

The Global 'College Sector'

Stress Testing Boards

Student Advocates

SPRING 2025

# Trustee

## QUARTERLY



## Consensus Amid Change

The Community College Congressional Forum brought together 14 lawmakers to discuss the community college sector.

2025

# AWARDS

## REGIONAL AWARDS

Trustee Leadership  
Impact and Success  
Chief Executive Officer  
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## ASSOCIATION AWARDS

M. Dale Ensign Trustee Leadership  
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[WWW.ACCT.ORG](http://WWW.ACCT.ORG)

ACCT's awards program is designed to recognize and honor outstanding community college trustees, student success programs, presidents, faculty members, and professional board staff members at regional and national levels. In order to be considered for an Association Award, you must first submit a nomination at the regional level.

The Awards committees will select and notify the Awards recipients prior to the ACCT Leadership Congress. ACCT's Awards recipients will be honored at the 2025 ACCT Leadership Congress this October in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Visit [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org) for specific nomination criteria and to submit nominations online.

Call 202.775.4667 with any questions.

All nominations must be received by **June 23, 2025**.

NOMINATIONS DUE **23** 2025  
**JUNE**



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## What's your angle on the challenges ahead?

THE WORLD SEEMED SIMPLE AND straightforward in 2015 when Washington Governor Jay Inslee appointed me to the board of Bellevue College. But life is always full of complexities, sometimes complications, and I've had enough life experiences to expect to deal with both.

Still, those were simpler times in a lot of regards. We are well aware that the country is in a state of flux as we deal with turbulence including the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and figuring out how best to optimize the use of artificial intelligence, the fastest adopted technology in history.

Your colleges and my college are working overtime to deal with the pace of change and regulatory issues including, perhaps most notably for those in our position, an executive order charging the U.S. Secretary of Education to downsize the U.S. Department of Education. ACCT responded immediately, drawing attention to the importance of federal investments including the Pell Grant program, federal student loan program, federal work-study and more. Our institutions offer apprenticeships and other job training programs for everyone from nurses to utility line workers; dental hygienists to welders; electricians to paramedics. Our communities rely on these workers to make day-to-day life safe and feasible.

As ACCT board chair, I have an insider's view to witness how the association's exemplary work is done. As community

college board members, all of us have access to and benefit from ACCT's advocacy work. I hope that every member of your board understands how essential is the association's government relations work of clearly informing legislators and staffers of the value and vital role community colleges play in supporting our future workforce and our communities.

I am a firm believer that any challenge can become an opportunity when viewed from a different angle. ACCT's leadership and staff are exploring all angles of what is happening today to make the best of any opportunity that may arise. To do that, we need the engagement of every member of your board whenever possible. Please participate with ACCT's programs and services and give the staff and board members feedback about the work being done. Share information that impacts your institutions and students, and let us know how we can serve your colleges.

The rapid change in artificial intelligence and the administrative environment is impacting our ability to adapt and support our colleges. Sharing the work being done on our campuses and learning and collaborating with others is needed more than ever. I look forward to seeing, hearing, and working with you in New Orleans this October for the 2025 ACCT Leadership Congress.

**Rich Fukutaki**  
*Bellevue College, Washington*



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QUARTERLY

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# contents

## 14 'Years of Transition'

BY MARK TONER

A returning presidential administration and more than 80 new members of Congress topped the opportunities and challenges at the 2025 NLS.

## 19 Consensus Amid Change

BY MARK TONER

The Community College Congressional Forum brought together 14 lawmakers to discuss the community college sector.

## 22 The Global "College Sector": Definitions, Characteristics, and Challenges

BY ROSALIND LATINER RABY AND EDWARD J. VALEAU

The authors of this excerpt from ACCT's new *Mapping Community Colleges Around the World* series profile similarities, differences, and trends among community college-like institutions across the globe.

## 26 A Case for Stressing the Board of Trustees: Preparing for the Unexpected

BY DANIEL J. PHELAN

A 'fire drill for governance' can help boards practice decision-making, asking tough questions, and applying policies in challenging situations.

## 28 Leading Unapologetically Through Campus Turbulence

BY KEITH CURRY

A college president/CEO offers lessons on how to proceed after an institutional crisis and a vote of no confidence.

## 33 Mikhaelle Pablico's Intro to Advocacy

BY KALI WOODS

The College of Southern Nevada student put advocacy into action in Washington, D.C.

## 35 The Effective Board Chair: First Among Equals

BY PAMILA J. FISHER

A new handbook for community college board chairs discusses the opportunities and challenges of being "the first among equals" on a board.

## DEPARTMENTS

### 10 ADVOCACY

Financial Accountability on the Horizon

By Carrie Warick-Smith

### 12 CONNECT

Global Learning for a Global Workforce

By Robin Matross Helms

### 40 LEGAL

Early Trump Administration executive orders and guidance focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in the federal government and in higher education.

By Ira Michael Shepard

## IN EVERY ISSUE

### 1 FROM THE CHAIR

### 4 FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

### 5 NEWS

### 38 AROUND THE REGIONS

### 45 INTERFACE

### 48 ADVISOR



The whole ACCT team has been working in overdrive to make sure our members—you—have what you need to navigate and thrive at this time.

## We Are Where the Action Is

DEAR ACCT MEMBERS,

EVERY NEW PRESIDENTIAL administration and every new United States Congress brings changes, some of which can challenge even experienced advocates.

I want to congratulate and thank our public policy division led by Carrie Warick-Smith, José Miranda, and Genesis Santiago for their attentiveness, their responsiveness, and for applying their collective expertise so adeptly.

When I joined ACCT as the organization's director of public policy years ago, the public policy department was...me. I'm proud to have been able to develop and cultivate the team that have proved to be indispensable at this busy time.

The whole ACCT team has been working in overdrive to make sure our members — you — have what you need to navigate and thrive at this time. And I want to thank and congratulate you, too, for your attentiveness, your diligence, and your visionary responsiveness. Your colleges and your communities depend on your dedication. Please let me know how we can help you do what you need to do.

Together, we nearly broke our record this past February as nearly 1,400 community college leaders gathered in Washington, D.C., to advocate for our colleges. On pages 12-17, you'll read about and see our strength in numbers — including a record number of Congressional speakers at our annual Capitol Hill Forum.

This issue of *Trustee Quarterly* addresses a number of challenges, including Compton Community College President and CEO Dr. Keith Curry's boldly frank discussion of how he led his campus through extraordinary

changes and then navigated, strategically and emotionally processed, and ultimately made peace with a vote of no confidence. Even when a leader's confidence is shaken, my friend Keith tells us, we must ground ourselves and focus on opportunities to grow. And sorry to stress you out, but Jackson College President and CEO Dr. Dan Phelan made too good a case for it for our editor to say no. Be sure to check out Dan's article that proposes "a fire drill for governance" to ensure your board will be ready should an emergency happen.

Finally, I am happy to be the bearer of some good and not-at-all stressful updates: Vice President for Membership and Educational Services Robin Matross Helms has been working diligently to bring one of her personal passions — global education — to ACCT, and her work has paid off with a new series of publications that examine community college correlates throughout the world so that we can better understand and learn not only from their work but from how they work.

I look forward to hearing from you as I continue my cross-country travels from campus to campus. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to anyone on the ACCT staff if we can do anything for you.

**JEE HANG LEE**

*ACCT President and CEO*



# NEWS & NOTES

## Bilirakis, Courtney Recognized with National Education Service Award



Left: Rep. Gus Bilirakis with ACCT Vice President for Public Policy Carrie Warick-Smith; Right: ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee with Rep. Joe Courtney.

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 2025 COMMUNITY COLLEGE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE Summit, ACCT and the **American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)** recognized **Congressman Gus Bilirakis** (R-Fla.) and **Congressman Joe Courtney** (D-Conn.) with 2025 National Education Service Awards. One or more National Education Service Awards are presented annually to national leaders or leadership teams who have made extraordinary contributions to national public policies and resources that support education, training, and postsecondary learning.

Bilirakis represents Florida's 12th congressional district. He serves as a Senior Member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, as Chairman of the Innovation, Data, and Commerce Subcommittee, and as a Senior Member of the Health Subcommittee and the Communications and Technology Subcommittee. With 75 bills he authored signed into law since 2015, Bilirakis was recently designated as the most effective Republican lawmaker in the State of Florida by the Center for Effective Lawmaking at Vanderbilt University. Bilirakis also serves as the Co-Chair of the House Community College Caucus, which was established to raise awareness about the unique role community colleges play in the American educational system, as well as provide a forum for Members to identify and discuss issues affecting these institutions.

Courtney was elected in 2006 to represent the Second Congressional District of Connecticut in the House of Representatives. He serves on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce. Courtney is the Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Projection Forces. From 2018–2022, Courtney served as Chairman of the Subcommittee.

Courtney also serves as the Co-Chair of the House Community College Caucus. As a senior member of the Education and the Workforce Committee, Courtney has championed investments in workforce development initiatives. These initiatives ensure students can access the skills they need through institutions of higher education and training programs that meet employer and employee needs.

On behalf of our member institutions and their students, ACCT and AACC thank Representatives Bilirakis and Courtney for their outstanding service to community colleges.

## Model Standards of Good Practice for Trustee Boards

In Support of Effective Community College Governance, the Board Believes:

- That it derives its authority from the community and that it must always act as an advocate on behalf of the entire community;
- That it must clearly define and articulate its role;
- That it is responsible for creating and maintaining a spirit of true cooperation and a mutually supportive relationship with its CEO;
- That it always strives to differentiate between external and internal processes in the exercise of its authority;
- That its trustee members should engage in a regular and ongoing process of in-service training and continuous improvement;
- That its trustee members come to each meeting prepared and ready to debate issues fully and openly;
- That it endeavors to remain always accountable to the community;
- That it honestly debates the issues affecting its community and speaks with one voice once a decision or policy is made.

*\*The term "board" refers to a community college board of trustees or appropriate governing authority.*

# LET THE LAW WORK FOR YOU

If you're an advocate for your college and its students, then you need to be following the LAW.

ACCT's Latest Action in Washington (LAW) Updates are twice-weekly bulletins that summarize developing legislation and executive actions that affect community colleges. LAW Updates give you advance notice and let you know when it's time to take action to support your institution.

Please encourage your fellow trustees, presidents, and colleagues to stay up to date about legislation that affects their community colleges by joining the LAW E-Alert network. To join, simply email [publicpolicy@acct.org](mailto:publicpolicy@acct.org) with "LAW Alert" in the subject of the email.

For more information about ACCT's advocacy services, visit [www.acct.org/advocacy](http://www.acct.org/advocacy).

## ACCT Leadership Congress

### Reimagining Community College: Innovation for a Changing World

THE ACCT LEADERSHIP CONGRESS SERVES AS A GATHERING GROUND FOR OVER 1,500 community college trustees and presidents, as well as leaders from philanthropic organizations, government agencies, and non-profits. It provides a platform to exchange initiatives, successes, and concerns crucial to leading community colleges. As the largest annual gathering of its kind, it holds immense significance in advancing the community college sector.

The 2025 Annual ACCT Leadership Congress will honor the transformative accomplishments of our institutions as we build a bridge between our remarkable history and a future marked by many unknown challenges and just as many untapped opportunities. Join us at the Marriott New Orleans this October 22-25. To learn more, go to [Congress.ACCT.org](http://Congress.ACCT.org).

#### Presentations in Five Critical Areas

More than 100 sessions and roundtable presentations will be scheduled within the following five tracks:

- Innovating for the AI Era
- Collaborative Solutions for Workforce Needs
- Enrollment Strategies
- Creating Student-Centered Pathways for Student Success
- Effective Board Governance: How to Be a Trustee

#### Mark your calendar

- June 23 – ACCT Awards Nominations Due
- July 1 – ACCT Board of Directors Director-at-Large Candidate Nominations Due
- July 1 – Amendments to the ACCT Bylaws Due
- August 15 – ACCT Leadership Congress Early Registration Discount Ends
- November 1 – Application to Serve as ACCT Committee Member in 2025 Due





## ACCT's India-US Partnership Lab Leads Workforce Development in a Global Era

Initiative pairs U.S., Indian institutions to develop culturally competent workers in crucial fields.

ACCT IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE LAUNCH OF THE **India-US Partnership Lab**, a cohort-based program designed to establish sustained partnerships between American and Indian higher education institutions to create a workforce to address growing challenges that transcend national borders.

ACCT selected two member colleges to participate in the Partnership Lab pilot program. **Pierce College** in Washington is paired with **Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University (RTMNU)** in Nagpur to develop collaborations in the area of disaster management. **Wor-Wic Community College** in Maryland is paired with **Symbiosis Skills and Professional University in Pune**, with a focus on fintech and cybersecurity.

The workforce development fields selected align with recommendations by participants in ACCT's inaugural India-US Workforce Partnership Workshop, which brought together government, industry, and higher education leaders from both countries to discuss opportunities for collaboration. The resulting "Action Agenda," which identifies strategic fields with high workforce needs in both countries, the skills and competencies graduates need, and key stakeholders to engage in partnerships, provides an initial roadmap for Lab participants.

"In an increasingly interconnected world, community colleges play a critical role in educating students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in and contribute to a global workforce," said ACCT President and CEO **Jee Hang Lee**. "ACCT is proud to provide a pathway for colleges to develop sustained and substantive workforce-focused partnerships that contribute to our shared goal of student success."

The Partnership Lab is supported by **Cognizant**, a global IT services company. "Cognizant is proud to support the India-U.S. Partnership Lab which is bringing together government, industry and higher education leaders to share best practices and spur global innovative workforce solutions," said **Emma Fisher**, managing director of corporate affairs. "Cognizant has longstanding expertise in training and educating a global workforce and is committed to training 1 million people on the digital skills needed to build the future workforce through its Synapse Initiative."

Recognizing that leadership commitment is a critical part of the equation for successful partnerships, presidents, staff, and trustees from Wor-Wic and Pierce met at ACCT's Community College National Legislative Summit in February to discuss goals and strategies for their work with their Indian partners. "Wor-Wic Community College is committed to expanding

global opportunities in STEM and cybersecurity education," said **Deb Casey**, Wor-Wic president. "Our partnership with Symbiosis Skills and Professional University strengthens our mission to provide students with workforce skills, cross-cultural collaboration, and pathways to high-demand careers. Together, we will cultivate innovation, workforce readiness, and a shared vision for the future."

In March, leaders, faculty, and administrators from Pierce College visited RTMNU for in-person planning meetings and the signing of a memorandum of understanding to officially launch their partnership. **Julie White**, chancellor and CEO of Pierce College, stated, "Our Pierce College team was excited to visit our RTMNU partners and learn more about their programs, as we bring our areas of expertise together to build a sustainable and culturally responsive collaboration to support workforce development in the U.S. and India."

Wor-Wic Community College and Symbiosis Skills and Professional University will focus on virtual meetings to start, with a visit by the Wor-Wic team to Symbiosis to take place in the coming months. Dr. Casey and her team will also host delegations from the Partnership Lab institutions for an in-person visit to Wor-Wic in August in conjunction with a second India-US Workforce Partnership Workshop, which will take place in Washington and feature lessons learned from the Partnership Lab.

