

ACCT LEADERSHIP CONGRESS KEYNOTE SPEAKERS  
SET THE STAGE FOR CRITICAL DISCOURSE

# Leadership & Learning



Gregory M. Anderson



Alison R. Bernstein



Philip A. Berry



The Honorable Gaston Caperton

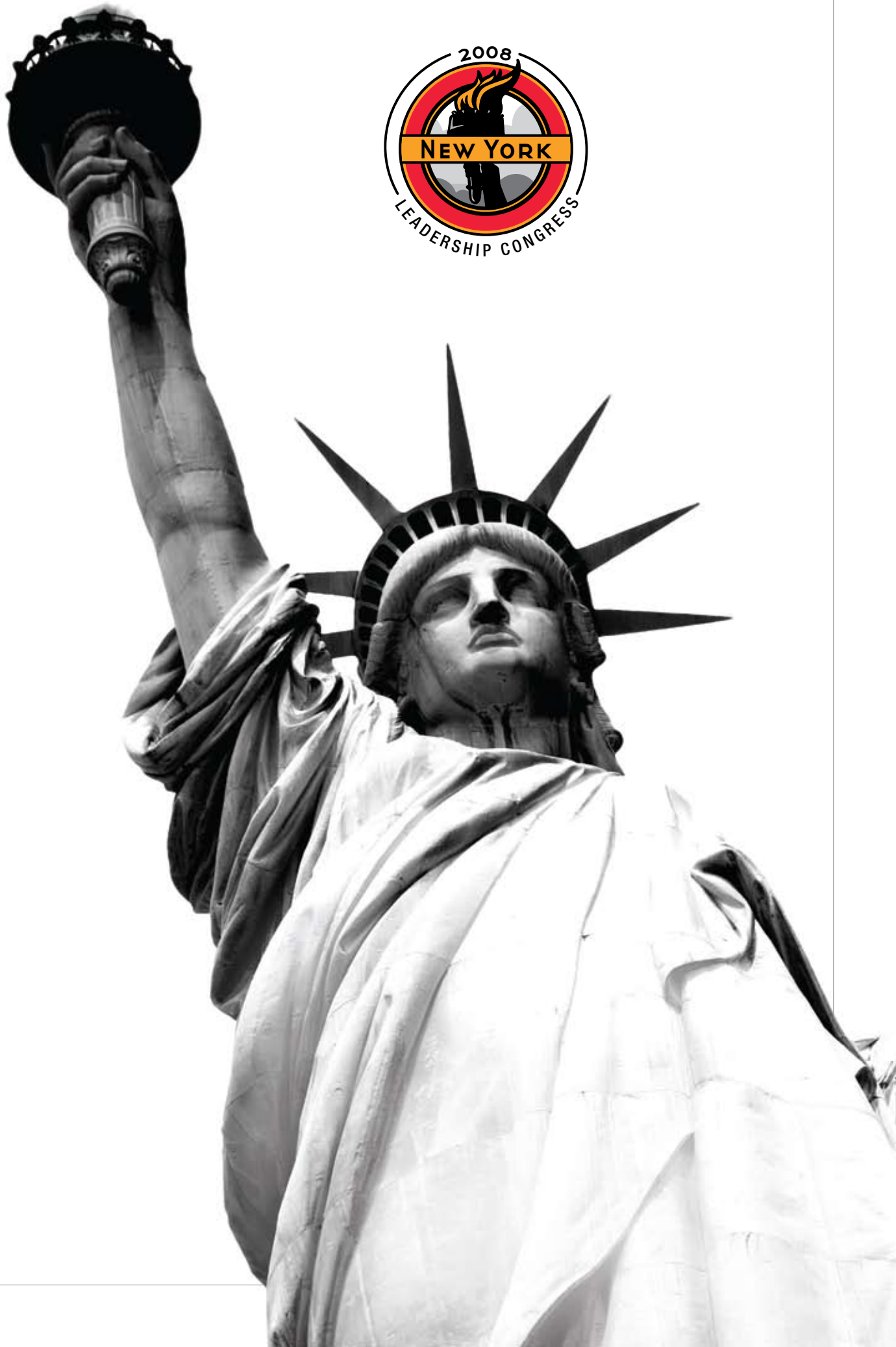


Stuart J. Ishimaru



Hilary Pennington

ONE IS A FORMER GOVERNOR WHO HELPED TURN AROUND HIS STATE'S education system. Another worked to bring talented people of all backgrounds to a former Fortune 500 company. One has pushed a federal agency to renew its efforts on race discrimination issues, while others work with two of the premier foundations that help to advance education and access to it by minorities and disadvantaged people. In the pages that follow, the keynote speakers of ACCT's 39th Annual Leadership Congress share insights on the role of community colleges in a changing world, the top issues facing trustees, and ways to improve both access and outcomes for impoverished and minority students. These remarkable leaders have been asked to address issues in higher education to foster discourse. We appreciate their candid, engaging, and sometimes-provocative opinions introduced within these pages and continued at Congress. Let the dialogue begin.





## “COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE **ENGINES OF OPPORTUNITY** FOR STUDENTS TO BE MORE ENGAGED AND EFFECTIVE CITIZENS.”

Alison R. Bernstein, Ford Foundation

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### Alison R. Bernstein, Ford Foundation

Bernstein has served as vice president of the Ford Foundation's Knowledge, Creativity, and Freedom Program since 1996. She provides leadership for the foundation's work in the U.S. and internationally in the fields of education and scholarship, arts and culture, media, religion, and sexuality. Bernstein co-authored *Melting Pots and Rainbow Nations: Conversations about Difference in the United States and South Africa* in 2002 and is recognized as an authority on issues related to students who transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions, access to higher education for women and minorities, diversity on campus, and the impact of women's studies on society. She has served on the board of trustees of Vassar College and currently serves as a trustee at Bates College.

During the ACCT Congress general session luncheon, Bernstein will be joined by **Gregory M. Anderson, higher education policy program officer, Ford Foundation**. Anderson oversees research on access, equity, and affordability in the U.S., and is responsible for the Institute for International Education's fellowship program.

**Q:** You have an extensive history working with minorities and the disadvantaged. What would you say are the most pressing issues facing these groups when it comes to higher education?

First and most important is transferability into four-year colleges. For many who want to attain a baccalaureate degree, this is an arduous and often frustrating journey. For me and the Ford Foundation, nothing could be more important than eliminating roadblocks, bureaucracy, and barriers that make that transition difficult. Articulation agreements in which courses are uniformly numbered would help, and there are some state models that do that. We need to look at this more carefully.

