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From the Chair

Adjusting Our Sails

THERE ARE TIMES IN OUR LIVES WHEN CHANGES come furiously, at a breakneck pace. This has been such a year for me.

All year I have anxiously awaited the birth of my first daughter, and the days since Niara's May 4 arrival have been a whirlwind of joy and problem-solving in ways for which law school hardly prepared me. Our colleges — community colleges — on the other hand, are at the crossroads of book learning and experiential learning, and every day I learn another lesson about how our institutions represent the best of both worlds.

There are times when life is exhilarating and challenging at the same time. All changes come with challenges. All changes come with opportunities.

As our federal leadership transitioned this winter, ACCT had the opportunity to host Betsy DeVos, the newly appointed secretary of education, as she delivered her first keynote address to a national higher education association in her new position. Secretary DeVos spoke to the nearly 1,000 trustees, presidents, students, and other community college advocates at the National Legislative Summit about the unique and vital contributions our institutions make to the nation. We in turn met the new administration and Congress with renewed focus and purpose as we lobbied for reinstatement of year-round Pell Grant access.

Our efforts paid off when Congress in May authorized the reinstatement. Our most-in-need students will benefit from this bipartisan action, which would not have taken place without ACCT’s talented public policy leadership — or without your voice.

Even during a time when just about everything is presented as politically charged, all of us understand and uphold our dual commitment to higher education — access and the success of all students. This is something about which we all can be and should be proud.

Years ago, the theme of the ACCT Leadership Congress was “winds of change.” Change is a constant, not a variable, we rememberer then as we tapped into lessons learned through prior transformations. We remember this today as we adjust our sails to the changing winds. This September 25-28, we will convene in Las Vegas to discuss Pathways to Prosperity — maintaining the momentum we’ve built over the past decade, even faced with the worst economic recession since the Great Depression.

It is a testament to our resilience, our innovation, our leadership, and our productive cooperativeness that our colleges and our association have expanded to serve many different educational roles while at the same time attending to students’ ever-evolving needs as never before. Education is a national value, and we are charged with the immense responsibility of navigating constant changes to uphold this value. I am proud to be able to say that we — you and I and our peers nationwide — are keeping that promise. I look forward to seeing you this fall and thanking you in person for your commitment.

BAKARI G. LEE, ESQ.
CHAIR
Through the Eyes of Janus

OUR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IS FOUNDED IN PART on the principles exemplified by Ancient Rome. We’ve derived many lessons from that great society, and at times it’s useful to consider Roman philosophy and mythology as a reference for our modern lives.

The Romans looked to Janus, the god and guardian of the passage of time, for guidance. The two faces of Janus, one looking left and one right, may disturb our eyes today — but to the Romans, the left and the right, the past and the present, were inextricably linked by beginnings, passages, change, and time itself. Time, the Romans understood, never passes without bringing change. In times of great change, it can be instrumental to look at the world through the eyes of Janus, to take in the long view of ourselves and the events that brought us here.

Community colleges are uniquely American institutions, founded and evolved during what is likely the century of greatest advancement in human history. In 1901, the same year Joliet Junior College was founded as the first community college, the first radio-wave signal was sent successfully across the Atlantic Ocean. Eight years after that, Ford issued the Model T, allowing average Americans to give up horse power for horsepower. In the blink of Janus’s eye, we landed on the Moon, sent a rover to Mars, and the science-fiction communicator from Star Trek was outperformed in reality by the science-factual smartphone, a handheld device that can access information of a scope never imagined by the librarians of Alexandria.

In the interim, we’ve weathered at least two Great Wars and benefited from the democratization of education. I can’t imagine an American today who would argue that education through high school shouldn’t be accessible at no cost to every child — over time, through Janus’s eye, we have all come to share the common value of primary and secondary education. As we look ahead at present and coming changes, I suggest keeping this longer view in mind.

Following a presentation I gave this spring, I was encouraged to write about some of the challenges facing community colleges today, based upon what I hear from my esteemed colleagues across the country and from policy insiders here in Washington. From a changing political landscape to declining enrollments, funding, and more, the article that begins on page 18 discusses the 10 most frequently discussed and concerning challenges facing our sector today.

I believe strongly that all the challenges that face us today are simply expressions of change — change that is as inevitable and constant as it is variable and unpredictable. As you read this issue, I hope that you’ll reflect on the tremendous changes that transpired over the century during which our colleges were born and matured. By looking at the big picture and by reflecting simultaneously on past lessons and future possibilities, we will equip ourselves to build the pathway to prosperity rather than passively hoping to stumble upon it.

J. NOAH BROWN
ACCT PRESIDENT AND CEO
Contents

DEPARTMENTS

8 Advocacy
Increased Accountability, By the Numbers
Jee Hang Lee

25 For Year-Round Pell, a Victory —
and Gratitude
The efforts of community college trustees helped reinstate this key support for
student success.
J. Noah Brown

30 Legal
Legal Issues Impacting
Community Colleges
Ira Michael Shepard

IN EVERY ISSUE

1 From the Chair
2 From the President & CEO
4 News
28 Around the Regions
39 Searches
41 Interface
44 Advisor

FEATURES

10 A Capitol Idea — By Mark Toner
ACCT’s annual bipartisan Congressional Forum focused on familiar themes
and the challenges to come.

12 An Opportunity to Lead — By Mark Toner
The new administration’s economic aspirations give community colleges a
continuing role to play in the policy agenda.

18 10 Challenges Facing Community Colleges — By J. Noah Brown
The coming years will bring both new and familiar issues, but our institutions’
ability to innovate also offers new opportunities.

22 Increasing Your Budget Knowhow: A Checklist — By Cindra Smith
As stewards of public funds, trustees must learn enough to know what to ask —
and to understand the answers.

26 How HCCS Empowers DisAbled Students — By Eva Loredo
and Robert Glaser
Houston’s community colleges help students move from disability
to independence.

32 The Real Cost of Attending Community College — By Jacob Bray
Despite a relatively low sticker price, other factors can raise the cost of
attending community college.

34 Basic Needs Insecurity: The Real Crisis Facing Community Colleges
— By Sara Goldrick-Rab
With majorities of students facing challenges with food and housing, institutions
can help ensure that more have their basic needs met.
New Discussion Papers Address Effects of Working While Learning, Value of Associate Degrees

ACCT recently released two new publications that address workforce issues associated with community colleges. Learning While Earning: How low-income learners differ from all other American college students and Putting Students First: Are associate degrees preparing students for successful careers? join two other papers that originated as discussions at the 2016 ACCT Symposium on Student Success, held last October in New Orleans. All four papers are available for free download at acct.org.

Learning While Earning: How low-income learners differ from all other American college students

Georgetown University Center on Education and Workforce Researchers Anthony Carnevale and Nicole Smith examine the challenges working students face and the impacts of these challenges on completion and debt. While working and paying tuition and fees “as you go” is no longer an option for the majority of America’s college students, it remains a possibility at community colleges and public four-year colleges. Students pursuing postsecondary credentials and/or wishing to attain the skills necessary to land a good job need support from career counselors to understand their options and the economic value of their selected major.

Among notable findings:

- Nearly half (43 percent) of American college students who work while enrolled are low income.
- Low-income working learners are less likely to have access to financial wealth-building channels.
- Low-income students are relatively more risk averse when it comes to borrowing funds to support their educations.
- Low-income students who work are less likely to enroll in bachelor’s degree programs and more likely to enroll in associate degree and certificate programs.
- Low-income students face greater obstacles in earning a credential.
- Low-income students who work are less likely to attend selective four-year colleges and universities, and are more likely to attend for-profit institutions.
- Black and Latino working students are more likely to be financially disadvantaged and less likely to enroll in a bachelor’s degree program.

Putting Students First: Are associate degrees preparing graduates for successful careers?

Gallup Senior Economist Jonathan Rothwell presents data on employment outcomes for college graduates from different types of colleges. He also provides findings from the Gallup-USA Funds Associate Degree Graduates Survey, which identifies a number of student experiences that are highly predictive of overall life satisfaction. He cites the factors that contribute to a positive high life evaluation, noting that approximately 46 percent of associate degree earners reported their college education was worth the cost. Other significant findings include:

- The relative average returns to those with a higher education are growing, but the absolute returns are not.
- Averages obscure the diversity and complexity of higher-education decisions.
- The policy tools needed to raise alumni outcomes are becoming clearer but have not been integrated into ratings.
- New data sources and measures of quality are shedding additional light.
New Research Report: Student Loan Borrowing and Default Trends Similar Across Kentucky, Louisiana, Iowa Community Colleges

Report recommends policies to improve student outcomes.

This May, ACCT issued a new report that examines trends in federal student loan borrowing and default in Kentucky and Louisiana’s community college systems. The report compares repayment trends in these states to our prior research in Iowa, which was published in 2015.

Lost in the Trillion: A Three-State Comparison of Community College Borrowing and Default reveals surprising similarities, with some notable differences, in how community college students use federal debt repayment interventions. The report also expands the analyses performed in prior research by adding an examination of borrowers’ incomes. Primary findings include:

- Student loan default rates among Louisiana and Kentucky community college students are concentrated among borrowers who hold low loan balances, a finding consistent with the Iowa cohort.
- In Louisiana and Kentucky, more than twice as many borrowers in active repayment used income-driven plans.
- Forbearance rates were higher in Kentucky and Louisiana than in Iowa.
- In Louisiana, low-balance borrowers had the lowest median incomes of all borrowing groups.

The authors of Lost in the Trillion, ACCT policy analysts Colleen Campbell and Ivy Love, analyzed detailed data about borrowers at 21 community colleges throughout Kentucky and Louisiana who entered repayment in 2013. The authors were also able to access income data for the Louisiana cohort, which provided additional context to the economic situations of community college student loan borrowers. The FY2013 cohort default rate in Kentucky was 26.2 percent, compared with 19.9 percent in Louisiana; in the 2015 Iowa study, 18.5 percent of students had defaulted. Although the Iowa cohort entered repayment in 2011, Campbell and Love identified many similarities among the cohorts, including in the amounts borrowed, loan statuses, and default rates.

“This new research report supports ACCT’s previous findings that low-balance borrowers are at the highest risk of student loan default,” said J. Noah Brown, president and CEO of ACCT. “We also see some limited, but interesting, data from students in Louisiana, showing that the students who borrow the least also have the lowest median earnings across all borrowing groups, which could contribute to high default rates. But until we see more comprehensive analyses from the federal government, we’ll remain in the dark about why students, and why low-balance borrowers in particular, default.”

Community college leaders in both states said they are focusing on the report findings. “We were interested in learning more about our student borrowers,” said Dr. Monty Sullivan, president of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System. “We have made major changes across our system to ensure that our students are set up to be successful, and we believe that assessing our borrowers’ outcomes is a big piece of that puzzle.”

