

# EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

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STATE OF THE ASSOCIATION 2023-2024



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# Exceeds Expectations



**JAY NARDINI**  
Chair, ACCT Board  
of Directors



**JEE HANG LEE**  
President and CEO

## DEAR ACCT MEMBERS AND PARTNERS,

Last fall, ACCT surveyed our membership to ask how we are doing. We were thrilled to hear almost universally that we exceed most of our members' expectations. That is always our goal, and we took the compliment as permission to focus on building onto our existing offerings to be the best possible resource we can be for members. Throughout this report, you will read about some of our latest developments.

We also received some constructive feedback—namely, requests for expanded governance-education resources and means by which members who are unable to travel can engage with these resources. We took this feedback as an opportunity to keep our promise to always exceed expectations.

A few steps we've taken in this direction include:

- We launched ACCT Connect, which serves as both a networking platform for members and as a library of educational content available exclusively to ACCT members. ACCT Connect was created as a complement to our educational events so that members can stay engaged with one another throughout the year, and so resources you need are always at your fingertips.
- We launched state-based Governance Leadership Institutes as a new member service to provide governance education tailored to the needs of board members statewide thus far, we provided this service to members in Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey, and Pacific Rim colleges.
- We are developing several new educational publications that will roll out in the coming year.

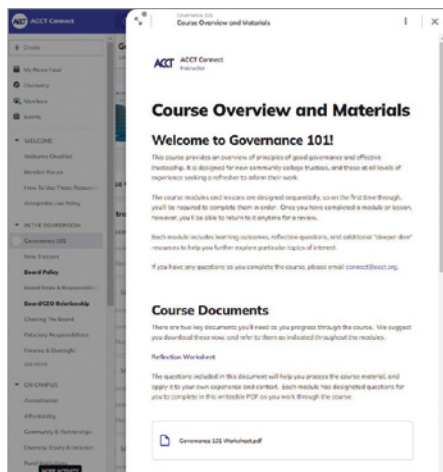
Beyond this, the ACCT leadership and staff also are fully dedicated to keeping last year's promise of deepening connections of all types to you, our members. To this end:

- President and CEO Jee Hang Lee personally visited 48 community colleges—averaging almost one per week—and attended more than 30 statewide or national higher education events.
- We placed college CEOs or senior administrators for 33 member colleges through our ACCT Searches division, and provided 113 retreats, evaluations, or technical assistance trainings to member boards.
- Nearly half of all member trustees (47%) directly engaged with ACCT-provided training over the past year.

These are only a few highlights, as are the programs and services featured in greater depth throughout this annual report. We are happy to report that even with these increased investments in member services, which demand significant resources, ACCT had its strongest fiscal year in history, with 11% growth over the previous year thanks in great part to grants that empower the association to accomplish even more for our members. You will read about many of those grant-supported projects in this report.

ACCT belongs to its members. The association exists to equip and empower community college trustees to govern and advocate knowledgeably, effectively, and ethically. Please let us know what expectations you have of this association so that we can do our best to exceed them.

# Right Where You Expect Us to Be—And Showing Up in Some Surprising Places



**“The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.”**

— Arthur C. Clarke

Deepening connections with our members is ACCT’s top priority. Over the past year, we worked to connect in all possible ways—meeting members on their home campuses, at our events around the country, and virtually.

## We’re Available Anytime, Anywhere

ACCT Connect is our online forum for community college board members to quickly access both information and people, including ACCT’s staff and your peer trustees, college presidents, and the Professional Board Staff Network.

The platform hosts an evergreen Governance 101 video series to orient new trustees, along with written educational resources on topics such as new trustees, board policy, board roles and responsibilities, the board-and-CEO relationship, roles and responsibilities of the board chair, fiduciary responsibilities, finance and oversight, along with an abundance of public policy and advocacy-related resources. An instructional advocacy module to complement the Governance 101 lecture series will be launched in the fall of 2024.

