

Workforce Pell

The Board Chair

Targeted Student Supports

SPRING 2026

# Trustee

## QUARTERLY



## ‘Sea Change’

The 2026 National Legislative Summit brought community college leaders to Washington amid unprecedented transitions in higher education.

# 2026 AWARDS

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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 2026 ACCT Leadership Congress this October in Chicago, Illinois.

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

Call 202.499.5309 with any questions.  
All nominations must be received by June 22, 2026.

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NOMINATIONS DUE

**JUNE 22** 2026

**ACCT**  
ASSOCIATION OF  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES



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Navigating the Sea Change

GREETINGS! IN THE WINTER ISSUE of *Trustee Quarterly*, I discussed the importance of expressing support and concern for one another, listening attentively, and doing what we can to offer support. This issue addresses the “sea change” in the higher education landscape presented to the 2026 Community College National Legislative Summit attendees back in February. Any major change of this nature is disruptive, and often this can demand so much attention that we neglect taking care of one another. Before you read this issue, I want to ask you to read it with care — with care for your fellow board members and especially care for your college president or chancellor in mind. The best way to navigate a sea change is to make sure the ship’s infrastructure and the crew are secure and ready to take on whatever challenges may rock the boat.

It is imperative that as we lead our colleges through challenging and inspiring transitions, we remain focused on why our colleges exist. They exist to give students the knowledge and other resources and opportunities they need to live up to their potential. They exist as continual providers of talented people who keep our communities thriving. Our colleges are engines of care that operate in the common good. We should always remember this, no matter what demands our attention, and we should remain rooted in care.

This is why our 2026 ACCT Leadership Congress theme is “Driving Change, Leading with Care: Where Vision Meets

Compassion.” It is uncommon to pair change and compassion, and that is exactly why the association is doing it. As our colleges adapt to changing federal and state policies and regulations, we must figure out how to apply artificial intelligence in ways that are beneficial to students, the community and the college staff alike, all while navigating so many other changes. We not only have an opportunity but a responsibility to do so. That way, we can move forward with mutual trust.

As I wrote last winter, we are all friends and colleagues in pursuit of a common good — and that includes potentially disruptive changes we make. College CEOs bear the brunt of pressure and criticism during times like this, and board members are affected, as well. By supporting one another, and by remembering even in busy times to communicate to our communities that what we do is out of care for them, we will all rise together.

**Carol Del Carlo**

*Nevada System of Higher Education, NV*

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Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions and values of the Association of Community College Trustees.

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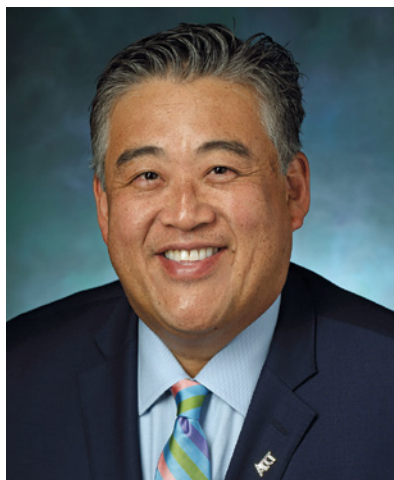
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ON THE COVER: Community college alumni Congressman Juan Ciscomani and Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici speak at the 2026 National Legislative Summit.



## After a Decade, Workforce Pell is Top of Mind

After ten years of hard work to get it through Congress, now begins the hard work of implementing Workforce Pell nationwide. It should also be seen as an accelerant to embrace broader workforce goals, a role trustees are well positioned to champion.

DEAR ACCT MEMBERS,

THE SPRING ISSUE OF *TRUSTEE QUARTERLY* always follows the Community College National Legislative Summit, and the issue always highlights community college legislative priorities and related public policy. With one glance at the table of contents, you will notice that Workforce Pell is at the top of everyone's mind this year.

ACCT began its advocacy for this program a decade ago, back when I led the association's public policy efforts — and its approval is the result of our collective efforts to ensure that thousands of our students will have new opportunities in short-term programs. After ten years of hard work to get it through Congress, now begins the hard work of implementing Workforce Pell nationwide. The program is complex and implementing it on our campuses will take time. It also charges states with a new role in overseeing these programs, which gives us an opportunity — and the responsibility — to strengthen our relationships with both state workforce leaders and the industries in our communities. As Michelle Van Noy and Mark M. D'Amico argue on p. 26, Workforce Pell should also be seen as an accelerant to embrace broader workforce goals, a role trustees are well-positioned to champion.

I encourage you to work closely with ACCT's public policy and advocacy team to let us know how the program is — or is not — working for your institution so we can collaboratively be a voice for necessary changes.

All Pell Grants support students who need financial support to succeed in college. This kind of care drives ACCT's work as much as it drives the work at your colleges. This year, ACCT Board Chair Carol Del Carlo also has called for all of us to focus on leading with care as we drive change — and this will be one of the primary focuses of the 2026 ACCT Leadership Congress in Chicago this October 21-24.

One Congress educational track will focus on “leading with care: wellness & institutional culture,” while others will focus on workforce development, strategic use of AI and related technologies, enrollment strategies, creating student-centered pathways for success, and effective board governance.

I look forward to seeing you in Chicago this October.

**JEE HANG LEE**  
*ACCT President and CEO*

# NEWS & NOTES

## Cassidy Recognized with National Education Service Award



From left: Louisiana Community and Technical College System President Richard Nelson, ACCT Chair Carol Del Carlo, Senator Bill Cassidy, AACC Board Chair Leigh Goodson, ACCT Secretary-Treasurer Tim Hardy, ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 2026 COMMUNITY COLLEGE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE Summit, ACCT and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) recognized senior Louisiana Senator Dr. Bill Cassidy with the 2026 National Education Service Award. 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.

Since 2023, Cassidy has served as chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, and he is the first physician to serve in the role. He played a pivotal role in passing the 2025 reconciliation package, which ensured an infusion of funds into the Pell Grant program, created the Workforce Pell program, and created an accountability system that rejected the precedent of risk sharing. Senator Cassidy also has led and championed the bipartisan College Transparency Act, a new approach to tracking student data and outcomes that would better serve community colleges and the post-traditional student population.

On behalf of our member institutions and their students, ACCT and AACC thank Senator Cassidy for his 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

### Driving Change, Leading with Care: Where Vision Meets Compassion

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 national nonprofit organizations. 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 2026 Annual ACCT Leadership Congress will explore strategies that balance innovation with institutional well-being, governance with empathy, and transformation with purpose — equipping leaders to make informed decisions that strengthen their colleges and the communities they serve. Join us at the Hyatt Regency Chicago this October 21 – 24. To learn more, go to [Congress.ACCT.org](http://Congress.ACCT.org).

#### Submit Presentations by May 15

ACCT invites you to submit a session or roundtable presentation proposal that falls within the following tracks:

- Leading with Care: Wellness & Institutional Culture
- Strategic AI in Community Colleges
- Collaborative Solutions for Workforce Needs
- Enrollment Strategies
- Creating Inclusive, Student-Centered Pathways for Student Success
- Effective Board Governance: How to Be a Trustee

To register, submit presentations, and for more information, go to [Congress.ACCT.org](http://Congress.ACCT.org) or contact Educational Events Director Christina Simons at [csimons@acct.org](mailto:csimons@acct.org).

#### Mark your calendar

- May 15 – Presentation Proposals Due
- June 22 – 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 14 – ACCT Leadership Congress Early Registration Discount Ends
- September 8 – Hyatt Chicago Reservation Deadline
- November 1 – Applications to Serve as ACCT Committee Member in 2027 Due

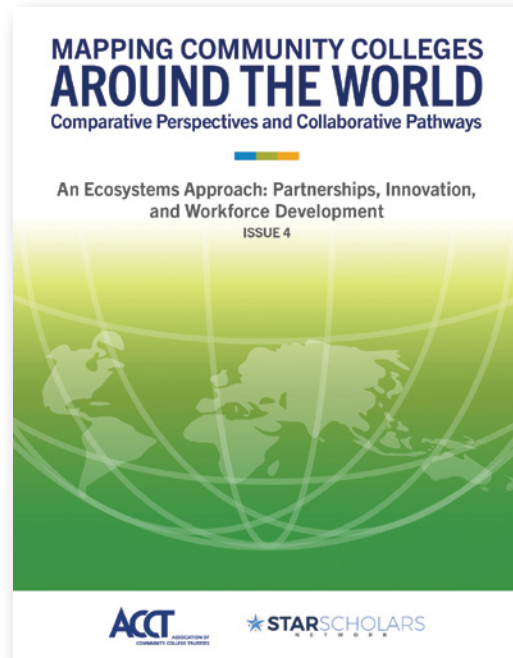
## Partnerships, Innovation, and Workforce Development at Community Colleges Around the World

THIS APRIL, ACCT AND THE STAR SCHOLARS NETWORK released the fourth issue of their *Mapping Community Colleges Around the World* series. The new issue, “An Ecosystems Approach: Partnerships, Innovation, and Workforce Development,” aims to inform educators, policymakers, and industry leaders seeking to strengthen the connection between education and the future of work.

This publication brings together scholars, practitioners, and industry leaders to explore innovative approaches for preparing the next generation of skilled workers. The articles illustrate how collaboration among educational institutions, governments, industries, and communities can strengthen workforce pipelines while promoting equitable access to opportunity.

Included in the brief are the following articles:

- “Building the Next Generation of Skilled Workers: SME’s Manufacturing Imperative-Workforce Pipeline Challenge” by Deb Volzer
- “Global Competency and Workforce Development: Lessons from Peru” by Fabiola Riobé
- “Internationalization in Higher Education for Society: Collaborating for Community Impact” by Uwe Brandenburg, Carla Carmago Cassol da Silva, and Paulina Latorre
- “Meeting the Workforce Call to the Future Ready: Miami Dade College’s Approach” by Anay Abraham, Malou C. Harrison, and Madeline Pumariega
- “Strategic Coordination for Statewide Workforce Development: The Role of Technology to Manage a Triadic Relationship” by Bradley Beecher and Curt Wynn
- “Catalyzing Connection and Enabling Change: Shared Governance and the Role of Trustees” by Michael H. Parsons
- “A Human-Centered Approach: Algonquin College’s Cooperative Model for Training Skilled Workers” by Jed Looker
- “Meeting Student Basic Needs to Improve Retention and Success: BibliU and Jackson College” by Rachael Hardiek



- “Compulsory Internships in Finland: Symbiosis Between Universities of Applied Sciences and Industry” by Sandra Slotte
  - “Giving Apples to Newtons: Nurturing Talent to Shape the Future Workforce” by Aswathy Venugopal and Rophia Rose
- All *Mapping Community Colleges Around the World* articles can be downloaded at [acct.org/publications-media/reports-and-papers](https://acct.org/publications-media/reports-and-papers).



Download the full paper at [acct.org/publications-media/reports-and-papers](https://acct.org/publications-media/reports-and-papers).



# Federal Funding for Community Colleges

## What to Know as You Plan for FY2026 Grants

IN MARCH, SEVENTH STREET STRATEGIES PRESIDENT Amanda Fuchs Miller authored a brief to help ACCT members navigate the new environment for federal funding opportunities. The full paper is available to download via ACCT.org under “Publications” and then “Reports and White Papers.” Following is a brief excerpt.

### Competitive Grant Programs for Community Colleges

Several different grant programs designed to support community colleges are authorized and appropriated by Congress. This report discusses competitive grants that can benefit community colleges.

### Overview of Funding for Federal Grant Programs

It is important to note that the available funding for federal grant programs is contingent on numerous factors, including Congressional annual appropriations and decisions by the Administration about if and how to fund them. The agencies have options each fiscal year to determine how they spend the amount of funds appropriated by Congress, including offering new competitions, funding grantees from previous competitions, providing supplemental funding to current grantees, or reprogramming the funds to other grant programs.

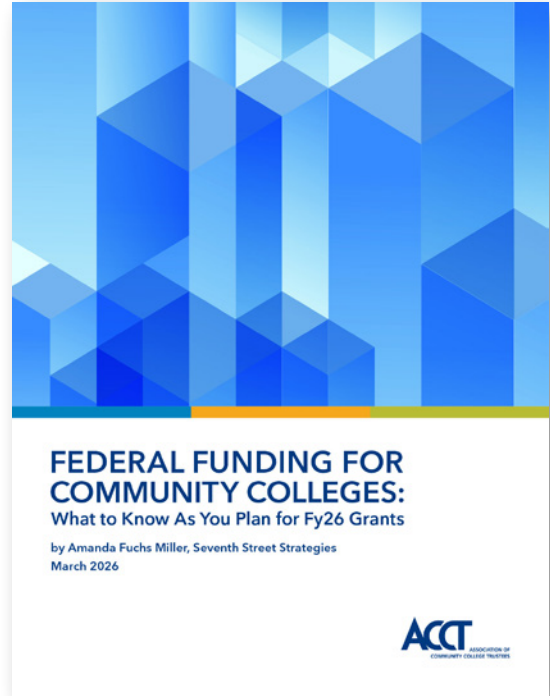
Despite this uncertainty, community colleges should be aware of the programs included in this report that are designed to provide needed supports for their students. Institutions should look for competitions, plan ahead for projects that can meet the program requirements, apply for funding when available, and advocate to their members of Congress for sufficient funding.