"The Lab program model is proving to be successful in catalyzing meaningful global partnerships," said **Robin Matross Helms**, ACCT vice president for membership and educational services. "A high-touch approach that entails carefully matching community colleges with complementary partner institutions abroad, engaging leaders and trustees, and providing a structured process for relationship development creates a framework to support the creativity and brilliance of the faculty and staff. It's wonderful to see their expertise shine as they carry these collaborations forward."

ACCT is currently piloting the Lab model in the India-US Partnership Lab, as well as the **US-UK Community College and Technical Exchange**, funded by the **Cyril Taylor Charitable Foundation**.

Given strong interest among ACCT member colleges, a growing network of institutions abroad, and a global emphasis on workforce development and technical education, ACCT is exploring opportunities to expand the Lab initiative to include additional institutions, industries, and countries. Institutions interested in exploring future global Partnership Lab opportunities should contact Robin Matross Helms at [rhelms@acct.org](mailto:rhelms@acct.org).

# Kids on Campus Project Releases First Annual Progress Report

ACCT, NHSA partnership lays groundwork to reduce generational poverty through early education and a multigenerational approach that empowers student parents.

THIS APRIL, ACCT AND NATIONAL HEAD START Association (NHSA) released the *Year One Progress Report* of its **Kids on Campus** project to advance student-parent success and the school readiness of young children from families with low incomes by bringing more Head Start child care centers to more community college campuses. The five-year initiative aims to establish at least 50 such programs by 2030.

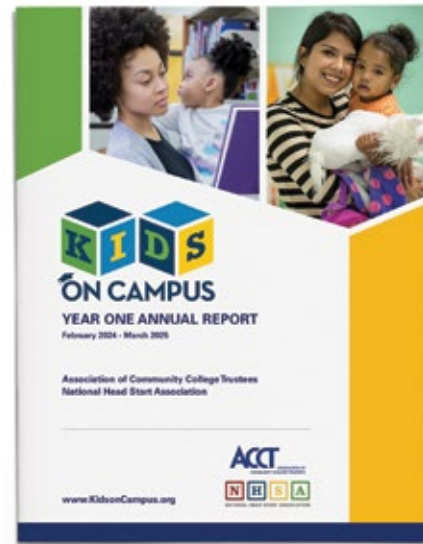
Kids on Campus is supported by **ECMC Foundation, Imaginable Futures, Lumina Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Trellis Foundation, Crimsonbridge Foundation, and Seldin Haring-Smith Foundation**. The core philosophy of the project is rooted in two of the most effective strategies for reducing poverty: providing high-quality early care and learning for young children and supporting parents through education and training that will advance their career goals.

The report details why ACCT and NHSA are doing this important work, progress to date, next steps, and how community colleges and Head Start centers can get involved. So far:

- 87 community colleges and 98 Head Starts have taken the initial step in connecting and engaging with *Kids on Campus*.
- The partners have found 18 potential matches between community colleges and Head Start programs interested in exploring partnerships.
- Two new *Kids on Campus* partnerships launched in Fall 2024 and a third is set to open in late spring 2025.

“Kids on Campus is off to a strong start,” said ACCT Vice President for Public Policy **Carrie Warick-Smith**. “During year one, we’ve sown the seeds of progress. Over the next several years, Kids on Campus will continue to push our initiative forward — building on outreach efforts to leaders at community college campuses and Head Start programs, increasing engagement, bridging connections and nurturing opportunities for networking and learning, and creating and providing technical assistance and support.”

Kids on Campus partnerships between community colleges and Head Start programs bring significant value to campuses, with positive impacts across multiple stakeholders.



Kids on Campus partnerships between community colleges and Head Start programs bring significant value to campuses, with positive impacts across multiple stakeholders. “Head Start programs that partner with community colleges benefit in many ways,” said NHSA Senior Director of Data **Victoria Jones**. “Among these are financial and budget implications that allow the reinvestment of funds into programming, connection to campus departments and resources for practicum experiences, and access to classroom space, plus operational and infrastructure support.”

“The benefits to community colleges and their students are many,” said ACCT Center for Policy and Practice Associate Vice President **Steve Jurch**. “On-campus Head Start programs increase colleges’ capacities to support students’ basic needs. They support enrollment, persistence, and completion among eligible students. And they offer access to a high-quality early learning program for students’ children, which encourages generational emphasis on education that can lead to better financial futures for those in the community through free, high-quality early learning opportunities and access to additional resources for family members.”

ACCT and NHSA invite community colleges, Head Start centers, and philanthropic supporters interested in transforming the lives of families to reach out to [kidsoncampus@acct.org](mailto:kidsoncampus@acct.org).



To access the full report, visit [www.KidsOnCampus.org](http://www.KidsOnCampus.org).



# REIMAGINING COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Innovation for a Changing World

NEW ORLEANS Oct. 22 – 25, 2025



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As Congress moves through the reconciliation process, higher education accountability will be front and center for the House and Senate education committees as they look to find savings.

## Financial Accountability on the Horizon

**A ‘perfect storm’ is brewing for lawmakers to focus on higher education funding – with potential impacts to community colleges and their students.**

BY CARRIE WARICK-SMITH

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 119TH CONGRESS AND the Trump Administration, Washington has been whirring at a frenetic pace. The President has passed a record number of executive orders, many of which have resulted in one or more court cases. The Senate has confirmed all cabinet secretaries. Congress passed a fiscal year 2025 full-year Continuing Resolution and immediately started on FY 2026 appropriations. And both chambers have laid out plans for a reconciliation process with a goal of completion by early summer.

Yet, when my colleague José Miranda, ACCT’s director of government relations, and I had a meeting with House staffers in mid-March, this was the line that stuck with me: “accountability is coming.” For a brief minute I thought we had been transported to the world of George R.R. Martin’s *Game of Thrones*, Westeros, and were to fear the arrival of winter. Beyond my penchant for all genres of fantasy, this struck me and has stuck with me throughout this spring, particularly given the possibility that some kind of accountability for higher education institutions could be included in the final budget reconciliation package as a revenue generator. And in fact, the House Education and Workforce Committee passed one such proposal out of committee in late April.

There is always uncertainty in the legislative process, but a perfect storm is brewing for legislators to focus on higher education funding. The value of higher education continues to be questioned, and wealthy elite universities have become culture war lightning rods. The federal student loan portfolio is still expanding. And three events have caused the Pell Grant program to face a funding shortfall: the Pell Grant maximum was increased during the Biden administration, FAFSA simplification with its eligibility formula expansion went into effect, and enrollment started increasing, all in rapid succession.

Meanwhile, the Republican caucus is seeking ways to save money or generate revenue to offset the costs of their budget reconciliation package that would bring about a number of the President's campaign promises on defense, energy, border security, as well as tax cut extensions. Limiting program participation in federal financial aid programs, lowering the amount of need-based aid, or changing loan repayment plans would save the federal government money. Risk-sharing payments and taxing endowments would generate revenue.

Given this landscape, let's dive in on several of the proposals currently circulating, who proposed them, how much funding they would generate, and how they would impact community colleges.

**Proposal:** Student Success and Taxpayer Savings Plan (aka House Education Reconciliation bill)

**Lead:** 119th Congress, Rep. Tim Walberg (R-Mich.), Chair of the House Education and Workforce Committee

**Savings generated:** \$351 billion over ten years (Congressional Budget Office)

**Summary:** This bill takes the carrots and sticks approach to accountability and includes several other changes to Pell Grants and federal student loans. To motivate colleges to provide high quality programs and improve completion, it creates the PROMISE Grant program, which pays colleges based on a formula related to Pell Grant participation and student cohort on-time completion. On the stick side, institutions must pay back proportions of student loans that went unpaid or forgiven by each student cohort.

**Process:** This proposal was introduced and passed through the House Education and Workforce Committee to fulfill its requirement of cost savings for the FY25 budget reconciliation process. Next it will head to the House floor along with reconciliation proposals from other authorizing committees.

**Community college impact:** This risk-sharing proposal could cause some community colleges to stop participating in the federal student loan program or to pay fines back to the U.S. Department of Education. The PROMISE Grant could benefit many community colleges, but that depends on the cash flow over time from the risk-sharing penalty payments.

**Proposal:** Streamlining Accountability and Value in Education (SAVE) for Students Act

**Lead:** 118th Congress, by now Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chair Bill Cassidy (R-La.) as part of the Lowering Education and Debt Act.

**Savings generated:** Estimate not available

**Summary:** This bill would measure graduate earnings by program and compare them to the median high school graduate. Any programs not providing earnings above the high school median threshold would no longer be eligible for the federal student loan program.

**Process:** This proposal could be reintroduced as is, or considered as one way to change the federal loan program to save funds during reconciliation.

**Community college impact:** Community college programs that result in earnings lower than the high school median could no longer participate in borrowing, which could hurt student enrollment and retention.

**Proposal:** Endowment Tax Fairness Act (21% tax) or Tax Endowment Expansion to 14% Rate

**Lead:** Rep. Troy E. Nehls (R-Texas) in the 119th Congress; House revenue generation proposal document obtained by media sources

**Savings generated:** \$69.8 billion over 10 years (estimate from Tax Foundation); \$10 billion over 10 years (House revenue generation proposals)

**Summary:** The first endowment tax on institutional endowments was levied as part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, requiring private, non-profit colleges with at least 500 students enrolled and \$500,000 per student FTE to pay a 1.4% tax on their endowment payout annually. Current proposals suggest an increase in the tax percentage with the possibility of also adjusting the qualifying formula so that more colleges are affected.

**Process:** This proposal will be part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act extension, which was passed using reconciliation in 2017. If passed again, it would be under the same process.

**Community college impact:** Community colleges will not be affected by this tax as long as public institutions remain exempt. Even without the exemption, the qualifying formula would need to change in order for community colleges to be impacted.

As Congress moves through the reconciliation process, higher education accountability will be front and center for the House and Senate education committees as they look to find savings within their jurisdiction. While community colleges embrace responsible accountability, including having supported guardrails in Workforce Pell proposals and elements of the Gainful Employment metrics, our institutions must oppose any type of risk-sharing that would require colleges to pay funds back to the federal government. As open access institutions, community colleges have no control over who they admit or how much debt they accrue within federal limits. Given these circumstances, community colleges should not be held responsible for repaying borrower loans.

To contact your member of Congress about these proposals, particularly in opposing risk-sharing in the budget reconciliation process, visit the Action Center under the Advocacy tab on ACCT.org.



Carrie Warick-Smith is vice president for public policy at ACCT. She can be reached at [cwsmith@acct.org](mailto:cwsmith@acct.org).



What I have come to appreciate most about our sector is the firm commitment and attention to both the big rocks (economic development) and small rocks (empowering individual students and families) that comprise our colleges' missions.

## Global Learning for a Global Workforce

**Support of college leadership is crucial for global engagement.**

BY ROBIN MATROSS HELMS

COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN THE U.S. ARE GLOBAL LEADERS in workforce development and skills-based education. Governments, organizations, and higher education systems around the world are increasingly recognizing the power of our institutions' deep industry ties, innovative collaborations with employers, and demonstrated agility in designing short-term programs and credentials, and are looking to our sector for good practices and operational models. On the other side of the coin, counterpart institutions around the world are advancing knowledge and educational practice in key fields with high workforce needs in a variety of geographical contexts: AI, cybersecurity, healthcare, and many others.

Institutions focused on workforce education around the world — and most importantly, our students — have much to learn from one another. Global engagement furthers student success both by



ACCT Vice President Robin Matross Helms and students at Symbiosis Skills and Professional University in Pune, India.





exposing students to cutting-edge training, skills, and best practices in rapidly evolving, high demand fields, and by helping them develop the “durable” skills, such as cross-cultural communication, that will allow them to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world and workplace.

As part of our commitments to furthering student success and providing opportunities for our member colleges, ACCT is developing two programs that facilitate the development of sustained partnerships between ACCT member institutions and counterparts abroad. The US-UK Community College and Technical Exchange Program, supported by the Cyril Taylor Charitable Foundation, focuses on creating short-term education abroad programs for student populations which typically have not had access to travel and global education opportunities. The India-US Partnership Lab, supported by Cognizant Philanthropies, pairs American colleges and Indian counterparts to establish ongoing relationships that include a variety of joint activities, including co-taught courses, curriculum development, and virtual and in-person exchanges. Fields of focus across the two programs include electric vehicle technology, sustainable construction, disaster management, and cybersecurity as starting points, with collaboration in a variety of other fields under development.

ACCT’s philosophy in our global engagement initiatives is “go deep to go broad.” Our programs are high touch, with a focus on building the infrastructure and foundations for long-term relationships between U.S. colleges and their partner institutions that will evolve over time and provide multifaceted learning opportunities for our students.

This is where trustees come in. Along with presidents and other administrative leaders, boards play a critical role in the success and sustainability of global endeavors. While faculty are the linchpins of student learning and oversee content development and delivery, support at the policy level is crucial for global engagement to move beyond transactional to truly transformational mutual

learning opportunities that benefit our institutions and students in the long term. Key roles for trustees include:

**Setting the tone.** Trustees’ voices carry weight. Understanding the need for global learning and engagement, drawing the connection to overall institutional mission and goals, and articulating the impact on campus and in the community sets a supportive tone to underpin this work. Concrete success stories (e.g., contributions by an international student to the local community, how students applied skills they learned through a virtual exchange experience in the classroom) and examples of personal interactions and experiences with global learning are especially powerful.

**Asking the right questions.** Given their fiduciary responsibility to the institution, trustees should attend particularly to student safety, well-being, and academic success, and to the impact of global learning and engagement on the overall health of the college. Raising questions about enrollment impacts, costs and revenue streams, institutional liability, and learning outcomes will ultimately ensure robust, sustainable activities and collective confidence in the work undertaken.

**Making connections and building relationships.** Given their leadership roles in their communities and the local economy, trustees are in an excellent position to see opportunities for partnerships between the college and local, national, and global companies, organizations, and other entities to promote global learning, knowledge exchange, and talent development. Bringing ideas to campus leaders, making introductions, and helping them build a network of resources to support global learning and engagement will help further expand the scope and impact of this work.

**Considering board policy.** ACCT advises boards to regularly — at least annually — review their policies. Such reviews are an opportune time to consider the impact of existing policies on global learning and engagement activities. What policies facilitate such work, and are there

any that inadvertently hinder it? As global activities accelerate, boards might consider adding a dedicated policy item that articulates a commitment to global learning and engagement and specifies the board’s role.

Building on our initial pilot projects, ACCT is working to expand global engagement opportunities for our member colleges. In addition to our programmatic initiatives, our new publication series, *Mapping Community Colleges Around the World: Comparative Perspectives and Collaborative Pathways*, provides short, incisive articles, authored by trustees, institution leaders, industry partners, and scholars from around the world, that highlight innovative practices and potential partners for our colleges. Rosalind Latiner Raby and Edward J. Valeau’s article, “The Global ‘College Sector’: Definitions, Characteristics, and Challenges,” included in this issue of *Trustee Quarterly*, provides an overview and preview of the series.