Dr. Jay Box, president of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, agreed: “Students come to our colleges seeking the opportunity to improve their lives, and our system is working hard to meet their needs.”

Federal policy recommendations included in Lost in the Trillion include:

- Simplify the repayment process.
- Improve borrowers’ repayment plan options.
- Consider new policies for borrowers with low balances.
- Improve the servicing environment with a focus on borrowers.
- Revise accountability metrics to include contextual factors.
- Improve transparency in the loan program.

“We hope that policymakers and influencers will take these findings and recommendations into consideration,” Brown said. “With total student loan debt exceeding $1.2 trillion nationally, and with over 7 million borrowers in default, our country can’t afford not to invest in reforms to curtail this dangerous and preventable trend.”

Download the report at http://bit.ly/2qXFjdA.
NEWS

Changing the Culture

ACCT’s Governance Institute for Student Success for Tribal Colleges and Universities (GISS-TCU) leads to positive outcomes for TCU boards.

By Cindy Lopez

Most tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) have made a commitment to data-informed governance, demonstrated in part by their participation in Governance Institutes for Student Success for Tribal Colleges and Universities (GISS-TCU) training. After holding two well-attended GISS-TCU events, the Association of Community College Trustees’ GISS team surveyed TCU presidents to assess the influence of the institutes on board culture and policy.

The survey results show that GISS-TCU training has been effective in helping boards to bring about many of the changes needed to improve governance for student success and that continued participation will allow TCU boards to reap additional positive outcomes. This, in turn, will translate into improved outcomes for Native American TCU students.

The GISS is achieving its goal of creating an environment of inquiry and evidence among TCU boards, as well as strengthening overall governance for student success. Boards of all 25 TCUs who participated in the survey have been positively influenced by what they learned at the GISS-TCU.

As part of the survey illustrated on the following page, TCU presidents were given a list of 27 possible outcomes that could result from the GISS board training. Every outcome was selected by one or more TCU presidents at least once. The chart at right includes the percentage of TCU presidents that selected each outcome.

On average, TCUs selected nine areas in which there has been a change in board learning, culture, activities, and policy as a result of GISS participation. Overall, boards reported an increased understanding and use of student outcome data in governance and an improved understanding of the board’s governance role.

Results are particularly strong for boards that have participated in two GISS events, demonstrating that as more TCU board members participate, the number of positive outcomes should increase. While there were slightly fewer outcomes experienced by TCUs whose boards participated in only one event, the impact of having attended GISS was still strong.

TCU boards have a large role to play in fostering accountability and facilitating student success in their institutions and communities. However, it takes time to build and sustain a board culture of inquiry and the data-informed decision making required to do this.

The current momentum for data-informed governance for student success among TCU boards is strong. Given the positive outcomes of the GISS-TCU events held to date, we anticipate that TCU Board participation in the October 2017 GISS-TCU will exceed that of the previous year. Boards make a difference to student success, and the GISS empowers boards to carry out this important part of their role.

For more information about the Governance Leadership Institute, contact narcisa_polonio@acct.org or ngoldstein@acct.org.

TCU Board Outcomes from GISS Participation

64% indicated an increased board understanding of student outcome data, including the ability to identify gaps in student outcomes.

56% indicated the introduction and use of student outcome data in board meetings.

52% indicated improved board understanding of its roles and responsibilities.

44% indicated improved planning and goal setting post-GISS.

36% have already seen an increase in data-informed decision making.

Greater Participation  
Greater Impact

On average, TCUs that participated in two institutes indicated two more improved board outcomes than those that participated in one institute.

Presidents indicated improved board-president collaboration after one GISS.

67% indicated improved alignment of the board’s and president’s goals.
Board member attendance at a GISS-TCU event has resulted in . . .

- an increased board understanding of student outcome data, including the ability to identify gaps/problems in student outcomes (64%)
- the introduction and use of student outcome data in board meetings (56%)
- an increased number of questions to administration about strategies in place to address barriers to success and better understanding of these strategies (56%)
- an improved understanding of the board’s roles and responsibilities (52%)
- improved planning and goal setting (44%)
- the increased frequency in board review of student outcome data (40%)
- improved board-president communication (40%)
- an improved alignment of board and president’s goals (40%)
- an increase in data-informed decision making (for example, reallocation of resources to increase advising/student performance monitoring, or policy to require students in developmental education courses to also attend a lab etc.) (36%)
- improved board functioning and cohesion (36%)
- better use of the board’s time (32%)
- increased support for institutional change (finding resources, eliminating barriers, supporting administration in making needed changes in curriculum, staff etc.) (32%)
- improved services to students (32%)
- the board’s review of its student success related policies (28%)
- increased focus on students at board meetings (28%)
- an increase in advocacy for college with legislators (28%)
- the review and refinement of college mission statement (28%)
- the reallocation of resources to better support administration’s student success efforts (28%)
- an increase in advocacy for college in community (24%)
- increased connections with K-12 feeder schools (24%)
- engagement with Achieving the Dream (20%)
- implementation of high impact policies or practices that promote student success (20%)
- new policies that remove barriers to student success (20%)
- increased support for institutional research (resources dedicated to generating good data) (20%)
- changing the format of board meetings (16%)
- creating a new board committee/s (16%)
- increased connections with university transfer institutions (12%)
Increased Accountability, by the Numbers

Data can help provide the big picture — or an incomplete one.

By Jee Hang Lee

As Congress works to reauthorize the Higher Education Act (HEA), one common theme is that the increased funding for federal financial aid has resulted in Congress pushing colleges to do better for students and increase degree completion. The demise of some large proprietary colleges has also led to increased discussions about creating mechanisms to ascertain the performance of colleges and holding institutions more accountable, for example by imposing financial risk-sharing penalties on student loans and possible changes in accreditation.

Policymakers largely believe that the sole mission of a community college is to graduate students. The measurement used to assess the performance of higher education is the first-time/full-time graduation rate at 150 percent of time, which is three years for community colleges. Unfortunately, this metric fails to understand the demographics and enrollment behaviors of community college students.

The current federal graduation rate fails to measure part-time students, who represent the clear majority of community college students. Importantly, graduation rates also fail to measure the key role of community colleges in transferring students to other institutions. Every student that takes longer to graduate, stops out, or transfers is therefore considered to be a failure by the current federal metrics. Earlier this year, the National Student Clearinghouse reported that of the students graduating
Policymakers largely believe that the sole mission of a community college is to graduate students. The measurement used to assess the performance of higher education fails to understand the demographics and enrollment behaviors of community college students.

with a bachelor’s degree in 2015-16, 49 percent had attended a community college. This data point shows the power and importance of community colleges, yet the federal graduation metrics fail to acknowledge this crucial role.

The Department of Education’s College Scorecard perfectly illustrates policymakers’ lack of understanding of community college students and the institutions they attend. The Scorecard contains wage information, but it only includes students who receive federal aid. In some instances, it only contains data for Pell Grant recipients, which further skews the picture of community college student earnings.

In the last reauthorization of HEA, Congress included an amendment to ban a federal student unit record system. The ban has resulted in an inaccurate picture of the role and success of community colleges. For community colleges as public entities, data at the institutional and individual levels are routinely provided to their states. However, due to the federal unit record ban, colleges provide data to the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data system (IPEDS) only at the aggregate institutional level and for students receiving federal aid. The lack of individual student data beyond for those receiving federal Title IV aid makes it difficult to get an accurate picture of how community college students are persisting, completing, and transferring. Research shows that students who do not receive financial aid complete at higher levels, but their data, including wage data, are not being captured by the federal government except at the aggregate level.

A major priority for community colleges in this coming HEA reauthorization will be to overturn the federal student unit record ban. The traditional student of old represents a minority of students today. A federal student unit record data system would allow for metrics on actual student behavior, transfers between institutions, and stop outs. A federal unit record also would allow for actual wage information on students when they leave college. Furthermore, overturning the federal student record ban would reduce the data burden on institutions, as the data would only need to be provided once, as opposed to today’s piecemeal approach and multiple formats.

Another element that needs to change is the three-year graduation metric for community college students, which should be adjusted to reflect more accurate enrollment behaviors. A recent Clearinghouse report noted that Department of Education data on first-time/full-time students entering in 2010 showed that the graduation rate was 29.4 percent. But when those full-time students were measured on a six-year timeframe and included transfers who completed at another institution, the graduation rate nearly doubled — to 54.7 percent, according to the Clearinghouse report. Students are taking more time to finish, and Congress should acknowledge changing enrollment trends.

The next several Advocacy articles in upcoming issues of Trustee Quarterly will be aimed at key ACCT policy priorities that will be part of the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Please follow along with latest developments and encourage other advocates at your college to use ACCT’s new online policy website, now.acct.org. To receive legislative updates via e-mail, please sign up at publicpolicy@acct.org.

ACCT Vice President for Public Policy and External Relations Jee Hang Lee can be reached by email at jhlee@acct.org, or by phone at 202-775-4667.
IN THE FACE OF A NEW ADMINISTRATION, ACCT’s ANNUAL bipartisitan gathering of lawmakers at the U.S. Capitol in February struck some familiar themes — and set the stage for the legislative challenges to come.

“This should be an extraordinary time of opportunity,” said Rep. Luke Messer (R-Ind.). “There’s no doubt that the difference that makes a difference in the opportunity to have success in America is education… and if we stay focused on students, there’s no reason to have anything but hope.”

Held in conjunction with the 2017 National Legislative Summit (see p. 12), the Community College Congressional Forum provided community college leaders with an early look at how Congress is thinking about the policy landscape as the Trump Administration enters Washington.

While lawmakers from both sides of the aisle pledged continuing support to community colleges, the clear contrasts that have emerged in recent years were evident. Republicans stressed the value of flexibility to institutions and their students, while their Democratic counterparts focused on continuing the previous administration’s efforts to expand access to higher education. Yet lawmakers on both sides of the aisle stressed the value of supporting community colleges as they tackle higher education issues.

Pointing to apprenticeships and other job-training programs offered by community colleges, Rep. Charlie Dent (R-Pa.) signaled bipartisan support for the Pell Grant program, despite the current climate in Washington.

“We will do what we can to continue to support Pell Grants,” Dent told Forum attendees. “You play such a key role in our communities. You are where the rubber that meets the road [in] higher education.”

Focus on Innovation

Dent focused on flexibility and adaptability to local workforce needs as key benefits of the community college model, and other Republicans stressed their intent to provide community colleges with greater latitude in hopes of sparking new, more cost-effective approaches to higher education.

Citing the message sent by voters in the 2016 presidential election, Messer told Forum attendees that Congress will be focused on flexibility in higher education. “What you’re going to see from policymakers is an effort on encouraging innovation,” he said.