I'd also say that financial aid opportunities for students who want to transfer into four-year colleges are very problematic, because a lot of community college students are unprepared and spend a lot of their financial aid allocation on remedial courses, and by the time they are able to go to a four-year college, they've used up all their money. That's true for all who are economically disadvantaged, but especially true for minority students.

**Q:** The Ford Foundation's Knowledge, Creativity, and Freedom Program Web page states that “there is a profound desire to better understand the world, to connect more deeply with others, to come to terms with multiple and conflicting values, and to find more meaningful ways to participate fully as citizens.” What can community colleges do to address these needs?

The great advantage of a community college education is its responsiveness to community — and by that I mean its location, its understanding that it's there to serve students from [local] communities. That advantage can be a great disadvantage...it may result in a homogenized education. For me — and I know this will probably be provocative — I'd argue that community colleges not only have to serve communities of their own, but also help students to understand communities that are different from their own — communities from different points of view geographically, religiously, that have different cultural norms. There's a tendency at community colleges — because students are only on campus for as long as it takes to take a course — that they don't get this experience of difference in the ways that students who are on campus for a greater period of time would. I think community colleges must be much more intentional in exposing students to each other.

**Q:** How is the growing economic divide affecting education?

There is still a tremendous gap between the poorest students' opportunities to go on to higher education and those of the wealthiest. That hasn't changed; it's plateaued. Students in the lowest 20 percent socioeconomically are seven times less likely to go to college than students in the highest 20 percent.

**Q:** Based upon your experience and knowledge, what would you say are the priority areas for those who govern community colleges?

The number-one priority community college [boards] should focus on is accountability to students — making sure that the institution that enrolled them doesn't leave them hanging. Second most important is service to community: recognize what needs are not being met in the community and work with students to help meet [them] — not by offering programs which are dead ends from a workforce point of view, but by helping students get a rung on the ladder of economic independence.