If you and your college are interested in global learning and exploring international opportunities, please let us know! Check out the “Global Learning and Engagement” section on ACCT Connect to access resources and updates, and to share examples of your own global projects. Keep an eye out for globally focused sessions at the 2025 ACCT Leadership Congress, as well as announcements about additional opportunities. We’ll continue to advocate for our sector with our global partners, both to bring the excellent work of our colleges to the world stage, and to bring the world to our colleges, students, and communities. Stay tuned!



Robin Matross Helms is ACCT’s vice president for membership and educational services. She can be reached at [rhelms@acct.org](mailto:rhelms@acct.org).

# ‘Years of Transition’

A returning presidential administration and more than 80 new members of Congress topped the opportunities and challenges at the 2025 NLS.



BY MARK TONER



**N**EARLY 1,400 COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS, students, and other advocates came to February’s Community College National Legislative Summit in a Washington poised for dramatic change.

Along with a new presidential administration, the nation’s capital welcomed 68 new members of the House of Representatives and 14 new Senators just weeks before the annual event, making the presence of community college leaders all the more critical.

“It is during these years of transition that it’s most important for us to join together in Washington,” said ACCT Chair Rich Fukutaki, a member of the Bellevue (Wash.) College Board of Trustees. “There are dialogues happening nationwide about the role of government of education and the value of higher education... It is necessary that we demonstrate the impact federal dollars have on our institutions, our students, and our local economies.”

## Changing Dynamics

New federal leaders and lawmakers weren’t the only changes confronting community college leaders. At a time when higher education has been under attack, keynote speaker Doug Shapiro, research and executive director of the National Student Clearinghouse, shared that community colleges are leading the way as enrollments rebound following the pandemic.

“The news is good,” he said.

Top left: ACCT Chair Rich Fukutaki  
Bottom left: Student trustees



Clockwise from left: Rep. Burgess Owens; Nathan Gonzales; Carrie Warick-Smith, David Baime, Jim Hermes, and José Miranda; Doug Shapiro



Fall 2024 community college enrollment grew by nearly double the rate of public four-year institutions, driven by both dual enrollment students and adult learners over 21, according to Shapiro. “Students who lost the most ground during the pandemic are the ones who came back the strongest,” he said.

While enrollment growth at community colleges is stronger than at four-year institutions — with short-term certificates the fastest-growing credential, followed by associate degrees — community colleges remain the one sector of higher education which has not returned to pre-pandemic levels. “But with one more year at this rate, they’ll be very close,” Shapiro said.

Amid the proliferation of fast-growing vocational programs for fields such as construction and trades, mechanics and repair, and precision production, fewer students are planning to transfer to four-year institutions, according to Shapiro. “Students are opting not just for lower cost but also shorter term and mostly vocationally focused programs,” he said.

The vocational focus comes at a time of economic change. Despite a strong economy and low unemployment, high inflation, unusually low hiring rates, and the disruption of AI are driving uncertainty as workforce needs continue to shift dramatically,

*Washington Post* columnist Heather Long told NLS attendees. In the short term, these favors have led to a period that Long calls “the long stay.”

“People are feeling very stuck,” she said. “That’s something we need to think about and keep an eye on... You are at the forefront of trying to help people figure out how to adjust to these big trends.”

Lawmakers need to be aware of these changing contexts — and the increasingly important role community colleges play, NLS speakers said. “These elected officials who are new to Congress need to hear about the important work on our campuses,” said Carrie Warick-Smith, ACCT vice president of public policy.

## Policy Priorities

To do just that, trustees, presidents, community college advocates, and more than 125 student trustees fanned out across Capitol Hill to meet with lawmakers (see sidebar, p.17). ACCT and American Association of Community College (AACC) public policy experts reviewed the annual green sheet of community college priorities, which includes opposing risk-sharing proposals, maintaining funding for the Pell Grant Program in the face of budgetary





Clockwise from left: Heather Long; Student trustees; Rep. Don Newhouse with Washington delegation



shortfalls, making Pell awards available for short-term training programs and tax-free for students, and reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

Noting that much of the opprobrium around higher education has been focused on universities, David Baime, AACC senior vice president of government relations, noted that community colleges “are without question at this moment the preferred sector of higher education.”

“We believe this is a time of great opportunity for our institutions and our students,” he said. “We think there are some meaningful openings... [to] achieve goals we’ve been working on for some time... The opportunities are very real. We think there’s a lot of progress we can make.”

Several key priorities, including workforce Pell and WIOA reauthorization, have broad bipartisan support, speakers said, noting support for both from the new Republican leaders in key House and Senate committees. But given questions about the future of the Department of Education and other key programs, it’s also important to advocate more broadly about the importance of community colleges, speakers said.

“Even if the deck chairs of the federal government get rearranged, the question is what message does our Congress

and administration want to send about the power of education?” Warick-Smith said. “That’s a larger conversation.”

“We can’t predict how our federal agencies will change in the coming months, but we know we have opportunities and challenges ahead in securing support for our community colleges,” ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee told NLS attendees. “Every one of you is here because you value higher education. As long as we stay focused on that value, our mission will succeed.”

## Policy and Practice

One area of potential traction is apprenticeships, according to Long, who noted that interest in the programs “surged” during the first Trump Administration. NLS attendees were updated on ACCT’s registered apprenticeship project, a four-year initiative to develop a cohort of colleges developing RA programs in fields which have not traditionally embraced formal apprenticeships, including healthcare, IT, and advanced manufacturing.

“As a community college, you’re already offering many of these non-traditional opportunities,” said Linda Rhoads, ACCT’s senior project associate. “Colleges don’t need a lot of assistance in learning how to develop programs, but developing those employer partnerships in a way that they are long term and sustainable



# On Advocacy

"We have to start highlighting the very best of the best with our colleges and students. When you come to tell us what it looks like to be an innovator, we can craft legislation around that. So my suggestion is to continue to come and talk with your legislators, find those who really have a desire and passion for education."

— REP. BURGESS OWENS (R-UTAH)

"Reach out to Republicans. Even if you don't have a relationship, ask for a meeting. If you don't, you're giving them a free pass."

— REP. MARILYN STRICKLAND (D-WASH.)

"We want to find efficiencies, but we don't want to hamstring anything. If you see any red flags, let us know."

— REP. DON NEWHOUSE (R-WASH.)

"My advice from the economic side is to really talk up how the programs you are championing can build up the labor force."

— WASHINGTON POST COLUMNIST HEATHER LONG

"The colleges serve our communities from a full spectrum of economic backgrounds, students from other countries, and students from many racial backgrounds. It is crucial that we advocate and share their stories.... and it is critical that we do this with data and transparency."

— ACCT CHAIR RICH FUKUTAKI

"People don't understand the value you bring. You have to educate people."

— REP. JIM MCGOVERN (D-MASS.)

## 'At the Table' on Capitol Hill

Community college students were well represented during NLS visits to Capitol Hill. In the office of Rep. Marilyn Strickland (D-Wash.), student advocates lined an entire side of a long conference table.

"These are students with 3.5 GPAs, and they're at our table, advocating for other students' needs," said Aubrey Whitemarsh, a member of Pierce College's student government.

Randy Phillips, Tacoma Community College's student government president, discussed his experience as a student parent and how grants helped him afford on-campus childcare. "My ask is to protect what we have right now while everything is being dismantled," he said.

"Trustees are very proud of our students, and this is why we volunteer to do this work," Doug Mah, a trustee with South Puget Sound Community College, told Rep. Strickland.

Across Capitol Hill, students shared stories about peers struggling to afford textbooks and materials, avoiding campus due to fears of deportation, and having to scale back on classes to work.

These stories had an impact on members. "All I do is talk to adults," Strickland told student advocates. "You are more credible messengers than any elected official. Use your voice — speak out."

Community college leaders sought common ground across

Capitol Hill. Meeting with Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), trustees from three Massachusetts community colleges expressed concerns about cuts to the Pell Grant program. Students described how Pell grants remain essential for supplies and living expenses, even after state leaders made community college free. The cost of a graphing calculator, one said, "is food for a week."

Meeting with Rep. Don Newhouse (R-Wash.), trustees and state board members focused on workforce Pell and provisions in the Farm Bill that include a grant program to improve community college agriculture programs and job training.

Dr. Sara Cate, a trustee at Yakima Valley College, highlighted the college's vineyard technology program. "There's more to winemaking than crushing grapes," she told Newhouse.

Members of the Illinois delegation met with the state's two senators, Dick Durbin (D) and Tammy Duckworth (D). Both pledged their commitment to federal student funding for disadvantaged students, diversity, and the Department of Education.

"Illinois has some of the best community colleges in the country," Duckworth said. "Senator Durbin and I will keep working to support our postsecondary schools at the federal level so that every Illinoisan — regardless of their income, race or zip-code — has access to higher education."



Clockwise from left: Rep. Jim McGovern with Massachusetts delegation; Sen. Tammy Duckworth and Sen. Dick Durbin meet with Illinois delegation; Bates Technical College President Dr. Lin Zhou presents Rep. Marilyn Strickland with award



and align with the occupations that are needed in your region or your local economy and the programs that you offer at your college.”

The project is just one of several offered through ACCT's Center for Policy & Practice, including supporting institutional adoption of the SNAP Employment & Training program and the ongoing Kids on Campus childcare partnership with the National Head Start Association. The Center has also published research on funding models for community colleges that can inform advocacy efforts.

“Community colleges are asked to be everything to all people — we all know this,” said ACCT Associate Vice President Steve Jurch. “We want to make sure the funding matches.”

### Together ‘In the Fight’

The NLS also recognized the sector’s allies, including the revitalized House Community College Caucus. During the event, its co-chair, Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.), and Congressman Joe Courtney (D-Conn.) were recognized with 2025 National Education Service Awards (see p. 5).

In closing remarks, Rep. Burgess Owens (R-Utah), the chair of the U.S. House Subcommittee on Higher Education and

Workforce Development, called community colleges the place “where the American Dream is still alive.”

Affirming his support for workforce Pell, Owens noted that more than 8 million unfilled jobs while nearly 7 million Americans are unemployed is “telling us something is broken.”

“Families are stretching their budgets to send kids to school that are stuck in the past, while employers are desperate for workers trained for the future,” Owens said, calling for an “education system that [meets] our country’s current economic needs.”

“I’m honored to stay with you guys in the fight,” Owens said. “And we have, I think, in the next four years, a chance to have some really good things happen.”



Mark Toner is an editor for Trustee Quarterly.



# CONSENSUS AMID CHANGE

The Community College Congressional Forum brought together 14 lawmakers to discuss the community college sector.

BY MARK TONER



**A**MONG THE 14 LEGISLATORS WHO SPOKE AT THE 2025 Community College Legislative Forum were numerous first-time Congressional leaders, as well as multiple community college alumni and first-generation college students. Meeting with community college leaders in the basement of the U.S. Capitol, the bipartisan group of lawmakers urged community college leaders to advocate for their institutions and students.

“We need to make sure that both sides of the aisle understand the nature of these programs and how to protect them,” said Rep. Juan Ciscomani (R-Ariz.).

## The ‘9th Inning’ for Workforce Pell

Both Republican and Democratic lawmakers stressed that allowing Pell grants to be used for short-term job training programs remains a top priority in Congress.

“We’re in the 9th inning,” Sen. Roger Marshall (R-Kansas) told attendees. “I’m not going to promise you, but... I don’t know why it wouldn’t become law,” Marshall said.

Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) called workforce Pell his “number one priority” in his role on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP). “What an enormously popular bipartisan idea, and yet we still haven’t accomplished it,” he said. “We get very, very close, but all the while gaining more bipartisan support and all the while speaking more directly to the conditions of our economy and the conditions of our workforce.”

As ranking member of the House Committee on Education & Workforce, Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.) expressed optimism that the

reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which was removed at the last-minute from December’s continuing resolution, would be reauthorized, along with short-term Pell grants. “I think the popularity of the idea will carry the day,” he said. “We expect to be able to get a lot of things done.”

## Promise and Potential

Several lawmakers discussed their roles in creating state and local Promise programs before coming to Congress.

Rep. Michael Baumgartner (R-Wash.), a co-sponsor of the Washington Promise program during his time in the state legislature, credited community colleges with “doing more with less than almost anyone else in the American education space.”

“And it would be wonderful if we helped you do more with more because your mission is so important as we look at our workforce development needs, what’s going on with student debt loads, and just what kind of America we want to be,” he added.

In similar fashion, Rep. Adam Gray (D-Calif.) pointed to his time in the state legislature, which made two years of community college free, as affirming the sector’s ability to address key challenges. “In California, the most vexing issues, whether it be housing, whether it be healthcare, it’s community colleges that are on the front line of making sure we have the workforce to address them in a meaningful way,” he said.

Rep. Yassamin Ansari (D-Ariz.), who supported the Phoenix Promise program as a city councilwoman, stressed the “game-changing impact” of community colleges as her region seeks to address workforce needs in semiconductor manufacturing and healthcare. “Community colleges



Clockwise from left: Sen. Roger Marshall; Rep. Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks; Rep. Adam Gray; Rep. Alma Adams; Sen. Tim Kaine; Rep. Bobby Scott; Rep. Michael Baumgartner

have been a vital partner to us to be able to train the next generation of the workforce in these critical areas that are just going to be incredibly important to our economy moving forward,” she said, urging attendees to “speak with members of Congress, because it is very powerful at this time for them to hear your voice and to understand the impacts their decisions are having.”

## Personal Stories

Lawmakers also pointed to their own experiences with community colleges and workforce training.

Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-Iowa) highlighted her own experience as a community college student as driving her support for opportunity for all students. “Whether it’s looking at the status of Pell Grants... or making sure that GI Bill benefits can be used for certificates or other career pathways than a four-year degree, I am with you and support the role that you play in community colleges, in the one place in the world where there is upward mobility, where you can come in and out of the education system at will,” she said.

Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-Conn.) shared her personal story about how education “saved my life.” The former National Teacher of the Year stressed her efforts as a legislator to support on-campus childcare and efforts to address food insecurity at colleges. “We need people to go out, get an education, and then go back to their communities to be

full and productive citizens,” she said. “I implore you to put names and faces to the budgets and the line items that are being discussed to help [lawmakers] understand not only the impact and the importance of the work that you do, but what happens in the absence that will be created if funding is stripped.”

Rep. Juan Ciscomani (R-Ariz.), the first community college student who participated in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute — and the first CHCI graduate to become a member of Congress — pointed to the value of community colleges. “It’s not where you start, it’s what you do with what’s given with what was given to you that will make a difference in your life,” he said. “I’m a Republican... and we need to make sure that both sides of the aisle understand the nature of these programs and how to protect them.”

Rep. Randy Weber (R-Texas) called community colleges “the backbone of American education,” highlighting the workforce needs of his region and his own experience as a community college student. “It changed my life forever,” he said. “Never forget that what you all do is extremely important.”

## Support Amid Challenge

Bipartisan support has been a key theme of the Congressional Forum over the years, and even in Washington’s polarized climate, speakers pledged to work together on key community college issues.