Messer cited reverse transfer, partnerships with industry, and the use of Pell Grants for shorter job-training programs as examples of community college programs likely to receive support from lawmakers.
Echoing the bipartisan support that community colleges enjoy, Rep. Joe Wilson (R-S.C.) predicted that the House Committee for Education and the Workforce, led by former community college president Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.) will continue efforts to scale back the federal government's role in higher education. “The emphasis of one community would be different from another,” Wilson said. “However we can promote local flexibility and control, we will.”

Keeping the Promise
Democratic lawmakers spoke to continuing Obama-era efforts to make community college free for qualified students. In addressing the nation’s economic challenges, they focused on limited access to education as the greatest obstacle to global competitiveness.

Pointing to the experience of manufacturers in her district and nationwide, Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) said the lack of a skilled workforce is the biggest challenge employers face. “It’s not foreign competition, it’s not tax laws — it’s none of that,” she said. “It’s skilled workforce. And where do we get skilled workers? We get them from community colleges.”

Along with supporting college promise programs — not all of which draw from federal funding — Duckworth pointed to the example of an advanced manufacturing partnership between Harper College and Northrop Grumman in her district as the impetus for a proposed grant program at the U.S. Department of Labor that would support job-training partnerships with industry.

“I think this is a great solution to the skills gap,” Duckworth said. “It allows community colleges to further strengthen themselves and expand their services, but also expand our national competitiveness.”

Duckworth noted that closing one tax loophole would fund the entire estimated cost of the America College Promise program — a theme echoed by Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.) The $100 billion estimated cost of the proposed Obama-era program, which Scott said would serve as a model for future legislation, pales in comparison to the nearly $4 trillion in tax cuts enacted by Congress in recent years, he added.

“Make no mistake, this will cost money — money that some say we can’t afford,” Scott told attendees. “It’s just a matter of priorities… We can do all these things. We just have to have the courage to do them. Your role is to hold us accountable.”

Building Bridges
Despite the continuing lack of partisan consensus in Congress, Scott predicted that lawmakers would ultimately succeed in reauthorizing the Higher Education Act.

“I am optimistic we can come together as HEA reauthorization approaches,” he told Forum attendees. “It will be important for your institutions to engage both sides of the aisle so we continue to support community colleges.”

From that other side of the aisle, Wilson agreed that workforce issues will likely bring together lawmakers on key issues involving higher education. “You hear about all the partisan fighting up here… [but] on the education and workforce committee… we’re actually trying to work together. We obviously have ideological differences, but we can have civil discourse.”

Finding ways to work together may be the key challenge for lawmakers in the year to come. “There’s always going to be a certain amount of gridlock, but when that partisanship leads to paralysis, we’re going to have problems,” Dent said, pointing to his efforts to work with Democrats on key issues. “We’re just trying to build bridges to do the work that the American people expect us to,” he said.
An Opportunity to Lead

BY MARK TONER

THE NEW ADMINISTRATION’S ECONOMIC ASPIRATIONS GIVE COMMUNITY COLLEGES A CONTINUING ROLE TO PLAY IN THE POLICY AGENDA.
As community college leaders arrived in a roiling Washington, D.C., just weeks after President Trump was sworn in, they received immediate assurance that the new administration continues to recognize the value of their institutions.

Betsy DeVos, the newly appointed U.S. Secretary of Education, chose the 2017 Community College National Legislative Summit as the venue for her first speech to higher education leaders. And she signaled that the Trump Administration, like the one that preceded it, will rely on community colleges to meet its goals for workforce development and job creation.

“Your institutions, working hand-in-glove with your business partners, play an important role in getting Americans back to work,” DeVos said during the NLS closing keynote session. “The president was elected to help bring back jobs and economic opportunity in every region of our country… [The administration’s] plan notes the importance of expanding technical and vocational education — the type of career and technical education that community colleges excel at providing.”

President Trump, DeVos told NLS attendees, “has called the multiple paths of postsecondary education an absolute priority for his administration, and I share that vision.”

Despite the uncertainty sparked by the early weeks of the first new presidential administration in nearly a decade, community college leaders and lawmakers alike spoke of optimism for the years to come throughout the NLS and at the concurrent Community College Congressional Forum on Capitol Hill (see p. 10).

“This is a time for optimism, a time to think about what is possible, and a time to do the work we’re capable of doing,” ACCT President & CEO J. Noah Brown told attendees.

“Eight years of the Obama administration gave community colleges the opportunity to come out from under the rocks and show what we do,” added Eloy Oakley, chancellor of California Community Colleges. “The new administration is going to give us the opportunity to show we can lead as a national system of community colleges focused on moving this country forward.”

A key to that effort, community college leaders stressed, is continued advocacy.

“As community colleges, we have worked very well with Republican administrations and Democratic administrations, and I’m very confident we are going to have a good relationship with this new administration,” said Walter G. Bumphus, American Association of Community Colleges president and CEO. “We have a lot to offer… but more than ever we’re going to need all of you in the room to take the message to the Hill.”

Priorities in Play

That sense of optimism carries over to the community college legislative agenda. Despite the ongoing reality of limited opportunities for additional funding, ACCT and AACC leaders see a possibility to reinstate key components of Pell Grant funding that were chiseled away in recent years, year-round Pell chief among them.
The Pell Grant program's current $10 billion surplus and bipartisan support represent an opportunity to regain benefits from previous cuts, ACCT Director of Government Relations Jennifer Stiddard told NLS attendees. “We’re confident it could get done this year,” she said.

That confidence proved to be well-placed. In budget deliberations in the months following the NLS, year-round Pell was in fact restored. Yet more remains to be done. Community college trustees should continue advocating for the return of eligibility for ability to benefit (ATB) students and an increase of the maximum number of semesters from 12 to 14 to help ensure that community college students who transfer to four-year institutions don’t run out of benefits before earning their bachelor’s degree, Stiddard said. The extension of Pell grants to students in workforce development programs represents another area which has seen legislative support, she added.

While the budget agreement passed by Congress this spring maintains level funding for many federal higher education programs through the fall, it’s clear that the budget outlook for the years ahead will be challenging for all non-defense spending. “The notion that Congress is going to be spending large sums of money for new initiatives is not realistic,” David Baime, AACC senior vice president for government relations, told NLS attendees. For that reason, “it’s going to be a particularly important year to justify our priorities,” Stiddard said. “We don’t want to see significant cuts to our programs.”

However, the Trump Administration’s proposed infrastructure plan could represent a potential opportunity for community colleges to make a case for job training programs in high-demand fields, Stiddard said. “When we’re talking about an infrastructure bill, we could have thousands of jobs in high-need fields, and community colleges can help fill those gaps,” she said. “Partnering with businesses and creating jobs has a lot of bipartisan appeal.”

While it’s unclear when Congress will take up reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, the contours around the debate touch on many issues vital to community colleges — among them, student loan defaults, accountability, deregulation, and financial aid. “We understand the questions about the cost of college and outcomes of institutions and the general integrity of the responsiveness of the enterprise to public needs,” Baime said.

Among the key issues for community colleges: risk-sharing for institutions with high student loan default rates and improvements to measurements and metrics, including the adoption of a six-year graduation rate for community college students and the creation of a national unit-record data system to better track student outcomes across institutions and states that has met with opposition around privacy concerns. “The healthcare industry managed to [create a unit-record system] and get over the privacy issues,” Nancy L. Zimpher, chancellor of the State University of New York (SUNY) system, told attendees.

Concerns about declining state support for higher ed, simplifying financial aid, reducing the regulatory burden on institutions, and accreditation round out key issues in HEA, according to Baime. Calls to ensure greater accountability in
higher ed through revamping accreditation don’t tell the full picture, argued Robert Shireman, senior fellow at the Century Foundation. “The most effective mechanism for preventing students from being ripped off isn’t accreditation, but we take it for granted,” he said. “It is the accountability mechanism that is built into the organization of the college — trusteeship. You as trustees make decisions about what you believe is best for students and your community.”

Like the Higher Education Act, reauthorization of the Carl B. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act saw movement in Congress last year and could move forward soon, Jim Hermes, AACC associate vice president for government relations, told NLS attendees. “We could see relatively expeditious action,” he said.

Current legislative efforts focus on emphasizing the importance of meeting business needs, aligning Perkins with the recently reauthorized Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and continuing to modernize the law to reflect changes in CTE, including pathways, dual enrollment and updating “the old-fashioned thinking of what was once thought of as vocational ed,” Hermes said.

With immigration proving an early flash point for the Trump Administration, the status of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program put into place by an executive order by former President Obama remains unresolved. Proposed legislation introduced in the House and Senate would preserve key components of DACA in law, making it more difficult to reverse them by executive order, according to Hermes.

“The message we stress is that as institutions, we’re going to use the tools available to us under the law to work on behalf of our students and hope that legislation wouldn’t pass that would narrow options to institutions in that area,” Hermes said.

Ultimately, institutions will have to take a leadership role in this area, Zimpher said. “Dreamers are going to move at the speed of policy,” she said, noting that the SUNY Board was an early endorser of the DREAM Act. “Look at your own crucible and make sure you are on the record and that your beliefs are in policy. Enough of that can move the dial, but you have to act.”

The Big Picture
Throughout the NLS, speakers touched on the current political climate and the changing higher education landscape.

Noting the growth of college promise programs throughout the country, Zimpher noted that more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that students are encouraged to persist.

“What we’re learning is that the more engaged the student is on the campus, [the more] it builds commitment,” Zimpher said. “In return for more access and more support, what is the expectation of the student, and what is the responsibility of the student to meet that expectation?”

California Community Colleges’ Oakley agreed, noting that free tuition “is one tool in the toolbox. It should be a means to an end and part of an overall student success strategy…. How do we build an entire structure around students to ensure they’re successful? Without [that commitment], it’s empty.”

From left: Politico Pro Education Reporter Michael Stratford, Oregon Community College Association Executive Director Andrea Henderson, and Inside Higher Ed Reporter Ashley A. Smith.

From left: SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher, California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Oakley, Politico Senior Education Writer Kimberly Hefling.
Higher ed costs are now part of the political agenda, speakers said. “College affordability broadly and free community college specifically will be something we will see,” predicted Michael Stratford, education reporter for Politico Pro.

The growth of early college high school and dual enrollment programs and efforts to improve remediation at the secondary and postsecondary level are contributing to the longstanding goal of an aligned P-14 system, speakers said. “I think history is going to look at this period and say this is when we moved to 14 years of education,” Zimpher said. “That’s emerging not from federal policy, but one partnership at a time.”

In general, speakers predicted the political calculus is shifting away from Washington, D.C. “I’m pretty skeptical that we’re going to see a lot of positive action on Capitol Hill,” said Carmel Martin, executive vice president for policy at the Center for American Progress. “The mood is that the federal government should step back and let states do what they want.”

That represents an opportunity for community colleges to draw on their local expertise to serve their constituents in new ways. “There seems to be a recurrent theme: a clear sense of anger out there in the country among middle class and working people,” said ACCT’s Brown. “We need to recognize this and figure out how we can respond. We have community colleges enfranchised in every one of these communities. I would encourage you to think about all the things you are doing, and do more of the ones that give people greater economic opportunity for themselves and their loved ones.”