## “GOING TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE GAVE ME ADVANTAGES THAT I NEVER WOULD HAVE HAD OTHERWISE.”

Philip A. Berry, Berry Block and Bernstein LLC

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### Philip A. Berry, Berry Block and Bernstein LLC, vice chairman of the board of trustees, City University of New York

Philip A. Berry is the managing principal of Berry Block and Bernstein LLC (B3), a global management consulting, executive coaching, and training practice. B3 specializes in leadership training, global talent management, global diversity, innovation, team building, corporate social responsibility, employee relations effectiveness, and affirmative action compliance.

He previously served as vice president of Global Workplace Initiatives for Colgate-Palmolive, where he focused on enhancing Colgate's efforts to attract and retain the best people from a diverse and broad base of global talent, and to create an inclusive work environment. Prior to joining Colgate, Berry acquired broad human resources expertise at Procter & Gamble, at Digital Equipment, and the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority.

Berry was appointed to the Business Leadership Council of the City University of New York (CUNY), and is on the Mayor's Panel for Education Policy. He also serves as vice chairman of the board of trustees for City University, which has responsibility for the 23 colleges within the New York City area, and as acting chairman of the CUNY Construction Fund.

**Q:** You hold an associate's degree from Manhattan Community College. How did your community college experience factor into your subsequent achievements?

The community college gave me an excellent foundation for the skills, knowledge, and languages that I use — I learned Spanish and French in community college, which helped me from a global standpoint. I got an associate's degree in marketing, which helped when I went on to get a BA in sociology, and then a master's in social work. I grew up in Brooklyn, in a predominantly African-American neighborhood called Crown Heights. Going to a community college in Manhattan gave me more exposure to other races and cultures. I came from a working-class community, and going to community college gave me advantages that I never would have had otherwise.

**Q:** As vice chair of the City University of New York's board of trustees, you know firsthand the opportunities and challenges that affect educational

governing boards. What do you perceive as the greatest challenges and opportunities faced today by higher education trustees?

Finances are a top priority — how to finance the rising cost of living, how to finance a number of programs that we want to put in place and still make public education available. This issue is compounded by the political and social pressures on government. How do you get money for colleges? One often-overlooked answer is that you need to get alumni involved, just like the larger private schools do. The biggest challenge in doing this is to develop giving programs.

Innovation and sustained relevance is a major concern. If a college doesn't offer viable services, then it shouldn't exist. Colleges and courses need to be vibrant and meet the needs of students; colleges have to have mechanisms to meet those needs. Community colleges are right for that — mandated to be immediately practical and relevant to people.

Community colleges are part of the community and therefore should do things to involve the community and meet its needs. For example, can the college open up the pool to the community so it's not just sitting there over the summer? How about extending hours at night to fit more people?

The primary purpose of community colleges is to graduate individuals [who] meet the professional demands of their community or industry. I've been surprised that the graduation rate of community colleges is not that high — for several reasons — and I think that's appalling. We have to find a way to re-attract people who have left; we need to find out why people have left and find a way to bring them back to graduate.

I'd like to see the educational system change so community colleges wouldn't have to do so much remedial education. We need to partner with public schools to ensure their efficacy; providing remedial education is a drain on resources that could be better used. And the community college's reputation as a remedial educator makes the degree less competitive.

American community colleges are a novel concept in that we provide practical skills for individuals to do things. On the other hand, we need to realize that community colleges don't need to do all things for all people, while still keeping standards high.

**Q:** All your experience has culminated in your current role as a global management consultant specializing in diversity, innovation, team building,



## “THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS WHEN IT COMES TO SERVING DIVERSE GROUPS OF STUDENTS.”

Gaston Caperton, The College Board

social responsibility, and affirmative action compliance. What advice can you offer to community college trustees in these areas?

It's important for boards of trustees to understand and develop a mission statement — sometimes we're driven by budgets. It is important not to lose sight of our mission, to adhere to it.

I feel that boards should include diversity that mirrors the marketplace — Asians, Hispanics, Women, African-Americans, sometimes even clergy. When boards have that representation, it allows them to address the needs of the community.