Clockwise from left: Rep. Yassamin Ansari; Rep. Juan Ciscomani; Rep. Suzanne Bonamici; Rep. Randy Weber; Rep. Mark Harris; Rep. Jahana Hayes; Rep. Donald Norcross

Saying that community colleges “play the vital role in making higher education accessible and helping develop students who are truly ready to contribute to their community,” Rep. Mark Harris (R-N.C.) pledged to “use my role on the Education and Workforce Committee to be constantly looking for ways we can empower our communities... and helping you do what you do best.”

His Democratic counterpart on the committee, Rep. Donald Norcross (D-N.J.), added that community colleges remain the most flexible sector in higher education. “They fit everything. They’re affordable and they’re accessible,” said Norcross, who says he and others on the Committee “hear the stories that you live each and every day.”

“It’s great to see bipartisan support for community colleges,” added Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-Ore.). At the same time, she and other lawmakers stressed the importance of advocating for the needs of students and the institutions who serve them in the face of likely budget cuts.

Bonomici stressed that current students’ needs are “significantly different from what they used to be... whether it be food support, healthcare support, childcare support... they all make a difference in terms of retention and completion of programs,” she said. “So it’s never been more important to tell your stories and talk about the need for supporting community colleges.”

Rep. Alma Adams (D-N.C.) said that she would fight attempts to “take any resources away from our students, our institutions, and our teachers.”

“For all of the talk about investing in workforce development, we’re seeing cuts to Pell grants when we know that affordability is already one of the biggest challenges for our students, cuts to workforce training programs at a time when employers are desperate for skilled workers, and cuts to research funding, when our community colleges are leading the way in innovation,” she said. “We cannot ignore the role that community colleges play in every single corner of this country — rural communities, urban centers, suburbs. Community colleges don’t just serve America. They are America.”



Mark Toner is an editor for Trustee Quarterly.



# THE GLOBAL “COLLEGE SECTOR”: DEFINITIONS, CHARACTERISTICS, AND CHALLENGES



The authors of this excerpt from ACCT’s new *Mapping Community Colleges Around the World* series profile similarities, differences, and trends among community college-like institutions across the globe.

By Rosalind Latiner Raby and Edward J. Valeau

*ACCT is excited to introduce a new series of briefs that highlights effective policies and programs that strengthen U.S. community colleges and their global counterparts; identifies models for the development of these institutions in other geographic contexts; investigates challenges and solutions; explores synergies for mutually beneficial partnerships; and celebrates the success and contributions of this unique educational sector.*

*The first installment, Mapping Community Colleges Around the World: Comparative Perspectives and Collaborative Pathways, features “global snapshots” of community colleges and counterpart institutions, programs, and initiatives in an array of country and regional contexts. Here, we present an excerpt of the article that lays the groundwork and sets the context for our findings. Visit [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org) for the full report.*

Beyond universities, there is a sector of the higher education enterprise across the world that is comparable in many ways to community and technical colleges in the United States. These institutions exist to provide access for nontraditional and marginalized students, flexible paths for learning, retooling for future jobs, and opportunities for lifelong learning. We will refer to these institutions as “the college sector” throughout this article.

Today, over 170 distinct institutional types comprise the sector worldwide. The table below displays the 24 types that appear most often in the academic literature to date, although institutional names and types undoubtedly will continue to evolve as societal and economic needs change.

This article presents a framework for understanding the commonalities that define the college sector and the challenges it currently faces. Our analysis is based on a review of 2,113 academic articles and 365 book chapters for a total of 2,478 sources. While our review encompasses a significant body of research, readers should be aware that some parts of the world are not represented here due to an absence of available scholarship. As we gain an understanding of commonalities and differences among institutions worldwide, we also encourage research into as-yet unexplored areas for the sake of gaining a more comprehensive knowledge base and ultimately improving educational opportunities for all people.

## Five Key Commonalities

Our analysis indicates that the college sector shares five key commonalities: flexibility, accessibility, nontraditional student populations, local industry connections, and accreditation frameworks. While universities and other higher education institutions share some of these characteristics, the composite whole remains unique to the college sector.

### 1. Flexibility

Mission statements of institutions in the college sector around the world focus on the need to meet local industry and community needs. As needs change, colleges must maintain flexibility to edit or change programming and curricula and to refocus their offerings on the next-level skills needed for emerging and future industries at the local and global levels. One area in which this flexibility is especially evident over time is the adoption of international education programs that aim to bring the world to a local context and prepare students to succeed in a global economy. In 1947, the Truman Commission Report validated U.S. community college internationalization. It encouraged program and curriculum changes, which have been undertaken by an increasing number of U.S. community colleges over the last few decades. Across the Atlantic, the European University Alliance includes 74 Centers for Vocational Excellence, housed at Universities of Applied Sciences throughout the region, which advance mobility, international development, and cross-national partnerships.

## Top 24 Names of Institutions in the College Sector

1) Community Colleges	13) Apprenticeship Education Institutes
2) Further Education Colleges	14) Dual Apprenticeship Institutes
3) Technical and Further Education (TAF) Institutes/Colleges	15) Técnico Profesional
4) Vocational Education Training (VET) Institutions/Colleges	16) Technical Universities
5) Vocational Education Institutes (VE)	17) Vocational Universities
6) Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Centers/Institutions/College	18) Universities of Applied Sciences
7) Colleges	19) Vocational Colleges
8) Polytechnics	20) Higher Colleges of Technology
9) Technical-Vocational Education (TVE) Colleges	21) Further Education & Training Colleges
10) Technical Education Institutes (TE)	22) University Colleges
11) Adult Education Institute	23) Higher Vocational Colleges
12) TVET Colleges – Vocational Higher Education	24) Dual VET Colleges

The college sector has seen significant innovation and evolution over the last 150 years in terms of structure (types of institution), academic levels (secondary, sub-tertiary, and tertiary levels), mission (what is taught), access (who has it), and curricular focus (academic and vocational focus). However, the college sector has yet to be sufficiently recognized for its contributions to global knowledge production and innovations that serve local communities.

## 2. Accessibility

Mission statements also emphasize enabling access for marginalized students. Particular populations of focus vary by country and context. U.S. community colleges, Australian Technical and Further Education institutes and colleges, and Israeli Academic Regional Colleges, for example, aim to provide educational opportunities to students who have traditionally been excluded from higher education in their contexts, including students from low-income backgrounds, adults, and immigrants. In many countries, colleges are strategically located geographically to maximize accessibility. Portugal's Cursos Técnicos Superiores Profissionais, for instance, operate in rural locations, and Kenya's TVET Colleges for blind and deaf students are located throughout the country.

In a number of countries, the college sector also serves as a gateway for access to universities and further study via articulation agreements and pathway programs. This is the case for Hong Kong Community Colleges, some United Kingdom Colleges of Further Education, Japanese KOSSEN Colleges of Technology, and Singapore Polytechnics. The EU Qualifications for Transfer Pathways and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa Pathway Programs also enable continued study upon completion of a college degree or other qualification.

## 3. Varied Student Populations

Overall, the college sector serves a tremendous diversity of student populations. Colleges are the primary — and often most qualified — providers of postsecondary education for part-time, older, differently abled, first-generation, Indigenous, low-income, refugee, international, second-career, single parent, and adult students, and those from other disadvantaged or disempowered groups. Given their flexible educational pathways and emphasis on career preparation, colleges are especially well suited to serve adult learners, which is reflected in enrollment data. The average age of TVET students in Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland, for example, is 35.

## 4. Industry Connections

Around the world, the college sector works closely with local industries to determine the skills and competencies needed by employers. The curricular flexibility noted previously, combined with holistic, learner-

centered teaching approaches, helps colleges prepare graduates both to fill current jobs and to adapt to new and emerging labor market demands over time. Industry collaboration is multifaceted and takes a variety of forms. For example, European TVET and Universities of Applied Sciences industry collaborations create microcredentials and service-learning options. Dual education models from Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland merge formal academics with internships, and colleges offer apprenticeships throughout Africa, Asia, and Europe. Although direct correlations are often difficult to document, research confirms that colleges contribute to increased human capacity, higher incomes, and overall socioeconomic growth in many countries and contexts.

## 5. Accreditation

Two primary types of accreditation frameworks guide the development of curricula, competency requirements, and learning outcomes for the college sector worldwide:

- National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) apply to all postsecondary education institutions, including those in the college sector. For example, TAFE institutions are included in Australia's Qualification Framework, Polytechnics in Korea's Academic Bank Credit System, TVET Colleges in the Malaysian Qualification Framework, New Vocational Colleges in the China 2019 project, and TVET institutions in the New Chile Law.
- Regional qualification frameworks (RQFs) set standards for degrees and qualifications across geographic regions. The ASEAN Qualification Framework includes VET institutes and postsecondary polytechnics and colleges; Africa's Agenda 2063 includes high-quality TVET centers; and the Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE) includes tertiary TVET institutes and community colleges.

## Trends and Challenges

Our review of the literature on the college sector highlights several key challenges facing systems and institutions worldwide:

- Labels such as sub-degree, third category, non-university, and



second tier too often are ascribed to the sector, and minoritized students are stereotyped as having expectations of failure.

- The college sector needs stronger leadership, better national planning, and improved accountability to achieve sustainability and growth and to counter the persistent deficit narrative. In many countries, a lack of funding remains an ongoing problem and will require the reprioritization of resources at the national, regional, and local levels.
- In an era of globalization, international partnerships and collaboration within the college sector are expanding, which has many positive impacts on institutions and student learning. However, international cooperation must respect and preserve all local cultures and should be careful not to promote only or preferentially, for example, English or any other single language, and Westernized pedagogy. A primary value of international collaboration is benefiting, drawing from, and appealing to varied cultures.
- Prestige-seeking and pressure for the college sector to compete with other postsecondary education sectors for enrollment can result in shifts from short-cycle certificates to two-year associate degrees to baccalaureate and master's degrees. In some cases, these shifts may lead to more selective enrollment, potentially undermining colleges' access mission.

## Conclusion

The college sector has seen significant innovation and evolution over the last 150 years in terms of structure (types of institution), academic levels (secondary, sub-tertiary, and tertiary levels), mission (what is taught), access (who has it), and curricular focus (academic and vocational focus). However, the college sector has yet to be sufficiently recognized for its contributions to global knowledge production and innovations that serve local communities.

As highlighted in the articles throughout ACCT's new *Mapping Community Colleges Around the World — Global Snapshots* brief, much more research on the sector is needed, starting with systematic collection of data on student outcomes. Of particular interest to the authors is the story of change resulting from educational borrowing and the role of the college sector in social equalization, whereby new opportunities define new possibilities for social change.

U.S. community colleges and their relative counterparts across the globe play a unique role in offering opportunities to students who otherwise may not be able to access postsecondary education for the sake of benefiting these students and their communities. This new publication series will identify opportunities for improvements that can be applied throughout the college sector. It should be read by college leaders who have an interest in the long-term success of their institutions.

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# A Case for Stressing the Board of Trustees: **Preparing for the Unexpected**

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A 'fire drill for governance' can help boards practice decision-making, asking tough questions, and applying policies in challenging situations.

By Daniel J. Phelan



**T**HINK BACK TO YOUR SCHOOL DAYS. REMEMBER FIRE drills? These routine exercises weren't just about meeting safety regulations; they were about building habits and muscle memory. In that way, when the alarm rang, everyone would know what to do. The goal wasn't to cause stress, but, in fact, to reduce it by replacing panic with practiced, purposeful action.

Community college boards of trustees should take a similar approach to strengthening their governance practice for times of crisis. In high-stress situations, our brains are wired to respond emotionally. The limbic system, especially the amygdala, triggers our instinctive "fight-or-flight" response. Heart rate increases, breathing quickens, and focus narrows as the body prepares to confront or escape a perceived threat. While that can serve us well when facing physical danger, it's not as useful when facing a financial crisis, political controversy, campus unrest, or leadership turnover. In those moments, it's the prefrontal cortex, responsible for thoughtful, clear-eyed reasoning, that we need most. But that response only kicks in if we've built the habit of staying calm and thinking strategically.

Nobel laureate, psychologist, and author Daniel Kahneman, in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (2011), describes two distinct modes of thinking that further explains this dichotomy of brain behavior. A "System 1" response is fast, instinctive, and emotionally driven, while a "System 2" response is slower, more thoughtful, and logical. What makes this insight particularly important for trustees is that stress, so common in moments of institutional crisis, naturally pushes people toward System 1 responses, which happens about 95% of the time, according to Kahneman. Yet effective governance depends on the very opposite: patience, coherent analysis, as well as strategic and long-term thinking. For trustees, the real challenge and responsibility is having the necessary discipline to engage System 2 thinking, especially in moments of stress or uncertainty when it's most difficult to do so.

To help build that capacity, one practical tool is a 'stress test' of board policies — essentially, a 'fire drill for governance.' At Jackson College, we regularly run these exercises with both our Leadership Council and our Board of Trustees. We use realistic, dynamic case studies and scenario planning to simulate challenges that test our ability to respond as a high-functioning governance body. It's not about predicting the exact crisis or the exact outcome for that matter, it's about preparing the mindset and habit creation necessary to respond effectively, no matter what comes.

Stress testing can help boards of trustees to:

- Build trustee confidence by creating a safe environment to practice decision-making, ask tough questions, and routinely apply policies in complex, real-world scenarios.
- Establish a shared understanding of how the board will respond to public pressure, political challenges, or other emergencies while entrusting the president to lead institutional responses and manage communications, especially during times of crisis.
- Stay focused on governance responsibilities, such as setting policy, providing oversight, and guiding strategy.
- Regularly review and update board policies to ensure they are relevant, clear, current, and aligned with the college's mission and evolving needs.

If you wish to try this approach at your institution:

- Develop (or have ChatGPT create for you) a case study based on a real or plausible challenge facing community colleges, such as a sudden drop in enrollment, a controversial speaker on campus, a political issue, a ransomware attack, another executive order, or the unexpected resignation of a senior leader. Break the case into several stages, revealing new information as the session progresses to simulate how real crises unfold.
- Use a board retreat or dedicated planning session to work through the scenario, pausing at each stage for discussion, reflection, and application of relevant board policies. A facilitator, such as a governance consultant or other skilled professional, can help guide the conversation and keep it focused on governance and out of administrative roles.
- Throughout the exercise, consistently return to this most central question for trustees: "What do our board policies have to say about this?" This simple but powerful prompt helps anchor the discussion in the board's governance role. It shifts the board's mindset from emotional and immediate reaction (System 1) to strategic and thoughtful reflection (System 2) — from uncertainty and confusion to clarity. By routinely focusing on policies, trustees can avoid drifting into operational territory and instead reinforce their responsibility to provide strategic oversight and direction.
- After the exercise, take time to debrief as a group. What went well? Where did the board stay true to its governance role, and where did it slip into operational thinking? Are existing policies sufficient to guide decision-making, or did gaps emerge that need attention? Use this reflection to identify areas for policy refinement, additional trustee training, or stronger onboarding practices.

Stress testing isn't just about preparing for crisis, it's about strengthening board culture, building shared understanding, and reinforcing your role as a strategic, policy-focused leadership body.