**Looking Ahead**

At the same time, advocacy remains critical as the new administration continues moving forward with its agenda. “Your local connection to your member of Congress is vital,” said Jee Hang Lee, ACCT vice president for public policy and external relations. “It is not a one or two-day occurrence. We need all of you to continue to be advocates for your students when you’re at home.”

And there are some encouraging signs. Calling community colleges “a uniquely American educational asset,” DeVos signaled a willingness to learn from state and local higher education initiatives, including dual enrollment and workforce development programs. She also acknowledged community college leaders’ interest in the reauthorization of HEA and Perkins, as well as a role in infrastructure plans and Pell Grant flexibility to “help students graduate more quickly.”

“Today is the beginning of what I’m confident will be years of productive collaboration and a healthy exchange of ideas among the nation’s colleges and universities and the Department of Education,” DeVos told NLS attendees. “I look forward to hearing from you and working with you as President Trump’s vision takes shape.”

A month after NLS ended, it appears DeVos was still listening. In March, the education secretary made her first visit to a higher ed institution — and it was a community college, Florida’s Valencia College.
A 23-YEAR-OLD ARMY VETERAN WHO RETURNED TO COLLEGE after serving in Afghanistan, Samantha Arnold is an example of the nontraditional students community colleges serve best. As a student trustee at Madison Area Technical College in Wisconsin, she was able to bring that mission to life for lawmakers in Washington, D.C., during the 2017 NLS.

“As a high school student, my family filled out the FASFA and saw the expected family contribution was $20,000 a year,” Arnold told Rep. Mark Pocan (D-Wis.) during a visit to his offices on Capitol Hill. With plans to transfer to UW-Madison and ultimately get a law degree, Arnold made a case for the value of preserving the Pell Grant surplus to ensure that more students like her have access to higher education.

Pocan, who received Pell Grants as a college student, stressed the importance of bipartisan advocacy. “If we can get across party lines, things would be different,” he said. “We’ve got our work cut out for us.”

As in past years, community college delegations received warm welcomes from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle during their Hill visits. “At a time like this, we need you more than ever,” Rep. Randy Hultgren (R-Ill.) told NLS attendees. “One of the bright spots in Illinois is our community college system. Together we can get great things done.”

Meeting with Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), another student trustee brought home the impact of the new administration’s stance toward immigration. “Since November, we have seen a tremendous drop in morale,” said Molly Walker, a student trustee from Portland Community College. A California delegation stressed to Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) the importance of protecting students who entered the country as children. “We’ve tried to be very clear about the value these students bring to our communities,” said Eloy Oakley, chancellor of California Community Colleges.

Oakley also stressed the value of community college training in emerging fields such as cybersecurity. “We feel we’re the place to begin that training,” Oakley said.

Wearing buttons that read “Students excel with year-round Pell,” trustees and other leaders heard that lawmakers understand the importance of the grants for community colleges and their students. “Expansion of Pell is at the top of my list,” Rep. Susan Davis (D-Calif.) told attendees at ACCT’s Capitol Hill reception. A colleague from the other side of the aisle, Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.), said he supported year-round Pell to applause from the audience.

Support like that is a direct result of trustee advocacy, speakers told NLS attendees. “It does make a difference to have you here in Washington,” said AACC Chair Dan Phelan, president of Jackson College in Michigan. “To have the kind of impact we need, we have to stay on track. Change does not happen overnight. It’s a long-haul proposition.”
The coming years will bring both new and familiar issues, but our institutions’ ability to innovate also offers new opportunities.

BY J. NOAH BROWN
Almost a decade ago, I wrote in this magazine about the one constant in life...change. Economic changes at that time drove changes at our colleges. Throughout the nation, community colleges experienced higher-than-ever enrollments while state funding continued to decline.

The decade that followed has been an unprecedented one for the community college sector, defined by the greatest federal support since Harry S. Truman’s administration first recommended in 1947 making community colleges as universally available as K-12 public schools. Driven by a need for affordable and practical higher education during the Great Recession, our institutions became regarded as life-savers rather than outliers, while at the same time, both the federal government and our sector itself were driven to place a greater-than-ever emphasis on accountability and student outcomes.

As we enter a new era, many of the challenges we face today are difficult. But we thrive then, and we have the power to thrive in coming years as long as we continue to innovate and to make wise decisions, particularly in the critical areas detailed below.

A Changed Political Landscape

The political direction of our country changed overnight on November 8, 2016. One political party controls the White House, both houses of the U.S. Congress, 35 governorships, and 32 state legislatures. However, it is a mistake to assume that the Republican party is unified and homogenous – witness the recent struggles with repealing and replacing the Affordable Care Act. The bipartisanship gridlock may or may not give way to action, and those actions are likely to place a greater priority on reducing the role of the federal government — both in terms of funding and oversight. Despite the political sea change, the focus will remain on cost, accountability, and outcomes.

The Great Recession honed our colleges’ already high-performing, practical job training expertise. Newly appointed Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos celebrated community colleges for these services, and we expect that the new administration will continue an emphasis on job training, workforce development, technical education, and rebuilding the middle class — certainly a role we fill. At the same time, there likely will be a repeal or weakening of certain regulations and protections, such as gainful employment.

In recent years, the federal government has attended closely to the poor performance and outcomes — as well as some predatory marketing and financial aid tactics — of private for-profit colleges and universities. We have seen signs that the new administration will view this sector with considerably more charity than the previous one.

The spotlight on community colleges for the better part of a decade illuminated many of our best qualities — offering access to high-quality higher education for all Americans at an affordable cost, yielding high returns on students’ and taxpayers’ investments, and getting people to work. That spotlight may well drift away from our colleges, and we should be prepared to redouble our efforts to leverage the goodwill and public faith that better understanding has levied upon us.

Financial Challenges and Constraints

Our colleges have seen a 20-year decline in state support. Per $1,000 of personal income, state and local resources invested into higher education declined from $7.37 in 1984-85 to $5.28 in 2014-15. In April, the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) association released a report showing that state support increased by an average 3.2 percent from 2015-16, and declined in 17 states. While the majority trend has been to increase investment, the landscape remains rocky and state funding for colleges and universities still have not been restored to pre-recession levels.

Illinois has taken a particularly hard hit, with nearly no higher education budget over the past two fiscal years. Illinois last passed a full state budget in the 2014-15 fiscal year, and support for community colleges has suffered tremendously as a result. The SHEEO report notes that Illinois’s support of its higher education institutions has dropped by 80 percent.

There are distressing signs that this situation may well be replicated in other states — most recently in New Mexico, where the governor and legislature came to loggerheads over the higher education budget, and Oklahoma, which saw a 12.6 percent decrease in state funding last year — giving it the dubious distinction of being second to Illinois.

On top of funding turbulence, performance-based funding, now adopted in 32 states, represents another challenge that will continue to grow in importance for our institutions, placing more emphasis on performance and outcomes.

Declining Enrollments

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), public community college enrollment declined 9.6 percent over the past three years, from 6.3 million students in 2013 to 5.7 million in 2016. Declining enrollment will make increasing educational attainment goals, such as Lumina Foundation’s Goal 2025 to increase credentials by 60 percent, harder to achieve. Market share competition will continue to increase throughout the higher-education sector. The past indeed is prologue — private, for-profit enrollments may encumber rather than enable degree and certificate attainment while riddling students with debt. Recent trends of dual enrollment, improved alignment of standards, institutional partnerships, and a focus on college readiness are more important than ever to ensure that students will not be lost in translation from high school to higher education.
Financial Aid
Federal student loan debt has surpassed $1.3 trillion. This astounding debt load may transfer inequity to generations of younger Americans, with ripple effects that could change everything about American lives. High student loan debt prevents young adults from qualifying for or even wanting to purchase homes — and in some cases, automobiles. At the same time, responsibility for providing student assistance has continued to shift to Washington. The federal government provides 65 percent of all student financial assistance, with states contributing only 12 percent. As a result of the federal government's role as majority shareholder, increased public scrutiny and calls for better educational outcomes are inevitable.

At the same time, higher education tuition and fees continue to rise at an astounding rate. According to the College Board, the average four-year tuition and fees at a private American university was $134,600 in 2015; by 2033, it is estimated to be $323,900. Public in-state tuition is far more reasonable, at $39,400 in 2015, but the rate of increase is equally shocking, projected to rise to $94,800 by 2033. This debt alone makes upward mobility and independence a challenge — and it is vital to recognize that these costs represent only direct expenses paid to institutions, and do not include room and board, books, supplies, equipment, transportation, and other mandatory expenses. We know that the average community college student must cover $7,500 in living expenses beyond tuition and fees — a fact that is typically lost on policymakers.

The role of community colleges in this debt economy may become profound, just as it was in the post-recession economy. However, in order to fulfill our promise to educate all Americans at an affordable cost, we’ll need to develop a true long-term plan for stability. College Promise programs have expanded to over 200 programs nationwide, with activities in over 30 states including six statewide programs in Arkansas, Hawaii, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Tennessee. It seems that Promise programs are popping up every day, led by local and state leaders who are struggling with maintaining access to the education and training opportunities afforded to students through community colleges.

College Completion and Student Success
We know that college completion is the most effective solution for effective, real, and sustained progress. Attainment of a degree or credential is directly correlated with increased earnings, and students who expend the time and money necessary to attend college but do not finish unfortunately stand to benefit little economically from what they learned.

More than 31 million students over the past two decades have enrolled in college and left before earning any credential, according to a 2014 report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Of these, 35.6 percent exclusively attended two-year colleges, and 28.8 percent attended both two- and four-year institutions. More troublingly, only 20 percent of certificate and degree seekers graduate with their intended credentials, according to AACC. Community colleges must continue to emphasize the importance of persisting until graduation, and to find innovative means to help students succeed. When faced with a scarcity of resources, our colleges can stem the growing conundrum of how to do more with less by focusing efforts on enabling persistence and completion.

Degrees of Relevance
A great share of students attend community colleges with a primary goal of improving job prospects and earning potential. In recent years, some primarily two-year-degree-granting colleges have begun to offer select four-year bachelor’s degrees. This movement has been focused on responding to the needs of our community partners; for example, many hospitals now require entry-level nurses to possess a bachelor of science in nursing. Because so many community colleges are relied upon to meet the demand for qualified nursing staff, many have introduced bachelor’s degree programs in nursing in recent years.

ACCT believes that the decision to offer a four-year degree at a community college is best delegated to the college’s board, through its mission and policy-setting role that guides operations of the college and its role in addressing the needs of the community. The focus on pathways to the baccalaureate degree through community colleges — including through distance learning, university centers, and improved transfer and articulation agreements — is the new normal. Providing access to an affordable baccalaureate degree and, increasingly, to a technical and/or applied baccalaureate degree demanded by industry aligns with the new political focus to empower the middle class.