ACCT Connect also houses online communities and, to date, the Illinois Community College Trustees Association, the ACCT Coordinators Network, Michigan Community College Association Trustees and Regents, Washington State Association of Community College Trustees, the ACCT Under 45 Caucus, the LGBTQ Trustees Association, the Student Trustees Advisory Committee, and Professional Board Staff Network have established vibrant online communities.

## We’re All Around the Country—And the World

Over the past year, ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee personally traveled to 48 member community colleges and to 17 state community college association meetings. Other staff also spent time on members’ campuses throughout the country, including Governance Leadership Institutes that convened community college leaders from around the country in Long Beach, California, and throughout the Pacific Islands in Saipan.

## Colleges Visited During FY2024

1. Aiken Technical College, SC
2. Augusta Technical College, GA
3. Bellevue College, WA
4. Bladen Community College, NC
5. Brunswick Community College, NC
6. Butler Community College, KS
7. Cerritos College, CA
8. Chemeketa Community College, OR
9. College of Southern Nevada, NV
10. Columbia Basin College, WA
11. Columbia Gorge Community College, OR
12. Compton College, CA
13. Contra Costa Community College District, CA
14. Florence Darlington Technical College, SC
15. Glendale Community College, CA
16. Harry S. Truman College, IL
17. Hawkeye College, IA
18. Heartland Community College, IL
19. Houston Community College, TX
20. Howard Community College, MD
21. Jackson College, MI
22. Jefferson State Community College, AL
23. Johnston Community College, NC
24. Kirkwood Community College, IA
25. Lansing Community College, MI
26. Lawson State Community College, AL
27. Lee College, TX
28. Lone Star College, TX
29. Long Beach City College, CA
30. Los Angeles Southwest College, CA
31. Malcolm X College, IL
32. Mesa Community College, AZ
33. Mohave Community College, AZ
34. Mount Hood Community College, OR
35. Mt. San Antonio College, CA
36. North Iowa Community College, IA
37. North Michigan College, MI
38. North Seattle College, WA
39. Northern Virginia Community College, VA
40. Pasadena City College, CA
41. Portland Community College, OR
42. Prince George's Community College, MD
43. Reading Area Community College, PA
44. Rio Hondo College, CA
45. Roxbury Community College, MA
46. San Antonio College, TX
47. San Jacinto College, TX
48. South Mountain Community College, AZ
49. State Fair Community College, MO
50. State University of New York, NY
51. Tarrant County Community College District, TX
52. Trident Technical College, SC
53. Valencia College, FL
54. Victor Valley College, CA
55. Wake Tech Community College, NC
56. Wor-Wic Community College, MD
57. Yakima Valley College, WA

## Association & Other Higher-Education Organization Conferences & Presentations

1. Achieving the Dream Board meeting
2. Advanced Education Policy Leadership Program (AEPLP)
3. American Association of Community Colleges
4. APHSA Economic Mobility and Wellness Conference
5. APHSA Human Services Conference
6. Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) National Policy Seminar (NPS)
7. Association of College Trustees of Washington

8. Association of Colleges, UK
9. Association of Florida Colleges, Legislative Conference
10. Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA)
11. California Community College Chancellor's Office All-Directors
12. China-US Vocational Education Technical Dialogue, Department of Education and Embassy of China
13. College Promise Campaign Advisory Board
14. College Promise National Convening, Phoenix
15. Community College Association of Texas Trustees
16. Community College Baccalaureate Association
17. Community College Caucus Congressional Briefing
18. Community College League of California
19. Community Colleges for Iowa
20. Congressional Briefing on SNAP & Education Beyond High School
21. Department of Education Raise the Bar Transfer Summit
22. Executive Leadership Institute (League of Innovation)
23. Generation Hope Conference
24. Good Jobs Challenge Community of Practice Convening
25. Illinois Community College Trustees Association
26. Institute of International Education: Transatlantic High-level Roundtable
27. Kansas Association of Community Colleges
28. Kentucky Community and Technical College System
29. Level UP Symposium Chicago
30. Level UP Symposium New York City
31. Quarterly Meetings with U.S. Education Secretary Miguel Cardona and Undersecretary James Kvaal
32. Michigan Community College Association
33. Missouri Association of Community Colleges
34. Mountain State Community College Association
35. National API Elected Officials Summit
36. National Asian Pacific Islander Council
37. National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship Conference and Board Meeting
38. National Head Start Association Conference
39. National Skills Coalition Hill Briefing
40. New York Community College Trustees Association
41. North Carolina Community College Trustees Association
42. Oregon Community College Association
43. Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society CCsmart Collaborative Summit
44. Rotary Club of Saipan
45. Roxbury Community College Academic Symposium
46. Rural Community College Alliance
47. South Carolina Association of Technical College Commissioners Academy
48. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
49. Transatlantic High-level Roundtable: Towards a common framework for EU-US higher education, Institute of International Education
50. Washington Higher Education Secretariat Retreat
51. White House Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Roundtable
52. White House Chips R&D Event and Roundtable