Above all, remember: The boardroom is not a place for unchecked emotion or political posturing. It is a place of stewardship where mission, trust, and long-term impact must guide every decision. A high-functioning board supports its president, stays focused on outcomes over personalities and politics, and models respectful, mission-driven, policy-focused leadership in every meeting. Just as fire drills prepare schools to protect students, stress testing equips boards to protect their colleges. In a time of rising complexity, public scrutiny, and institutional risk, your college doesn't just need your presence, it needs your preparedness.



Dr. Daniel J. Phelan has served as president and CEO of Jackson College in Michigan since 2001. He is the author of *The Community College Board 2.0 (2021)* and *Unrelenting Change, Innovation, and Risk: Forging the Next Generation of Community Colleges (2016)*, both published by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.



# LEADING UNAPOLOGETICALLY Through Campus Turbulence

A college president and CEO offers lessons on how to proceed  
after an institutional crisis and a vote of no confidence.

By Keith Curry



**A**S PRESIDENT/CEO OF COMPTON COLLEGE AND THE Compton Community College District for more than 14 years, I've witnessed significant challenges and triumphs — from navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and regaining our accreditation to winning bond measures and addressing the loss of public confidence in higher education.

Not much could have prepared me for the multiple attempts at votes of no confidence, though.

In the spring of 2017, 35 Compton College faculty members marked “yes” to having confidence in me as CEO, and 33 voted “no.” By a margin of two votes, the vote of no confidence was not issued.

Then, in the fall of 2021, the Academic Senate, along with the faculty and staff unions, issued a joint resolution expressing no confidence in me and the Compton College vice president of Academic Affairs.

But I'm still here. So, let me go back to the beginning.

August 15, 2005, was my first day at Compton College (at the time called Compton Community College), where I joined the ranks as the interim dean of student services. When I arrived on campus, my number one goal was to stay focused on the students and their success. I was excited about the opportunity to support this institution that has educated many friends, family, and community members over the years. After all, I grew up in Compton, California, so that meant this job was so much more than just a job.

It was personal.

Over the years, I have sacrificed family time, my health, and other professional opportunities because I was committed to this institution. Compton College, for those who don't know, was the first and only California community college whose accreditation was revoked by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). This was done in the summer of 2006, not long after I started working at the college.

In the spring of 2004, the chancellor of California Community Colleges first removed the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees' powers and authority, and a Special Trustee was appointed. Then, in the summer of 2006, through the passage of California Assembly Bill 318 and with the approval of the ACCJC, Compton Community College District entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the El Camino Community College District to provide academic and student support services at the Compton Community College site. The institution would be known as the “El Camino College Compton Center.”

Despite these setbacks, I always believed in Compton College's eventual vindication, and I knew I would be there to witness it. On March 16, 2011, I was appointed interim CEO, and I shared the following goals with the campus community:

- Complete the 2011-2012 Compton Community College District budget development process.
- Address the facilities' needs.
- Continue to support the partnership with the El Camino Community College District.

- Work with the community.

That day finally came. On March 20, 2017, the power and authority of the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees were restored. On June 7, 2017, El Camino College Compton Center achieved accreditation from the ACCJC. A year later, on June 7, 2018, Compton College held its first commencement ceremony. Finally, on June 7, 2019, at 11:59 p.m., Compton College's partnership with El Camino Community College District was officially terminated.

Over the years, I stayed focused on achieving yearly goals for Compton College while working to restore the institution's statewide and nationwide credibility. To achieve this, I had to be everywhere, tell our story, and find creative ways to improve this institution's work.

Despite the many accomplishments of this institution, including the passage of a \$100 million facilities bond in November 2014, the faculty union voted for a vote of no confidence in the spring of 2017. By a narrow margin of just two votes, the vote of no confidence was not issued. This vote occurred during a period when we recommended faculty layoffs and right before our ACCJC accreditation site visit in March 2017. Following that vote, I remained focused on securing accreditation for the institution, addressing budget challenges we faced due to the separation from the El Camino Community College District, and repairing the relationship with the faculty union.

Then, after personally surviving two pulmonary embolisms in the summer of 2020 and trying to be responsive to the campus community as we dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic, a vote of no confidence would come again in the fall of 2021. This time, it would pass in a joint resolution from the Academic Senate and the faculty and staff unions.

I was dismayed by the statements made in public meetings that characterized me as an “Oppressor” and a “Tormentor,” and likened me to various dictators (names I shall not repeat). I took some of the comments personally, and frankly, as any CEO in this situation would. Additionally, I was concerned about the potential impact of a vote of no confidence on our vice president of Academic Affairs, and I didn't want it to impact their career trajectory.

Many people say a vote of no confidence is a “badge of honor.” I don't agree with that statement. Such a vote creates a label about your leadership, and an executive search firm once told me that if there is “smoke,” there must be “fire.” Even if the statements in the vote are not factual, you will be forced to continually defend your integrity since the vote is a public document.

Anyone who knows me understands that I often speak about being an unapologetic leader. However, this vote shook my confidence, made me question many of my decisions, and deeply hurt me. Born and raised here, my intention from the beginning was to ensure access to higher education in my community. People of color are all too familiar with accusations of not being good enough — that we are merely “DEI hires.” Despite feeling incredibly low during that time, I tried to remind myself of the many accomplishments I had brought to my community, even if it felt like my community had forgotten them.

There is life after a vote of no confidence. I'm living proof, and so is Compton College. The future of Compton College and the Compton Community College District is bright, and I will remain focused on students and their success.

Still, an important lesson for me during this time was how to respond to criticism, discrimination, and, in some cases, racism. You must remain calm and speak to the facts, not respond through emotions or anger. Make sure you take time to develop responses and, in some cases, seek advice from your legal counsel, your colleagues, and your board.

The joint resolution vote of no confidence against me and the vice president of academic affairs included many inaccurate statements and lacked evidence to support the allegations.

However, I understood the concerns of the Academic Senate and the faculty and staff unions regarding enrollment. Since 2011, with the separation from the El Camino Community College District and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a dramatic decrease in enrollment.

In preparation for the separation from El Camino College, we worked with the California State Legislature to secure Full-Time Equivalent Student (FTES) Hold-Harmless Protection for Compton Community College District through 2025-2026. Beginning in the fall of 2019, this protection ensured our institution would receive funding for no less than 5,980 FTES, regardless of our actual student enrollment. Despite this, many people did not realize or understand that our funding was not in jeopardy. Since fall 2019, our state funding levels have increased. Additionally, we received \$11.3 million in the 2017-2018 California State Budget to support Compton College's transition to an independent college. The preparation we made through California's legislation was crucial. However, the concerns from various constituent groups about wanting to see more students on campus and in their classes were understandable.

Despite my efforts to address the concerns in the joint resolution, I was troubled that misinformation in the resolution was forwarded to community members and employees at other California community colleges. This was done to discredit my leadership and our many accomplishments over the last decade. On October 19, 2021, the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees issued a statement in support of my leadership, which included the following:

- "The Compton Community College District Board of Trustees has complete confidence in the leadership of Dr. Keith Curry.

- "Our support remains with Dr. Keith Curry, and we look forward to a bright future with this skilled president/CEO."

In addition, the Board of Trustees approved a two-year contract extension for the vice president of Academic Affairs, showing confidence in that individual's leadership. I truly appreciate the support from the Compton Community College District Board of Trustees and am forever grateful for their leadership and guidance, especially during that period.

## So, how did we move forward?

### Step One: Lean on your supporters.

In addition to the statements of support, the board of trustees highlighted the many accomplishments of Compton College and the Compton Community College District under my leadership. During the February 22, 2022, Board of Trustees meeting, my employment contract was extended. The board's commitment to me and my leadership was the first step to moving forward after the vote of no confidence.

The board of trustees demonstrated its commitment during board meetings and one-on-one interactions, offering words of encouragement and advice on overcoming the vote of no confidence. Like me, they were dedicated to seeing Compton College succeed.

### Step Two: Share your success stories with your advocates.

Our local and statewide elected officials showed significant support during this time. When they were informed of the vote of no confidence, they either called, provided support during meetings, or submitted letters of support to the board of trustees. The statewide elected officials were particularly surprised by the vote, as many of them were involved with the college during the revocation and restoration of our accreditation. They were excited when the college achieved accreditation, and when the partnership with the El Camino Community College District ended. Moving forward, the second step was to continue meeting with our local elected officials, increasing the frequency, and sharing more information with the campus community about our advocacy efforts.



**Step Three: Assess yourself honestly, and communicate, communicate, communicate.**

The third step involved self-reflection on my leadership, aiming to improve myself as a leader, enhance my communication and interaction with constituent groups, and better convey decisions to the campus community. In my weekly president/CEO message to the campus community, I introduced a section called “Closing the Loop” where I communicated all decisions made on campus. Additionally, I institutionalized the documentation of all my responses to the Academic Senate regarding decisions made at their meetings. I included those responses in the “Closing the Loop” section of my weekly message to the campus.

I also became more intentional about sending recommendations and suggestions from employees and the constituent groups through the governance structures before making decisions. This ensured the recommendations and suggestions were vetted, discussions were documented, and formal recommendations from the responsible committee were forwarded to my office. I provided written responses, which were included in the “Closing the Loop” section of my president/CEO message to the campus community. I scheduled ongoing meetings with the Academic Senate and both the faculty and staff unions to discuss college-related matters and keep the lines of communication open. I also made sure to be more visible on campus by attending year-end student celebrations, visiting faculty and staff offices, and walking the campus to interact with employees and students. Additionally, I continued to offer office hours for employees to meet with me one-on-one, both in person and via Zoom.

**Step Four: Respond to the Vote of No Confidence.**

The fourth step involved responding in writing to the vote of no confidence and making my statement public to the campus community. I included it in a president/CEO message to the campus community and shared it with the board of trustees. In the response, I addressed many of the statements included in the resolution. I reaffirmed my commitment to Compton College and our mission of being a leading institution of student learning and success. Preparing and releasing the response was crucial, as it allowed me to publicly share my stance and commitment if asked about the vote in the future.

**Step Five: Bring in third parties to show you what you can't see.**

The fifth step involved hiring consultants to review Compton College's governance structure. Completed in the fall of 2024, the review led to the formation of a committee tasked with implementing the recommendations and updating our governance manual. Throughout the process, I collaborated closely with each constituent group to gather feedback and determine the best path forward.

**Step Six: Be radically transparent.**

The sixth step was enhancing transparency with the board of trustees by including monthly updates on enrollment and district budget information in our board agenda. Before the vote of no confidence, I believed we were transparent regarding our fiscal stability; now, we are even more intentional. For example, from January to September, we provide monthly updates on the development of the annual budget. Throughout the fiscal year, we provide monthly updates on the budget-to-actuals for all funds, including unrestricted, restricted, and all three facilities bonds. The information section of the board of trustees' agenda includes 25 to 35 items each month. Additionally, my weekly president/CEO message to the campus community regularly features enrollment and fiscal information.

**Step Seven: Stay humble, work hard, and be unapologetic.**

The seventh, and most important, step is that I have come to realize that no matter how much you do for an institution or how much you love your work, a vote of no confidence can happen at any moment. This is a job, and you can only do so much. As a leader, you will never make everyone happy. Therefore, focus on moving your institution forward, but also maintain a work-life balance and remember what matters most — your family and friends.

Since the votes of no confidence, I am proud to say Compton College has continued moving forward. In spring 2024, ACCJC reaffirmed our accreditation for seven years, and I received the following accommodation from the ACCJC:

“The Commission commends the chief executive officer's leadership in organizational planning, institutional goal setting, and fostering strategic community partnerships that have improved student success through enhanced access to basic needs.”

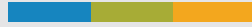
We passed a \$200 million facilities bond in November 2024, and in December 2024, the board of trustees approved the Compton College 2035 Comprehensive Master Plan. On January 17, 2025, the college broke ground on a 251-bed, \$80.3 million student housing project. From fall 2021 to spring 2024, we experienced a 24% enrollment growth.

There is life after a vote of no confidence. I'm living proof, and so is Compton College. The future of Compton College and the Compton Community College District is bright, and I will remain focused on students and their success.



*Dr. Keith Curry is president and CEO of Compton College and Compton Community College District in California.*

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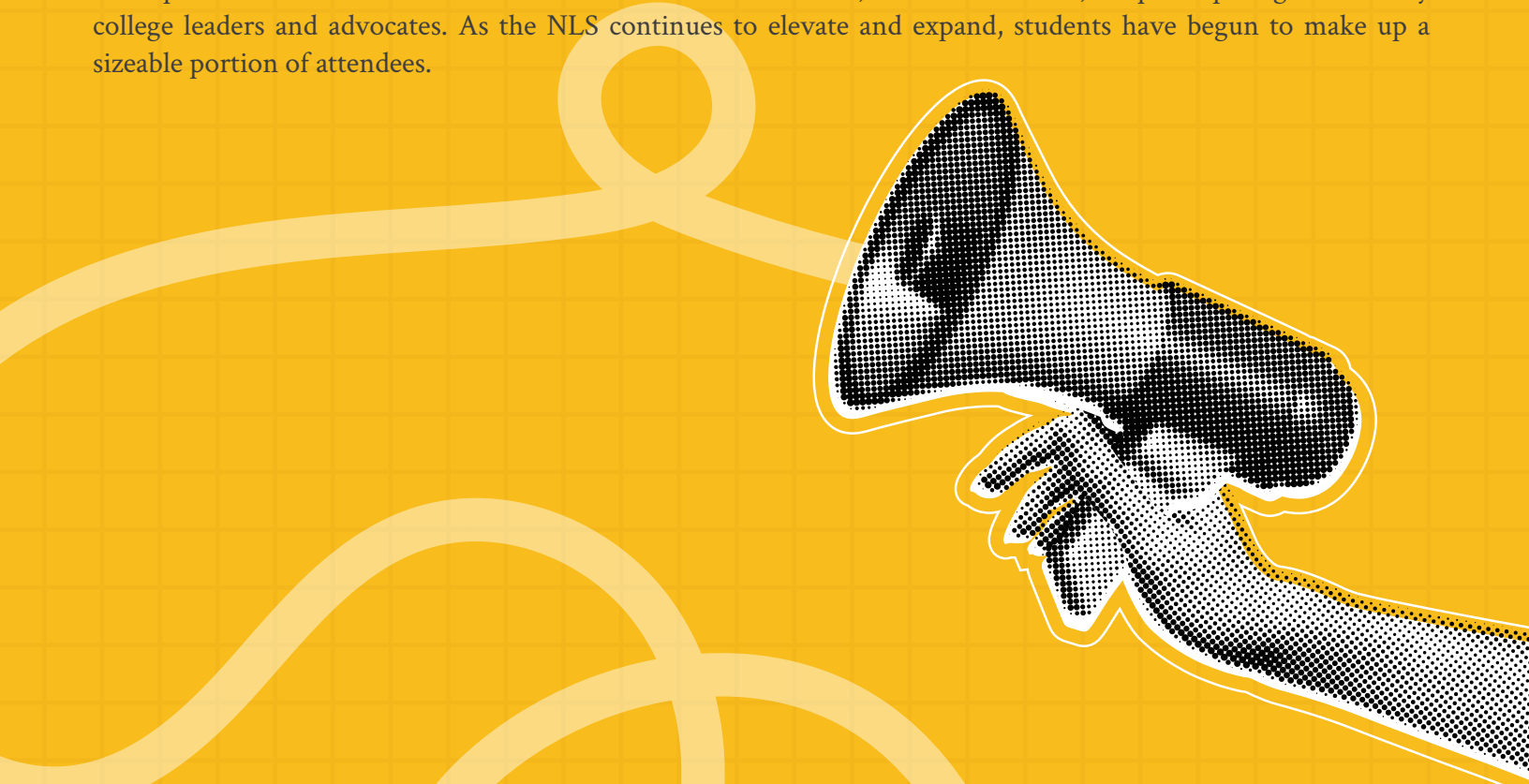
# Mikhaelle Pablico's Intro to Advocacy

The College of Southern Nevada student put advocacy into action in Washington, D.C.