Employment and Earnings
Community colleges always have specialized in preparing students for real jobs in their communities and increasing their prospects for increased earnings. Right now, millions of working people feel disconnected from our economy and social and political institutions — they no longer believe that they and their children will be better off than earlier generations were.

Our sector is getting better at this. Emsi, a company now owned by CareerBuilder that originally launched with support from ACCT, is expanding its already well-established economic modeling to determine returns on investments in community colleges by their communities, students, businesses, and others. Through this work, Emsi and other companies like it are helping colleges to better align their offerings, including certificates and degrees, to their local labor markets and employer needs. With the benefit of these insights, our institutions will become better equipped to improve employment and earnings throughout
the nation. New analytics and research hold great promise to further cement the impressive ROI of community colleges to society through increased educational attainment and career relevance.

**Business Models**

The two-year college business model, as is the nature of all educational sectors, is being changed tremendously by developing technologies, economic forces, and other factors. As we evolve, our colleges must continue to anchor all governance and operations to our commitments of open access, educational quality, persistence, and college completion. Access and quality are historic mainstays; persistence and completion are newer mandatory add-ons, as we know that these factors are inextricably tied to employment and earnings.

Operationally, doing more with less, as many colleges have been forced to do in recent years, is not sustainable. In coming years, we’ll see colleges focusing more on core strengths and their own niche markets. For institutional sustainability, the focus is shifting to public/private partnerships and supplanting traditional income streams. In short, the new normal will be doing less with more. Our colleges have been lauded by the new Secretary of Education for our flexibility, entrepreneurial spirit, and risk-taking. These will be our advantages in the higher education sector, and they should be our focuses as we move ahead.

**Technology**

Brick-and-mortar classrooms will always have a place. However, with distance learning enabled by brilliant course designs and new technologies, colleges should think about relying less on physical infrastructure. Historically, opening new buildings and campuses has been a cause for celebration and done whenever possible. Today, we should ask whether these physical expansions are truly needed, or possibly even liabilities.

MOOCs (massive open online courses) and distance-learning programs are popular, and colleges should be looking at how these programs impact program and service delivery. According to the late John Ebersole, former leader of Excelsior College, online education could be boosted by 6 to 8 percent by an increased focus on workforce and occupation readiness. Predictive analytics and data-informed decisions increasingly will drive technological applications in ways unimagined just a decade ago.

**Leadership**

Over the past several years, we have seen an unprecedented leadership exodus as college presidents have retired in droves, leaving a dearth of experienced and skilled chief executives to lead colleges. This is a challenge that gives us the opportunity to feed the leadership pipeline more intentionally. Interviews with newly minted presidents reveal a profound paucity in applied knowledge relative to the changing nature of their role. To lead successfully, networked leadership must become the hallmark of the future president, along with familiarity with analytics, recombinant resource development, co-creation, and strategic partnership skills. New times require new skills, and we must endeavor to meet the new and varied pathways that will assure the supply of innovative leadership now and in the future.

J. Noah Brown is president & CEO of ACCT.
INCREASING YOUR BUDGET KNOWHOW: A CHECKLIST

BY CINDRA SMITH
PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES ARE COMPLEX
organizations, and their budgets, financial reports, and
accounting rules can be daunting. Most trustees do not have
a specialized background in finance or accounting. However,
as stewards of public funds and resources, they must be
willing to learn key fiscal concepts, understand how to read
budgets and financial reports, and know how to assess
appropriate controls and audits. They must learn enough to
know what questions to ask and be able to understand the
answers. And they must set fiscal policies that guide budget
development and require fiscal stability and accountability.
The following checklist can help you assess your
knowledge and skills in each of these areas.

Budget

- Does board policy ensure an appropriate level of
  involvement by various stakeholders in the process of
developing the budget?
- Is your board aware of and has it discussed the planning
  assumptions on which the budget is based?
- Do you understand the projected revenues and
  resources? Are the projections based on reasonable
  assumptions? Are the projected revenues from students,
  local taxes and levies, state funds, grants, donations, and
  partnerships appropriate?
- Do you understand the basic accounting principles
  relevant to public entities? (e.g., fund accounting,
  reserves, etc.)
- Does the board have policy guidelines for budget
  allocations? For instance, are mission priorities reflected
  in the overall allocations? If your board has established
  “target percentages” for personnel, reserves, new
  initiatives, etc., have the targets been met?
- Do you understand the expenditure categories? Are the
  projected expenditures realistic given past history and
  probable influences on expenditures? Are the proportions
  of funds dedicated to personnel, maintenance, supplies,
  and other major categories appropriate?
- Is the “ending balance” or unrestricted reserves sufficient
  to meet unexpected needs?

Can you determine:
- The level of debt?
- The level of income compared with the level
  of expenditures?
- That cash flow is sufficient to meet expenses?

Are you assured that:
- Funds allocated or restricted to specific purposes are not
  commingled or transferred without the approval required
  by board policy and by law?
- Are deferral of payments and other ways of spreading
  expenses over a period of time appropriate? Do they not
  commit the organization to liabilities that it cannot meet?
- Do you understand the payment schedule?

Long-Range Planning
Does your board discuss the implications of making long-term
commitments, such as:
- Employee union contracts?
- Employee retirement and health benefits?
- Building projects?
- New programs?
- Debt?
- Multi-year contracts for services, and so on?

Has your board explored and does it understand the long-
range impacts of:
- State and regional economic trends?
- Enrollment projections and trends?
- Facility and maintenance needs?
- The need to upgrade technology and other equipment?
- Are you sufficiently confident that revenues will be
  available to cover projected financial commitments?

Fiscal Management

- Does your board have clear policy guidelines for fiscal and
  asset management?
- Are you willing to delegate responsibility for
  financial monitoring to the CEO? To a board audit or
  finance committee?
- Does your board receive monthly or quarterly financial
  statements? Do you understand them? (If not, how will you
  learn to understand them?) Do the statements provide a
  clear picture of the fiscal condition of the institution? Are
  they timely?
- Does the institution have sufficient “cash” on hand to meet
  its needs?
- Does the institution have sufficient internal controls or
  an internal audit system? Does management follow up on
  potential problems in a timely manner?

Understanding Audits

- Do you require that the college’s financial statements
  and operations be audited on a regular basis by an
  external firm? Do you clearly understand the purposes of
  financial audits?
- Does your board select the auditing firm?
- Does your board’s auditing firm report to the board?
- Do you understand the concept of “generally accepted
  auditing principles” and other government standards
  used to evaluate the soundness of public institutions?
  (Federal standards are set by the Governmental Accounting
  Standards Board; your state may have additional standards.)
Public community colleges are complex organizations, and their budgets, financial reports, and accounting rules can be daunting. Most trustees do not have a specialized background in finance or accounting. However, as stewards of public funds and resources, they must be willing to learn key fiscal concepts, understand how to read budgets and financial reports, and know how to assess appropriate controls and audits.

- If your board has an audit or finance committee, do you ensure that their reports on the audit are discussed thoroughly by the entire board?

**Investments**
- Does your board have an investment policy that defines an appropriate level of risk and reflects other investment values on your board?
- Are you confident that college funds are invested securely and appropriately?

**State and Federal Accountability**
- Is your board aware of the laws and regulations that affect your budget and how funds are spent? Is your institution able to comply with the laws? If not, why not, and what steps are being taken to comply?
- Are reports required by state and federal agencies accurate and filed in a timely manner? Does your board appropriately review the reports? When you are asked to approve the reports, do you understand them well enough to approve them?

**Foundation and Gifts**
- Is your board confident that gifts are accounted for and used appropriately?
- Is your board aware of how the college foundation is spending its money? Does the foundation comply with related laws and board policy?
- Are you assured that its financial reports are filed in a timely manner?

**Monitoring**
- Are you willing to:
  - Ask tough questions?
  - Ask “stupid” questions?
  - Challenge management when something doesn’t make sense?
  - Do the work necessary to learn how to evaluate budget reports, quarterly financial reports, and the audit?

Are you alert to the following potential problems?
- General fund balances or reserves falling below the level the board has established as prudent
- Declining balances or reserves over a period of years
- Deficit spending or routinely borrowing or transferring funds to meet cash flow needs
- Long-range commitments for salaries, benefits, contracts or debt that exceed projected revenues
- Commingling special funds with general funds
- Unpaid or late bills and debt payments
- Audits that contain significant qualified or adverse opinions, or which report significant weaknesses or reportable conditions.

*Dr. Cindra J. Smith is a board development and facilitation consultant, and the author of Trusteeship in Community Colleges: A guide for effective governance.*
I am writing to share some exciting news and, more importantly, to thank you. Because of the dedicated advocacy of community college leaders like you, Congress has reinstated Year-Round Pell Grants as part of the final fiscal year 2017 funding package. ACCT has been urging our members to join their national association in making a case for Year-Round Pell reinstatement, and together we were able to make it happen.

With the reinstatement of Year-Round Pell, eligible full- and part-time students will be able to receive an additional disbursement of grant aid once they’ve exhausted their Pell Grant aid for the year. This additional aid disbursement will often occur during the summer months, enabling community college students to attend classes continually with the support of Pell Grant aid. Year-round access to this vital support will close what is for many students an annual academic gap during which they are more prone to stop out or drop out.

Your membership and engagement have been essential to this victory. ACCT membership dues directly support our association’s advocacy efforts. Additionally, strong member engagement on Year-Round Pell propelled this priority into law. At this year’s Community College National Legislative Summit, hundreds of attendees went to Capitol Hill to discuss our community college federal legislative priorities, which emphasized Pell Grant support (see p. 12). Your efforts not only educated members of Congress on this issue, but they also sent a clear and sustained message that Year-Round Pell supports student access and success.

I thank you for your efforts and for your support. Your ongoing membership makes ACCT’s advocacy work possible. We could not have achieved this without the dedication and support of our community college leaders. We hope that you will continue your advocacy efforts on behalf of our institutions and students. The year ahead will bring a new set of challenges and we rely on your leadership and support. Be sure to bookmark now.acct.org and visit the site regularly for the latest news, research and other information about public policy that affects community colleges.

Sincerely,

J. Noah Brown
President & CEO
Association of Community College Trustees
The Houston Community College System (HCCS) is one of the largest institutions of its kind in the United States. The system operates six separate colleges, 23 campuses, and more than 250 degree and certificate programs. The HCCS Board of Trustees takes pride in knowing that the student population is among the most diverse of any community college.

Twenty-five years ago, HCCS created one of its most diverse programs: The Vocational Advancement and Skills Training (VAST) Academy. This visionary program serves students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The VAST Academy makes it possible for many of these special students to gain independence and to have a productive life in the workforce.
The board of trustees not only fully supports the VAST Academy, but also encourages its growth. The program has expanded from one instructor and 55 students to a staff of 20 that has served more than 2,000 students over the years. Several trustees, the HCCS chancellor, and other high-level administrators attend a special commencement ceremony every year for graduates of the program.