# What Happened in Vegas Followed Members Home

“We must dare to be great; and we must realize that greatness is the fruit of toil and sacrifice and high courage.”

– Theodore Roosevelt

While Las Vegas is known for keeping secrets, the 2023 ACCT Leadership Congress aimed to unite members, foster new connections, share vital information, and empower attendees to return home more knowledgeable, connected, and innovative.

The 2023 ACCT Leadership Congress, themed “Building a Legacy: Uplifting Students and Transforming Communities,” exceeded expectations with near-record attendance and over 160 educational sessions. The event focused on the evolving role of community colleges during turbulent industrial and cultural times. ACCT Chair Rose Benavidez of South Texas College opened the event by emphasizing the importance of community colleges in supporting the American Dream and addressing economic disparities.

A major theme of the event was reaching underserved populations. Michael Bond, Snap-on Incorporated’s director of community relations, emphasized the need for immediate action, while Dr. James L. Moore III from the National Science Foundation’s Directorate for STEM Education stressed the importance of reaching marginalized groups, such as disabled workers and refugees, who are often overlooked despite their readiness to work. Additionally, the “Leveling Up: Realizing Black Learner Excellence at Community Colleges Symposium” spearheaded by Compton College President and CEO Keith Curry introduced the Alliance for Black Learner Excellence, aimed at supporting Black students.

Economic conditions were a key focus, with speakers like Ben Armstrong from MIT discussing the role of community colleges in rebuilding the middle-income workforce. Armstrong and industry leaders from Cengage led provocative discussions about the potential of generative artificial intelligence to revolutionize education and industrial needs and practices. Bond encouraged trustees to engage with industry leaders to align college programs with workforce needs. Northern Virginia Community College President Anne Kress highlighted the importance of creating “pathways that pay,” to address labor market mismatches in sectors like IT and healthcare.

The Congress also spotlighted innovation, with examples like Finger Lakes Community College’s use of augmented reality for training and Central Wyoming College’s efforts to diversify the state’s economy through initiatives like the Wyoming Innovation Partnership.

ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee urged attendees to implement what they learned, while Jay Nardini, ACCT’s 2023-24 Chair, emphasized the importance of volunteer leadership in continuing the organization’s legacy, encouraging trustees to step up and actively contribute to their communities.



# Partnership to Expand Child Care for Student Parents at Community Colleges



This year, ACCT partnered with the National Head Start Association (NHSA) to launch the Kids on Campus initiative dedicated to bringing more Head Start programs to community college campuses throughout the country.

Over the next five years, ACCT and NHSA will provide technical assistance to Head Start and Early Head Start programs and community colleges, bringing them from “matchmaking” to “marriage.” The associations are working to identify organizations interested in launching new Head Start programs, introducing those that have the capacity to partner, and providing technical assistance beyond when the doors have opened.

“Insufficient child care and early learning opportunities are significant barriers for the 1.7 million parents—mainly moms—in college,” said ACCT Board of Directors Chair Jay Nardini. “Nearly all of these students have incomes at or near the poverty line.”

Nardini, who also serves as chair of Iowa’s Hawkeye Community College board, added that “few community colleges currently offer on-campus child care, and many centers that did exist permanently closed during the pandemic. Most single parents in college have children under age five and would be eligible for Head Start.”