By Kali Woods

AMERICAN NOVELIST KEN KESEY ONCE SAID, “YOU DON’T LEAD BY POINTING AND TELLING people some place to go. You lead by going to that place and making a case.” Mikhaelle Pablico, a senior at the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) in Las Vegas, was charged with putting those words to the test, as she traveled across the country to advocate for herself and her fellow peers during ACCT’s 2025 National Legislative Summit (NLS).

The annual National Legislative Summit is the premier advocacy event for community college trustees in Washington, D.C. Trustees from around the world get the opportunity to network with each other, hear speeches from leading journalists and political experts, and engage in intimate discussions with their state’s representatives on Capitol Hill. The 2025 NLS was one of the best attended ever, with more than 1,300 participating community college leaders and advocates. As the NLS continues to elevate and expand, students have begun to make up a sizeable portion of attendees.







Mikhaelle Pablico, a thriving project management major in her senior year, was tagged to help represent the College of Southern Nevada at this year's NLS. While pursuing her degree, professors and administrators quickly identified Pablico as a leader among peers, introducing her to opportunities designed to further develop her natural gifts. Pablico is actively

serving as a student senator for CSN's Henderson campus. She serves as a catalyst for change, connecting the dots between the student body and upper administration.

"It has basically opened up my eyes into different ways I can be a leader. It helps me be a good listener," she says. "And it's been really fun honestly [...] As a senator, we do outreach. We try to talk to students directly and ask them what their needs and wants [are]."

As an Associated Students of the College of Southern Nevada (ASCSN) senator, Pablico has worked to implement several ideas designed to bolster student success, including a "study snacks" initiative which provides free snacks to students during stressful midterm and final exam periods, as well as convincing CSN to invest in prayer mats for the college's prayer and meditation room. She's also held conversations with administrators after hearing concerns from veterans and international students regarding a reduction in the availability of in-person classes following the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We noticed there's an opportunity, so we just brought it up to the department chairs and they were able to help us...even the NSHE, to help [them] recognize that there are changes that need to be made," Pablico says. (The NSHE is the Nevada System of Higher Education.)

While Pablico is relatively new to the role of campus senator, she says the responsibility of the job feels all too familiar.

"Honestly, I feel like advocacy kind of came natural to me," she says. "From a young age [...] I would always have to speak up or say something if I see something and also speak on behalf of those that can't save themselves."

Her position as senator served as a training ground to help her advocate for even greater change on the federal level. As a first-time attendee at the NLS in Washington, D.C., Pablico had a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to discuss policy issues with her state's Congressional representatives — Sen. Catherine Cortez-Masto (D-Nev.), Rep. Dina Titus (D-Nev. 1st District), and Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.), alongside board members from the NHSE. While she was initially intimidated by the thought of meeting with such high-powered political figures, Pablico said her anxiety melted away as soon as she caught a glance of Nevada paraphernalia.

"It definitely felt like a home away from home, especially stepping into some of their offices," she says. "We see the Nevada stuff, the Welcome

to Las Vegas sign. We see Elvis! Their staff did an amazing job in making us feel welcome."

In preparation for her trip to the Hill, Pablico attended ACCT's Student Trustee Advocacy Academy, which was hosted by Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society President & CEO Lynn Tinchler-Ladner. The session was designed to give students practical tips for advocating for their institutions through interactive activities that mimicked real-life meetings on the Hill. "It was basically to teach us how we could present ourselves and how we could have our voices come across to the Congress [representatives] that we were going to meet," Pablico says.

During the session, students paired up and were given the responsibility to pitch legislative priorities such as the expansion of the Pell Grant and access to childcare facilities on campus, to a practice congressperson. The students were instructed to use statistics to make their case while infusing relatable stories from their own personal experiences to garner empathy. The session left Pablico feeling energized about her upcoming Hill visits. "Talking to them really just felt natural," Pablico says.

The opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., to advocate for students would likely not have surfaced if Pablico hadn't made the decision to attend CSN. But prior to enrolling, she admits the stigmas around community colleges caused her to think harder about the decision she was making. Looking back on her years invested in the institution, she made it clear that her experience did not match the negative stereotypes.

"I've been enjoying my time here at community college. I wouldn't talk negatively about it because at the end of the day, it's given a lot of students opportunity [...] It's definitely a very open and non-judgmental feeling every time I do come here," she says.

Pablico's family fully supports her decision to attend community college — her grandmother being one of her biggest supporters along this academic journey. For as long as she can remember, Pablico's grandmother has encouraged her to reach her highest potential. "She is always saying, 'If I am able to get my master's, you should be able to aim higher.' So that's definitely one thing I go by," she says.

With one year left before officially attaining her bachelor's degree, Pablico is already thinking about the future ahead. She said she hopes her degree will give her the leverage needed to enter the project management workforce, and she is currently eyeing opportunities within the IT field. However, after this year's impactful NLS conference experience, she said, for the first time, she is also thinking about pursuing a career in advocacy. "I am not closing myself off to any opportunities out there," Pablico says.



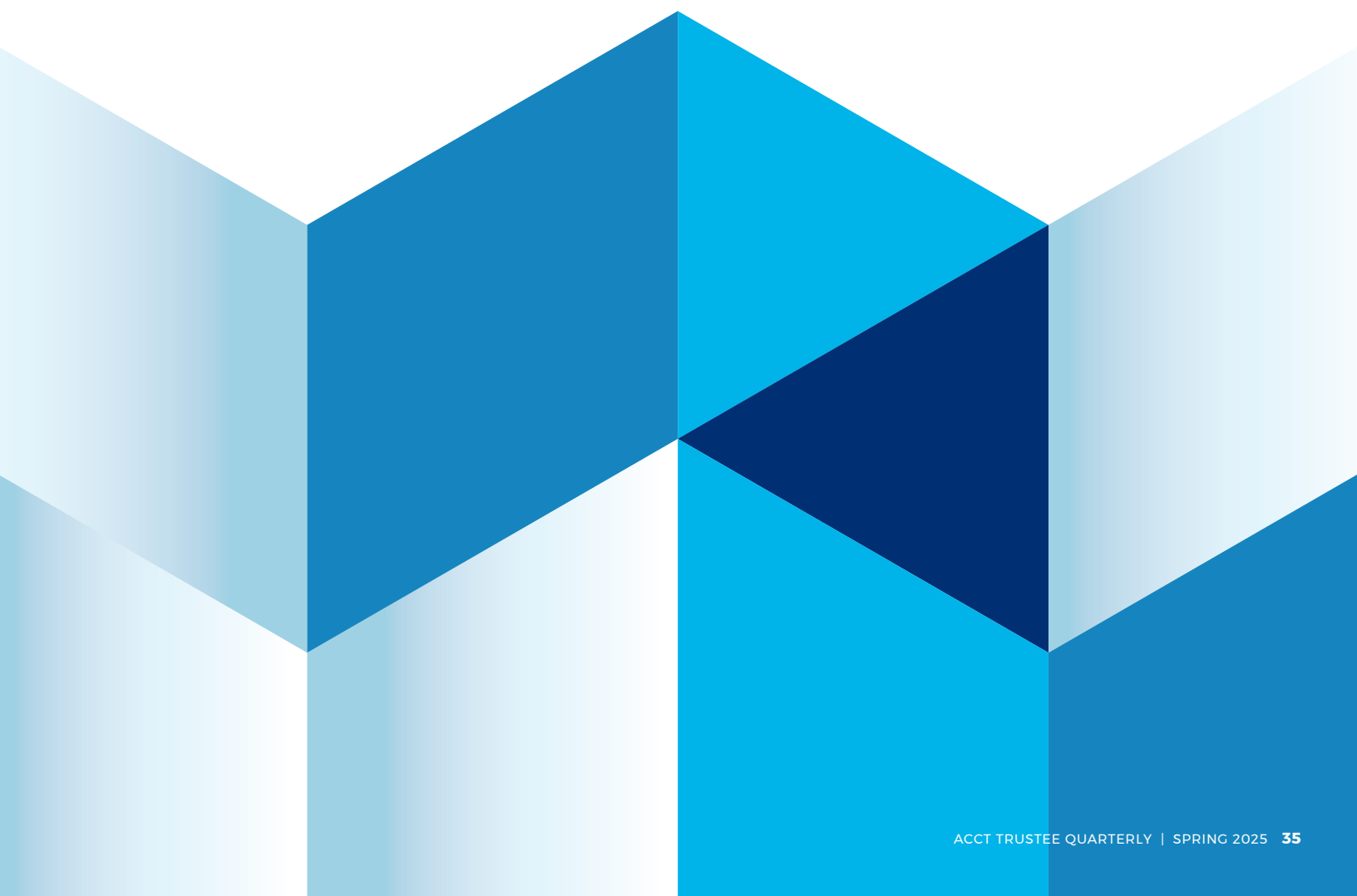
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# THE EFFECTIVE BOARD CHAIR

## First Among Equals

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By Pamila J. Fisher



IF YOU ARE A COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNING BOARD chair, you should feel privileged and proud, but also a heavy sense of responsibility and accountability for your college's future. *The Effective Board Chair: First Among Equals* is for you. This publication is also indispensable for any trustee who is contemplating future service as the chair of a board, and it is a vital resource for every other board member, as the full board benefits from every trustee understanding the special roles and responsibilities of the board chair — “first among equals.”

Millions of individuals' lives, their families, and their communities have been positively changed since the inception of America's junior, community, and technical colleges more than 100 years ago. It would be hard to overestimate the impact the community college movement has had on this country's culture, economy, and success.

While an outstanding community college will have many employees demonstrating excellence in their respective roles, the formal leadership of the college plays a major role in ensuring that occurs. Thus, the characteristics and skills of college presidents and chancellors have been extensively studied for decades.

As the complexity of leading a public community college has grown exponentially in recent years, increasing attention also has focused on the role and impact of a college's governing board on a president or chancellor's success, and thus on the college itself. This focus is reflected in the press, in legislatures and Congress, and most dramatically, in recent accreditation standards. Regardless of some state differences in how governing boards are organized and seated, all boards are expected to operate as a collegial team in the pursuit of accomplishing the college's mission.

Although the requirements to become a trustee are minimal, the knowledge and skills needed to be effective are extensive. At the local, state, and national levels, professional associations, including the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), make the necessary education and training of governing boards a major part of their activities. What recent research and experience demonstrates is that how successfully the board operates is often dependent not just on board member behavior, but also upon the effectiveness of the chair of the governing board.

The purpose of *The Effective Board Chair* is to provide guidance that hopefully will assist trustees who currently are board chairs, those considering becoming a board chair, or those who simply want to better understand this special position and be supportive of their board chair. The information also should be useful for college presidents and chancellors, who can discuss included suggestions with their respective board chairs to increase communication and clarify mutual expectations. The following discussion of the opportunities

and challenges of being an effective board chair is organized around three premises.

They are:

1. To be an effective board chair, an individual must first be an effective and experienced board member.
2. To be an effective board chair, an individual must have or acquire unique knowledge and skills required by the board chair role.
3. To be an effective board chair, an individual must have exemplary emotional intelligence and the interpersonal qualities and skills required to lead and facilitate a lay board team of highly qualified officials.

This new publication details the qualities of an effective trustee, including characteristics, conduct, and “the top 20 truths for effective trusteeship.” It details the expectations, knowledge, and skills of the effective board chair, from a job description to laws and accreditation standards to the before, during, and after of running effective meetings, and more. Part of the “more” is understanding the board chair's relationship with the college president or chancellor and the external role of the board chair. Finally, we take a look at the emotionally intelligent board chair — something too often overlooked. All board members must possess emotional intelligence to successfully meet the demands of their role, but board chairs, as the first among equals, have special obligations that other board members do not, and high emotional intelligence is needed to successfully navigate this territory. In addition to explaining the what and the why, we offer case studies on policy versus operations, responding to concerns and complaints, dealing with the press, sensitive situations, and dealing with the rare ‘rogue trustee.’ These exercises will prompt you to explore ways by which to navigate challenging circumstances.

*The Effective Board Chair: First Among Equals* is available for purchase from the ACCT Bookstore via the Membership Portal at [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org).



Dr. Pamela Fisher is a graduate of Modesto Junior College, former chancellor of Yosemite Community College District, and former interim chancellor of the City College of San Francisco. She has conducted more than 60 CEO searches and over 100 governing board retreats on behalf of ACCT over the past 15 years.





## ACCT Brings Governance Leadership Institute to the Pacific Islands

Over 120 Trustees and Presidents Gather in Oahu for Transformative Training

This spring, ACCT proudly brought the 2025 Governance Leadership Institute (GLI) to Windward Community College in Oahu, Hawai'i — marking a major milestone in our commitment to serving all our members, especially those in the Pacific Islands.

With more than 120 participants from across the country and the Pacific region, this year's GLI was a powerful gathering of community college leaders dedicated to strengthening governance and student success. The energy throughout the event was electric as trustees and presidents engaged in dynamic sessions focused on effective leadership, board-CEO relationships, and navigating the evolving challenges in higher education.

ACCT extends our deepest gratitude to Windward Community College for their exceptional hospitality and for serving as the perfect host campus. Their support and partnership helped create a welcoming, enriching environment that made this event truly special.

The 2025 GLI in Oahu not only advanced our mission to provide high-quality training and development — it also reaffirmed the power of bringing leaders together from across the ACCT community to learn, connect, and grow.



What participants said:

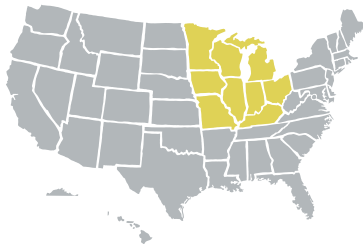
*"The highest value of GLI was in working with our board and president and hearing the same messages. It gave us a chance to work on building relationships and having shared knowledge and takeaways."*

*"The topics were geared to colleges similar to us."*

*"I enjoyed hearing from other trustees and presidents from around the country"*

*"What I enjoyed most about the institute was connecting with others and sharing similar experiences. Discovering new ways to handle challenging situations/people."*

# AROUND THE REGIONS



## CENTRAL REGION

One of **Illinois** Gov. JB Pritzker's top legislative initiatives stalled in the General Assembly when the chair of the House Higher Education Committee refused to call a vote on a bill that would authorize community colleges to offer four-year bachelor's degree programs in select, high-demand career fields.