### Considerations for Federal Grants

Community colleges should pay attention to current changes to how competitive grants are being run at the federal level, from shorter timelines between announcement and application deadline to new rules for drawing down funds. In addition, some grant programs will be run out of more than one federal agency, which will require new systems and processes for institutions to implement and follow.

It is also important for community colleges to understand the current risks for continued funding if they receive a grant, and to plan for how they will either continue the program or what will happen to the services if their grant ends earlier than planned. Grants may not be funded for their full performance periods for several different reasons.

First, federal discretionary grants can currently be terminated “pursuant to the terms and conditions of the Federal award,



including, to the extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities.” While courts are still interpreting what that means, there have been efforts across agencies to end grants in the middle of their budget periods. Second, the Department of Education’s rules allow grants to be discontinued for a subsequent budget period if there is no “determination from the Secretary that continuation of the project is in the best interest of the Federal Government,” and this provision has been used across programs to end grants in the middle of a performance period.

Third, the Department of Education has stated that they may cancel grant programs that benefit Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). Under the authority provided to the department in the appropriations bill, it is allowed to reprogram discretionary funds for MSI grants to the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP), pursuant to a provision that allows funds to be moved from one program to another within the same account provided that notification is given to Congress. Finally, given the budget proposals put forth by the president, if a grant program is zeroed out by Congress in the appropriations bill for the next fiscal year, a grant will be cancelled as the majority of grants are only obligated for one year at a time regardless of the length of the grant.



The Education Department has prioritized projects that expand the understanding of AI or expand the appropriate use of AI technology in education, projects that support workforce development programs aligned with state workforce priorities, and projects designed to return education to the states, Tribal entities, or consortia of such entities.

Other factors community colleges should be aware of when accepting federal grant funds are new terms and conditions that attempt to limit activities the college can partake in, both with and without federal funds. Certification of these terms and conditions may be included in individual grant agreements, department-wide rules, or through the System Award Management (SAM) system which is required to be used by all federal grant recipients.

In addition, changes in the requirements under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which states that “Federal public benefits” are limited to U.S. citizens, U.S. non-citizen nationals, and qualified aliens, may impact which students community colleges can serve. In July 2025, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a memo reversing longstanding guidance and stated that all programs were covered by PRWORA unless specifically exempted by statute. The impact for community college grantees is that the requirements of PRWORA are being applied to programs under the Higher Education Act and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Programs are awaiting more information on implementation of this new guidance, but agencies have indicated it can impact enforcement actions.

### Federal Grant Programs for Community Colleges

While there are other grants open to community colleges, the following programs are ones that are more specifically aligned to community colleges’ work.

**U.S. Department of Education** grants include the Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program (CCAMPIS), the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP), TRIO Programs (Student Support Services, Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science,

Veterans Upward Bound Program, Educational Opportunity Centers, and Talent Search); the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE); and Minority-Serving Institutions Grants. The Education Department has prioritized for 2026 projects that expand the understanding of artificial intelligence or expand the appropriate use of AI technology in education, projects that support workforce development programs aligned with state workforce priorities, and projects designed to return education to state education agencies, governors, state workforce development agencies/boards, state vocational rehabilitation agencies, state higher education agencies, Tribal entities, or consortia of such entities.

**U.S. Department of Labor** grants include Strengthening Community College Training Grants (SCCTG).

**National Science Foundation Grants** include the NSF Advanced Technological Education Program (ATEP).

The overall focus is on students who have been in the workforce and on building a pathway from high school to community colleges to technical careers. The goal is to strengthen and expand the scientific and technical education and training capability of community colleges.

For a more detailed overview of the above programs, download Amanda Fuchs Miller’s full paper at [acct.org/publications-media/reports-and-papers](https://acct.org/publications-media/reports-and-papers).



Download the full paper at [acct.org/publications-media/reports-and-papers](https://acct.org/publications-media/reports-and-papers).



To help make the case for full funding, community colleges can host members of Congress on campus, with Pell Grant students sharing personal stories of how the grants are essential to entering and completing college.

## Congress Fixed FAFSA, Now the Bill is Due

**Financial aid simplification has led to increased Pell Grant demand – and projected multibillion dollar shortfalls.**

BY CARRIE WARICK-SMITH

PELL GRANTS ARE THE CORNERSTONE OF FEDERAL financial aid, serving nearly 8 million low-income students per year — including about one in three community college students. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that Pell Grants repay the taxpayer’s investment in less than ten years because low-income students enter, persist, and complete college, get higher-paying jobs, pay more taxes, and are much less likely to need other social services than other low-income people who do not get Pell Grants.

Concern that the complicated financial aid form, called the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), caused eligible students to miss out on needed aid due its complexity persisted for years. In December 2020, Congress passed the bipartisan FAFSA Simplification Act as part of a larger legislative package, and President Trump signed it into law. Now that the law has been fully implemented and is finally succeeding, a new critical problem faces Congress: how to pay for the uptick in Pell costs caused by increased applications and eligibility.

In many ways, this issue goes into the “good problem to have” category. More students are going to college. Students who need greater support now have access to those dollars. The champions of FAFSA simplification long knew that meeting the goal meant the federal government would need to spend more on the Pell Grant program. But after a decade of flat funding the program at \$22 billion in annual discretionary dollars (plus an automatic mandatory add-on that gets to full funding for the program), Congress has built the habit of relying on previous years’ funding being underspent to fund program growth and grant increases.

Thanks to your advocacy at National Legislative Summit and in follow-up contact with your members of Congress, this year we broke the records for the largest number of U.S. House members and Senators — both Republicans and Democrats — publicly supporting Pell Grant funding.

That is no longer possible. In February, the Congressional Budget Office projected that the Pell Grant program will have a \$5.4 billion shortfall in FY2026 and an \$11.5 billion shortfall in FY2027. Due to the mechanics of the funding of the federal program and the academic year, ultimately that means that Congress must find \$17 billion to close this “shortfall” in order to keep the program whole — maintaining the current \$7,395 maximum award for all students currently eligible.

There are several ways to do this. Congress could decide to increase the amount of money that can be spent via the Labor-HHS-Ed appropriations bill or use deficit spending. It could cut other programs within that bill. Or Congress could maneuver to use funding outside of the appropriations bill to pay for the shortfall. The first two proposals will not be popular when Republicans are looking to spend less.

ACCT, trustees, and community college leaders have been making the case to Congress that any cuts to Pell Grant eligibility or benefits tend to hit community college students the hardest. In fact, community college leaders have seen this before. Back in 2011 when the Pell Grant program faced a shortfall, Congress reduced the number of semesters of Pell eligibility from 16 to 12, cut the Ability to Benefit test allowing students without a high school degree to earn Pell Grants, and eliminated year-round/summer Pell Grants. (Congress subsequently restored versions of the latter two.)

In 2025, the Republican-only House-passed reconciliation bill would have made part-time students ineligible for Pell Grants if they take less than eight credits per semester. It also would have ratably reduced Pell Grant amounts for all students taking less than 15 credits per semester, instead of the 12 credits in current law. Community college students are more likely to be taking classes part time while working or parenting, so these part-time Pell Grant cuts would have had a devastating impact on our students — much more than on four-year college students. Although community college advocates were able to keep these proposals out of the final enacted One Big Beautiful Bill Act, we

are very likely to see them again as a means to address the current Pell shortfall.

Community college trustees, leaders, students, and ACCT have been making the case to Congress that Pell Grants are essential to helping community college students access and complete college. Thanks to your advocacy at National Legislative Summit and in follow-up contact with your members of Congress, this year we broke the records for the largest number of U.S. House members and Senators — both Republicans and Democrats — publicly supporting Pell Grant funding.

With a September 30 deadline looming for Congress to write the annual spending bills, community college trustees, leaders, and students will need to keep up the pressure. Ask your members of Congress to fund the Pell Grant program — without cutting eligibility or benefits for community college students.

To help make the case for full funding, community colleges can host members of Congress on campus, with Pell Grant students sharing personal stories of how the grants are essential to entering and completing college. Working with their presidents, trustees can meet with members of Congress and their staffs to highlight the problem and remind them to meet the commitments they made in the FAFSA Simplification Act and One Big Beautiful Bill Act. Our students deserve nothing less.



ACCT Vice President for Public Policy Carrie Warick-Smith can be reached at [cwsmith@acct.org](mailto:cwsmith@acct.org).



‘You could do anything with education; it doesn't matter what your background is... you can do anything that you want to do.’

## Spotlighting Our Staff

Meet ACCT’s Beth Merga and discover what she learned from Hudson County Community College Chair Jeanette Peña.

**I**N THIS COLUMN, YOU’VE HAD A CHANCE TO GET TO know me and hear my take on ACCT’s Membership and Education Services division and our priorities. With our ongoing and deepening focus on member relationships and our chair Carol Del Carlo’s emphasis on wellbeing, over the next few installments of this column, you’ll have a chance to get to know the names behind the email addresses and the people who make it all happen.

In each “staff spotlight” profile, a Membership and Education Services staff member will tell you a bit about themselves, their work, and what they do outside of ACCT. And the “Robin’s Refrigerator” section will highlight an aspect of their work that I am particularly proud of — kind of akin to a special piece of artwork or an A+ assignment from one of your kids or grandkids you might post on your fridge.

This team does amazing work — I’m excited for you to get to know them a little better! Below is a bit about Beth, and on the next page is a profile she wrote about one of our amazing members.

— *Robin Matross Helms*

### Beth Merga

Membership Services Associate

**ACCT tenure:** 1 year and 4 months

**What she does:** My role includes supporting member engagement, maintaining our member data, and coordinating our annual awards program.

**Where you’ll see her:** You will see me at our Award Gala directing regional award winners to their seats.

**When she’s off the clock:** I enjoy reading, watching docuseries, and sightseeing with friends. A fun fact about me is that I collect souvenir magnets from places I visit :)

**Favorite ACCT member moment:** I communicate via email with a lot of our members, so it’s always a delight to match emails to faces at our conferences.



## Reshaping Lives: Chair Jeanette Peña of Hudson County Community College Reflects on Board Winning ACCT's Inaugural Impact and Success Award

BY BETH MERGA

Hudson County Community College (HCCC) in Hudson County, New Jersey, showcases what is possible when a governing board leads with a deep understanding of its students and the barriers they face. This commitment was recognized this past October at the 2025 ACCT Congress, when the college received ACCT's inaugural Impact and Success Award. This award honors a board that strengthens college enrollment and completion rates, expands basic needs support, and creates opportunities for adult and noncredit learners. To offer a closer look at the work being done by our winning board, I interviewed current Board Chair Jeanette Peña. After learning more about HCCC, it became clear its success stems from a leadership style that views education as a force capable of reshaping lives. Chair Peña's reflections highlight a board grounded in community insight and guided by policy choices that expand opportunity. Hudson County Community College cultivates an environment where students are not only welcomed but empowered to thrive.

"You could do anything with education; it doesn't matter what your background is... you can do anything that you want to do," Peña told me. This captures the true spirit of the Impact and Success Award, which is to celebrate those committed to improving the student experience no matter where a student begins. Her words articulate the carefully crafted partnerships and programs offered by the college. Among others, these partnerships range from apprenticeships and healthcare clinical placements to reentry education and the Justice-Involved Undergraduate Success and Training (JUSTice) Program for incarcerated learners. Furthermore, 90% of students are eligible for financial aid, and about half are first-generation college students. To support the success of students, HCCC has created the nationally recognized Hudson Scholars

Program, a three-part model that combines proactive advising, financial stipends, and early academic intervention. Through a range of initiatives tailored towards the demographics of its community, HCCC demonstrates its dedication to opening meaningful pathways for students and supporting them on their journey.

This commitment to opening meaningful pathways is seen in moments shared directly with the board. At HCCC board meetings, after agenda items are completed, President Christopher Reber introduces the meeting's "Special Event." This dedicated time gives members of the community an opportunity to share a presentation with the board. Chair Peña recalled one presentation that touched her: "We had JUSTice involved individuals who completed a welding program, and one gentleman that spoke. I don't think there was a dry eye in the room." This young man had received his welding certification and secured a job. On the stage, he spoke to his late mother and said, "You'd be so proud." Chair Peña echoed that same sentiment, sharing, "This is our mission. That is our job... that young man was able to turn his life around."

