



A New Landscape — But the Job Remains the Same

by Jee Hang Lee

FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS, 2009 has been a year to remember. Community colleges in all regions, and of all sizes, have experienced unprecedented enrollment growth, with some enrollment gains surpassing 30 percent. The changes in the economy have brought countless individuals to community college doors for education and training — even for classes held past midnight on some campuses. Attendance levels at community colleges mirror the economic status of communities, with attendance growing during economic downturns. With a new television show set on a community college campus — regardless of its opinions — there is no arguing that community colleges are more visible than ever.

The single action that most influenced the change in public perception and awareness of community colleges was President Obama's announcement of the American Graduation Initiative (AGI). Totalling \$12 billion, AGI provides funding for community colleges to meet the nation's higher education goals. Who better to ask to support this goal than community colleges, the largest and arguably most accountable sector in higher education? Countless community college boards have responded to the AGI challenge by publicly stating through resolutions that their institutions will work to help the United States become the world leader in higher education attainment by 2020.

The media and think tanks are also taking more than a passing glance at community colleges. In Washington, D.C., the federal focus has historically been on the four-year sector, especially the private institutions. AGI represents a sea change in the higher education landscape. Federal support for community colleges recognizes the importance of the work



our colleges do each day to offer better educational and economic opportunities for countless individuals.

Keep Your Eyes on the Horizon

The new federal and public support of community colleges changes our landscape dramatically, but are these changes sustainable? Unfortunately, the enrollment growth within the community college sector has not insulated the colleges from state budget cuts. Some cuts have come in waves as states work to meet shortfalls in many budget areas. While the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has played a major role in alleviating some budget shortfalls, it has not prevented severe cuts to community college funding. Additionally, many community colleges, especially those in California, are unable to meet rising enrollment demands,

which could have a detrimental effect on their ability to offer access to all in the long run.

With the community college brand held in higher regard than ever, the role of community college leaders has not changed. It is not time to be complacent or rely on enrollment increases as justification for institutional funding. Community college leaders must continue to take the mantle of leadership by advocating to ensure that community colleges remain on the funding priority list.

Keep Your College on the Map with Effective Advocacy

A perfect case study is the state of Michigan. With the highest unemployment rate of any state, Michigan has been economically decimated by auto industry job losses. But the state has

SUCCESSFUL MEETING TIPS

Six things to keep in mind when planning a visit with your representatives on Capitol Hill.

- 1. Be on time, flexible, friendly, and brief.** Arrive early and be willing to wait. Delayed appointments can be beneficial if they give you time to get to know the Member's staff. Stick to the issues and facts, and don't overstay your welcome.
- 2. Ask about your member's priorities.** Your visit is an opportunity to find out more about your representative and his or her agenda and to work together on common issues.
- 3. Ask for support.** Your representative or his or her staff should be able to give you an indication of the Member's level of support for community college priorities. Ask for their position.
- 4. ACCT and AACC.** Remind members and staff that the two national community college associations are in Washington, D.C., and are available and always willing to provide information on community college issues.
- 5. Photo Op.** Ask to take a photo with your legislator so that your college can issue a news release and picture to your local media for publicity. This helps communicate to your community that you are working on their behalf.
- 6. Get business cards.** Don't leave without business cards from all staff members you talk to for easy reference when writing your thank-you letter. Remember to leave your card or college information during your visit.

continued to maintain its funding level for community colleges — a testament to the hard work that community college leaders have undertaken to align the colleges as centers of education, job creation, and economic solutions.

The sustained funding would not have been possible without the tireless and strategic advocacy efforts of Michigan community college trustees and presidents. Their work leveraged the needs of the community with the newfound national appreciation for community colleges as economic engines that have proven their worth in a desperate economy.

More Work to be Done

The National Legislative Summit is once again on the horizon. For many, the NLS serves as an advocacy platform for community college priorities. As local leaders, ACCT needs you to come to Washington, D.C., to ensure that these priorities continue to be in the forefront of federal policy.

There are a number of issues that Congress and the Administration need to address, including the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and higher education tax credits. WIA represents billions of dollars in federal funding opportunities, but unfortunately colleges have had varied experiences with WIA and Workforce Investment Boards. One thing is clear: substantial changes need to be made in order to strengthen the ties between workforce training and education. To build the next generation of the middle class, community colleges need to have a broader role in this critical area.

