Your Leadership is Showing

BY LARISA PFEIFFER
PBSN PRESIDENT

WELCOME TO THE NEW YEAR! A SPECIAL GREETING TO THE NEW CEOs and trustees who have entered the ACCT studio of community college governance: you are among a talented membership of leadership artists.

Through art we can see how different periods of history were influenced by the advances of society and technology. Community colleges are no different. We have entered a transition period that demands a new type of leadership navigation and style.

The landscape includes a prominent CEO base entering retirement age, an inadequate pipeline of successors to fill those vacancies with the skills and paths we are accustomed to, and technological and societal changes that are disrupting decades of behaviors we have become dependent upon in higher education.

The horizon is starting to take shape as we discuss how will we maintain our legitimacy under the confluences of a demographic drought, declining enrollment, uncertain funding models, and the unspoken fear that new artists are entering the market who will dismiss us as the masters — we can see they are thirsty to assign us to our place in history while they form a new period of knowledge and skill sharing for their vision of a new and unexplored world.

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Learn more at www.acct.org/page/professional-board-staff-network.



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This situates our rising leaders at an interesting intersection of career decision making — do they focus their careers on the minimalism movement of community colleges, still heavily focused on literalism, or do they join their contemporaries and take part in a movement that is just beginning to form and hints at creating a new identity for knowledge and learning post K-12?

That is a lot to think about and, let's be honest, it's a little intimidating — which is why we need organizations like ACCT to help us continue to understand where we are now, where we are heading, and how to develop and grow trustees to navigate this period. Regardless of the new artistic movement in town, community colleges are critical for a healthy and fair society that includes a middle class and socioeconomic advancement.

The Professional Board Staff Network (PBSN) is a very good example of a subset of community college professionals who are in extreme flux. There is a lot of turnover in positions, which creates opportunities to understand the talent needed to meet modern governance needs. PBSN was created as a professional affinity group for the staff who accompanied leaders to the annual ACCT conference, the staff who managed meeting materials, and who made travel arrangements in a very manual world. The early members of PBSN had very similar duties and came together to learn how to better serve their CEOs and trustees. They developed and shared new ideas and systems that helped advance to their work and created efficiencies for their leaders.

Today, the membership of PBSN includes artists who reflect the leadership they serve. We have artists whose work represents the early period of symbolism, with roles designed for information sharing and recordkeeping, which is the cornerstone of effective office management — they decide what you are eating for lunch. Pay attention to them.

We have Renaissance artists, a period known for enlightenment and literacy advancement — they are devoted to the teams they serve, they assist in retreats, and they manage collegewide celebrations as their leaders pull them into the Rococo period of playfulness. These are the energetic and informed team parents — they influence culture. Pay attention to them.

We have professional staff who are in the Bauhaus movement — they are art in everyday life, they sit on cabinet-level teams, they set agendas, and they strategize with CEOs and leadership teams. They are the leaders who other leaders come to for advice on how to navigate their responsibilities and priorities — these are professionals that are

organizationally influential. The CEO who creates space for this staff member is confident and a futurist. Pay attention to them.

We have artists that fall between Abstract Impressionism, the action painters, and Contemporary Art, the art of today that no one quite understands or fully appreciates yet — the highly educated with doctoral degrees (education, philosophy, jurisprudence) who are advisors and confidants, who have the same view as the CEO of the institution, and who support trustees to ensure the CEO is empowered to lead the organization. These staff members are in a position very similar to the government and military approach to leadership succession planning, empowered to assist leaders to meet the strategies and initiatives of the CEO. They understand the role of the CEO, and they work tirelessly to ensure the success of the CEO.

The military develops these professionals for higher levels of service. Community colleges use these roles largely to supplement leadership gaps. Creative CEOs begin to lift and pull professionals from across the organization into this role. We see evidence this is happening in very advanced leadership systems — these artists are now in or moving into associate vice president, vice president, and CEO roles.

Do you recognize the pipeline in your own studio that is poised and ready to take on new roles and responsibilities? These artists may not even realize they fit into the succession pipeline, because by and large these are professionals who are committed to the mission and to ensuring that other leaders succeed — traits of servant leadership. Pay attention to the CEOs and trustees with these staff members — they are the captains of industry.

Your leadership is showing in how you support all of these professional staff members. Are they involved with PBSN? Do they attend the ACCT Leadership Congress and the Community College National Legislative Summit? Are you aware that the ACCT PBSN network is a valuable tool in ensuring your CEO as well as trustees are properly supported? PBSN offers leadership and network opportunities for staff professionals. These are solitary roles in most organizations that require high levels of confidentiality and discretion (if it is true that the loneliest job in the organization is the CEO, then certainly the second loneliest job is the staff person supporting the CEO).

PBSN has four regional officers and an executive committee that support and inform members across the 1,100 community colleges that ACCT brings together. PBSN members attend the conference



for the same reason you do — to learn from each other, to obtain new ideas, to grow their networks, and to make a difference. Talk to your staff professional and find ways to make the PBSN network part of their professional development plan.

I want to acknowledge and thank the CEOs and trustees from the following institutions who have encouraged their staff members to embrace the PBSN opportunity. Your leadership is showing.

College of Southern Maryland, MD – Larisa Pfeiffer, Chief of Staff and President of PBSN

Brookdale Community College, NJ – Cynthia Gruskos, Senior Assistant to the President and Board of Trustees and Vice President of PBSN

Ohlone College, CA – Shelby Foster, Assistant to the President/ Board of Trustees and Secretary of PBSN

Yavapai College, AZ – Yvonne Sandoval, Executive Assistant to the President/District Governing Board and Communications Coordinator of PBSN

Edison State Community College, OH – Heather Lanham, Senior Executive Assistant to the President/ Secretary of the Board of Trustees and Central Region Representative of PBSN

Halifax Community College, NC – Lisa Barkley, Executive Assistant to the President/ Board of Trustees and Southern Region Representative/Member-At-Large of PBSN

Yosemite Community College District, CA – Graciela Molina, Executive Assistant Office of the Chancellor and Pacific Region Representative of PBSN

Montgomery College, MD – Dr. Michelle Scott, Special Assistant to the President for Board Operations and Northeast Region Representative of PBSN

Lansing Community College, MI – Benita Duncan, Executive Assistant & Liaison to the Board of Trustees and immediate past president of PBSN

Larisa Pfeiffer is a doctoral candidate at Ferris State University in the Ed.D. program for community college leadership. Her community college professional background includes: Business and Information Technology Coordinator, Community Engagement Coordinator, Adjunct Faculty, Senior Executive Associate to the President and Board of Trustees, and Chief of Staff for the College of Southern Maryland. Her doctorate work is focused on the onboarding of trustees to ensure successful understanding and demonstration of their fiduciary responsibilities. She has been actively involved with PBSN for the last four years.



2023 Professional Board Staff Network