HCCC's board prides itself on supporting policies that "break down barriers and help more students cross the finish line." Chair Peña joked that students always show up to board meetings, but in truth, their enthusiasm illustrates the welcoming and supportive environment HCCC creates.

While students' stories highlight individual transformation, they also point to a broader reality that many, especially adult learners, face complex barriers that require support. HCCC serves a large population of adult learners and strives to improve their economic mobility by expanding credit for prior learning options, growing noncredit and workforce programs, and re-engaging those who previously stopped out. To further bolster retention, the college

addresses basic needs challenges through the Hudson Helps Resource Center. This center has provided more than 25,000 meals since the pandemic and offers mental health services, social work support, Chromebook lending, and a career clothing closet. HCCC also partners with New Jersey City University (NJCU) to offer affordable preschool and drop-in childcare through NJCU's Children's Learning Center. Programs like this emphasize the belief that adult learners deserve the same opportunity to succeed as any traditional student. Together, the support systems establish the conditions adult learners need to balance school, work, and family.

Chair Peña shared so many remarkable initiatives happening at the college, far more than I could capture here, but there was one moment I want to end on. As we bonded over our shared experiences as first-generation college students, she passed along a piece of wisdom from her grandmother: "Motivation is always fleeting. You need to have discipline." This shared wisdom speaks to the intentional and steady leadership she brings to her role. The same sense of discipline and care is evident across her board, whose decisions prioritize student needs. HCCC's motto is, "Hudson is Home," and that motto serves as more than a slogan. It is an ethic that shapes the college's culture and purpose.



Beth Merga is ACCT's membership services associate. Robin Matross Helms is ACCT's vice president for membership and educational services.



# 'SEA CHANGE'

The 2026 National Legislative Summit brought community college leaders to Washington amid unprecedented transitions in higher education.



BY MARK TONER

THE 2026 NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT BROUGHT community college leaders and advocates to Washington to celebrate key victories — including the passage of Workforce Pell after a decade of what officials called “relentless advocacy” — and to prepare for new challenges to come.

“A very long list of changes have happened since we last came together in Washington,” ACCT Chair Carol Del Carlo of the Nevada System of Higher Education Board of Regents told attendees.

Key among those changes is the ongoing reorganization of the U.S. Department of Education, which the Trump Administration's top postsecondary official called a “sea change” in the higher education landscape.

“As an administration... we think about how we can implement policy and put resources behind other well-respected and outcome-driven programs and institutions, and I think community colleges are certainly one of those choices,” Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent told attendees.

Trustees and community college advocates were briefed on policy changes, visited lawmakers — and were given some key advice by Washington insiders: “Buckle up,” said Jared C. Bass, senior vice president of education of the Center for American Progress. “I did not expect as much [change] as fast.”



Top right: ACCT Chair and Nevada System of Higher Education Regent Carol Del Carlo

Bottom right: Senator Bill Cassidy receives the 2026 National Education Service Award.



Clockwise from left: Perspectives on the Higher Education Landscape panel, including *Inside Higher Ed's* Katherine Knott, HCM Strategists' Kristin Hultquist, Seventh Street Strategists' Amanda Fuchs Miller, Center for American Progress's Jared Bass, and American Enterprise Institute's Preston Cooper; ACCT Vice President for Public Policy Carrie Warick-Smith; ACCT Director of Government Relations Jonathan Elkin



## A Changing Landscape

Representatives from the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Labor, and other federal agencies have been a longstanding part of the NLS. This year, the focus shifted to how these agencies are working to take on pieces of the Education Department's work as the Trump Administration shifts its key functions elsewhere in the federal government.

At the time of the NLS, the Education Department had signed seven interagency agreements with four other federal agencies to outsource key functions and programming. "The president ran on this promise to return education back to the states," Kent said. "We are always receptive to how we can be doing it better, and that is something that we take very seriously, but this project is something that is going to be moving forward under this administration."

Because formally closing the Education Department would require an act of Congress, these moves can be understood as a "proof of concept" to demonstrate that other agencies can manage its functions to a future "Congress that's more amenable to closing the Department," argued Preston Cooper, senior fellow of the American Enterprise Institute. In the meantime, "it's going to be more and more ubiquitous that these agencies come together to set agendas

and develop common metrics and funding," said Kristin Hultquist, founding partner of HCM Strategists.

To that end, U.S. Department of Labor Assistant Secretary Henry Mack outlined the Trump Administration's vision of the role community colleges will play in "accelerating our workforce re-industrialization agenda."

Mack told attendees that the nation could meet President Trump's goal of placing 1 million people in registered apprenticeship programs by enrolling just 3 to 5 percent of the overall community college student population in these programs, including degree-connected apprenticeships he called "past overdue."

While around 200 community colleges are currently involved in registered apprenticeship programs, Mack told attendees he would like to see that number exceed 500 in the coming years. To that end, he announced that the Strengthening Community College Training Grant (SCCTG) program will be "largely dedicated" to developing short-term training programs that could become eligible for Workforce Pell.

"The community colleges of the nation are so well positioned, so well poised," Mack said. "We want to support you in our work to deliver on this incredible opportunity."



From left: U.S. Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent; ACCT President and CEO Jee Hang Lee



## Preparing for Pell

Even as the federal landscape is shifting, the long-anticipated arrival of Workforce Pell also requires community colleges to strengthen relationships at the state level, NLS speakers said.

When the program begins July 1, states will have the primary role in interpreting regulations and approving short-term programs, which must be in place for at least a year and meet specific workforce outcomes before becoming eligible. “It’s a new and fundamental role for states to play... a new set of muscles they’re going to need not just this year, but in the years ahead,” said Steve Voytek, federal policy advisor for Advance CTE.

“If you don’t have a strong working relationship with your governor’s office and state workforce development boards, these are relationships you need to attend to,” Hultquist cautioned.

States are currently “in different places with their willingness and ability to have these conversations,” said Jim Hermes, associate vice president of government relations for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). “It’s an opportunity for colleges to be part of these conversations and shape these programs.” Strengthening relationships with businesses and employers to demonstrate the value of short-term programs to the labor market will also be critical, added Caroline Treschitta, senior government affairs manager for the National Skills Coalition.

The other key: improved state data systems to track student outcomes into the workforce, something that Mack said the Labor Department would help support. “When we get better data, I suspect the conversation will level up,” Hultquist said.

## A ‘Unified Front’

NLS attendees were urged to approach the rapid changes impacting the sector with what ACCT Vice President for Public Policy Carrie Warick-Smith called “a unified front.”

“There are a lot of issues we’re facing right now and we’ve got a complicated political context, but we really want to drive home the message that federal investment in our colleges matter, and all our colleges have a role as economic engines in their communities and their regions,” Warick-Smith said during the annual review of federal legislative priorities.

Key priorities for 2026 include supporting the long-term fiscal health of the Pell Grant program and making its benefits tax free, supporting under-resourced institutions through the Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) and other programs, strengthening the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and continuing support of adult education and childcare grants through the CCAMPIS program.

ACCT President & CEO Jee Hang Lee stressed the importance



From left: U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor Henry Mack; Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici; Congressman Juan Ciscomani



of continued advocacy in “this increasingly competitive higher education sector.”

“Many of you know how long the road can be for legislative victories like Workforce Pell,” Lee said. “The process can be long and tedious, but [it] will provide opportunities for thousands of our students who otherwise would not have them.”

“Community colleges are not an afterthought,” said American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) President & CEO DeRionne Pollard. “We are the front door to opportunity in America. I’m proud of the mission we have, and the power and audacity to carry forth every day.”

Other key areas of advocacy include appropriations for minority-serving institutions, which have seen cuts and continued uncertainty over the past year. “Tell the impact the cuts have had on your school if you were one of the schools that had your MSI grants cut,” Amanda Fuchs Miller, president of Seventh Street Strategies, told attendees. “There’s so much happening that [lawmakers] can’t keep track. If your grant is canceled, they aren’t notified. The only way they’ll hear about it is if you reach out.”

Policy experts also stressed the importance of influencing, not attempting to curtail, federal efforts to create accountability systems. “We haven’t had an accountability system stick in postsecondary education... and therefore we’re not providing

receipts that are students are doing better from participating in our programs,” Hultquist told attendees. “There’s this broader narrative we must win.”

Overall, the sector has done “remarkably well” addressing the challenges of the past year, including attempts to eliminate Pell for students taking less than nine credits and forestalling other key funding cuts, according to David Baime, AACC senior vice president of government relations. And 170 community colleges received congressionally directed spending grants — formerly known as “earmarks” in recent funding bills, said Jonathan Elkin, ACCT director of government relations.

“Workforce Pell was a wonderful victory, and we’re now looking forward to the next round of our priorities,” Warick-Smith said.

### **Allies Across the Hill**

NLS attendees found considerable support across Capitol Hill during their annual visit to lawmakers (see p. 18) — support which was also reflected by the bipartisan presence at the Community College Congressional Forum (see p. 20). The recently revived House Community College Caucus is now up to 16 members, and another longstanding supporter, Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.) was honored with the 2026 Community College National Education Service Award (see p. 5).



From left: Over 100 community college students attended the 2026 National Legislative Summit; Senator Cory Booker meets with New Jersey community college representatives.



## On the Hill

When a delegation of New Jersey community college advocates visited the office of Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.), students were set to discuss tax-free Pell, the federal work study program, and TRIO. But they also became Instagram famous.

“This room is the power of New Jersey,” Booker said before taking one person’s phone and recording a sweeping video of the room, which was posted by the New Jersey Council on Community Colleges. “The students who spoke? Incredible.”

Students representing community colleges received similar reactions across the Hill. Portland Community College student trustee Fareeha Nayebare shared with Rep. Janelle Bynum (D-Ore.) her journey to the United States from Uganda, where her family still lives — and how, by working while learning, she is supporting her brothers’ educations there.

“It’s everything we are about,” Oregon Community College Association Executive Director Abby Lee told Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.)

Across the Hill, students and advocates stressed the importance of ongoing supports, including CCAMPIS grants that support childcare centers and the Pell Grant program. “The whole reason I am able to sit at this table today is the Pell Grant,” Calliadora Laipakis, Tacoma Community College student government legislative liaison, said in the office of Rep. Emily Randall (D-Wash.)

And the benefits extend across generations. Rep. Mike Flood (R-Neb.) welcomed a roomful of community college leaders from Nebraska, who stressed how their institutions keep young residents in their communities. “I’m going to know my grandkids,” one recalled a mother telling her.

Fuchs Miller pointed to signs, including the bipartisan calls to restore funding for adult education last fall, that ongoing advocacy will continue to reap benefits. “I’m hopeful that members of Congress will stand up a bit more for their constituents’ funding,” she said.

And the closing keynote highlighted the wide-ranging impact of community colleges, featuring two prominent lawmakers who are also alumni. “I will always have a special place in my heart and on my policy agenda for community colleges because it’s where people come from different backgrounds and different lived experiences come together to learn,” said Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-Ore.) “Too many young people now see that slipping away... and that’s what we need to turn back around... So never has it been more important to advocate for community colleges.”

“The stories of community college graduates are endless,” added Rep. Juan Ciscomani (R-Ariz). “It’s not where you start. It’s what you do with what’s given to you that will make a difference of where you go. And your job as leaders of these community colleges is to go out there and provide those opportunities. And my job now as a legislator at the federal level is to make sure that you have the resources and the tools to be able to offer these opportunities to the people that we serve.”



Mark Toner is an editor for Trustee Quarterly.



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# ‘NOT BY ACCIDENT’

The Community College Congressional Forum showcased how ongoing advocacy translates into bipartisan support in Washington, D.C.

BY MARK TONER



**H**ELD STEPS FROM THE HOUSE CHAMBER IN THE historic Capitol building, this year’s Community College Congressional Forum brought together a bipartisan group of lawmakers who emphasized their ongoing support for the sector.

Convened in conjunction with the Community College National Legislative Summit (see p. 14), the Forum was a testament to the continued advocacy of community college leaders, ACCT President & CEO Jee Hang Lee told attendees.

“This support did not happen by accident,” he said. “Your advocacy, telling your stories, and making the case for community colleges helped build this strong support.”

In their comments, the 10 bipartisan lawmakers attending the Forum highlighted key public policy issues involving the sector, including workforce readiness, Short Term Pell, TRIO, ghost students, FAFSA changes, and the continued bipartisan support for programs helping community colleges serve students and labor market needs.

