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From the President & CEO

It's Been My Pleasure



IT IS WITH MIXED EMOTIONS THAT I WRITE THIS, my final letter, for *Trustee Quarterly*. The final 17 months of my presidency were not what I expected, nor anticipated back in 2019 when I made the decision to step down. Our democracy has been tested, first by a pandemic, then the resultant economic recession, followed by civil strife and demands for justice and an end to racism and persecution of people of color.

The Association does not exist in a vacuum; it is not an elite organization ringed by the Washington Beltway and insulated from the events and everyday lives of people in tens of thousands of communities across the land. No, the ACCT team and I exist at

the very intersection of all things and bear witness to the events — good and bad — that affect our students, our colleges, and our communities. Despite the pandemic and having to work virtually for most of the past 15 months, we continued to stay close to our membership and to reinvent both ourselves and the Association to rise to a higher level of service.

Winston Churchill opined after the catastrophe that was Dunkirk in 1940 that “this was their finest hour,” a clarion signal that Britain would triumph over adversity. While I by no means suggest that the pandemic is equatable to the Second World War, it nonetheless tested our resolve and challenged us to rethink serving the membership and distill the very essence of ACCT’s mission and purpose. As I look back to the events that were unfolding in March 2020, I can say without hesitation that we at ACCT experienced our “finest hour.” We more than survived — we thrived.

Just flip through the pages of this edition of *Trustee Quarterly*. An interview with the new U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, a lifelong educator and administrator, the importance of nondegree credentials, fostering the entrepreneurial mindset, resetting transfer, and the “making of a community college trustee” — these articles bear witness to an Association that has continued to be both relevant and instructive to the membership, despite countless obstacles thrown in front of us.

As I prepare to hand the leadership off to your new president and CEO, I do so with the confidence and evidence of an association that has never been stronger in my 25 years of service to you and to ACCT. We are financially secure, acknowledged as a policy and thought leader, respected by our peers, and yes, somewhat the envy of others for our productivity and innovation.

It has been my honor to have traveled this road with you, particularly during my 16 years as your president and CEO — a tenure I never imagined and never once took for granted. Service is both a calling and a solemn obligation that falls to too few in this world. I have been privileged to serve you and the millions of students who rely on your colleges as gateways to the American Dream. I will forever cherish my time with you and look forward with great anticipation to the future of the Association and the community college movement.

Please stay safe, and thank you for your service and for having placed your faith in ACCT.

J. NOAH BROWN
ACCT PRESIDENT AND CEO