WIA is one example of the billions of dollars in federal funding opportunities. In order to secure funding, community college leaders should take advantage

of the opportunity the NLS provides to meet with their members of Congress and administration officials at the same time as other community college advocates. Remember that there is strength in numbers, and while calls and letters are effective advocacy tools, there is no substitute for meeting with your federal representatives face to face.

Community college legislative priorities are established by our membership. These priorities will be delivered during the 2010 NLS and used as talking points for what we hope will be the most active year of advocacy in the history of community colleges. With the help of you, our members, ACCT will work to ensure that funding and opportunities continue to be available during the coming years.

It is inarguable that community colleges are more visible and appreciated than ever. However, we need to work hard to maintain and grow the support of our federal, state, and local legislators to establish ourselves as a vital economic component and not a passing trend.

Mark February 8-10 on your calendar and go to www.acct.org/events/legislativesummit today to register for the National Legislative Summit. Without your advocacy efforts, we could face the steady growth in enrollment with fewer resources to meet our students' needs. With your efforts, 2010 will be an even more remarkable year for community colleges — and your college will reap the benefits.



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2010



COMMUNITY COLLEGE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT

Maintaining the *Momentum*

ADVOCACY IS A VITAL COMPONENT TO GAINING AND sustaining support. The 2010 Community College National Legislative Summit (NLS) comes at a time when community colleges are receiving unprecedented national recognition and appreciation. Supported by President Barack Obama and Congress, community colleges are finally being recognized as significant educational and economic engines for America's local and national economies. Thanks to the great turnout at the 2009 NLS and ongoing advocacy throughout the year, we have been able to pave the way for this unprecedented federal assistance.



Above: Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, at the 2009 Community College National Legislative Summit.

Right: David Gregory, host of NBC's *Meet the Press*.

Facing page: 2008-2009 ACCT Chair Arthur C. Anthonisen with Rep. Michael N. Castle (R-Del.) and ACCT President and CEO J. Noah Brown.



REGISTER ONLINE TODAY!
www.acct.org/events/legislativesummit



2010 NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS

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This February 8-10, we hope that you will join your peers from colleges throughout the country at the 2010 NLS. The 2010 NLS is your opportunity to learn the ins and outs of advocacy from leading experts and send a message to your national legislators on Capitol Hill face to face. Equally important, the 2010 NLS is your chance to be seen by members of Congress and the Obama Administration — those who make the decisions about how money gets spent.

There is strength in numbers. A large NLS turnout with as many on-site meetings as possible will send a clear message to the Administration and Congress that community college leaders are interested, involved, and powerful. Your attendance at the 2010 NLS will benefit your college through continued federal support.

Visiting Washington early in 2010 will empower you with the opportunity to influence the national political agenda and express your appreciation of the unprecedented support that the federal government has given community colleges over the past year.

Mark your calendar today and plan to attend the 2010 Community College National Legislative Summit. Your voice and your presence are critical to ensuring the ongoing federal prioritization of community colleges.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRIORITIES & ADVOCACY 101

Advocate effectively for the community college movement by sending out a clear, concise message that is in keeping with the national voice of community college advocacy. The annual Community College Priorities session is an invaluable ingredient in effectively and successfully advocating on behalf of your college throughout the year.

DAVID GREGORY OF NBC'S *MEET THE PRESS*

Listen to the sage advice of one of America's most respected and renowned journalists. Emmy Award-winner David Gregory has a reputation as a journalist who asks the tough questions, having served as NBC's chief White House correspondent throughout the George W. Bush Administration and frequently anchoring *NBC Nightly News* and the *Today* show. Gregory was recently named one of Washington's 50 best and most influential journalists by *Washingtonian* magazine. Following last year's keynote speech by *Face the Nation* moderator and legendary Washington journalist Bob Schieffer, the NLS continues to attract the best of the best.

VISITS TO HOUSE, SENATE, AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The heart of the annual National Community College Legislative Summit, visits to the Capitol Hill offices of your elected representatives deliver a clear message that your college is an important contributor to and an influential voice in your community. Do not miss this opportunity to make your voice heard.

THE SECOND CITY



The Second City is a long-running and award-winning improvisational comedy enterprise. Alumni include Joan Rivers, John Belushi, Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, George Wendt, Shelley Long, Bonnie Hunt, Mike Myers, Jeremy Piven, Steve Carrell, Tina Fey, Amy Poehler, and many others.