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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 has launched some exciting new services, 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. ACCT Director of Member Engagement Kielo Savilaakso is available to help with any needs you may have. Reach out to her at ksavilaakso@acct.org.



Navigating New Spaces

BY LARISA PFEIFFER
PBSN PRESIDENT

HIGHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS ARE CURRENTLY LIVING and working in three spaces that compete for our attention, focus, and capabilities: the post-COVID impacts on our tolerance and energy, the reality of a 2023 that entered like a lamb but is quickly shaping into a lion, and FY24 budgets.

Many presidents and trustees are finding their ambitions are tempered with the reality of unmet basic needs and mental health concerns, for both students and employees, that has a dotted line to the shrinking talent market which has been especially difficult for community and enrollment changes. Each of us must decide: Am I going to take this knowledge and face these challenges as an optimist, as a pessimist, or as a realist? Those of us who found opportunities through the open doors of a community college and then returned as professionals to serve these incredible institutions are the optimists!

Our post-COVID selves reflect longingly to the days when we were forced to rest, read, listen to music, and had time to think because the world was closed. At the same time, our 2023 reality includes the return of commuting, people, activities, dynamic meetings, and face-to-face collaborations that benefit students and our careers, and we hear our inner lion roar. Then there are our budgets —



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our funding models vary across the nation, but most of us require some combination of enrollment and elected officials to enable us to meet our missions. Without a doubt, we need funding. The conversation around federal money to support students in workforce development programs indicates that our new federal leadership understands equity in new and meaningful ways.

For every challenge and pressure before us, community colleges will find solutions and innovative ways to help. We are reentering a cycle through which community colleges are being recognized as assets to meet workforce development needs because of the incredible global advances in manufacturing and technology — the results of those arenas appear in our everyday lives, creating the ability to communicate, connect, build, and enter spaces never seen before. Community colleges will also strive to honor the learner who chooses to study philosophy, music, art, literature, and history. We understand that each community has unique needs, and our goal is to create the experiences that advance our people and our socio-economic realities. Your community college is what it is because of who your community is. There is a symbiotic relationship between communities and their community colleges that is organic and beautiful.

We are successful because of the experts we surround ourselves

with, and for that I thank ACCT. The commitment that ACCT brings to the community college space to advocate, inform, celebrate, and support all of us is a gift. Their focus is primarily trustees and presidents, but they do understand that there are professional staff members that sit alongside these leaders who support, contribute, and encourage their leadership every single day.

I have been honored to collaborate this year with the amazing professionals of the Professional Board Staff Network. Our team spent a year connecting and planning agenda items for our annual conference, to be held as part of the 2023 ACCT Leadership Congress. I have been humbled by the strength, humility, kindness, and positivity of the PBSN elected board and regional leaders in this group.

Until we meet again,
 – Larisa Pfeiffer, Ed.D.

Chief of Staff, College of Southern Maryland

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2023 Professional Board Staff Network