Stressing the need to address the stigma around short-term programs, Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.) urged trustees and community college leaders to look for what she called “the T-word” — training — in their literature and websites, “and get it out.”

“You are not in the business of training dogs, you are in the business of educating professionals,” she said. “We treat people who work primarily with their hands as second-class citizens... Change the image of your programs, and you’ll have more people wanting to avail themselves of the programs that you offer.”

Pointing to the so-called “ghost students” who have defrauded colleges in California and around the country, Rep. Young Kim (R-Calif.) stressed the importance of “protecting the integrity of the community college system so resources can actually reach the students.” Her No More Scams Act would establish a federal interagency task force to coordinate fraud investigations. She also urged further simplification of FAFSA and related processes. “It’s easier to get through the DMV than through the financial aid process,” she said.



Clockwise from left: Congresswoman Young Kim; Congressman Bobby Scott; Congresswoman Jahana Hayes; Congressman Burgess Owens; Congressman Robert Aderholt; Congresswoman Alma Adams; community college leaders from across the country attended the Community College Congressional Forum.

Rep. Burgess Owens (R-Utah) stressed the potential of Workforce Pell to improve workforce readiness. He highlighted the role that learning and employment records (LERs) could play in supporting career exploration and documentation of skills. “We need a workforce that we have not done a really good job preparing for now,” he said. “This is a digital record that allows us to really know exactly what to get done and do it very well.”

Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.) highlighted the role community college played in his life, noting that the partisan rancor on Capitol Hill belied the bipartisan support for community colleges among lawmakers from both sides of the aisle.

“There are amazing people from all walks of life fighting for your issues,” Panetta said. “They are ensuring that there are enough Pell Grants to go around, that funding is there for TRIO, for HSIs, for HBCUs.”

Rep. Alma Adams (D-N.C.) called community colleges “core infrastructure for workforce development,” noting that workforce gaps “are not a demand problem, but a capacity problem.”

“Colleges are being asked to do more with less... at the same time facing... strain and uncertainty around federal investments,” Adams said, noting that she hopes to “protect and strengthen federal grants” and ensure that the federal government will be a “reliable partner.”

Noting the growing number of families in his rural district with first-generation college students, Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.) urged community college leaders to continue their advocacy for those students and their institutions. “Thank you for being here and letting us know your priorities — which should be our priorities,” he said.

Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-Conn.) called her own experience at Naugatuck Valley Community College a “launchpad” for her life. Noting “it should not be this hard to get a higher education,” she stressed the importance of community college leaders holding their elected representatives accountable.

“Your responsibility as the leaders of community colleges and advocates for the students they serve is to hold elected officials



Congresswoman Virginia Foxx; Congressman Dan Newhouse; Congressman Jimmy Panetta; Congressman Mark Takano.

responsible,” she said. “Look at their voting records. Look at the legislation they’re supporting... It is not enough to stand here and say it. Follow the work of your leaders in Congress.”

Rep. Robert Aderholt (R-Ala.) pointed to bipartisan efforts to maintain funding for Pell, TRIO, and other key education programs in the funding bills which passed in the weeks before the Forum. He also urged community college leaders to look to directed Congressional funding — formerly known as earmarks — as a way to support specific programs. Noting that earmarks supported three key community college programs in his district, Aderholt said “we in Congress want to make sure we are being really proactive and responding to what our constituents want. And there’s no better way to do that.”

Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.), ranking member of the House Committee for Education and Workforce, pointed to decades of underinvestment in the nation’s workforce development system, calling Workforce Pell “a microscopic bit of good news” in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed last year.

Noting that community colleges have considerable experience working with federal and state officials, local employers, and regional accreditors, Scott said that they should have the “inside track” on standing up Workforce Pell programs.

“You’ll be in a position to get your programs approved and have young people take full advantage of those programs,” he said.

Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.) urged community college leaders to navigate what he called the “chaos” of recent events and to embrace the inherent open access and inclusivity of community colleges.

“It’s at the core of what we do,” he said. “Do not be afraid. Stand for what you know your mission is.”

“When chaos in Washington comes to an end, we need to be ready to strengthen community colleges,” Takano added. “Our country is strongest when we have robust educational options, and community colleges are a vital part.”



Mark Toner is an editor for Trustee Quarterly.

## Over 60 College Leaders Gather in Miami for 2026 Governance Leadership Institute

### Participants said...

**“The GLI events are my favorite of all the higher ed meetings/conferences I attend.”**

**“What I enjoyed most about the institute was the ability to hear about the challenges encountered by colleagues and their solutions.”**

In March, Miami Dade College hosted the ACCT Educational Programs and Events team as it brought together over 80 trustees, presidents, and community college staff for a Governance Leadership Institute focused on strengthening board leadership. With downtown Miami as the backdrop, the Wolfson campus at Miami Dade College provided an excellent immersive environment for hands-on training as the attending members renewed their commitment to effective leadership and service to their communities.

Bringing together members from every corner of the country, including California, Louisiana, Washington, Florida, Oklahoma, Massachusetts, and Michigan, created a unique opportunity to collaboratively tackle the evolving challenges that face their institutions. ACCT was also fortunate to welcome representatives from multiple tribal colleges whose participation enriched the discussions by offering critical perspectives that are not always available to trustees without close ties to tribal nations.

ACCT extends our sincere thanks to Miami Dade College for its gracious accommodation and hospitality to both our staff and visiting members. Without MDC's valued support, this event, and its impact, would not have been possible.

# MEETING THE MOMENT: COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND WORKFORCE PELL

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It's time to shift the conversation from process to purpose — and outcomes.

By Jo Alice Blondin and Kate Kinder



**W**ITH LESS THAN THREE MONTHS UNTIL implementation, it's time to shift the Workforce Pell conversation from process and compliance to purpose and outcomes. Instead of asking what programs will be eligible, community colleges and state leaders should be asking how learners benefit, how we can build more seamless pathways for learners to earn credentials of value that lead to careers with economic mobility, and how Workforce Pell can be a catalyst to transform our workforce and higher ed ecosystems, and to center the needs of our learners, our local employers, and our communities.

The U.S. Department of Education issued its Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Workforce Pell after its Accountability in Higher Education and Access through Demand-driven Workforce Pell (AHEAD) Committee reached consensus on the regulatory framework. Workforce Pell expands access to this important federal financial aid stream for students pursuing short-term, career-driven programs. It features a unique approval process coupled with eligibility requirements, connection to the workforce, employment outcomes, and a focus on credential and degree pathways.

Given the very narrow program eligibility parameters, states and colleges project that a relatively small number of programs and therefore students will qualify. Focusing on this reality, however, misses the mark. The passage of Workforce Pell is a catalyst for change, including removing barriers between traditional academic credit programs and professional or "noncredit" programs. It's a call to action to take stock of how well our programs and systems are meeting the needs of all modern learners, industry partners, and today's economy.

This cannot be achieved without the expertise of college leaders and students. A practitioner-focused approach to implementing Workforce Pell is needed to ensure that learners are at the center of the conversation, alongside employers and faculty.

Now is the time to do this work. While colleges wait for final federal guidance and advocate to inform state processes, they can be planning for successful campus implementation and systems change. Five recommendations for effective Workforce Pell implementation and impact include:

1. Do not let existing and traditional academic silos or systems drive the implementation process or stifle workforce innovation.
2. Rely on the expertise of workforce staff who work closely with learners and employers to braid funding and identify resources.
3. Center the student experience in program design, including outreach, enrollment, advising, holistic supports, and financial aid processes.
4. Adapt infrastructures, including student record systems, term schedules, data, registration, and financial aid.
5. Be clear about the policy challenges and the opportunities.

Fortunately, there are exceptional examples of colleges already doing this work across the country. The National Council for Workforce Education (NCWE) was able to hear tangible strategies and recommendations from Amanda Abens, assistant vice chancellor of workforce development and lifelong learning at Pima Community College, Randall Stamper, associate vice chancellor of career education and workforce programs at the Virginia Community College System, and Ne'Keisha Stepney, assistant provost of workforce development at Waubensee Community College.

Leaders highlighted how their institutions and states are centering learners and viewing Workforce Pell as a tool to improve college and career outcomes. They highlighted that this work requires cross-functional collaboration across the college and with partners to strengthen data, improve student supports, reshape program offerings, advance credit for prior learning, effectively serve adult learners, and ensure that "all learning counts, and every student counts."

The passage of Workforce Pell is a recognition of the value of stackable credentials and seamless pathways that allow learners to enter and exit into college and careers over time. It's overdue recognition of the programs and services that college workforce departments have been offering learners, employers, and the community for decades and the myriad ways they transform lives.

While Workforce Pell is not a panacea and must be harnessed wisely and judiciously with learner outcomes and intent in mind, it is a powerful tool and opportunity for reform. It's a charge for leaders to ensure that workforce education learners, programs, faculty, and staff are no longer at the margins, but centered in the mission and culture of every community college and supported by public workforce and economic development partners.

Let's listen to learners and college practitioners. Let's meet this moment.



*Dr. Jo Alice Blondin is president of Clark State College and NCWE Board President. Kate Kinder is NCWE executive director.*

# BUILDING THE NONCREDIT DATA INFRASTRUCTURE FOR—AND BEYOND—WORKFORCE PELL

With short-term credentials in the spotlight, trustees should leverage Workforce Pell as an accelerant to embrace broader workforce goals.



By Michelle Van Noy and Mark M. D'Amico



Noncredit data are critical to understanding and communicating the full workforce development contribution of community colleges to their regions, measuring whether short-term programs lead to improved economic outcomes for both individuals and employers, and tracking students across their educational lifespans whether that includes noncredit programs or the pursuit of degrees.

### Noncredit Data are Needed to Ensure Quality

Short-term credentials, commonly offered through community college noncredit education, are in the spotlight. Learners report increasing interest in shorter-term educational options. States are increasing investments in short-term and credential-based training. And some colleges increasingly focus on workforce-oriented noncredit programs. Now with the passage of Workforce Pell, even more interest in these programs is occurring with the promise of need-based student aid for qualified programs. With that has come heightened awareness about the data needed to ensure quality as part of the legislation's guardrails.

As colleges and systems navigate implementation, trustees face a critical moment to ensure that noncredit education is a part of strategic conversations. While Workforce Pell offers an immediate motivator to gather data on these programs, forward thinking leaders are aware of the wider importance of documenting all noncredit enrollments and outcomes — just as they do on the credit side — and how these data fit into much broader conversations within states about system building to ensure credential quality.

### The State Noncredit Data Project

Despite its sizeable portion of community college enrollments, noncredit education has historically had little data collected. While no national data sources on noncredit programs exist and attempts to add a student measure to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) have not yet been successful, the best estimates from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) indicate about 4.1 million students are enrolled in community college noncredit programs. States, however, have increasingly been developing data systems as noncredit grows in interest and prominence. Since 2021, the State Noncredit Data Project (SNDP) has been working to learn from states and document the noncredit community college data infrastructure with research partner states and through an open-access national learning community.

A key resource from our effort is the SNDP Noncredit Data Taxonomy, designed to provide a guide for states and institutions to build out their noncredit data. The current version of the taxonomy includes more than 90 operationalized data elements in four categories: Purpose & Design, Outcomes, Enrollment &

Demographics, and Finance & Policy. The taxonomy, coupled with a how-to guide, offers both states and institutions tools to advance the development of the noncredit data infrastructure. We have learned that the data elements collected often follow mandates, accountability measures, and efforts to document student enrollments and quality. By setting strategic priorities, trustees can and will drive greater data collection.

### Workforce Pell is a Noncredit Data Use Case

Since the passage of Workforce Pell and the buzz around its implementation, a national movement is growing for consistent noncredit data collection, largely related to the program's rigorous guardrails. With the guardrails in mind, including requirements for 70% completion and job placement rates as well as a ROI metric that ensures costs do not exceed value-added earnings, Workforce Pell provides a compelling use case to drive the development of noncredit data. To meet this moment, the SNDP national learning community and specialized working groups have been convening stakeholders to help support the sharing of practice among those doing the work. Based on our research and collaboration with those from states around the country, we have some lessons to share and know there will be challenges.

With program-level data from our eight research partner states (Iowa, Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia), we have used our Noncredit Data Taxonomy to document many assets and gaps in state-level community and technical college data. State-level data most commonly includes essential information on programs such as course name and contact hours, but some states are working to fill gaps in critical areas such as Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes, which are foundational for systems and colleges to track — both for Workforce Pell and for broader noncredit data systems development. Many — but not all — of the states struggled with outcomes data on their learners, with only about half able to report on wage and employment outcomes. To do so, some states and their institutions need to more consistently collect student identifiers and develop data partnerships to address the larger question of credential value. Many states do not have the data ready for Workforce Pell implementation, yet efforts are underway to meet that need.

