



Congress Preview: An American Promise, A Call to Action

BY MARK TONER

WITH THE THEME “THE AMERICAN PROMISE,” THE 39th ANNUAL ACCT LEADERSHIP CONGRESS will bring together trustees from across the nation in New York City — a place where countless generations have gone to pursue their dreams. But the focus of this year’s Congress is not the bright lights of Broadway, where the Oct. 29–Nov. 1 conference will be held at the New York Marriott Marquis.

Instead, this year’s Congress will focus on the persistent poverty that still exists in big cities and rural pockets throughout the nation — and on the power of education to help people escape it. Community college trustees must “help to assure that the historical commitment to affordability, accessibility, and accountability is firmly cemented throughout college programs and services,” says Lynda Stanley, Chair of ACCT’s Board of Directors and the Brunswick (NC) Community College Board of Trustees.

A Call to Action

Appropriately entitled “A Call to Action,” a Town Hall meeting on Oct. 30 will allow participants to discuss the role community colleges play in fighting poverty amid a growing number of socioeconomic challenges, including the

growing economic gap, the “digital divide” limiting access to technology, the “missing minority male,” and the growing need for remedial education. ACCT will also release at the Congress a publication providing an overview of the issues facing community colleges as they work to address poverty (see pages 32-33 for an excerpt).

Combating poverty and increasing opportunities for education requires effective governance in a wide range of areas, and throughout the Congress, nearly 90 sessions will explore pressing issues in five tracks:

- Student access and educational success
- Workforce development and economic vitality
- Addressing the equity gap
- Institutional quality and the campus of the future
- Effective governance

These themes will also be emphasized by keynote speakers throughout the Congress, including Hilary Pennington, director of special initiatives for U.S. programs at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; College Board President and former West Virginia Governor Gaston Caperton; U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission Commissioner Stuart J. Ishimaru; the Ford Foundation's Alison R. Bernstein, vice president of the Knowledge, Creativity and Freedom Program, and Gregory M. Anderson, higher education policy program officer; and Philip A. Berry, managing principal of Berry, Block and Bernstein LLC, a global management consulting, executive coaching, and training practice, and formerly vice president for global workplace initiatives for Colgate-Palmolive. (See pages 24-31 for interviews with the keynote speakers.)

In addition, special interactive opportunities bookend the Congress, with pre-Congress Academies and Saturday's roundtable discussions and focus group providing opportunities for attendees to learn from and discuss critical issues with colleagues from across the country.

Pre-Congress Academies and Session

On Wed., Oct. 29, four pre-Congress Academies will focus on key areas of interest to trustees:

- **ACCT's Governance Leadership Institute** offers a one-day primer on building leadership teams. An abbreviated version of the Institute's acclaimed training sessions, "The Crucial Leadership Role of the Chair and the Executive Committee of the Board" provides an opportunity for board leadership, including the chair, vice chair, other officers, trustees, and the president, to share a leadership training experience. Focusing on the "Eight Principles of Effective Boards," the primer focuses on techniques for team building, board/CEO relationships, the characteristics of highly functioning boards, dealing with differences, and a toolkit for being an effective board chair.
- **What Trustees Need to Know About Presidential Contracts and Conducting the Presidential Evaluation** focuses on the key role trustees play in hiring and evaluating community college presidents, as well as ensuring that contracts strike the proper balance between protecting the interests of the institution and those of its top executive. The session will provide information on preparing contracts, the components of an effective contract, and the process for renewing contracts, as well as how these necessary functions can help strengthen the relationship between a board and the CEO.
- **Effective Board Governance: Policy Governance, Traditional Models, and Adaptations** focuses on governance issues unique to community colleges. Speakers will focus on elements of effective governance, including the Policy Governance model, which helps boards focus on the end goals of their organization instead of the means by which

to get there. Traditional models and other alternatives will also be explored, with an emphasis on agendas, policy manuals, bylaws, and operating procedures.

- **Pre-Congress Session: Crisis Preparedness and Response** will discuss issues related to campus security, including the arming of campus police officers, the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which was unveiled in 2004 as a national framework for crisis situations, and the policy implications for trustees seeking to ensure a safe campus environment.

Participants are encouraged to sign up for the pre-Congress Academies in advance. More information is included on the Congress registration form (available at www.acct.org/events/annualcongress/08/forms.php).

Wrapping Up By Interacting

The Congress wraps up Saturday with opportunities for attendees to interact with their peers in small groups and learn more about how to get involved with ACCT.

During the morning roundtable discussions, resource leaders will lead discussions among small groups of attendees, who will move from table to table every 30 minutes to explore topics including:

- An awards program developed by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board of Trustees to recognize outstanding teaching;
- Strategies for hiring the best president and/or chancellor;
- Planning for professional board staff succession;
- Minority male mentoring;
- Creating a "virtual hospital" to assist nursing students, a tactic employed by Queensborough Community College (NY) to increase funding from area businesses and hospitals, as well to as improve communication and safety for its nursing students, three-quarters of whom were born outside of the United States; and
- Choosing a "Generation X" president, as the Warren County Community College (NJ) board did when it hired a 33-year-old president in 2003.

Along with the roundtables, a focus group discussion will explore "How to Get Involved with ACCT: ACCT Staff Working for You." During the discussion, attendees will learn key ways of becoming involved with the Association, including becoming an associate committee member or board member, submitting Congress proposals, nominating someone for an ACCT award, or taking advantage of the many services offered by ACCT's Board Leadership Services department.

Following the final keynote speech, the annual changing of the guard will introduce ACCT's incoming chair, Arthur Anthonisen, trustee at Orange County Community College (NY), who will take the gavel as Congress attendees return to their colleges nationwide, reenergized and ready to tackle the challenges facing them and their peers. ■