Ultimately, a board is a team. It works well or it doesn't work well. How do you ensure that the decision-making mechanisms are more effective? Boards must concentrate on dynamics between board members in order to be effective.

We should think about how we can innovate. Organizations sometimes talk about keeping things going, not keeping things fresh. Colleges also need to think about their brand. This will affect the marketplace and the degree that people leave with — they will leave with pride because that school represents something.

Social responsibility is more than just “going green” — colleges should take leadership, whether it has to do with energy savings, providing education, or other important social responsibilities. [Doing so] makes it possible for community colleges to serve as a beacon within the community, and also to show that big ideas are coming out of community colleges.

Many people look at affirmative action and say, “let's produce a report.” Affirmative action programs should provide an opportunity to evaluate staff and faculty, as well as the mechanisms to attract, recruit, develop, and promote people of diverse backgrounds where they otherwise would not be. How can we improve diversity and offer truly equal opportunities to everyone? The board should ask this question, and on more than just an annual basis.

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### Gaston Caperton, The College Board

Gaston Caperton is the eighth president of the College Board, a not-for-profit membership association that consists of 5,400 of the nation's leading schools, colleges, and universities. As the College Board's president since 1999, Caperton has led efforts to update the SAT, elevate the importance of writing, expand low-income

student access to academic rigor, promote college affordability, and increase opportunities for all students to achieve college success.

As governor of West Virginia from 1989 to 1997, Caperton transformed the state through his ambitious education reform agenda. Under his leadership, the state invested more than \$800 million in school construction and modernization, and West Virginia's average teacher salary jumped from 49th to 31st in the country. Caperton's vision for educational technology earned national acclaim, including top rankings in *Education Week* and the Computerworld Smithsonian Award for Education.

**Q:** What unique challenges would you say face community colleges today?

I believe that community colleges are one of the most important and valuable institutions in the United States — not just one of the most important educational institutions, but one of the most important institutions overall. Nevertheless, they face some difficult challenges. The College Board recently convened a national commission on community colleges, composed of community college leaders throughout the country. Its recently released report expressed these challenges well. First, a serious mismatch exists between the many jobs community colleges are expected to do and the resources provided to get those jobs done. Community colleges have the broadest mission of all higher education institutions, but they also need adequate resources to continue to do this work effectively.

Second, community colleges' commitment to student access must be matched with a commitment to student success and completion. Although one of the defining characteristics of community colleges is its open admissions policy — a policy that no other higher education segment can claim — we must also be sure that the students we bring through this open door have access to the courses and services they will need to complete their educational objectives.

Finally, policymakers are often not fully aware of the effectiveness of community colleges because current methods for measuring higher education productivity do not capture well the work of these institutions or the students that attend them. Moreover, “success” on current accountability measures is defined as the completion of a degree or certificate, or transfer to a four-year institution, yet the educational goals of community college students vary widely. For example, some individuals

**“TRUSTEES NEED TO BE COGNIZANT OF HOW LIFE AROUND THEM HAS CHANGED AND HOW THAT AFFECTS THE PROGRAMS THAT COLLEGES OFFER.”**

Stuart J. Ishimaru, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

enroll at a community college for a single course to upgrade a specific job skill, perhaps to earn a promotion; others enroll for personal enrichment alone. The College Board is working with ACCT and AACC on a project to define a set of metrics that may be helpful to community colleges in better reflecting the important work that these institutions are doing.

**Q:** What advice can you offer to community college trustees that will help to overcome these challenges?

Boards of trustees are pivotal players in advancing the success of community colleges. They develop the strategic direction for their campuses and provide an important external perspective. Given that most trustees are leaders within their states and communities, they are in an influential position to inform legislators, governors, and other policymakers about the important role that community colleges play in the economic and cultural health of their regions.

But trustees also serve their colleges by highlighting how political leaders and the public view community colleges. For example, trustees are in a perfect position to provide a reality check to campus faculty and staff about how the [accountability] debate might influence their work, while also working with them to craft useful ways to respond.

**Q:** The College Board has made significant efforts to ensure that the SAT and other standardized tests are fair to culturally, ethnically, economically, and otherwise diverse students. What specific lessons have you learned in this process that you think could benefit community college governing boards?