## Workforce Pell is One Use Case

While Workforce Pell has created a sense of urgency that is real, it is just one of many important motivations for collecting noncredit data, including making the case for community colleges' contributions to workforce development and building state systems for credential quality. As states and institutions think about Workforce Pell, the SNDP's Noncredit Data Taxonomy and accompanying how-to guide offer a roadmap for states seeking longer-term data development. The implementation guide recommends taking an inventory of current data, embracing the mindset of building over time, making intentional decisions about data systems, securing partnerships, especially for labor market outcomes data, and engaging broader ecosystems. As it turns out, the guide maps precisely with the data strategy needed for Workforce Pell eligible program identification and implementation.

The national attention directed toward Workforce Pell has awakened many to the need for more robust noncredit data, but this is only a single use case. Trustees, as vital connectors to their communities, must work with other strategic community college leaders to think beyond this one policy and funding priority and support the development of broader quality systems related to noncredit and short-term training.

Noncredit data are critical to understanding and communicating the full workforce development contribution of community colleges to their regions, measuring whether short-term programs lead to

improved economic outcomes for both individuals and employers, and tracking students across their educational lifespans whether that includes noncredit programs or the pursuit of degrees. The field must recognize Workforce Pell as an accelerant to expand access, promote quality, and improve data. At the same time, we must also look beyond Workforce Pell to see the other use cases over time and embrace broader goals of quality and the development of valuable education and career pathways that serve students and communities.



*Michelle Van Noy is director of the Education and Employment Research Center at Rutgers University. Mark M. D'Amico is professor of higher education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.*

## Engaging the Noncredit Data Journey


SNDP How-To Guide	Preparing Data for Workforce Pell
<b>If your state has begun collecting noncredit data:</b>	
Step 1: Inventory noncredit data	Map existing data to Workforce Pell Guardrails
<b>Whether or not your state has begun noncredit data collection:</b>	
Step 2: Begin with essentials and build over time	Short term: Fill Workforce Pell Guardrail gaps Long term: Plan for expansion & upcoming requirements
Step 3: Choose a data platform for interconnectivity	Ensure noncredit data platform is prepared for financial aid and credit articulation
Step 4: Secure data partnerships for outcomes	Embrace the broader ecosystem: institutions, governors/workforce, data sharing for credentials and labor market outcomes, cross-state agreements, and national efforts
Step 5: Engage state & national data ecosystems	

# THE EFFECTIVE BOARD CHAIR

This article is the first of a three-part series excerpted from *The Effective Board Chair: First Among Equals*, published by ACCT in 2025.

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By Pamila J. Fisher



Get *The Effective Board Chair* and other titles on governance and advocacy by clicking "Member Portal and Online Shop" at [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org).

**I**F YOU ARE A COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNING BOARD chair, you should feel privileged and proud. You should also feel a heavy sense of responsibility and accountability for your college's future. As the complexity of leading a public community college has grown exponentially in recent years, increasing attention 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. Although the requirements to become a trustee are minimal, the knowledge and skills needed to be effective are extensive.

What recent research and experience demonstrates is that how successfully the board operates is often dependent not just on board members' behavior, but also upon the effectiveness of the board chair. With the addition of new and demanding crises, internally and externally, board chairs also need to be emotionally intelligent leaders to be successful.

This series of articles is structured around three premises that comprise the essential formula for a successful board chair. Each article focuses on one of these principles.

- 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.*

### **Part One: To be an effective board chair, an individual must first be an effective and experienced board member.**

A primary component of the board chair's role is to ensure that the entire board is following generally accepted best practices. Since this essentially means helping to continuously educate the board, and especially new members, the chair must model that behavior. The chair also must be able to articulate the value of the board's professional development and ensure it occurs. Many opportunities exist for board members to become educated about best practices and to assess how well they are doing and where there may be gaps. But first the chair must know those best practices. Any board member who serves as chair or who may contemplate doing so should review the following information and feel confident that they are upholding all requisite responsibilities, principles, and values intrinsic to serving on a board.

When talking with newly seated trustees, I tell them that until they have an opportunity to learn and absorb more information, keep in mind "The Three Ones," which will keep them out of trouble in the short term.

### **The Three Ones: Foundational Operating Principles for Every Board Member**

1. There is only **ONE** board. As a trustee, you have no board authority as an individual. Your influence on that board will be determined by how well you listen and learn, do your homework, respect your colleagues, and develop good working relationships with them and your CEO.
2. The board speaks with **ONE** voice. Do actively participate, but once a decision has been made by the full board, honor that decision even if it does not reflect how you voted.
3. The board has **ONE** employee, the CEO (president or chancellor). You must not tell other staff what to do, and if you have a question or request, always go through your CEO.

### **The Effective Trustee's Characteristics**

One of the board chair's responsibilities is to ensure that board members understand that an effective trustee does the following things:


- Appreciates and is committed to the mission of the college they serve.
- Shares the vision and core values of the college.
- Makes decisions based on what is best for students.
- Ensures the college meets the needs of its various communities.
- Practices sound fiscal management.
- Understands the role of individual trustees and the board.
- Recognizes the difference between setting policy and operations.
- Contributes to the selection, support, and evaluation of the CEO.
- Prepares adequately and attends meetings regularly and on time.
- Follows communication protocols related to constituents and employees.
- Possesses knowledge of key state statutes.
- Knows and honors local college policies and board bylaws.
- Participates in ongoing professional development.
- Protects the long-term interests of the college.
- Is a contributing team member and a role model for college staff.

### **The Effective Board's Characteristics**

There are many resources available for entire boards to become more familiar with the principles of effective trusteeship. The following list is a quick summary. For the board chair, this list can serve as a checklist for reminding, monitoring, and intervening when necessary.

#### *Board of Trustees' Roles*

1. The board adopts broad policies and goals and does not direct the president/chancellor or other staff as to how to implement those policies or achieve those goals.
2. The board operates as a unit and honors board decisions once they are made.



What recent research and experience demonstrates is that how successfully the board operates is often dependent not just on board members' behavior, but also upon the effectiveness of the board chair. With the addition of new and demanding crises, internally and externally, board chairs also need to be emotionally intelligent leaders to be successful.

3. The board ensures all board members follow board policy and intervenes when necessary.
4. The board conducts effective and efficient meetings.
5. The board follows parliamentary procedures.

#### *Board of Trustees' Ethical Behavior*

1. The board honors the confidentiality of all executive (closed) sessions.
2. Board members do not favor or protect any one college or community special group.
3. Board members operate ethically and without conflicts of interest and honor commitments they make to one another and to the president/chancellor.
4. Board members always treat employees and each other respectfully in all public settings.
5. Board members do not meet directly with union representatives when negotiations are underway.

#### *Board of Trustees/CEO Relations*

1. The board of trustees supports the president/chancellor, does not undermine their authority, and counters misinformed public criticism.
2. Board members refer all constituent concerns to the president/chancellor.
3. Individual board members do not direct the president/chancellor on what to do on any college-related decision and understand that direction can come only from the entire governing board.

#### *Community Relations*

1. The board builds a positive image of the college.

2. Board members do not speak to the press in any way that reflects negatively on their colleagues or the college and adhere to board and institutional policy that dictates who may speak to the press on behalf of the college.
3. No individual board member speaks for the board except the board chair, and even the chair speaks primarily about matters on which the board has taken an official position.
4. Board members do not use their positions for personal gain or to further their political careers.

#### *Accreditation Responsibilities*

1. Individual board members do not distract the attention of trustees, the president/chancellor, or other staff from implementing accreditation standards.
2. The board understands that its performance is a contributing factor to a college retaining its positive accreditation status.
3. The board demonstrates its commitment to making the college's accreditation status a high priority.

The above information represents the minimal requirements of every board member, and especially any board member who desires to serve as board chair. Two essential resources for chairs and all board members are ACCT's 2020 book entitled *Community College Trustees: A Guide to Effective Leadership* and the complementary Governance 101 on-demand seminar available to ACCT members via ACCT Connect. These resources can help a prospective board chair assess if they possess a good understanding of the basic knowledge of effective trusteeship and then remedy any gaps.

To begin that personal assessment, let's find out how you measure up with the following checklist.

## How Well Do I Measure Up?

- Do I understand and support my college's mission, and can I repeat it?
- Do I understand the limitations of my individual authority?
- Do I honor the final decision my board makes even if I did not vote for it?
- Do I know what items are permissible to discuss in executive session?
- Do I know the specifics of open meeting law?
- Do I know the meaning of being a policy board?
- Do I faithfully act within the parameters of my role?
- Do I commit to the time needed to be a fully engaged board member?
- Do I take advantage of professional development growth opportunities?
- Do I always treat my colleagues, the president, and staff respectfully?



*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.*

## A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

In my decades of working with excellent boards in different states with different structures, I have observed that even trustees with long experience and the best of intentions often do not fully appreciate the nuances of laws, policies, and best practices. It is extremely valuable for a board retreat to be part of a comprehensive new trustee orientation, as all members benefit from the review. An informal and intimate environment of this type fast-forwards the trust-building essential to a highly functioning board. Some new trustees, and the number seems to be increasing, feel they are not obligated to follow best practices, or even the law. A few even campaign for their position on the promise to take actions that are antithetical to the college mission. If a chair suspects that is the case, intervention should occur immediately in a respectful but firm way. And don't hesitate to ask for help.

I have found that most new trustees do not realize the time required to be an effective trustee or the complexities of many issues. New and veteran trustees frequently are often unprepared for the kinds of crises and controversies that governing boards face today. Even long-term trustees sometimes are shocked and dismayed by the behaviors of staff and even by their colleagues. Unfortunately, I have observed good trustees resign or not seek reelection simply because their colleague(s) made attending board meetings so contentious and miserable.

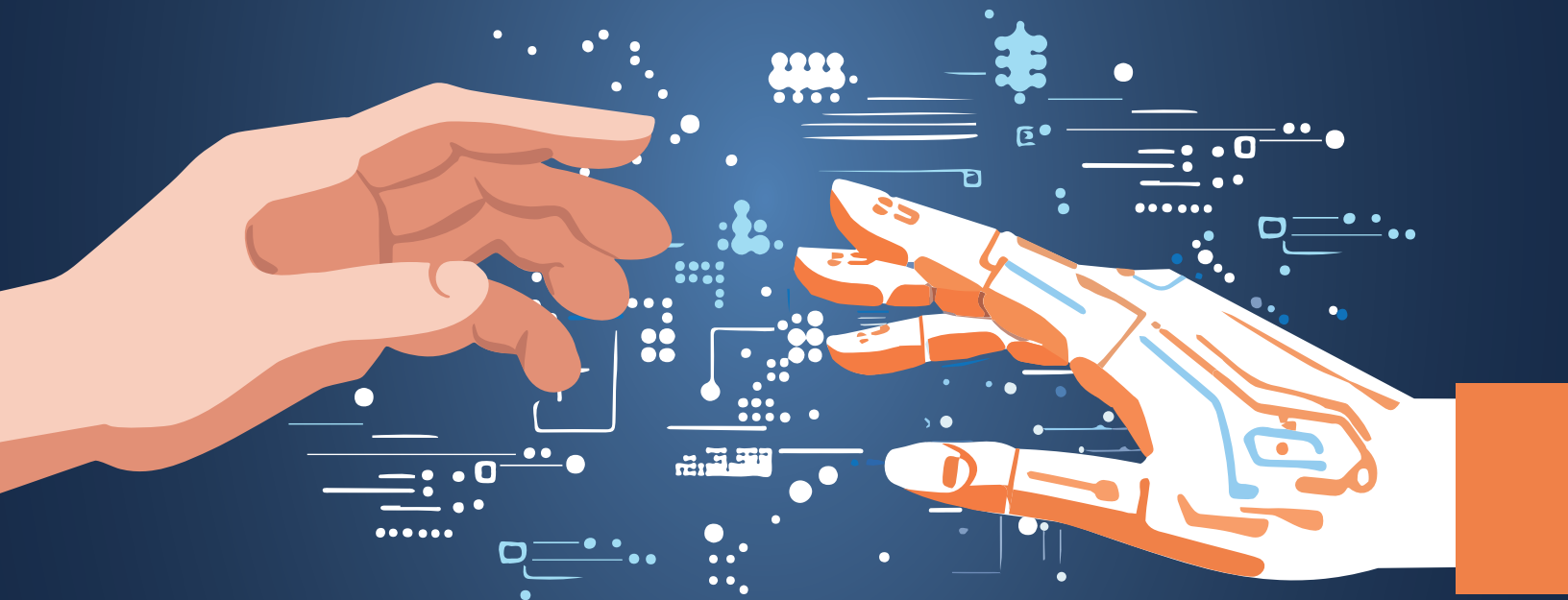
The best boards prepare for these possibilities by becoming as strong as possible before crises occur. Members invest the time and resources to become as knowledgeable as possible, have and follow up-to-date policies, participate in meaningful board self-assessment, and support continuous learning for themselves and each other. Professional development for board members is an investment in the college. It is not the place for being miserly.