The success of the VAST Academy is undeniable. Students can choose from an array of non-credit courses in subjects that include computer literacy, financial management, and social skills. Every one of the courses is designed to help students become more productive and employable. VAST offers numerous credentialed program tracks, including office skills and retail training. Many students take on internships with employers such as Hampton Inn and CVS and ultimately advance to successful careers.

The board values the success of our VAST students every bit as much as the success of the general student population. We are inspired by VAST students like Ellie Barkhouse-Gaye, who graduated from the program and is now employed as an office assistant at one of our campuses. She has been inducted into the National Society for Leadership and Success and has completed two semesters of college credit courses.

Another VAST alumna, Zeyhla Cruz, is taking on a leadership role as an advocate for individuals with disabilities. Cruz was elected president of the Gulf Coast Self-Advocates in 2016 and serves on the board of Texas Advocates. It is incredibly gratifying to see how VAST has dramatically changed the lives of Zeyhla Cruz, Ellis Barkhouse-Gayer, and thousands of other students.

The success of VAST has not gone unnoticed. The Academy was honored with the President of the United States’s New Freedom Initiative Award in 2002. VAST received a $2.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2009 to support its work. And in 2015, the Texas House of Representatives recognized VAST for its leadership in the creation of a new state consortium that promotes postsecondary education opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

On April 7, the VAST Academy officially celebrated its 25th anniversary with a dinner and an evening of entertainment. While the event recognized a successful past quarter-century, it also highlighted a commitment to the next 25 years of service to the previously underserved. The HCCS Board of Trustees considers it an honor to support that commitment to a very special community of students.

Eva Loredo is chair of the Houston Community College board of trustees. Robert Glaser is a member of the HCC board of trustees.
Central Region

Missouri’s 12 community college systems are collaborating on a new workforce development program designed to help in-state businesses. The program is intended to allow businesses to tap into job training resources available at other community colleges if the nearest campus does not meet the business’s need.

A commission formed by Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder issued a report recommending that the state make community college free for all and award merit-based scholarships to high school graduates who attend the state’s public universities.

Mott Community College in Michigan has joined the Community College Equity Assessment Lab National Consortium on College Men of Color. The consortium’s goal is to combat the achievement gap facing minority males.

Northeast Region

The Minnesota House has approved a $3.2 billion education bill that would freeze tuition for the state’s two-year and technical colleges. Included in the bill is funding for student debt counseling and a loan forgiveness plan for agricultural, aviation, and teaching jobs in rural Minnesota. It also establishes a scholarship program for minority teachers and provides opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities.

A bill is making its way through the Indiana state legislature to help adults without a degree or quality workforce certificate pay for school. The legislation would establish a Workforce Ready Grant and target in-demand degrees, including medical office administration and supply chain management.

Pacifica Region

State legislators in Washington unanimously passed a bill that would give college students a snapshot of the total amount of loans they have received, when the loans will be due, and what their likely payment will be. The intent of the bill is to increase the transparency of what students have complained is an opaque process. The bill was signed by the governor and will become effective in July of this year.

A measure in the California State Legislature seeks to give the state a role in alleviating the burden of debt caused by high-interest private student loans. Under the plan, borrowers would apply to a financial institution for loan refinancing. Once...
approved by the lender, a credit package would then go to the California Educational Financing Authority, which is run by the treasurer’s office. The Authority would agree to offer first-loss protection on up to 10 percent of the loan, meaning the state would guarantee that portion in event of a default.

Community leaders in San Jose, California, launched the San Jose Promise to offer free community college to those who qualify. The goal is to offer two years of free community college to low income, first generation, and historically underrepresented students with $750,000 grants that each of the three San Jose community colleges have received from the California College Promise innovation fund.

The Idaho House approved a community college budget despite division on other issues. The budget allocates nearly $40 million, a 6.7 percent increase from last year, to the state’s three community colleges.

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson signed an act establishing the Arkansas Futures grant. The grant will help pay for college for both recent high school graduates and adults who enroll in a science, technology, engineering, or math program or other high-demand fields at a state community or technical college.

The Tennessee state House approved Gov. Bill Haslam’s Tennessee Reconnect initiative by a large margin. The program offers many Tennessee adults the opportunity to attend community college tuition free. Governor Haslam believes the move is necessary to meet achieve his Drive to 55 initiative calling for 55 percent of Tennesseans to have a postsecondary credential by 2025. Tuition will be paid for through the state’s lottery reserve.

Three out of every four students at Trident Technical College in South Carolina receive financial aid. Although the school isn’t sure how many of its students are food insecure, the school’s Phi Theta Kappa chapter created a food pantry called The Grocery Vault on campus to improve access to food for hungry students. It is stocked with food both donated by the community and purchased by Phi Theta Kappa.

Senate Bill 482 proposes that the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services work with foster care transition centers to create a program that helps those in foster care earn a high school diploma and then either earn vocational certificates or take advantage of college tuition fees and waivers. House Bill 928 would assist foster children in the college admission process by providing guidance regarding tuition and fee waivers and help school districts identify foster children eligible for these waivers and also provide assistance in applying for financial aid and scholarships.

College administrators in Texas are working to convince state lawmakers to authorize them to offer four-year degrees in certain fields. Proponents believe this would increase the number of students who earn four-year degrees in the state, and alleviate worker shortages in skilled industries including nursing, applied technology, applied science, and early childhood education. Members of the Texas House and Senate have shown support for the idea.

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 dconner@acct.org. Fax submissions to 202-223-1297.
Legal Issues Impacting Community Colleges
Student employee unionization, service animals, athletic scholarships among recent developments.

By Ira Michael Shepard, ACCT General Counsel

The following are recent legal issues and court actions of interest to community colleges and their leaders.

Student petition alleging “unprofessional activities” by department chair cited by federal appeals court in reinstating sexual harassment claim. Noting that the plaintiff’s allegations were corroborated by a petition signed by over 200 students, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit recently reversed a trial court dismissal of a female professor’s sexual harassment/hostile environment complaint, holding that the professor was entitled to receive a jury trial on her allegations of mistreatment by an “aggressive and unprofessional” department head (Health v. Southern University System, 2017 BL 72073, 5th Cir. No. 16-30625, 3/8/17).

The professor had alleged in her complaint that the department chair excluded her from meetings because she “talked too much for a woman.” The plaintiff also alleged that the department chair rewrote some of her exams, coerced a student to file a complaint against her, and would not let her write grants or teach advanced classes. The plaintiff’s allegations were corroborated by the student petition, which said that the department chair “demonstrated open hatred and contempt for her and was unprofessional and aggressive.”

The trial court had dismissed the complaint, concluding that the complained activity was barred by the applicable statute of limitations. In its reversal, the appeals court cited the U.S. Supreme Court’s definition of a “continuing violation” applicable in hostile environment cases, which holds that such cases can be based on acts that occurred outside the formal statute of limitations as long as they continue to be related to activities occurring within the statutory period.

EEOC claims denial of service animal for employee suffering PTSD and a mood disorder violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). While service animal ADA suits are rare, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission recently filed litigation against a trucking company for refusing to consider a driver’s requested accommodation for his post-traumatic stress and mood disorder disabilities.

The EEOC sued the Florida company for failing to consider the request for an emotional support animal from a truck driver trainee and subsequently refusing to engage in the interactive process concerning ADA accommodation requests (EEOC v. CRST International, M.D. Fl., No. 3:17-cv-00241, comp filed 3/2/17).
Although the role of "service animals" is not defined in ADA employment provisions, the EEOC contends that these cases are coming up more frequently. The commission points to statistics that mental health disability charges have been on the rise over the past 10 years. In fiscal 2016, the EEOC collected $20 million in mental health disability charge resolutions.

While the use of service animals in certain work places may not be a reasonable accommodation, simply denying the request without consideration is not appropriate in the EEOC's eyes. Likewise, rejecting such a request without consideration based on a blanket policy prohibiting dogs in the workplace violates the ADA's requirement to engage in an interactive process with the employee regarding the requested accommodation.

Six national online job search websites targeted in age discrimination investigation. The State of Illinois Attorney General recently announced the issuance of investigative letters to six major national job search websites, becoming the first state to investigate age discrimination by online career sites.

Letters were sent to CareerBuilder, Monster Worldwide Inc., Vault, Ladders Inc., Beyond.com, and Indeed Inc. One of the sites was accused of denying older people use of its resume creator feature, which prevents users from entering graduation dates prior to 1955 and therefore excludes them from participating. Another was questioned on its use of a procedure that pegs the earliest possible option for education or prior job service at 1980, which allegedly bars anyone older than 52 from full use of the company's website.

NCAA agrees to $209 million settlement of sports scholarship antitrust case. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and 11 athletic conferences have agreed to pay $208.7 million to settle claims that they colluded to suppress athletes' scholarships in a case pending in federal district court in California (National Collegiate Athletic Association grant in Aid Cap Antitrust Litigation, N.D. Cal. No. 4:14-md-02541 motion for preliminary settlement approval, 2/3/17).

The settlement agreement is intended to compensate a class of college athletes who received "grant in aid," which is a form of financial aid which may not have compensated them for all expenses that they were due. The plaintiff group has been described as a 50,000-member group of student athletes who alleged that the size of their scholarships were depressed in violation of antitrust laws by collusion among the athletic conferences. The settlement still must be approved by the federal court involved in this litigation.

Graduate and undergraduate student employees are seeking unionization. Recent polls indicate that student workers, in some cases both graduate and undergraduate, are seeking unionization on campus not just for improved wages and health benefits, but also for protection and procedures to investigate and protect against sexual assault and harassment from students and coworkers (Bloomberg BNA, DLR 2/7/17).

More than 10,000 student employees at 11 major institutions of higher education have sought union representation across the country from the American Federation of Teachers, United Auto Workers, National Education Association, Service Employees Union International, and UNITE-HERE. The institutions involved were Portland State University, Grinnell College, Columbia University, Harvard University, University of Missouri, Duke University, New School, Yale University, Loyola University Chicago, George Washington University, and Cornell University.

Sexual and workplace harassment prevention reiterated as an EEOC priority. The prevention of sexual and other types of workplace harassment was reiterated as a priority of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in January.

The EEOC's draft revised enforcement guidance, which was issued for public comment on January 10, 2017, serves as a reference for the commission's staff, as well as employers and employees. Previous EEOC reports have commented that workplaces that rely on customer service and client satisfaction and those marked by limited communication between organizational levels are at the greatest risk for creating an atmosphere in which sexual harassment can flourish.
WHY DO COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS NEED ACCESS TO robust federal financial aid despite paying lower average tuition and fees than their four-year university counterparts? These costs are only part of the total cost of attending college — with living expenses such as housing, food, and transportation remaining no less expensive for community college students than university students. Given that many community college students have lower household incomes than the average four-year university student, they tend to be at a greater disadvantage when it comes to affording college.

