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Advocacy and Governance

ACCT EXISTS FOR TWO PRIMARY reasons: to advocate on behalf of all community colleges and their students, and to teach the principles of good governance to member boards and support their service in every way possible.

April was Community College Month, and while we normally focus on federal legislation when we speak of advocacy, I'd like to congratulate you and thank you for your grassroots efforts throughout the month. When ACCT breathed new life into the long-forgotten Community College Month a few years ago, the idea was that the association would create resources to encourage and facilitate local outreach by community colleges throughout your service area. The campaign has taken on a life of its own because of your efforts and I am certain it will only continue to expand and excel.

You can read in greater detail about the successes of this year's campaign, but I would be remiss if I didn't highlight a few campaign messages of note:

- Former First Lady Michelle Obama distributed a video message in support of Community College Month that was "liked" by over 200,000 individuals on Instagram alone within a couple of days.
- The U.S. State Department created a monthlong online campaign to feature foreign affairs professionals who have studied at community colleges and to recruit community college students and graduates to work at the Department.
- The governors of Arizona, Illinois, Michigan, and Maryland (and possibly other states) officially proclaimed April to be Community College Month within their states, and Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker traveled throughout the state to visit community colleges and pledge increased support for them in his FY2024 budget.

All of this happened organically over several years of consistent effort — through leaders like us, and quite a few students — dedicating a month to communicating the value and importance of community colleges. The success serves as a reminder that this work continues daily and that as respected leaders, we trustees are ideal ambassadors of this message.

President Jee Hang Lee and I were asked by Sonny Ramaswamy, president of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, to write an overview of why governance is critically important to student success. The article was well received, and so we have reproduced it in this issue of *Trustee Quarterly* to make it available to the full ACCT membership. I encourage you to distribute the article among your entire board and to use it as an opportunity to reflect on how effectively your board is upholding its fiduciary responsibilities, the oath of service, and ethical obligations. I also urge you to approach this reflective process in the spirit of introspection and growth, with grace and appreciation for your fellow board members, and in the interest of aligning and recalibrating where necessary.

I want to thank you for your dedication to supporting a healthy and thriving community college system. Let us continue to foster a message of hope and opportunity, because together we will inspire change and build legacies that will uplift our students and transform our communities.

Rose Benavidez
South Texas College