I have witnessed board chairs successfully navigate highly sensitive and controversial issues in an ethical and humane way. I also have observed board chairs misuse their position because they do not understand their role or follow best practices. Whether unintentional or deliberate, the consequences for the college can be profound. The board chair and their skills and attributes set the tone for how the board comports itself, how it represents the college within the community, and its effectiveness. Every board chair should be an exemplary board member first, before they ascend to become "first among equals" on the board.

# Collaborative Workforce Development in the Age of AI and Automation: A Trustee's Perspective

An experienced trustee and doctoral candidate explains why workforce preparation must move ahead of AI and automation — and how community colleges, labor, and industry can do it together.

by Vivian Malauulu



AI and automation are not temporary trends. They represent structural shifts in how work is organized and performed. New technologies frequently alter job tasks faster than credentialing systems can respond, leaving workers vulnerable and employers frustrated by skill mismatches. The pace of change requires institutions to think beyond reactive solutions.

**A**CROSS THE COUNTRY, COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE confronting a defining challenge: how to prepare students and incumbent workers for an economy increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence (AI) and automation. While technological innovation promises gains in efficiency, productivity, and economic growth, it also raises urgent questions about job displacement, skill gaps, and equity — particularly for working adults whose livelihoods depend on industries undergoing rapid transformation.

Community colleges sit at the center of this moment. More than any other sector of higher education, they are positioned to respond quickly to labor market shifts while remaining deeply connected to the communities they serve. Yet responding effectively to AI-driven change requires more than launching new programs or updating equipment. It demands intentional collaboration among education, industry, labor, and public-sector partners, guided by thoughtful governance and informed policy leadership.

Highly automated sectors such as maritime logistics often illustrate these dynamics clearly, but similar transformations are underway across advanced manufacturing, healthcare, transportation, warehousing, energy, and public sector services. In each of these sectors, employers are adopting new technologies faster than traditional training systems can adapt. Workers face uncertainty. Institutions face pressure to move quickly. Regions risk falling behind if systems are not aligned. The lessons emerging in one industry are increasingly applicable across regional economies nationwide.

### Positionality and Perspective

My perspective on collaborative workforce development is shaped by service across multiple intersecting roles. I have served three terms on the Long Beach Community College District Board of Trustees in Southern California, where workforce preparation, regional economic alignment, and accountability to students and employers are central governance responsibilities. At the national level, I have served two terms on the ACCT Board of Directors, including service on every standing committee.

In parallel, I am a career educator, longshore worker, union official, and doctoral researcher focused on skilled workforce

development in the age of AI and automation. This multi-sector intersecting experience — spanning governance, labor, and scholarship as practitioner, policymaker, and researcher — allows me to examine how board-level decisions, public policy frameworks, labor dynamics, and instructional practice converge in real time. Trustees are not abstract actors in this work. Decisions about program investment, industry partnerships, labor engagement, and institutional priorities directly shape how colleges respond to technological change on the ground.

In 2020, during the height of the public health crisis, I led the effort to establish the LBCC Labor Center with the explicit goal of creating opportunities for education, labor, industry, and government to better serve students by functioning as a regional hub for innovation, learning, and workforce training. The Labor Center was designed not merely as a program, but as a convening space — one that models how cross-sector collaboration can strengthen workforce ecosystems and ensure that technological change benefits workers rather than marginalizes them. That experience has further informed my research and reinforced the importance of structured collaboration as a governance priority. The Labor Center also played a role in supporting small businesses as they navigated the post-pandemic recovery, demonstrating how community colleges can serve not only students and workers, but also entire regional economies through intentional, collaborative skilled workforce development strategies.

### Why Collaboration Matters Now

AI and automation are not temporary trends. They represent structural shifts in how work is organized and performed. New technologies frequently alter job tasks faster than credentialing systems can respond, leaving workers vulnerable and employers frustrated by skill mismatches. The pace of change requires institutions to think beyond reactive solutions.

In this environment, community colleges cannot operate in isolation, nor can industry or labor shoulder the responsibility alone. Collaborative workforce development recognizes that sustainable solutions emerge when stakeholders share responsibility.

Industry brings insight into emerging technologies and

Effective workforce development in the age of AI and automation requires trustees to engage deeply with questions of adaptability, equity, and long-term regional impact. This includes supporting stackable and flexible credentials, investing in faculty training, strengthening data-informed decision-making, and fostering partnerships that reflect real labor market conditions rather than aspirational projections.

productivity demands. Labor contributes on-the-ground knowledge of work processes and worker needs. Community colleges translate these insights into curriculum, credentials, and instructional pathways. Public agencies and policymakers create the regulatory and funding environments that allow collaboration to flourish.

For trustees, this means expanding the lens beyond individual programs to consider how governance structures support — or inhibit — cross-sector alignment. It requires asking strategic questions:

- Are our partnerships transactional or truly collaborative?
- Do our workforce initiatives serve both entry-level students and incumbent workers?
- Are we preparing learners not only for immediate placement, but also for long-term adaptability in evolving industries?

### Bridging Governance and Instruction

As an educator, I see how rapidly evolving skill demands affect curriculum design, faculty professional development, and student confidence in career pathways. As a trustee, I see how policy decisions translate into institutional capacity — or constraints. When governance and instruction are misaligned, even well-intentioned workforce initiatives can struggle to deliver meaningful outcomes.

Effective workforce development in the age of AI and automation requires trustees to engage deeply with questions of adaptability, equity, and long-term regional impact. This includes supporting stackable and flexible credentials, investing in faculty training, strengthening data-informed decision-making, and fostering partnerships that reflect real labor market conditions rather than aspirational projections.

It also requires recognizing workers as lifelong learners whose success depends on systems designed for continuous upskilling and reskilling. Community colleges are uniquely positioned to lead in this space, but leadership must be intentional and coordinated.

### Toward a Collaborative Framework

The research informing this work is grounded in the belief that community colleges can lead collaborative workforce strategies when governance, instruction, labor, industry, and public policy are

intentionally aligned. Rather than reacting to technological change after displacement occurs, colleges can help anticipate shifts, design responsive pathways, and support workers through transitions.

Such an approach does not prescribe a single model. Instead, it emphasizes principles adaptable across regions and industries: shared decision-making, mutual accountability, sustained partnership, and a commitment to equity as technologies reshape work.

For trustees, embracing this framework means viewing workforce development not as a peripheral function of the college, but as a central expression of its mission and public responsibility.

### Conclusion

AI and automation will continue to transform the nature of work. The question for community colleges — and for trustees in particular — is how intentionally we choose to engage with that transformation.

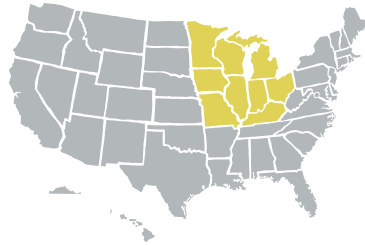
By fostering collaborative workforce development grounded in governance leadership, instructional alignment, and regional partnership, community colleges can help ensure that technological innovation expands opportunity rather than deepens inequality.

In this period of rapid change, trustees have a critical role to play — not only in overseeing institutional responses, but also in shaping the broader ecosystems that determine whether workers, students, and communities thrive in the future of work.



Vivian Malauulu, Ed.D., is a trustee at Long Beach City College in California and a member of the ACCT Board of Directors. She earned her doctoral degree at Arizona State University's Ed.D. in Leadership and Innovation program. This article is based on her doctoral dissertation research.

# AROUND THE REGIONS



## CENTRAL REGION

**Illinois** Gov. JB Pritzker signed an executive order to establish a working group that will evaluate Illinois' workforce and training needs. The group will also establish a postsecondary attainment goal for 2040.

**Indiana** SEA 254 updated the governance structure and mission of Ivy Tech, redefining it as a "workforce engine for the state of Indiana."

Proposed legislation that would allow five **Iowa** community colleges to offer a limited number of four-year degrees was left out of consideration by a senate committee, potentially leaving it dead in the water for this legislative session.

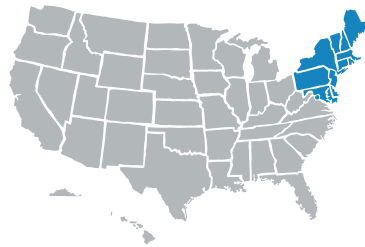
Launched in 2021, **Michigan** Reconnect has boosted adult enrollment at community colleges by 38% in the Wolverine State — or about 623 more students per campus, on average, according to a recent study.

The Michigan Community College Association, Detroit Regional Chamber and other organizations have recommended the state explore different streams of funding for dual enrollment programs to expand enrollment.

Five community colleges in **Ohio** will pilot eight-week academic terms, or "mini-esters" in hopes of catering to adult learners' needs.

A recent statewide survey by the **Wisconsin** Technical College System indicated that

about 66% of residents hold a favorable opinion of the schools, up from 52% in 2022.



## NORTHEAST REGION

**Maine** lawmakers narrowly passed a supplemental budget permanently funding the state's free community college program.

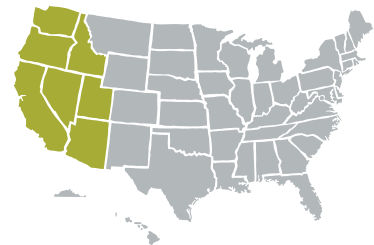
Six **Massachusetts** community colleges are partnering with employers across the state to launch new apprenticeship degree programs, an initiative supported by over \$6 million in grants from the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation and Accelerate the Future.

Enrolling in **New Jersey's** 18 community colleges leads to increased earnings for graduates, contributes \$12.8 billion annually to the state's economy, and supports more than 135,000 jobs, according to a new independent economic impact analysis. The activities of New Jersey community colleges, their students, and their graduates support one out of every 46 jobs in the New Jersey labor market, the analysis said.

**New York** Gov. Kathy Hochul added \$60 million to expand CUNY Reconnect, a free community college program for adult learners who are pursuing a degree in high-demand fields, to career paths including emergency management and air traffic control and transportation, and to adults obtaining a nursing degree even if they already completed a degree in a different discipline. Hochul also announced the expansion of child care services at 11 SUNY community colleges to include evenings

and weekends to better align with the schedules of student parents enrolled in high-demand programs and create additional spots for infants and toddlers.

The **Pennsylvania** Department of Education (PDE) awarded more than \$56 million to 13 community colleges to help fund short-term and long-term debt service projects, capital leases, and cash capital projects.



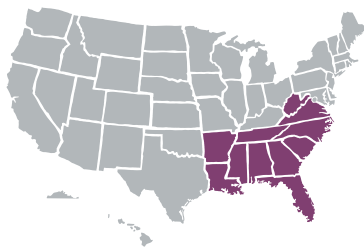
## PACIFIC REGION

Yavapai College in **Arizona** became the first community college in the nation to be approved for a three-year, reduced credit baccalaureate degree. A new partnership allows associate degree students at Moraine Park Technical College in Wisconsin to seamlessly transfer to Yavapai College upon completion of the program to complete their BASB fully online in eight-week courses.

**California** Community Colleges approved three bachelor's degree programs at Mesa, Moorpark, and Southwestern colleges, despite objections from California State University. Until now, top California community college officials, who have final decision-making power, have typically not approved degrees that face active objections from CSU campuses.

California State Treasurer Fiona Ma announced a statewide initiative to help eligible California community college students claim available CalKIDS Scholarships, connecting about 40,000 students with roughly \$20 million in funds.

**Washington** community college students could soon get free rides on public transit under a bill that advanced in the state House. The bill, introduced by Rep. Jamila Taylor (D-Federal Way), would establish a grant program under the state Department of Transportation.



## SOUTHERN REGION

**Alabama** Gov. Kay Ivey has signed legislation that will formally study bringing junior college football back to the state. House Joint Resolution 17 unanimously passed through the Alabama legislation, authorizing Ivey to form the Alabama Community College Football Study Commission, which will study the issue.

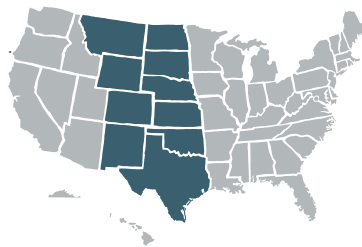
The U.S. Navy is investing \$30 million in the Alabama Community College System to expand maritime workforce training at four Alabama community colleges. The funding will enable the colleges to expand their submarine manufacturing and shipbuilding training programs.