The Illinois Community College Board awarded more than \$3.6 million to expand mental health resources and support programs for college students across the state, funding which is a result of the Mental Health Early Action on Campus (MHEAC) Act passed by the state in 2020.

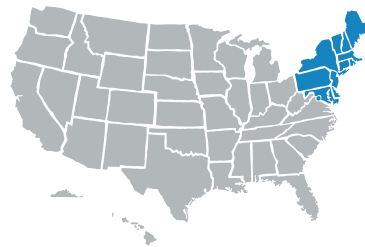
**Iowa** lawmakers are considering whether to allow community colleges in Iowa to offer new degree programs, with a request for further study to determine feasibility and possible impacts on students and higher education institutions.

**Michigan** Gov. Gretchen Whitmer visited Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) to celebrate four years of the Michigan Reconnect program, introduced in 2021 as a way for adults aged 25 and up to receive a college degree completely tuition free.

In **Missouri**, St. Louis Community College's STLCC Transformed, a \$450 million project funded in part through the passing of Proposition R, brings the planning, development and construction of six new buildings to the college's four main campuses to improve the student and meet Missouri's workforce demands.

A group of five **Ohio** community colleges, led by Lorain County Community College, established the North Shore Manufacturing Workforce partnership to address critical skill gaps in advanced manufacturing. Supported by a \$5.7 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, the partnership will focus on developing talent pipelines for high-demand manufacturing careers across the state.

**Wisconsin's** newly formed Apprenticeship Pathway Coalition Initiative will be supported by a \$10 million grant from Ascendium Education Group over the next five years to support the development of Wisconsin's future apprenticeship-focused workforce. WRT-P-BIG STEP will expand and develop a statewide network to build certified pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship pathways.



## NORTHEAST REGION

**Connecticut** State Community College (CT State) has significantly bolstered the state's economy, adding \$3.0 billion in income during the fiscal year 2022-2023, according to a recent study.

**Maine** Senate President Mattie Daughtry, D-Brunswick, sponsored a bill that would provide \$6 million annually for wraparound services at the state's seven community colleges.

To support the effort to build a replacement for **Maryland's** Francis Scott Key Bridge, the Community College of Baltimore County will establish a new welder training program at its Dundalk

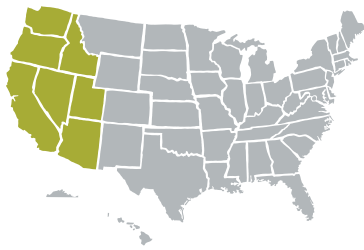
campus, just five miles from where the bridge stood and where preliminary construction activities on its replacement are underway.

The **Massachusetts** board of higher education unanimously approved new guidelines to help state colleges and universities run programs for students with disabilities. Under the new law, young people aged 22 and older with intellectual disabilities can participate in higher education opportunities following similar guidelines as those under 22.

**New Jersey** Gov. Phil Murphy's proposed FY26 budget calls for a cut of \$20 million, or 12%, in operating aid for New Jersey Community Colleges. Additional cuts scale back New Jersey's commitment to free or reduced tuition for low- and moderate-income community college students, with an 18% cut to the Community College Opportunity Grant, and a 50% cut to Student Success Incentive Funding.

**New York** Gov. Kathy Hochul announced plans to offer free community college tuition to adult learners ages 25 -55 who have never completed a degree and are looking to study in high-demand fields. More than 4 million working-age adults across the state do not have a college degree or credential. Hochul also announced \$1.1 million in grants for 22 community colleges to implement wide-ranging action plans designed to help more adult learners access transformational educational opportunities that lead to upward mobility.

**Pennsylvania** Community Colleges and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), with the support of Governor Josh Shapiro and a bipartisan coalition of state legislators and Act 69 of 2024, established transfer partnerships that guarantees junior status for community college graduates at PASSHE institutions.



## PACIFIC REGION

After **Arizona** legalized recreational cannabis in 2021, the state has collected more than \$314 million in tax revenue from recreational-use sales. About a third of that money goes to support community colleges through Prop 207 funding. The Maricopa County Community College District says that money — expected to total around \$28 million last fiscal year — is specifically earmarked for workforce development.

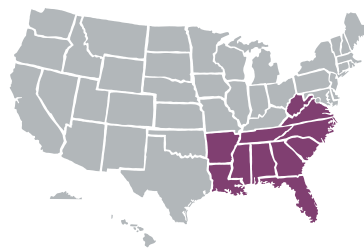
**California** introduced the first phase of its ambitious Cradle-to-Career data system. Now, parents, students and others can go to the Cradle-to-Career (C2C) website to learn how many graduates from each school district earned a bachelor's degree each year, how long it took to achieve that goal and how much, on average, they earned after graduation.

U.S. Representatives Ami Bera, M.D. (D-CA-06) and Jay Obernolte (R-CA-23) relaunched the California Public Higher Education Caucus (CPHEC) for the 119th Congress.

The University of **Hawai'i** at Mānoa College of Education is launching a new Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program in fall 2025.

Higher education-focused lawmakers are pitching a dramatic expansion of the **Oregon** Promise by removing a requirement that Oregonians have to enroll in community college immediately after graduating high school to qualify. The proposal has the potential to expand access to another 35,000 people, a more than fourfold increase over the current pool of eligible students.

Clackamas Community College President Dr. Tim Cook is set to embark on a 1,500-mile run this summer, visiting 17 community colleges across Oregon in 50 days to raise awareness about the challenges students face in meeting their basic needs while attending college and to advocate for increased state funding to support them.



## SOUTHERN REGION

Students and alumni of the **Alabama** Community College System contributed \$8.1 billion to the state's economy, an amount equal to about 3 percent of Alabama's total gross state product, according to a recent report.

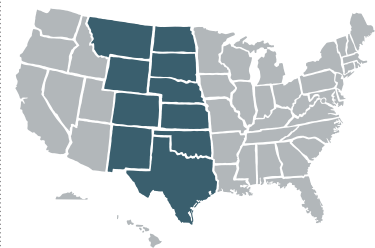
**Louisiana** college and university leaders have followed Gov. Jeff Landry's direction and presented a proposed budget to lawmakers that would effectively keep their state funding at current levels. The Louisiana Community and Technical College System would see a slight boost of \$3 million.

Bills that sought to drive students into **Mississippi's** community colleges through the promise of "free" tuition died after making their way across the Capitol this session. Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann (R) said that he does not plan to give up on trying to pass last-dollar tuition legislation.

The **North Carolina** Community College

System (NCCCS) asked state lawmakers for nearly \$100 million to implement Propel NC, a new performance-based funding model which NCCCS leaders say will better help colleges prioritize connecting students to high-demand, high-wage jobs.

**Virginia** Community Colleges' FastForward program, the commonwealth's premier workforce development initiative, saw a 17% increase in student enrollments in fiscal year 2024, resulting in the all-time highest enrollments. In addition, those who completed the program saw their median annual wages increase by an average of 50%.



## WESTERN REGION

**Colorado** Gov. Jared Polis announced Lamar Community College and Colorado Mountain College will implement this fall on their campuses the City University of New York's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs, or ASAP, student support program.

A **Kansas** House committee is considering a bill that would create a 17-member blue-ribbon commission to study operations and priorities of public higher education institutions, including consolidation of state universities and community colleges or technical colleges.

In **Texas**, Austin Community College's (ACC) free tuition pilot program, launched in 2024, has driven a 40% increase in enrollment among high school graduates.

*Around the Regions provides an opportunity to share what's happening in the states and around the regions. This section focuses on state legislative and budgetary issues, economic development, and finance. Please e-mail items from press releases or newsletters to ACCT at [acctinfo@acct.org](mailto:acctinfo@acct.org).*



# Legal Issues Impacting Community Colleges

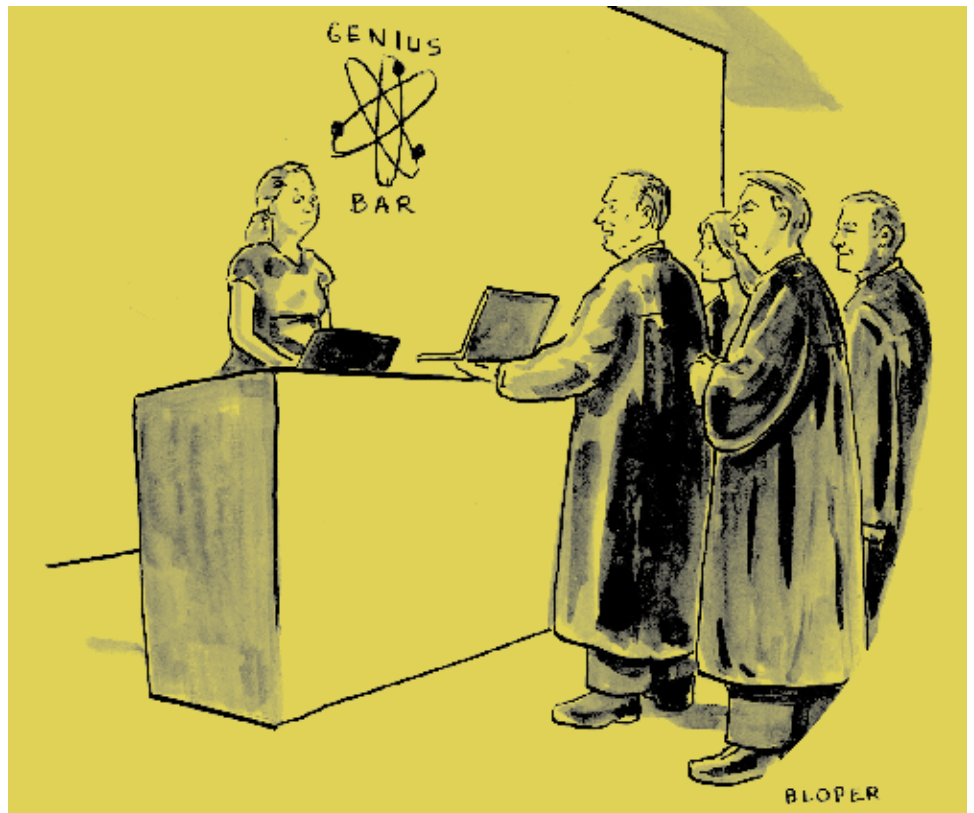
**Early Trump Administration executive orders and guidance focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in the federal government and in higher education.**

BY IRA MICHAEL SHEPARD, ACCT GENERAL COUNSEL

Civil rights groups sue the Trump Administration to stop anti-DEI initiatives and the elimination of transgender protection for federal government employees.

The following recent legal developments are important to the day-to-day administration of community colleges throughout America. This article does not provide legal advice; all readers are advised to seek legal guidance from their institution's legal advisors before acting on any of the topics discussed herein.

Because of the unprecedented nature of some of the administrative changes recently announced by the new presidential administration, the resulting litigation, and interim court decisions, developments are changing weekly and at times daily. The developments reported in this article were correct when submitted for publication but are subject to change as events occur.



*"Can you help us understand some pending tech lawsuits?"*

**Court of appeals stays federal judge's order halting part of the Trump Administration executive orders targeting DEI plans, which remain in full effect subject to consideration of the constitutional issues.** On March 14, 2025, the Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit stayed a Baltimore federal court judge's preliminary injunction halting enforcement of the Trump Administration executive orders targeting government contractor diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) plans as possibly illegal and discriminatory. The federal judge had granted in part a request for an injunction holding that several provisions of the executive orders are unconstitutionally vague (*National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education et al. v. Trump et al.*, D. Md., No. 1:25-cv-00333, 2/21/25).

The Baltimore federal judge's decision was appealed by the Trump Administration to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, which decided to stay the federal judge's decision on the injunction until it could hear all the constitutional issues and decide the matter on an expedited basis. The result is that for now, the original Trump Administration executive orders remain in effect.

**Education Department "Dear Colleague" letter broadly interprets the Supreme Court decision in *SFFA v. Harvard* to apply to all campus activities.** The U.S. Department of Education's Acting Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights issued a "Dear Colleague" on February 14, 2025, broadly interpreting the Supreme Court decision outlawing the use of race in college admissions in *SFFA v. Harvard* to apply to all campus policies and activities. The letter warns colleges and universities against using race as a preference in any policy and activity and encouraged anyone believing that an institution has violated civil rights laws to contact the Office of Civil Rights (OCR).

The letter directly criticized the development of DEI activities on campus and warned that the Education Department will not tolerate overt or covert race discrimination, which it concluded has become "widespread at our nation's educational institutions." The letter asserted that educational institutions have "toxically indoctrinated" students with the false premise that the U.S. is built upon "systemic and structural racism." The letter indicated that the Department would take appropriate steps to assess compliance with civil rights laws no later than 14 days after the letter was issued.

A "Dear Colleague" letter does not rise to the level of a statute passed by Congress and signed by the President. Nor does it contain the "fence of law" attributed to a Supreme Court decision. It is, however, an accurate description of the likely enforcement policies that the Education Department will follow in its interpretation of the laws it is responsible for enforcing. Those enforcement policies are subject to legal challenges.

**Trump Administration curtails OFCCP authority over affirmative action plans and requires contractors and grant**

**recipients to certify that they do not operate DEI programs that violate civil rights laws.** The Trump Administration issued an executive order on January 21, 2025, rescinding EO 11246, which established much of the authority of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to require affirmative action plans at employers which are federal government contractors. The executive order curtails the OFCCP from promoting affirmative action and workplace balancing based on race, sex, color, religion, national origin, or sexual preference.

The Administration also revoked EO 13672, which shielded federal government contract workers from discrimination based on sexual preference and gender identity. The order allows contractors to continue to comply with obligations in effect on January 20 for 90 days. Its executive order also requires contractors to certify that they are not carrying out DEI initiatives that the Administration would deem violate federal civil rights laws. At the end of February, the OFCCP announced that it was preparing to cut employees by almost 90% from 479 to 50 as a result of abandoning enforcement of affirmative action and other programs.

The executive order also requires the U.S. Attorney General and the Secretary of Education to issue further guidance to higher education institutions on compliance with the Supreme Court's ruling in *SFFA v. Harvard* within 120 days.

**Civil rights groups sue the Trump Administration to stop anti-DEI initiatives and the elimination of transgender protection for federal government employees.** A group of civil rights organizations led by the Urban League have sued the Trump Administration to stop the administration's anti-DEI Initiatives and its elimination of protection of transgender federal government employees (*National Urban League v. Trump*, D.D.C. 1:25-cv-00471, Complaint 2/19/25).

The lawsuit seeks to halt the enforcement of three executive orders — EOs 14158, 14168, and 14173. It alleges that the executive orders are unconstitutional because they suppress free speech. The civil rights groups also allege that they target specific "content" and "viewpoints" and use "vague subjective terms," making them "unconstitutionally void for vagueness" under past Supreme Court precedent.



Ira Michael Shepard is Of Counsel with the law firm of Saul Ewing, LLP, in Washington, D.C., and ACCT's General Counsel.