“Head Start and community colleges are two perfectly matched pieces of a complex puzzle, coming together to complete the picture of what comprehensive education can—and should—look like,” said Yasmina Vinci, executive director for the National Head Start Association. “Co-locating Head Start’s high-quality early childhood education programs on campuses will bring the Head Start model to more families who are working to get ahead. NHSA is thrilled to join this effort to support student parents and, as a result, to unlock the full potential of two generations of learners at once.”

Head Start and community colleges are both well-respected national institutions. Combining the public benefits of high quality, early education with our nation’s open access higher education institutions allows multiple generations of families to benefit. Leading foundations in the higher education and child care spaces recognize this possibility. ECMC Foundation, Lumina

Foundation, Imaginable Futures, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Trellis Foundation, Crimsonbridge Foundation, and Seldin / Haring-Smith Foundation all have joined together to support NHSA and ACCT in facilitating and supporting new contracts between campuses and Head Start operators.

The joint project offers a practical, commonsense approach to solving challenges in both sectors:

- Qualifying student parents receive free, high quality child care and early education for their families from the Head Start program.
- Colleges obtain an expert partner to operate on-site child care from Head Start, which also offers to retrofit buildings on campus.
- Head Start programs are located near their target populations and receive free or drastically reduced rent, which can be used as an in kind donation toward their required 20% match of federal funds – which many programs struggle to do.
- Head Start families have an option to enroll in the college and may even receive support from Head Start to do so, if receiving a GED or credential is part of their family goals.

ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee expressed gratitude for the opportunity to undertake this important work. “We’re grateful to have found partners in NHSA and the philanthropic community who share our vision for improving student outcomes by supporting students’ needs,” he said. “Students who are parents face enormous life challenges that compete with their abilities to thrive in college. Bringing Head Start centers to more community colleges is an elegant solution to address one complexity of the long-standing problem of student persistence and completion.”

This project builds on a planning grant funded by ECMC Foundation and Seldin / Haring-Smith Foundation for six months during 2023. That grant allowed for both associations to explore the likelihood of success of this project and develop a user guide that will inform the technical assistance provided during this five-year project. More information is available at: <https://www.acct.org/center-for-policy-practice/kids-on-campus>.



## Kids on Campus Featured in Documentary Video Series



A new docuseries, *Raising Up Student Parents*, presented by Ascend at the Aspen Institute and produced by Three Frame Media, features ACCT's Kids on Campus partnership with NHTSA. *Raising Up* is a five-part docuseries that profiles the struggles that student parents confront during their college journeys, inspired by the personal experiences of director Jaye Fenderson.

The episode dedicated to child care was filmed in part in ACCT's Washington, D.C. office as it documents the establishment of the Kids on Campus partnership. Visit [raisingupstudentparents.com](https://raisingupstudentparents.com) to view the series.

## ACCT Center for Policy and Practice: Innovation at Work for Community Colleges

Kids on Campus is only one initiative of ACCT's Center for Policy and Practice, a division that launched in 2022 to discover and implement practical solutions for members, informed policy development and implementation. All of the Center's work is designed to close the loop between policy, which informs practice, and practice, which informs policy.

To date the Center's initiatives have included:

- Non-Credit and Credit Alignment Lab—in partnership with ECMC Foundation and the Education Strategy Group
- Skills-Based Hiring in partnership with Lumina Foundation and Opportunity@Work
- Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training National Partnership in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services Program, Seattle Jobs Initiative, and The American Public Human Services Administration
- Symposium on Improving Educational Outcomes for Men of Color in partnership with the Kresge Foundation and the Community College Equity Assessment Lab
- State-Based Funding Models for Community College Systems—in partnership with Lumina Foundation and the Student Success Through Applied Research Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Strengthening Rural Community Colleges in partnership with The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Learn more about the Center at:

<https://www.acct.org/center-for-policy-practice>

To inquire about potential partnerships, contact Center for Policy and Practice Associate Vice President Steve Jurch at [sjurch@acct.org](mailto:sjurch@acct.org).

# Federal Connections

“Always deliver more than expected.”