Northwest **Arkansas** Community College (NWACC) in Bentonville developed a plan to make its campus more urban and walkable. Currently organized in a typical suburban layout, the goal is to transform NWACC into a 24-hour campus for living, working, learning, and playing.

Miami Dade College (MDC) in **Florida** and Intel Corporation announced a national expansion of the National Applied AI Consortium (NAAIC). As the lead institution of the NAAIC – a partnership among

MDC, Maricopa Community Colleges and Houston City College – MDC will now serve as the primary access point for community colleges nationwide seeking to leverage Intel’s AI for Workforce curriculum, resources and faculty professional development.

Senate Bill 2522, which establishes the Upskill **Mississippi** Grant Program, received near-unanimous bipartisan support in its originating chamber. If passed into law, it would allow Mississippians to learn a new trade or build upon existing labor expertise through a free, “workforce-aligned” program at a local community college.



## WESTERN REGION

A bill introduced by **Colorado** lawmakers would begin the process of unifying the state’s higher education department with numerous workforce development and labor programs. House Bill 1317 has bipartisan support and is the legislative vehicle for a major initiative Gov. Jared Polis introduced last year to form a new Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development. The bill would bring together over 100 programs and initiatives focused on higher education, workforce training, and employment.

Faculty members at regional public and community colleges in **Oklahoma** can no longer be granted tenure following an executive order by Gov. Kevin Stitt.

The **Texas** Higher Education Coordinating Board confirmed the agency will work in conjunction with the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Workforce Investment Council to identify Workforce Pell-eligible programs in areas of high-demand and high-wages.

The **Wyoming** Community College Commission voted unanimously to increase tuition by \$7 per credit hour, raising the current rate from \$105 to \$112 beginning in fall 2026.

*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).*

# FROM COUGAR TO JAGUAR

Coastal Bend College leaders detail how their Rural College Promise program reimagined transfer responsibility.



By Zachary Z. Suarez, Jerry Sanchez, Kevin Behr, Mercy Flynn, Velma Elizalde, Victor Gomez, Anna Marie Silvas, and Eloy Rodriguez

COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES HEAR A FAMILIAR story in conversations with local community members: A student successfully completes their coursework and earns an associate degree only to stall or stop after transfer. Credits don't always apply cleanly, the cost rises more than expected, and the momentum built at the community college begins to fade.

These challenges are especially present for rural students. Geographic distance limits four-year options, transportation and housing costs quickly add up, and students face uncertainty about whether continuing to a bachelor's degree is realistic for them. For many, transfer represents not just a change of institution, but a leap into the unknown. This reality raises a critical question for boards to consider: Is successful transfer really the end of a community college's responsibility, or should student success be defined by what happens next?

Most transfer agreements are designed to make sure credits transfer from one institution to another as required coursework rather than electives. They rarely account for whether the credits actually help students finish a bachelor's degree on time or at an affordable cost. Simply put, the agreement works on paper and provides a pathway for students, but it does not guarantee access or progress towards completing a bachelor's degree.

After students transfer, the sending institution often considers its role complete. Advising, financial support, and support services typically stop at the point of transfer, even though many students

may still need help navigating a new institution. As a result, no single institution feels fully responsible for what happens next. Rural students face even less choice for attending a four-year institution within a reasonable distance. The lack of choice can restrict academic options, limit competitive pricing, and force students to relocate if their preferred major is not offered locally.

Even when tuition rates are known, students often experience sudden increases in total costs after transfer. These can include higher tuition, loss of financial aid, new fees, housing and transportation expenses, and reduced access or more competitive jobs for part-time work. For many students, these unexpected costs become a barrier to continuing toward a bachelor's degree.

As discussions around transfer outcomes continued at Coastal Bend College (CBC), it became clear that this challenge could not be addressed through academic agreements alone. The issue touched the college's mission, long-term affordability commitments, and responsibility to rural students who had limited postsecondary options. While administrators could design pathways and negotiate partnerships, trustees were uniquely positioned to consider whether the institution's definition of student success truly aligned with its values.

With the expansion of Promise programs statewide, Coastal Bend College initiated conversations with South Texas College (STC), a regional peer institution that currently offers applied bachelor's degrees, to explore a new model of partnership.

CBC will launch its Cougar Promise program in fall 2026, while STC has operated a Promise program since 2022. Rather than developing a traditional transfer agreement, the institutions designed the Cougar-to-Jaguar Rural Promise Model to function as a coordinated Promise-to-Promise pathway. This model ensures guaranteed affordability, clearly defined eligibility requirements, and aligned advising from entry through bachelor's degree completion. Students who begin at CBC under the Cougar Promise will be able to transfer into an STC bachelor's program while continuing to benefit from STC's Promise program.

Because most of STC's bachelor's degrees are offered fully online, CBC has established on-campus laboratory and support spaces that allow students to complete upper-division coursework while remaining physically connected to a CBC campus. The central principle of this initiative is continuity of institutional responsibility. Students are not viewed as having exited CBC upon transfer, but rather as continuing students who remain supported through advising, facilities, and student success infrastructure.

For the Board of Trustees, this partnership reframes transfer not as an endpoint, but as a continuation of CBC's commitment to student success through degree completion. Trustees played a critical role in approving the partnership framework, ensuring that the model aligns with the college's mission, and confirming that financial and legal responsibilities are clearly defined. As the model was presented, trustees had to engage with several key questions, beginning with financial sustainability and whether the commitment could be maintained over time without creating unintended budget concerns. The board also had to consider risk and accountability to ensure that roles, responsibilities, and expectations between partner institutions were clear and enforceable.

To provide effective oversight, success will be monitored through a small set of practical indicators that reflect student progress beyond transfer. These include whether students continue enrolled after they move to the receiving institution and whether they persist toward bachelor's degree completion.

Before authorizing the Cougar-to-Jaguar Rural Promise Model, trustees asked for clear information to support decision-making. This included enrollment projections to understand potential scale, cost assumptions to assess long-term sustainability, and eligibility criteria to ensure the program aligned with CBC's mission. Trustees also examined how advising responsibilities would be coordinated and how student support would continue for students after transfer.

Boards considering similar models may find several lessons useful. First, transfer agreements alone are not affordability strategies. While articulation is important, access to a bachelor's degree requires explicit

attention to cost, advising continuity, and student support after transfer. Second, Promise programs do not need to end at the associate degree. With thoughtful design, they can be extended through partnerships that preserve momentum and reduce uncertainty for students.

Third, rural context matters. Colleges serving geographically dispersed students may need to think differently about partnerships, online delivery, and local support structures. Finally, shared accountability must be defined clearly. Trustees should expect roles, responsibilities, and measures of success to be articulated before approving new models.

By approaching transfer as a governance issue rather than a handoff between institutions, boards can help ensure that student success is measured not only by where students go next, but also by whether they ultimately reach their educational goals. In an era where boards are increasingly asked to define success beyond enrollment and completion metrics, Promise-to-Promise models offer one way to align mission, affordability, and long-term student outcomes.



Jerry Sanchez is Chair of the Coastal Bend College Board and has served on the CBC Board for five years. Kevin Behr is Vice Chair and has served on the CBC Board for two years. Mercy Flynn is Secretary and has served on the CBC Board for six years. Velma Elizalde has served on the CBC Board for four years. Victor Gomez has served on the CBC Board for 16 years. Anna Marie Silvas has served on the CBC Board for less than one year. Eloy Rodriguez has served on the CBC Board for six years. Dr. Zachary Z. Suarez has served as Coastal Bend College President since July 2025. All are residents of Bee County, Texas.

# Better Support, Better Outcomes



The most challenged students deserve the closest support, argues the president of higher education for Graduation Alliance.

by Donald Dement



**T**HE "OPEN DOOR" HAS LONG BEEN THE PROUD symbol of the American community college. But for many students, that door is a revolving one. While much institutional energy is focused on the high-visibility work of recruitment and enrollment, a quieter, more costly crisis persists in the shadows of the withdrawal data. In an era of shrinking budgets and fluctuating demographics, the most sophisticated fiscal strategy a college can employ is not found in new enrollments, but in the intensive, human-centered support of the students already taking courses.

### The Fiscal Math of Persistence

Every trustee and president knows the fundamental law of enrollment economics: it is significantly more expensive to recruit a new student than it is to retain an existing one. When a student at the highest risk — often those struggling financially and trying to balance full-time work, family obligations, and school — stops out, the loss is not merely an academic statistic. It is a total loss of the initial marketing investment, the financial aid processing costs, and the long-term tuition or FTE revenue that student represented.

For colleges with limited resources, "average" support is no longer sufficient. When we provide a standard level of advising to a student facing extraordinary life hurdles, we aren't being equitable. To ensure the most vulnerable learners receive the resources and support they need to thrive, colleges must pivot toward a "concierge" model of service. This is not a luxury; it is a defensive maneuver designed to keep students who would otherwise be lost on track and progressing toward completion.

### Compassionate Accountability and the Human Bridge

In the push for digital transformation, we risk losing the one element that actually moves the needle for at-risk students: human engagement. Technology can track a student's grade, but it cannot hear the exhaustion in a student's voice when their childcare falls through.

Intensive case management is built on the principle of compassionate accountability. It is a high-touch, concierge-level service that treats the student not as a number, but as a person in need of a navigator. This means weekly check-ins that go beyond "How are your classes?" to "How are you eating?" and "Do you have a ride to campus on Tuesday?"

Providing a single point of contact who understands students' specific challenges creates a sense of belonging that serves as a firewall against withdrawal. When a student knows a specific person is expecting them to succeed — and will call them if they don't show up — the likelihood of persistence skyrockets.

Take Georgia State University as an example. GSU moved to a proactive tracking system that alerts a dedicated advisor when a student hits a risk factor. The result? Their six-year graduation rate increased by more than 20 percentage points, according to a case study from the Association of Governing Boards.

This human bridge is what turns an institutional "support system" into a life-changing relationship.

### Strategic Allocation in a Resource-Constrained World

Colleges often hesitate to implement intensive case management because of the perceived cost of staffing. However, when viewed through the lens of enrollment preservation, the ROI becomes clear. By targeting intensive resources specifically toward the students most likely to stop out, colleges can optimize their limited budgets to achieve the highest possible impact on retention rates.

The goal is to move from a reactive model — where we intervene only after a student has failed a midterm — to a proactive, preventative model. This approach stabilizes the student's life before the crisis hits, ensuring they stay in the seat, stay in the system, and ultimately, stay on the path to program completion.

### The Path Forward

The challenge of the coming decade is more than just getting students into college. It's about ensuring they don't have to choose between their education and their survival. By prioritizing intensive case management, community college leaders can align their moral mission with their fiscal reality. We must invest in the students we have, providing the concierge support necessary to see them through to the finish line.

In doing so, we don't just save an enrollment. We honor the promise of the community college mission.



*Dr. Donald Dement is the president of higher education at Graduation Alliance. He can be reached at [donald.dement@graduationalliance.com](mailto:donald.dement@graduationalliance.com).*

*Graduation Alliance, an ACCT Corporate Council Member, works with institutions to provide scalable, intensive case management and support services for at-risk populations.*

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# 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).



# Legal Issues Impacting Community Colleges

Recent decisions on equal pay, religious and speech freedoms, AI use in arbitration, women’s health discrimination, workplace accommodations, and other legal issues that affect community colleges.

BY IRA MICHAEL SHEPARD, ACCT GENERAL COUNSEL

EEOC takes the position that one man paid more than any woman for the same job is a violation of the Equal Pay Act. In an amicus brief filed before the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission argued that it is not necessary to show a class of men are paid more than women for the same job.

**T**HE FOLLOWING LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE PAST SEVERAL months may impact the day-to-day operation of community colleges throughout the United States. 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.

**EEOC takes the position that one man paid more than any woman for the same job is a violation of the Equal Pay Act.** In an amicus brief filed before the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission argued that it is not necessary to show a class of men are paid more than women for the same job. Two other Courts of Appeals have already held that a single worker of the opposite sex paid more than



*“Follow your dreams—ideally in a field that will still require humans when you graduate.”*

a female worker performing the same job is a violation of the Equal Pay Act (*Cartee-Haring v. Cent Bucks County School District*, 3rd Cir. No. 25-02540, amicus brief filed 2/5/26).

In a separate case, the EEOC has taken the position before the Third Circuit Court of Appeals that the negligence standard should apply to employers accused of sex harassment when the perpetrator is a third party such as a student, customer, patient, or other third party. The case was filed against a university by a teaching assistant who accused a student of harassing her (*O'Neill v. Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania*, 3rd Cir. 25-03310, 2/10/26).