As the lowest cost sector in postsecondary education, it may seem as if community college students do not rely on financial aid as much as their peers at four-year institutions. In 2016-17, the average tuition and fees at public two-year colleges was $3,435, while in-state students at public four-year colleges paid approximately $9,410.

In all states, the average community college tuition is less than what is charged by public four-year colleges, and in 38 states, community college tuition is less than half as expensive. However, costs outside of tuition and fees represent a significant portion of the total cost of enrolling in college and do not vary considerably by sector. Figure 2 shows the estimated non-tuition expenses for students in the 2016-2017 academic year. These estimates, which are provided by colleges, show that living costs — not tuition and fees — make up the bulk of community college students' cost of attendance, and that those costs are similar to those faced by their peers at four-year colleges. Even if students can afford to pay low tuition prices, the living costs may stand in their way of their enrollment — especially as a full-time student. And even if meeting basic needs doesn’t prevent students from enrolling, it often does affect academic performance, persistence, and completion, as many students have to sacrifice time and effort they would otherwise dedicate to classwork in order to pay for basic living expenses. Federal financial aid is therefore vital to community college students despite their institutions' low tuition and fees.

While these data describe the cost of college, students' abilities to pay also factors into college affordability. According to federal data from 2012, half of all students at public two-year colleges had family earnings of less than $30,000. Almost one-third of independent students made less than $10,000. And while most dependent students' families had incomes at or above the national median of $51,000, those students only represented 40 percent of those enrolled in community colleges. With the average cost of attendance at a community college averaging $17,000 per year, most students and their families do not earn enough to pay students' ways without assistance.

Today's students can access financial support from a variety of sources. Federal aid is provided by the U.S. Department of Education in the form of grants, loans, and work-study programs. Most students also can take advantage of education tax credits or deductions, and some may be able to access other public benefits, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). At the state and local levels, students may be able to attend community college tuition-free through a College Promise program or qualify for state grants.


Jacob Bray is an associate writer for the Association of Community College Trustees.
FIGURE 1: AVERAGE TUITION AND FEES IN 2014-15, BY SECTOR

Note: Figure presented for for-profit colleges is the average for two- and four-year institutions.

FIGURE 2: AVERAGE NON-TUITION COSTS IN 2014-15, BY SECTOR

Note: Budgets for four-year public and private institutions denote on-campus living arrangements. All other sectors reflect students who are living off-campus, not with family. Figure presented for for-profit colleges is the average for two- and four-year institutions.

FIGURE 3: FAMILY INCOME OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS, OVERALL AND BY DEPENDENCY STATUS

BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY: THE REAL CRISIS FACING COMMUNITY COLLEGES

With majorities of students facing challenges with food and housing, institutions can help ensure that more have their basic needs met.

BY SARA GOLDRICK-RAB

EVERY DAY IN COLLEGE CLASSROOMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, STUDENTS FALL asleep in class. Their heads bob, drooping down on their desks, while their professors look on in dismay. Many of those students disappear during the term — while they were at least present in September, by December they are gone.

We talk a lot about the crisis of non-completion in community colleges, lamenting the struggles students confront when trying to juggle school and work, challenges created by under-preparation for the academic rigor of the coursework, and the difficulties faced by first-generation students who don’t know how to navigate complex bureaucracies. But we rarely discuss — at least openly — the sleeping students.
Those sleeping students deserve our attention, and so do the many other exhausted but perhaps not yet sleeping students whose energy is sapped. They come to class genuinely interested in learning, but not always ready to learn because their basic needs — conditions for that learning — have not yet been secured. Many are hungry, even homeless.

We are finally starting to notice. Last fall, the Association of Community College Trustees partnered with the Wisconsin HOPE Lab to conduct a survey funded by the Kresge Foundation. Seventy community colleges in 24 states agreed to send out questions to their students in order to assess who among them was experiencing food and/or housing insecurity. The survey was sent electronically, so as usual many students did not complete it, and it is reasonable to assume that those who did had more time and maybe even more money than those who did not. But in total, more than 33,000 community college students completed the questions, opening a window into experiences that many Americans know nothing about.

Basic Needs and Insecurity
Abraham Maslow teaches us that secure food, water, and shelter establish the basis of identity formation and self-actualization, processes required for the acquisition of higher learning. A student who is food insecure is unable to secure adequate nutritious food in a socially acceptable manner. A student who is housing insecure has high housing costs in proportion to their income, endures poor quality housing, lives in unstable neighborhoods, faces overcrowding, or at worst is homeless.

The ACCT/Wisconsin HOPE Lab survey revealed that two-thirds of the 33,000 community college students who responded were food insecure, with one-third registering the very lowest levels of security and therefore can be said to be hungry.

More than half (51 percent) of the students were housing insecure, having difficulty paying their rent or utilities, moving frequently, doubling up, or couch surfing. Among those students are the 14 percent of those surveyed who were homeless. That meant that they slept on the street, in abandoned buildings, in cars, or in shelters — or that sometimes they didn’t know where they would sleep.

When students experience these conditions outside of the classroom, is it any wonder that they have difficulty paying attention — or even staying awake — inside the classroom?

A Nationwide Challenge
We found that these conditions affect students all over the country. The rates of housing and food insecurity were similar at community colleges in the West, Midwest, South, and Northeast, with the only notable difference being higher rates of very low levels of food insecurity and homelessness occurring in the Northeast.

Moreover, community colleges in more (or less) expensive counties, and those enrolling more Pell Grant recipients were no more (or less) likely to have high rates of basic needs insecurity. One reason seems to be that
students on either side of the Pell Grant eligibility line — those who get it and those who do not — have a similar likelihood of being food and/or housing insecure. This may be because students who cannot or do not file the FAFSA often nonetheless have trouble paying the bills, and many middle-class families who only qualify for loans are experiencing declining financial health.

What does seem to matter? Jobs. Community colleges in counties with lower unemployment rates are less likely to have students experiencing food insecurity or housing insecurity. There is a noticeable difference in the employment of homeless students versus other students — they are more likely to be seeking work but unable to find it, and if they are employed they are paid lower hourly wages.

It is extremely hard for college students to find help when falling short of food or housing. In many ways, it is even harder for students than for non-students. For example, if a college student needs food stamps and does not have children, they will have to work at least 20 hours per week — but college does not count. If they need subsidized housing, they will often be placed lower on the priority list because they are in college, or even told that they cannot get housing because they are in school. It can be hard for homeless students to secure a bed in a shelter at night when the line forms in the afternoon while they are in class. We found that just 29 percent of food-insecure community college students received food stamps, and only 16 percent of housing-insecure students received rent or utility assistance.

Without their basic needs secured, students feel ashamed, alone, and unable to focus on learning. Some experience erosions in their mental health, their energy levels, and yes, even their ability to sleep at night is affected.

Recommendations for Colleges

There is much that community colleges can do to ensure that every student has their basic needs secured so that they can learn. Here are five places to start:

1. Put someone in charge — an institutional leader or committee of leaders who are specifically tasked with assessing and addressing students’ basic needs security.
2. Hire a case manager and/or train existing staff to serve as a single point of contact for basic needs-insecure students, and in particular homeless students.
3. Identify and implement creative approaches to addressing food insecurity, including the creation of campus food pantries, campus community gardens, food recovery programs, and coordinated benefits access programs.
4. Consider the needs of lower and moderate income students when developing any on-campus housing — seek to build mixed-income housing, and build partnerships with the local housing authority to identify supports for students in subsidized housing programs.
5. Develop a robust and accessible emergency aid program that delivers support to students quickly.

Our recent report, Hungry and Homeless in College, expands on these ideas and offers more details, including thoughts on how state and federal policymakers can make a difference too.

Every student in our colleges has the right to experience the fine instruction that professors work every day to provide. They need to be well-rested and fed in order to do so. We can act now to support the security of their basic needs and greatly enhance their chances for academic success.

Sara Goldrick-Rab is a professor of higher education policy and sociology at Temple University and founder of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, the nation’s only translational research laboratory seeking ways to make college more affordable.
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Participants came from 12 states and six United States territories to learn about governance.

MARCH 29 – APRIL 1, 2017

2017 Governance Leadership Institute

FROM MARCH 29 – APRIL 1, ACCT HELD THE NATIONALLY ACCLAIMED 2017 GOVERNANCE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE AT Kapi'olani Community College in Honolulu, Hawaii. This was ACCT’s first time bringing an event to Hawaii, and it was a huge success. More than 100 trustees, presidents, chancellors, and professional board staff gathered for this intensive and interactive Institute, sponsored by the Strada Education Network and hosted by the University of Hawaii.

Participants came from 12 states and six American territories, including the Republic of Palau, Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated State of Micronesia, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, and American Samoa.

Topics covered throughout the two-and-a-half day Institute included:
• Economic inequality on campus
• Community college trends
• Defining a disaster-resilient college
• How trustees can apply a college value framework to decision making
• How to build statewide partnerships

• Running effective board meetings
• Presidential evaluations
• Board self-assessments

ACCT thanks Dr. David Lassner, president of the University of Hawaii, and Mr. John Morton, vice chancellor of the University of Hawaii Community Colleges, for hosting the Institute and welcoming ACCT to Hawaii.

Community college leaders come together in Honolulu for a unique experience to accelerate the learning process and orient new trustees with the basics of boardsmanship.
President

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

College of the Mainland, Texas
Dr. Warren Nichols
President
Former Vice Chancellor, Tennessee’s Community Colleges, Tennessee Board of Regents

“We are thrilled to have Dr. Nichols on board because he brings a vast amount of experience to COM. He has been the president of a community college and supervised presidents of community colleges in Tennessee. He has a great deal of political acumen and he’s worked with a state legislature in establishing programs. He’s the right guy at the right time.”
—Wayne Miles, Chair, College of the Mainland, Board of Trustees

Washington State Community College, Ohio
Dr. Vicky Wood
President
Former Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs and Student Services, Marion Technical College, Ohio

“We had four outstanding final candidates, and Dr. Wynegar was the one that the board unanimously picked as our next president. He is very well qualified.”
—S. Paul O’Neal, Chair, Board of Trustees

College of The Albemarle, North Carolina
Dr. Robert Wynegar
President
Former Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Western Nevada College

“The board is confident with Vicky’s background and ability to better not just the college, but also the community. Her background in workforce development, student success, and building programs and enrollment will only enhance the performance of Washington State Community College.”
—Randy Barengo, Chair, Washington State Community College

Long Beach City College, California
Dr. Reagan Romali
Superintendent/President
Former President, Truman College, City Colleges of Chicago, Illinois

“Dr. Romali is going to be a great match for the college. She’s a people person, and one of the first things she said she wants to do is meet all the different constituent groups on campus. She is excited to be here, and we are excited to welcome her.”
—Ginny Baxter, Chair, Long Beach City College
Eastern Gateway Community College, Ohio
Dr. Anne Loochtan
Provost
Former Provost, Medical Education Campus, Northern Virginia Community College

“With ACCT’s support and assistance, we undertook a national search and are fortunate to have Anne Loochtan join our team at Eastern Gateway. Her experience and positive attitude will help us grow, achieve our goals, and provide the best education for our students.”