— Larry Page

Even as United States Congress made slow progress and accomplished little in the way of passing legislation, ACCT continued to broaden and deepen our relationships with federal agencies on behalf of member colleges. While representatives of the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor are regular speakers at the Community College National Legislative Summit (NLS), ACCT’s government relations division has cultivated strong connections with the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Health and Human Services, and the National Science Foundation. These relationships have yielded important payoffs for members such as the Farm Bill, which strengthens rural community colleges and their regions across the country, the CHIPS and Science Act, and bringing STEM education and vocational training to member colleges in emerging industries such as electric vehicles and artificial intelligence.

The 2024 NLS addressed a nation and education system at a critical juncture. U.S. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm emphasized the role of community colleges in addressing the climate crisis, revitalizing the economy, and providing students with opportunities for upward mobility. “We’re at this inflection point because we have an opportunity to not only make significant inroads in addressing the climate crisis, but in doing so to really rebuild the economy and...give students entry into the middle class and above,” she told NLS attendees. “You all have the keys to this future.”

With record attendance of 1,300 community college advocates, including over 120 student trustees, the NLS emphasized the vital role that community colleges play in workforce development, including in the clean energy sector, with Secretary Granholm encouraging students to pursue careers in this rapidly growing field.

“When community college advocates show up on Capitol Hill in numbers like today, it really says something about our collective vision and mission,” said ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee. “It also says something to the members of Congress and their staffs.”

Labor Secretary Julie Su and Commerce Secretary Alejandra Castillo highlighted the need for long-term funding and improvements to workforce systems to ensure equal access to job opportunities. “Economic development is not episodic. It’s not a one-off,” Castillo said. “Our country cannot just start and stop and think we have the strength to compete with countries around the world.”

A key policy priority discussed was the bipartisan push for short-term Pell Grants, seen as vital for equipping students with skills for in-demand jobs. Congressional leaders like House of Representatives Committee on Education and Workforce Chairwoman Rep. Virginia Foxx and Ranking Member Rep. Bobby Scott supported this initiative, alongside bills aimed at strengthening workforce education. Short-term Pell Grants “will be your path to upskilling and reskilling students quickly for in-demand jobs,” Foxx said, adding that without them, “you’ll be left tackling the skills gap with one hand tied behind your back.”

Cook Political Report Editor Amy Walter reminded NLS attendees that community colleges have a message that cuts across party lines in any political climate—and the record number of attendees provided another cause for optimism.



Clockwise from top left: U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Alejandra Y. Castillo; *Cook Political Report* Editor Amy Walter; Acting U.S. Secretary of Labor Julie A. Su; Record participation, including a record number of students at the 2024 Community College National Legislative Summit; U.S. Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm

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# Building Partnerships

ACCT would like to thank the generous support of our members, sponsors, and donors.

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Achieving the Dream

American Association of Community Colleges

American Indian Higher Education Consortium

American Public Health Services Association

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Ascend at the Aspen Institute

Association of Colleges (UK)

Bellwether College Consortium

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

CCPI-STEM

Cognizant Foundation

College Promise Campaign

Council for Advancement and Support of Education

Crimsonbridge Foundation

The Cyril Taylor Charitable Foundation

ECMC Foundation

Education Strategy Group

Health Resources and Services Association Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

Higher Learning Advocates

Hope Center for College, Community and Justice at Temple University

Imaginable Futures

The Kresge Foundation

Lumina Foundation

National Asian Pacific Islander Council

National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship

National Community Action Partnership

National College Attainment Network

National Head Start Association

National Junior College Athletic Association

Phi Theta Kappa

Rural Community College Alliance

The Seldin / Haring-Smith Foundation

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

State Higher Education Executive Officers

Trellis Foundation

United States Department of Agriculture Good and Nutrition Services

U.S. Department of Commerce

United States Department of Education

United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology

U.S. Department of Energy

United States Department of Labor, ETA Division of Strategic Investments

University of Maryland Community College Leadership Program

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“I am always doing that which  
I cannot do, in order that I may  
learn how to do it.”

— Pablo Picasso



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