# Looking For A New President, Vice President, Provost, or Vice Chancellor?

## Our Success

With over 40 years of experience as the only national non-profit organization dedicated to providing services to community college and Governing Boards, ACCT Searches delivers trusted and nationally acclaimed services in all phases of community college executive searches. We have successfully completed over 500 CEO Searches ranging from campus presidents to state system presidents. Focusing on two-year public community and technical colleges, we are uniquely qualified to provide comprehensive search assistance, recruitment of a diverse and high-quality pool of candidates, and guidance on a sound process to the board and the college.



## Our Strengths

- We understand the needs of community colleges.
- We find and cultivate high-caliber talent.
- We build a unique pool of candidates for each search to “fit” the college.
- We have extensive contacts with highly accomplished candidates poised to advance.
- We have the advantage of the ACCT membership as a source of contacts.

ACCT Searches will hold your hand during every step of the selection process.

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**For more information on ACCT’s expanded services to assist with the placement of new executive leaders at your community colleges, contact [acctsearches@acct.org](mailto:acctsearches@acct.org).**



# RETREATS AND WORKSHOPS

Thank you to the following colleges who used ACCT Services between February and June 2025.

Aims Community College, Colorado	Mesalands Community College, New Mexico
Allen Community College, Kansas	Metropolitan Community College, Missouri
American Samoa Community College, American Samoa	Monroe County Community College, Michigan
Atlantic Cape Community College, New Jersey	Montgomery College, Maryland
Brookdale Community College, New Jersey	Mott Community College, Michigan
Central Wyoming College, Wyoming	Mt. San Jacinto College, California
Clatsop Community College, Oregon	North Idaho College, Idaho
Coconino Community College, Arizona	Northern Virginia Community College, Virginia
College of Eastern Idaho, Idaho	Rose State College, Oklahoma
College of Marshall Islands & Marshall Islands Enterprises, Marshall Islands	San Jose-Evergreen Community College District, California
College of Micronesia-FSM, Federated States of Micronesia	Santa Fe Community College, New Mexico
College of the Canyons, California	Seward County Community College, Kansas
College of the Desert, California	Skagit Valley College, Washington
Columbia Gorge Community College, Oregon	Southern West Virginia Community & Technical College, West Virginia
Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C), Ohio	Southeast Arkansas College, Arkansas
Foothill-De Anza Community College District, California	Stanly Community College, North Carolina
Garden City Community College, Kansas	Sullivan County Community College, New York
Gaston College, North Carolina	SUNY Schenectady County Community College, New York
Gateway Technical College, Wisconsin	Ventura Community College District, California
Hagerstown Community College, Maryland	Victor Valley Community College District, California
Howard Community College, Maryland	Warren County Community College, New Jersey
Houston Community College, Texas	Western Wyoming Community College, Wyoming
Joliet Junior College, Illinois	Yavapai College, Arizona
Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College, Michigan	
Lake Tahoe Community College, California	



Find out more about board retreats and workshops at <https://www.acct.org/governance-services> or email [boardservices@acct.org](mailto:boardservices@acct.org)



## 2025 Governance Leadership Institute for New Trustees

**AUGUST 6 – 8, 2025**

Hosted by the Community  
College of Allegheny County in  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The Governance Leadership Institute for New Trustees is an immersive and engaging experience which includes interactive workshops and facilitated discussions by experts in the field of community college governance.

This institute will focus on the fundamentals of effective board governance and is a **must-attend** for newly elected and appointed trustees, college presidents, and board staff. The event is a great opportunity for new trustees to build a rapport with their college presidents and staff while learning about the basics and nuances of how to serve on a public higher-education institution board. We also encourage ongoing trustees to enroll for team building and to reinforce fundamental knowledge and skills.

### GLI Expert



**Dr. Charlene Dukes**

President Emerita, Prince George's  
Community College, Maryland



# interface

## PROFESSIONAL BOARD STAFF NETWORK 2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### PRESIDENT

Shelby Foster  
Assistant to the President/Board of Trustees  
Ohlone College, California  
sfoster@ohlone.edu

### VICE PRESIDENT

Reatha Bell  
Executive Assistant, Board Services Office  
Houston Community College, Texas  
Reatha.bell@hccs.edu

### SECRETARY

Andrea Wittig  
Director, Office of the President, Government Relations,  
Trustee Services, and Strategic Initiatives, Cerritos College,  
California  
awittig@cerritos.edu

### IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Cynthia Gruskos  
Senior Assistant to the President and the Board of Trustees  
Brookdale Community College, N.J.  
cgruskos@brookdalecc.edu

### COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Caitlin Murphy  
Special Assistant to the President  
Johnson County Community College, Kansas  
Cmurph57@jccc.edu

### NORTHEAST REGION MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Evelyn Cordova  
Board of Trustees Operations and Services Specialist  
Montgomery College, Maryland  
Evelyn.cordova@montgomerycollege.edu

### SOUTHERN REGION MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Dr. Sara Singleton  
Associate Vice President, Governance & Strategic  
Innovation  
Forsyth Tech Community College, N.C.  
ssingleton@forsythtech.edu

### CENTRAL REGION MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Benita Duncan  
Executive Assistant and Liaison to the Board of Trustees  
Lansing Community College, Michigan  
duncanb@lcc.edu

### WESTERN REGION MEMBER-AT-LARGE

David Mohlman  
Coordinator of Board Relations  
Lee College, Texas  
dmohlman@lee.edu

### PACIFIC REGION MEMBER-AT-LARGE (AND MEMBER-AT-LARGE DESIGNEE)

GRACIELA MOLINA  
Senior Executive Assistant, Office of the Chancellor  
Yosemite Community College District, California  
molinag@yosemite.edu

### FIND US ON FACEBOOK

ACCT Professional Board Staff Network

### PBSN WEBSITE

[www.acct.org/membership/PBSN](http://www.acct.org/membership/PBSN)



## Envisioning Ourselves Serving as Leaders

BY SHELBY FOSTER  
PBSN PRESIDENT

AS BOARD SUPPORT STAFF, IT IS QUITE EASY FOR OUR BUSY WORKDAYS to not leave room for much else.

While we are serving our presidents and boards in a supportive function, we may not realize that we also serve as leaders and mentors to others. Other departments may come to us when they have questions or need advice. In our roles, we lead by supporting, showing our commitment to our college through our work ethic and integrity.

A few years back, our convocation theme was “*What’s your why?*” This prompted me to reflect on why I was choosing to be in my role at my college. It is one thing to enjoy your job, but quite another to truly understand and embrace *why* you are serving in your role. In my own journey of reflection, I realized:

- Supporting the president and the board of trustees allows them to serve our students, faculty, and staff in the best ways possible.
- Engaging my fellow administrative support staff through trainings, mentorship, and professional development allows them to grow and succeed in their roles.

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“If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.”

– Booker T. Washington

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Support for my president and board of trustees is the most essential part of my job. I aim to ensure that they can lead effectively by making sure they have everything they need to do so. In addition to my support, I provide feedback and insights that those in my role are best trained to provide. Serving in this capacity is a significant part of why I enjoy serving in my role as professional board staff member.

As for supporting my fellow administrative colleagues, this began in the simplest of ways.

I was fortunate to have a former colleague who started a group of administrative support staff at our college. This group included all support staff, regardless of whether they were union, confidential, or management positions. Always volunteering their time to share best practices and receive trainings, the group met during lunch hour. Meeting only during personal time resulted in some members feeling the group wasn't valued.

When my former colleague retired, the group responsibility fell to me. With the help of our administration, we received support to move our meetings away from the lunch hour, to have a more formal structure to the meetings, and to strengthen our impact among the staff. This year, we resumed monthly training sessions with different departments. It benefits everyone when trainings are provided to ensure that our college processes are properly followed.

We also recently created a comprehensive orientation process for onboarding new administrative support staff, hoping to keep them

engaged, informed, and provide a support system that they need to be able to succeed. Eventually, we hope to create a mentorship program at our district for our support staff.

Is any of this a part of my regular job duties? Is any of this on my business card? No, but I consider it a vital element of my role in the President's Office.

Being able to lead through service to the administrative support staff at our college is humbling and truly rewarding. Doing this work at my college also encouraged me to serve and help others through my involvement with the Professional Board Staff Network. When someone asks me for advice or help, they do so because they value my opinion and trust me to lead them to a solution.

I challenge to you reflect on what your "why" is. How can you use it to embrace being your best self at your college? We all care deeply about our colleges and their success. How can you serve others through your leadership?

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**"Everybody can be great, because anybody can serve."**

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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DEAR PROFESSIONAL BOARD STAFF NETWORK MEMBERS,

AS THE ASSOCIATION THAT REPRESENTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARDS, we understand how much time, effort, diligence, and care is required to manage governance of public institutions. We want to say thank you for the work you do.

That's it. Just thank you.

We appreciate the work you do, from “simple things” (which we know are not always simple!) like liaising among different stakeholders to being the person entrusted with board and college policies to the complexities of the before, during, and after of board gatherings—thank you. Every one of you wears many hats, and you wear them well.

ACCT is a network and a resource for you, and we want to remind you that ACCT Connect, our online networking and education platform, is for you, too. The Professional Board Staff group is there to help you forge and maintain meaningful connections with peers outside of our in-person events, and it's a place where you can share information beyond your ACCT Leadership Congress PBSN events.

We also want to say thank you for your patience as the association has been transitioning from our longtime association management system to a new one. As always happens during these processes, we've experienced a few unpredictable delays, but the new system will be up and running later this spring — so be sure to explore the new Member Portal and Store on the upper right of ACCT.org to see what's new, to update your college records, find books for your board members, and more.

Let us know what we can help you with. Please contact us any time at [membershipupdates@acct.org](mailto:membershipupdates@acct.org) if we can do anything for you.

With sincere gratitude,  
Your Friends at ACCT



# advisor

## 2025 Candidates for the ACCT Board of Directors

### REGIONAL DIRECTOR

(1) Three-Year Term in Each Region

*The following is the slate of nominees:*

#### Central Region

**Kathleen Bruinsma\***  
*Grand Rapids Community College, MI*

#### Northeast Region

**Deborah Briggs\***  
*SUNY Ulster, NY*

#### Pacific Region

**Nan Gomez-Heitzeberg\***  
*Kern Community College District, CA*

#### Southern Region

**Yvonne Barnes\***  
*Trident Technical College, SC\**

#### Western Region

**Pat Wojcik\***  
*Northeast Community College, NE*

### DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE

(3) Three-Year Terms

*The following is the slate of nominees:*

**Donald D. Dantzler, Jr.\***  
*Madison Area Technical College, WI*

**Andra Hoffman\***  
*Los Angeles Community College District, CA*

**Robert Proctor\***  
*Lansing Community College, MI*

**Jermaine Reed\***  
*Metropolitan Community College, MO*

*\*Candidates with an asterisk received the support of their respective Regional Nominating Committees.*

**NOTE: Nominations will be accepted from the floor on all elections.**

## NOMINATIONS FOR DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE

**Deadline for Receipt is July 1, 2025**

You are encouraged to submit your nomination via e-mail to [nominations@acct.org](mailto:nominations@acct.org).

### Director-at-Large Nomination Process

Each member of the Board of Directors at the time of election must be a member of a Voting Member. Voting Members are defined as governing and advisory boards of accredited not-for-profit community-based postsecondary educational institutions that primarily offer programs other than baccalaureate, graduate, and professional degrees, including boards of state systems that include such institutions. According to the ACCT Bylaws, no more than one (1) member from any member board may serve as an elected member on the ACCT Board of Directors at the same time.

At the time of election, each candidate must have completed a minimum of one year of volunteer service to ACCT and have attended at least one ACCT Leadership Congress and one Community College National Legislative Summit. "Volunteer service to ACCT" is defined as service as an elected or appointed member of a Standing Committee or the Governance and Bylaws Committee, service as an elected or appointed member of a Regional Nominating Committee, or service as an appointed Coordinator in the ACCT State, Province and Territory Coordinators Network.

If you wish to run for a Director-at-Large seat during the 2025 ACCT Leadership Congress and appear in the Advisor, you are required to notify the ACCT President at the Washington, D.C., office in writing of your intent to run. Your notification must be received with a postmark date of July 1, 2025, or by electronic mail (preferred method) by close of business on July 1, 2025. The President will send candidate information received within the prescribed postmarked deadline to the ACCT membership in September.

Official notification from candidates shall consist of:

- A letter of declaration to run for office;
- A letter of support from the individual's board indicating the institution's commitment to provide financial support for the individual's service as an ACCT Board member, including participation in the ACCT Leadership Congress, Community College National Legislative Summit, and Annual Summer Board of Directors Retreat and Meeting;
- A one-page résumé that should focus on community college-related service and other civic activities and may include brief information on education and occupation;
- A narrative statement, not to exceed 150 words, on qualifications (electronically preferred), for inclusion in voting materials to be printed;
- A 5" x 7" head-and-shoulders photo, preferably color (photos will not be returned), or a color electronic version (preferred) — 300 dpi or higher; and
- An optional single letter of support from an ACCT member board. This letter of support must be limited to one page.

You are encouraged to submit your nomination online. Please e-mail your nomination to [nominations@acct.org](mailto:nominations@acct.org). ACCT will respond to your submission via e-mail within three working days. Please contact ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee at [jhlee@acct.org](mailto:jhlee@acct.org) if you do NOT receive a response within three working days. Nominations will also be accepted via standard mail (return receipt requested). Mail nominations to: ACCT President, 1101 17th Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036.

# A Lifetime of Appreciation

## ACCT LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

Community college trustees give a lot of themselves — time, energy, wisdom — and ask for little or nothing in return. The gift of an ACCT Lifetime Membership is a way to thank trustees for everything they do, and to empower them to keep doing it for as long as they choose.

A lifetime membership is a perfect way to...

- Recognize outstanding trustees whose dedication to your college has made a difference and set an example.
- Thank outgoing members for their service.
- Remain involved with your peers and make a tax-deductible donation to your national association by purchasing a Lifetime Membership for yourself.



## 7 REASONS TO BESTOW A LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

- 1 Giving outstanding and retiring board members a Lifetime Membership to ACCT is a way to thank them for their service, recognize them among their peers, and ensure their ongoing interest in your college.
- 2 Lifetime Members receive complimentary registration to all ACCT meetings, including the Annual Leadership Congress and the National Legislative Summit, after retiring from their local boards.
- 3 Lifetime Members receive all of ACCT's award-winning publications, including *Trustee Quarterly* magazine and *Advisor*.
- 4 Lifetime Members are recognized publicly in *Trustee Quarterly*, on the ACCT Web site, and elsewhere.
- 5 The Lifetime Membership program supports and promotes ACCT's continuing trustee education and professional development.
- 6 Colleges that purchase Lifetime Memberships can deduct the expense from taxes to the fullest extent allowed by law.
- 7 It's just a nice thing to do — and haven't your most exceptional trustees earned it?

For more information and to submit an application, go to [www.acct.org/membership/lifetime](http://www.acct.org/membership/lifetime) or contact ACCT's Member Services at 202.775.4667 or [acctinfo@acct.org](mailto:acctinfo@acct.org).





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