The SAT is one of the most rigorously researched and tested tests in the world, and all SAT questions undergo an extensive review process to ensure that they are fair for all students. A foundation of our work is that there are no shortcuts when it comes to serving diverse groups of students. In the same way the SAT program is able to take those important steps necessary to ensure fairness and be inclusive, community colleges must have the financial support to allow them to take the necessary steps to assure success among the diverse populations they serve.

**Q:** What should higher education governing boards do to ensure student access to community college education, especially for students with minimal financial resources?

Trustees should continue to keep their colleges open to as many students as possible. A recent report from Jobs for the Future noted that for the U.S. to keep its competitive edge, we will need to increase the rate at which we produce AA and BA graduates by 37 percent. The only way we will meet that goal is if we reach students who have been underrepresented or underserved in higher education. Community colleges are in a perfect position to help our country by training many students who might not otherwise have access to a college education.

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**Stuart J. Ishimaru, U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

Stuart Ishimaru has been a commissioner of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) since 2003. As a member of the Commission, he participates in matters including the development and approval of enforcement policies, authorization of litigation, and approval of agency regulations. Additionally, he issues Commissioner's charges of discrimination.

Ishimaru has worked with his colleagues in pushing the Commission to focus on large, systemic cases and in reinvigorating the agency's work on race discrimination issues. He was instrumental in the Commission's adoption of groundbreaking guidance on gender discrimination against workers who have caregiving responsibilities. He opposed the Commission's actions to weaken age discrimination protections and suppress collection of full data on workers of two or more races, as well as efforts to outsource and reorganize key EEOC functions.

He previously served as deputy assistant attorney general in the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice, as the acting staff director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and on the professional staffs of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights and two House Armed Services Subcommittees of the U.S. Congress.

**Q:** Why do you think it's so important to take a large, systemic view of diversity issues?

I came to the EEOC as a longtime civil-rights lawyer, and I see civil rights as being interconnected on so many levels, such as ensuring equal opportunities in housing, education, and employment — areas in which there has been discrimination



“UNTIL WE COMMIT TO A RIGOROUS APPROACH TO IMPROVEMENT,  
NONE OF US IS DOING ENOUGH TO **EXPAND ACCESS** TO OPPORTUNITY.”

Hilary Pennington, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

in the past. Community colleges really are a fundamental part of our educational system, especially for minorities, women, and students from low-income backgrounds. For many people, community college is the entry point into the larger system, and the beginning of the education they're going to need to succeed in the system.

**Q:** How do you think community colleges can address diversity issues institutionally?

It's always important to look at whether you're serving your actual constituency: people in your community. A good question to ask is [whether] you are responding to what students need and what employers are demanding in the workplace. Good community colleges do that. But in some cases, the same old stuff is being offered, rather than the college being responsive to what people really need. This might be driven by budget and other real limitations, but in order to make sure the college lives up to its potential, you have to understand and know what the constituencies want.

**Q:** How can they do that?

They can ask. You need to ask in order to make sure it's not just a top-down operation. You have to be responsive and listen to students, employers, or any other end user, and then you have to ask how you meet specific needs of specific communities with limited budgets and other resources.

**Q:** How do you think community college governing boards can expand opportunities for disadvantaged students and help make overall progress in social equity?

I think the first step should be to make sure you know your constituency. So many places around the country have seen tremendous changes...new people move into the community who bring different backgrounds, cultures, languages, and some may not speak English as a first language. Trustees need to be cognizant of how life around them has changed and how that affects the programs that colleges offer. There may be people who are hidden in plain sight, who are there but not necessarily seen by people in the community. Trustees have the task of ensuring that these people have educational

resources provided to meet their needs, and not just the standard menu of options. But the first step is to know the needs of the community.

**Q:** A lot of people are talking about how the increasingly global economy is affecting and affected by higher education. How do you think community colleges fit into this dialogue, considering cultural differences and workforce needs?