—Jimmie Bruce, President, Eastern Gateway Community College

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The Precariously Unique Role of the President’s Assistant During the Presidential Search Process

By Heather M. Lanham, PBSN President
Edison State Community College, Piqua, OH

According to Jeff Hockaday and Donald E. Puyear, up to half of the community colleges across the country will be experiencing a presidential search within the next ten years. “Studies, both empirical and formal, indicate that retirement and turnover among America’s community college leadership in the near future will have a serious impact. As many as 600 of the slightly more than 1,200 community college presidents in the United States could retire during the next decade,” say Hockaday and Puyear, authors of the article Community College Leadership in the New Millennium, which appears on ACCT’s website. For someone who serves in the capacity of the administrative assistant to the president or a similar position, going through the search process for the person who will one day be their next boss can seem like a daunting task. In reality, however, it is a unique opportunity to showcase the skills that lead them down this particular career path in the first place. They just have to be able to move beyond their own anxieties.

In any position in any institution, the prospect of getting a new boss can be intimidating and brings with it many questions. What will this new person be like? Will we get along? What kind of changes will they implement when they arrive? For the person or persons in the role of the president’s assistant(s), an additional question lurks: Will they want to replace me with their current assistant?

Having personally assisted with a presidential search within the last two years, I understand the origin and stress-inducing power of all of these questions. When I attended my first ACCT Annual Congress a few years ago, I eagerly took part in the half-day workshop facilitated by the Professional Board Staff Network (PBSN). One of the workshop topics was presented by a community college president and his assistant. He discussed the role of the presidential assistant from the viewpoint of a president, offering valuable insight and information on specific needs of a CEO. The president and his assistant shared how they navigated their roles and the importance of having a strong, trusting relationship. Though I don’t remember everything that was discussed, I do remember finding the session extremely beneficial, being the newbie that I was.

Continued on page 42
There was one thing that was said, however, that I have not forgotten to this day. The community college president stated that the position of the presidential assistant is one of the most precarious on campus when it comes time for that president to transition to a new institution. Because the relationship between a president and his or her assistant is so valuable, and is hopefully honed to perfection over the years, the ideal scenario when leaving one institution for another would be for the president to bring his or her personal assistant with them, the president said. This particular president added that he was close to retirement, but that if he instead chose to transition to another institution, he would do everything in his power to convince his current assistant to make the move as well.

Those words have never really left me, and they edged their way to the forefront of my thoughts when it became apparent that my institution would be searching for a new president. Added to that memory over the several months it took to complete the search process was the same frequently asked question posed by random staff members: “Do you think the new president will keep you when they are hired?” “I certainly hope they decide to do so,” was all that I could politely answer.

Being replaced or relocated by an incoming president is not something that you consciously think about when you apply for a position such as this, and it’s not something that anyone really warns you about ahead of time. Though I’ve been told several times since my early days on the job that this practice isn’t as prevalent as it might once have been in the past, I do know now that it is always a possibility.

Having all of these concerns going through my mind, I also understood, however, that during the search process, it was imperative that I continue to serve my current president, the board, and my institution to the best of my abilities in order to ensure a smooth and successful transition process. There was too much to be accomplished in terms of the search process itself and performing my regular day-to-day duties to allow anxieties to get in the way.

After having successfully completed this process myself, I realized how important my role as the executive assistant to the president was to the institution’s quest for its next leader. If the president’s assistant also serves the board of trustees, as I do, he or she can be a valuable asset to the trustees during the search process. There are so many components of the presidential search that need to be addressed, from organizing meeting logistics, communicating with members of search committees and search firms, communicating with the candidates themselves, organizing travel, and making sure everyone is fed, to name a few, which can adeptly be handled by the president’s assistant if called upon to help. The board of trustees depends on this person at this time more than ever. It is yet another opportunity for the president’s assistant to display their skills and competence. They also could potentially be called upon to give input throughout the process without overstepping their bounds.

Once the presidential candidates enter the picture, the chances arise for the assistant to showcase their abilities and work ethic to each candidate, among whom is the one who will be his or her future boss. Keeping in mind that the candidates will be nervous, and that the interview process is both daunting and momentous for each of them, the assistant has the opportunity to help make their experiences as easy as possible.

After the final selection is made and the offer is given, the real communication with the future president begins, often weeks before they step into their new role. This advance work will give the assistant the unique occasion to prove his or her value to the position, and to begin to build the relationship of trust that will hopefully perpetuate for years down the road.

Studies, both empirical and formal, indicate that retirement and turnover among America’s community college leadership in the near future will have a serious impact. As many as 600 of the slightly more than 1,200 community college presidents in the United States could retire during the next decade.
The Work-Life Balancing Act

By Margaret Lamb, San Diego Community College District, California

“WISH WE COULD TURN BACK TIME/ TO THE GOOD OLD DAYS/ when our momma sang us to sleep/ but now we’re stressed out…” So go the lyrics to one of the most popular songs of 2016, “Stressed Out” by the group Twenty One Pilots, which laments the many pressures the transition to adulthood brings.

Stress is a normal human response to danger. In some cases, it can motivate people to prepare or perform better, and it can even be life-saving in some situations. If stress goes on for too long, however, it can have serious effects on physical and mental health. It can affect immune, digestive, sleep, and reproductive systems, causing them to stop working normally. Stress can even lead to depression, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and other illnesses.

According to the Integrated Benefits Institute (IBI), a health and productivity research organization, lost productivity from illness costs the U.S. economy some $227 billion a year, including employee absenteeism and what researchers called “presenteeism,” when employees report to work but illness keeps them from performing at their best.

One in four Americans is affected by mental illness each year, and the World Health Organization says depression will be the costliest disease burden by 2020. When it comes to mental health, IBI’s research has shown a strong relationship between workplace climate, employee health, and work outcomes such as absence and job performance.

Numerous studies show that the greatest sources of stress for Americans are job-related. In today’s over-connected world, finding a balance between work and everything else seems like an impossible task. So how does one combat these stressors in order to stay healthy and perform at their best?

Prioritize at work and at home. At work, set manageable goals and focus on quality rather than quantity. Breaking larger projects into smaller tasks makes them seem more realistic, gives a greater sense of control, and allows for a greater sense of accomplishment and progress. Creating a to-do list can help prioritize more urgent and important items and keep you on track. Note what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do. At home, prioritize by allowing yourself to “unplug” from work. Recognize the need for personal time. For most of us, our productivity and effectiveness is tied to the speed of our thinking. Without enough rest, thinking slows down considerably.

Communicate. Learn to say no to new tasks if they are putting you into overload. Be honest with colleagues or your boss when you feel you’re in a bind. But don’t just complain — suggest practical alternatives. Be realistic about what you can and can’t accomplish in a day. It’s not helpful if you take on too much and then chastise yourself for not getting it done. To reduce stress, seek help from friends, family, and community organizations.

Make time for self-care. In addition to eating properly, exercising regularly, and getting enough sleep, take the time to do the things that you enjoy. Find what helps you cope with stress, whether it be meditation and yoga, connecting with friends, watching TV, reading, cooking, or getting a massage. Many organizations offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which assists employees with personal and work-related issues, including guidance on emotional well-being, as well as referrals to mental health and other services.

Don’t let stress stand in the way of your health and happiness. If you are persistently overwhelmed, it may be time to seek help from a mental health professional. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness — taking care of yourself is a sign of strength. Also important is to give yourself a break. No one’s perfect! Instead of focusing on your shortcomings, acknowledge your success, allow yourself to be human, and just do the best you can.

Schedule your time at work and at home. Although it can be challenging, by blocking off time for breaks at work, you are giving yourself the opportunity to recharge throughout the day. You can also prevent stressful situations from overlapping, reducing the number of stressors you must juggle at any one time. If possible, stagger deadlines for large projects. This strategy also translates to home life. By treating family time as a scheduled commitment, you are able to be intentional about your priorities.

The ACCT Professional Board Staff Network takes a strong interest in the health of our members. At the recent PBSN professional development workshop, held during the 2016 ACCT Leadership Congress, an informative session was provided on ways to stay healthy despite the largely sedentary working conditions of most professional board staff.

At the end of the day, there is no panacea for relieving stress. Each individual must identify his or her own stressors and take action to address them. You get to decide what balance means to you. While we would all prefer to return to a more carefree time, the very important work we do supporting our boards, CEOs, and ultimately, community college students helps to give people the tools to change their lives.

Using these tips, hopefully you will be able to restore a little balance in your own life. As the late businessman and writer Paul Boese once said, “We come into this world head first and go out feet first; in between, it is all a matter of balance.”
2017-2018 Candidates for the ACCT Board of Directors

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**

(1) Three-Year Term in Each Region
The following is the slate of nominees:

- **Central Region**
  - James Cooksey*
    Moberly Area Community College, MO

- **Northeast Region**
  - Hector Ortiz*
    Harrisburg Area Community College, PA

- **Pacific Region**
  - No nominees

- **Southern Region**
  - Dennis Troy*
    Bladen Community College, NC

- **Western Region**
  - Rose Benavidez*
    South Texas College, TX

**DIRECTOR-AT-LARGE**

(3) Three-Year Terms
(1) One-Year Partial Term
The following is the slate of nominees:

- **John Lukas**
  Lakeshore Technical College, WI

Nominations must be received by July 1, 2017 in order to appear in the fall 2017 issue of Advisor.

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

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

2017-2018 Candidates for the ACCT Diversity Committee

(1) Two-Year Term in Each Region
The following is the slate of nominees:

- **Central Region**
  - Jay Nardini*
    Hawkeye Community College, IA

- **Northeast Region**
  - Mary Zimmerman*
    Union County College, NJ

- **Pacific Region**
  - Judy Chen Haggerty*
    Mt. San Antonio College, CA

- **Southern Region**
  - Betty Holness*
    Daytona State College, FL

- **Western Region**
  - Carlton Underwood*
    Central Wyoming College, WY

- **Tamra Jackson**
  Wenatchee Valley College, WA

*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, 2017
You are encouraged to submit your nomination via e-mail to 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.

If you wish to run for a Director-at-Large seat in Las Vegas during the 2017 Annual 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, 2017, or by electronic mail (preferred method) by close of business on July 1, 2017.

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;
- 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. ACCT will respond to your submission via e-mail within three working days. Please contact ACCT Vice President for Public Policy and External Relations Jee Hang Lee at 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.
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