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## From the Chair

# Tell Others Why Your College Matters



I GREW UP JUST THREE BLOCKS FROM A community college, but I went to a four-year university out of town and had no direct experience with it until later in life. My son took dual-credit courses from the college while in high school, and he was able to attain 32 dual credits by the time he graduated. This made it possible for him to earn a degree from the community college in one year, graduating in 2008.

That experience revealed to me what community colleges can offer high school students — something I had not considered before. I was asked the following year whether I'd be interested in running for the college's board, and since joining the board of Moberly Area Community College, I have come to understand

the great value that our colleges offer to people throughout our communities.

April was Community College Month, and the national #CCmonth campaign coordinated by ACCT encouraged advocates throughout the country to communicate the importance of our communities' colleges through social media and local press outlets. According to social media analytics service Keyhole, these messages reached more than 5.5 million individuals and were seen over 12 million times in April alone.

This messaging is vitally important because many of us have notions of what community colleges are — and are not. Some people see our colleges as junior colleges. Others see them as vocational schools. Yet others see them primarily as “upskilling” resources, where established workers go to learn practical skills. The reality — as you know — is that most of our colleges serve all these roles and more. The question is whether the people in our communities know it.

Community colleges serve not only individual students, but entire families. I have learned this as a judge with juvenile and family board jurisdiction who also works closely with Moberly Area Community College to help raise student parents out of poverty and get them into stable, productive, profitable lives so they can take care of their families by giving their children healthier environments today and more promising futures. This is why I asked for the 2022 ACCT Leadership Congress theme to be “Community Colleges: Improving the Lives of Entire Families.”

As trustees, you know as well as I do what our colleges do for our communities. It is our privilege to have influence in our communities, and it is our responsibility to serve as college ambassadors, always communicating the good works being done by our colleges and the great successes of our students. Please remember to share these messages regularly with your state and elected officials so they know your college is worthy of praise and ongoing investment.

I encourage you to share your viewpoints and ideas at the 2022 ACCT Leadership Congress in New York City this October 26-29. As an ACCT member, you have the opportunity to share the great work your college and its board have been doing with other community college leaders so that lessons learned throughout the country can be brought back home to make our institutions even better. I look forward to seeing and speaking with you this October.

JAMES COOKSEY  
MOBERLY AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE, MISSOURI