**Federal Appeals Court affirms teacher may sue on First Amendment and religious-freedom grounds after teachers' prayer and Bible study was banned.** The plaintiff had regularly engaged in religious activities with other teachers before school in Houston, Texas, before their practice was banned by the school because it took place in sight of students. The Court cited the Supreme Court's decision in *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, in which the high court rejected the proposition that a public school may ban an employee's religious expression merely because a student could view it (*Barber v. Rounds*, 5th Cir. No. 25-20125, 3/9/26).

This case could be applied in the community college context because they, like school districts, are public institutions subject to the reach of the First Amendment.

**Artificial intelligence (AI) use in arbitration is subject to criticism and possible state and federal limitations.** The American Arbitration Association has unveiled the voluntary use of AI in low-value, document-only construction cases with the launch of its "AI Arbitration" tool. Other arbitration agencies are also unveiling voluntary programs using AI tools to help arbitrators move more quickly. Early case law questions whether using such tools exceeds an arbitrator's authority in delegating decision making. Commentators also question whether AI-generated arbitration decisions will be enforceable under the Federal Arbitration Act (FAA).

In late January, the California Senate passed a bill prohibiting arbitrators from delegating authority to AI-generated tools; at the time of publication the bill was pending approval by the full California Assembly. Other states are considering similar measures. Enforceability has yet to be tested in federal court under the Federal Arbitration Act. The one case brought in federal court was dismissed because it did not arise under the FAA and there was no federal-question jurisdiction. It also did not meet the \$75,000 minimum controversy standard for diversity cases.

**States begin adding menopause as a protected class under antidiscrimination statutes, requiring disability accommodations when requested.** The Virginia legislature passed a bill that would add menopause and perimenopause to protection under the state's anti-discrimination law. The new law would also require employers to provide disability accommodations under the state's disability discrimination statute when they are requested. If the bill is signed into law by the governor, Virginia would become the second state to

add menopause and perimenopause to disability protection under state statute.

Rhode Island became the first state to adopt such a measure last year. Its law protects and adds menopause and perimenopause to the list of protected classes under the state anti-discrimination statute and provides for disability-related accommodation requests. A similar bill was passed by the California legislature last year but vetoed by the governor, who called for a narrower proposal.

Separately, attorneys in many states have sued on behalf of menopause and perimenopause plaintiffs under existing state statutes on the grounds of sex, age, and/or disability discrimination. Those suits are subject to individual state court interpretation of the applicable state laws. Efforts to add menopause to protection under federal anti-discrimination protection have stalled in Congress.

**Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to limit proactive workplace-safety inspections in coming year due to loss of safety inspectors.** According to Department of Labor records published by Bloomberg, OSHA has lost more than 100 safety inspectors due to government cutbacks and resignations since the beginning of the Trump Administration. This translates into a total of approximately 1,700 inspectors responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of 144 million workers across the United States.

Traditionally, the agency has inspected known hazards and enforced possible OSHA citations and workplace safety failures. Inspections in the past have included routine and periodical proactive checks to prevent accidents from occurring. Commentators conclude that the reduction of labor will limit OSHA inspections to those responding to workplace accidents, fatalities, injuries, and complaints, risking injuries to workers that formerly may have been preventable.

**Employer's refusal to accommodate change in work schedule for employee with autism spectrum disorder leads to jury trial.** An Amazon employee who was unable to drive due to autism had successfully worked an overnight shift because his carpool arrangements enabled him to get to work on time. The employee claimed he was unable to arrange a different carpool to meet the requirements of his new schedule. The employer sought to dismiss the case, claiming that it proposed several reasonable alternative accommodations. The judge ruled that the plaintiff was entitled to a jury trial over the issue of whether the employer did enough to accommodate the plaintiff's request and whether the request posed an undue hardship for the employer (*Marquart v. Amazon.com Services LLC*, 2026 BL 20054 M.D. Pa. 1:23-cv 01095, 1/22/26).



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

# EXECUTIVE SEARCH

The staff and consultants of the Association of Community College Trustees are pleased to have assisted in the search for the following community college executive officers.



EAST LOS ANGELES COLLEGE, LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

## DR. MONTE E. PEREZ

President

“East Los Angeles College is a cornerstone of opportunity for the communities it serves, and Dr. Perez is exceptionally well-positioned to lead the college into its next chapter as the next ELAC President. During his time as Interim President, Dr. Perez provided steady leadership and helped advance key priorities that position ELAC for continued success. He is a proven leader with a strong record of advancing equity, strengthening academic pathways, and building meaningful partnerships. I am excited to continue working with him to support ELAC students and elevate the college’s impact.”

– **DR. ALBERTO J. ROMÁN**  
CHANCELLOR, LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

DINÉ COLLEGE, ARIZONA

## DR. DEBORAH JACKSON-DENNISON

President



“Her deep commitment to culturally responsive education, inclusive governance, and thoughtful financial stewardship aligns strongly with the college’s mission to serve the Diné Nation and surrounding communities. We look forward to working collaboratively with her as we advance student success and institutional sustainability.”

– **JANET SLOWMAN**  
CHAIR, DINÉ COLLEGE BOARD OF REGENTS



MINNESOTA NORTH COLLEGE, MINNESOTA

## DR. JESSALYN SABIN

President

“Dr. Sabin is a proven leader in higher education. As a member of Minnesota North’s leadership team, she has built strong, supportive connections with the campuses of Minnesota North, as well as with employers and the communities of the Iron Range. She exhibits through her work great leadership traits and has the experience and expertise to assume the presidency of Minnesota North College.”

– **SCOTT OLSON**  
CHANCELLOR, MINNESOTA STATE



[www.ACCTSearches.org](http://www.ACCTSearches.org)

# EXECUTIVE SEARCH

The staff and consultants of the Association of Community College Trustees are pleased to have assisted in the search for the following community college executive officers.

CASPER COLLEGE, WYOMING

**DR. KEVIN HARTSHORN**

Vice President of Academic Affairs



"Kevin's background and experience made him the ideal choice for this role. I look forward to working with Kevin as we continue to align everything we do at Casper College with a 'students first' focus."

- **BRANDON KOSINE, Ph.D.**  
*PRESIDENT, CASPER COLLEGE*



MOHAVE COLLEGE, ARIZONA

**DR. CHRISTIN HOLLIDAY**

President

"Dr. Holliday brings a strong background in student success, enrollment growth, strategic leadership and community connection. The Board was impressed by her thoughtful approach, her understanding of the mission, and her commitment to access, affordability, and opportunity. We are excited to welcome her to Mohave College and the communities we serve."

- **DR. JULIE BARE**  
*CHAIR, MOHAVE COLLEGE BOARD OF GOVERNORS*



[www.ACCTSearches.org](http://www.ACCTSearches.org)

# RETREATS & WORKSHOPS

Thank you to the following members who used ACCT Services between October 2025 and April 2026.

Aims Community College, Colo.	Lee College, Texas
Alamo Colleges, Texas	Metropolitan Community College, Mo.
Cecil College, Md.	Midland College, Texas
Chaffey College, Calif.	Montgomery College, Md.
Cochise College, Ariz.	Mott Community College, Mich.
College of Lake County, Ill.	Mt. San Jacinto College, Calif.
Crowder College, Mo.	Mount Wachusett Community College, Mass.
Cuyahoga Community College, Ohio	Neosho County Community College, Kans.
Dodge City Community College, Kans.	North Idaho College, Idaho
El Paso Community College, Texas	Palo Verde College, Calif.
Everett Community College, Wash.	Palomar College, Calif.
Florence-Darlington Technical College, S.C.	Piedmont Community College, N.C.
Garden City Community College, Kans.	Polk State College, Fla.
Gillette College, Wyo.	Riverside Community College District, Calif.
Greenfield Community College, Mass.	SUNY Erie Community College, N.Y.
H. Lavity Stoutt Community College, Virgin Islands	Vance-Granville Community College, N.C.
Harper College, Ill.	Ventura County Community College District, Calif.
Howard Community College, Md.	Western Iowa Tech Community College, Iowa
Illinois Central College, Ill.	
Jefferson College, Mo.	

*\*Five institutions that had engaged with ACCT prior to October 1 were inadvertently omitted from the fall 2025 issue of Trustee Quarterly*



Find out more about board retreats and workshops  
at [www.acct.org/governance-services](http://www.acct.org/governance-services)



# interface

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ACCT Professional Board Staff Network

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## Driving Change, Leading with Care: Where Vision Meets Compassion

BY REATHA BELL  
PBSN PRESIDENT

AS WE ENTER SPRING 2026, I EXTEND WARM GREETINGS ON BEHALF of the **Professional Board Staff Network (PBSN) Executive Committee** to the dedicated professionals who support presidents, boards of trustees, chancellors, and administrators at their institutions.

This year, our theme — **“Driving Change, Leading with Care: Where Vision Meets Compassion”** — reminds us that leadership is most effective when guided by both foresight and empathy. PBSN members, as executive assistants and liaisons to presidents, boards and trustees, and chancellors, are trusted partners who facilitate communication, coordination, and continuity. Your work ensures that institutional governance is both visionary and compassionate, benefiting leaders, campuses, and communities alike.

PBSN is committed to **strengthening professional support** in higher education through regional sessions and development opportunities at the **ACCT Annual Conference**. These programs enhance members’ ability to serve with excellence, integrity, and foresight, equipping you to support leadership that drives positive change while caring for the people it affects.



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



The PBSN Executive Committee provides strategic guidance for our network. We appreciate the dedication of our committee members:

- **President:** Reatha Bell
- **Immediate Past President:** Shelby Foster
- **Vice President:** Andrea Wittig
- **Secretary:** Katie Riggs
- **Communications Coordinator:** Venissa Earhart
- **Central Region Coordinator:** Benita Duncan
- **Northeast Region Coordinator:** Evelyn Cordova
- **Pacific Region Coordinator:** Chelley Sadowsky
- **Western Region Coordinator:** Denise Wilson
- **Senior Advisor to the President:** Cynthia Gruskos

Their leadership ensures PBSN remains a vital, forward-thinking network that empowers members and strengthens the institutions we serve.

We look forward to gathering at the **ACCT Annual Conference in Chicago** in October 2026, offering PBSN members opportunities for professional growth, networking, and meaningful dialogue with higher education professionals nationwide.

Throughout Spring 2026, let us continue **driving change and leading with care**, building stronger support systems that empower our leaders, uphold our institutional values, and enhance the impact of governance in our communities and colleges.

We anticipate a productive and inspiring quarter ahead.



PBSN Executive Committee. Not pictured: Cynthia Gruskos.

# Engage Your Board. Advance Your College.

**ACCT Board Services** provide opportunities to strengthen the unique role of board members and to develop an effective board.

## Services Include

- Retreats
- Board self-assessment
- Presidential evaluations
- Succession planning
- Institutional leadership analysis
- Board policy review
- Mediation and conflict resolution

**Call to learn more about ways to engage your board and make use of each trustee's skills and expertise.**

## Contact:

Colleen Allen  
*Director of Retreats and Evaluation Services*  
callen@acct.org

202-775-6490 | [www.acct.org/governance-services](http://www.acct.org/governance-services)

## 2027 Candidates for the ACCT Board of Directors

### REGIONAL DIRECTOR

(1) Three-Year Term in Each Region

(1) Two-Year Partial Term in the Northeast Region

*The following is the slate of nominees:*

#### Central Region

**Kathleen Bruinsma\***

*Grand Rapids Community College, MI*

#### Northeast Region

**Allen K. Williams\***

*Monroe Community College, NY*

#### Northeast Region

**Two-Year Partial Term**

**Reza Jafari\***

*Chesapeake College, MD*

#### Pacific Region

**José Alcalá\***

*Riverside Community College District, CA*

#### Southern Region

**Terry W. Atchley\***

*South Florida State College, FL\**

#### Western Region

**Carol Scott\***

*Del Mar College, TX*

### DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE

(3) Three-Year Terms

*The following is the slate of nominees:*

**Maureen Banks\***

*Parkland College, IL*

**Donald D. Dantzer, Jr.\***

*Madison Area Technical College, WI*

**Trinh Nguyen\***

*Bunker Hill Community College, MA*

**Keyatta Priester\***

*Aiken Technical College, SC*

**Andrew Speer\***

*Mt. Hood Community College, OR*

**Oscar Valladares\***

*Río Hondo College, CA*

**Olivia Zepeda\***

*Arizona Western College, AZ*

*\*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, 2026**

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 2026 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, 2026, or by electronic mail (preferred method) by close of business on July 1, 2026. 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.

# ACCT NOW

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## Community College Insights & Perspectives

ACCT NOW is the go-to resource for issues affecting community colleges. This new online publication offers original research, reporting, and of-the-moment legislative updates.



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