Having had a long run of prosperity, we as a country don't fully understand how to adapt. We need to be open to learning new languages and learning about other cultures. Community colleges are a key part of letting people dabble in or explore new areas of interest — languages, technology, ways of thinking. We can take classes that enable us to explore new ideas and think in new ways. The globalization phenomenon may mark a fundamental change in how we provide education in this country and to people who come here specifically to study. This raises interesting possibilities for community college students as student bodies change and they are able to welcome people from different parts of the world.

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#### Hilary Pennington, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

As the director of special initiatives, U.S. Programs, at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Hilary Pennington leads a new effort to focus on one-time opportunities and respond to unique challenges and unanticipated events in the United States. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has an endowment of over \$37 billion.

Pennington previously served as a senior fellow at the progressive think tank the Center for American Progress and vice-chair of Jobs for the Future (JFF), a research and policy development organization she co-founded.

**Q:** Education is one of the primary goals of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation — education for “all students, all schools, everywhere,” as the foundation Web site puts it. How do two-year technical and community colleges figure into this equation?

The guiding principle that drives Bill and Melinda's philanthropy is a simple one: “All lives have equal value.” Here

in the United States, we believe the greatest avenue toward reducing inequity and increasing opportunity is to expand access to a high-quality education.

After eight years of investing, we know that just as a high school education is no longer enough, neither is access sufficient — we need college completion. Therefore, as our high school work will continue to focus on increasing the number of young people who graduate from high school and preparing them for college, our new work will focus on increasing the number of young people who go on to actually complete college.

Community colleges award about 250,000 post-secondary degrees and credentials to low-income students each year. That's fantastic, but it's not enough. Every year hundreds of thousands of young people enroll in a community college to earn a degree, and then they earn a few credits and drop out. Many community colleges have set enrollment and degree completion targets for their institutions. We want to build on the breakthrough work that is already underway, and add to the momentum by identifying where our support can do the most good.

**Q:** While community colleges offer lower-cost and geographically convenient general education to many students who ultimately transition to four-year schools, they also provide primary education for the majority of firefighters, law enforcement officers, EMTs, nurses, and other new healthcare workers who are credentialed at community colleges. Given the increasing demand for these qualified workers, is the foundation doing anything to support students who want to get into these industries?

You make an important point that isn't widely understood. For about three-quarters of all students, community college isn't a gateway to another educational institution; it's the primary educator.

Employers have a clear interest in the success of community college students, and there's a lot that employers can do to ensure students complete their credentials. That's why a core part of our strategy is to increase employer involvement with community college degree programs, particularly in high-growth industries where employers have trouble filling job vacancies — health care and law enforcement are prime examples. We hope to test, evaluate, and scale ideas that help students balance work, family, and school obligations so students can complete their degrees within a reasonable time frame.

**Q:** What challenges and opportunities do you anticipate facing in the near and long-term future?

We need to work together to bust the myths about current performance that keep this country complacent. Whether it's on the national, state, or local level, we won't have success in changing policies without first changing opinions. Ultimately, we will need to create a national dialogue about a crisis few people understand.

In recent focus groups we held with a cross-section of Americans, everyone immediately recognized that a college degree is critical for success in today's economy. Yet despite the widely understood importance of higher education, the United States continues to fall behind. A generation ago, we led the world in postsecondary attainment. Today, we're in the middle of the pack. If current trends continue, the next generation of U.S. workers may be less educated than the baby boomers they'll replace, with potentially devastating consequences.

**Q:** Based upon your experience, what advice can you give community college trustees, presidents, and professional board staff members on how they can better address poverty and access to opportunity?

Bill and Melinda recognize that education is one of the most significant predictors of life outcomes for adults, and it's the single strongest predictor for their children. So when community colleges help young people escape poverty, they aren't only improving their students' lives, they're also building a better future for their children and grandchildren.

As community colleges continue to strive to fulfill their promise, we encourage their leaders to look at existing problems in a new way. We must all be relentless in pushing for more information and facts as we work together to build an evidence base of what works in getting more students to and through college. This includes setting clear, measurable goals, investing in data systems to track student progress, continuously mining data to measure progress and results, seeking formal and informal feedback, and perhaps most importantly, taking time to learn from the data and evaluation and adapting our approaches as needed. Until we commit to a rigorous approach to improvement, none of us is doing enough to expand access to opportunity. ■