As ACCT Chair, Dawn Erlandson wants to ensure that community college leaders meet the needs of every student — both in and out of the classroom.
ACCT's awards program is designed to recognize and honor outstanding community college trustees, equity programs, presidents, faculty members, and professional board staff members at regional and national levels. In order to be considered for an Association Award, you must first submit a nomination at the regional level.

The Awards committees will select and notify the Awards recipients prior to the ACCT Leadership Congress. ACCT’s Awards recipients will be honored at the 2020 ACCT Leadership Congress this September in Chicago, Illinois.

Visit www.acct.org for specific nomination criteria and to submit nominations online.

Call 202-775-4667 with any questions.
All nominations must be received by June 1, 2020.
From the Chair

Is Your College Student Ready?

FOR AS LONG AS COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES have existed, they have attracted students who are eager to learn. Today’s students, too, are eager to learn — that has not changed — but now we understand that people don’t all learn the same way. As open-access institutions that admit all students, community colleges need to transform the one-size-fits-all model in order to help all students reach their academic and life potential.

As chair of ACCT and a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities board, representing all of Minnesota’s public colleges and universities, I urge you to ascertain if our institutions are truly student ready. Are we prepared for Generation Z, my teenagers’ generation?

Research shows that Generation Z (born 1997–2012) expects technology, particularly visual video-based technology, to be integrated into their educational experience. They prefer interactive, in-person learning with teachers and classmates to online only education. They expect accelerated, flexible, on-demand and adaptive education tools. They refuse to be passive learners sitting in a lecture taking notes. They expect to be part of the learning process. Over 50 percent say they learn best by doing, not by listening. When studying outside of class, they learn together using digital tools like FaceTime.

Generation Z is more heavily influenced by the recession in 2008 than even the Millennials who preceded them. As such, they are motivated by career advancement and are cost-conscious.

During the 50th Annual ACCT Leadership Congress, nearly 2,000 community college leaders spent a short time reflecting on the past half-decade, and most of our time thinking about and planning for the future. As we move into the second half of our century as a national higher education institution, it’s time for us to think about how we can meet students where they are. That’s always been a specialty of community colleges, both in a geographical and an academic sense. The same sensibility needs to be applied to teaching and learning.

Doing so will contribute to our colleges’ commitment to educational equity. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, “one in five children in the U.S. have learning and attention issues such as dyslexia and ADHD…but 48 percent of parents believe incorrectly that children will outgrow these brain-based difficulties, and 33 percent of educators say that sometimes what people call a learning disability is really just laziness.” It’s not. When you read my interview in this issue, you’ll learn about my family’s own learning differences. In my case, I didn’t know that I had a learning difference until I was already out of college. As we adapt our colleges to deliver “precision, or personalized, education” to each student, we will naturally be serving not only younger students in the ways they need to be served, but also long-neglected students who have profound learning differences. Community colleges are best situated to take on this challenge.

I look forward to working with you over the coming year. Our nation’s community colleges are second to none in higher education, and together their governing boards will lead our institutions with courage and vision into the future.

DAWN ERLANDSON
TRUSTEE, MINNESOTA STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
Perfect Vision: Meeting Students Where They Are

THREE YEARS AGO, THE ACCT BOARD OF Directors developed its “2020 Vision” Strategic Plan, which has driven the association’s programs and services for the past three years. Our Board’s big goals have been to advance student success and completion strategies and to prepare trustees for the evolution of the community college.

The Board will deliberate this summer on an updated strategic plan. While I can’t predict what its overall focus may be, I can say that the spirit of our 2020 ACCT Leadership Congress theme of “Second to None: Meeting Students Where They Are” indicates where our sector is right now and where we’ll certainly be heading in the years to come.

You can see the sentiment reflected in our cover story of 2019-2020 Chair Dawn Erlandson (see page 18), whose vision of personalized education for every student is undeniably bold, but also within reach given the constant development of new technologies. Those technologies, combined with the research ACCT has conducted into student loan default rates, food and housing insecurity, mental health, and our current investigation into the unmet needs of rural colleges and their students (p. 16), are making it possible for our colleges to help students like Zan Benitez, Klayre Guzman, and James Elliott, profiled on pages 24-27, to reach their extraordinary potential.

The two main goals of our 2020 Vision are advanced through this issue. Stories that detail how open educational resources, or OER, can save students money (p. 14) and why encouraging participation in the 2020 U.S. Census is in the best interest of your college and its students (p. 22), as well as a profile of Amarillo College’s Maria, a student and a vision that changed outcomes at the college dramatically (p. 7), all can influence student success and completion strategies.

This issue also focuses on effective governance, continuing Eduardo Marti’s serialized case study about the making of a community college trustee (p. 30), addressing how strategic planning can unite community members, change cultures, and create fertile ground for institutional transformation (p. 34), and exploring how the San Diego Community College District’s annual process of setting board goals that align with the institution’s strategic plan and accreditation standards keeps the college on top (p. 40).

And as always, ACCT Senior Vice President Jee Hang Lee offers great insights into what he calls the “sausage-making” process of legislating (p. 8). Director of Trustee Education Norma Goldstein takes on the complicated issue of free speech on college campuses (p. 34), and General Counsel Ira Michael Shepard presents legal case summaries dealing with First Amendment concerns, in addition to issues that will benefit any board member to know.

I hope that you’ll take your time and review the articles carefully, as there is too much good information here to overlook. And in the interest of personalized, precision education, be sure to let us know how we can best deliver the information you need to know. Drop Trustee Quarterly’s Managing Editor David Conner a note at dconner@acct.org with your thoughts.

J. NOAH BROWN
ACCT PRESIDENT AND CEO
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Annual ACCT Association Awards

ACCT announced the recipients of its annual Association Awards for community college trustees, equity programs, chief executive officers, faculty members, and professional board staff members during the ACCT Awards Gala on Friday, October 18, at the Hilton San Francisco Union Square. Awardees were announced live during the gala on ACCT’s Twitter (@CCTrustees). For photos and videos of the Association and Regional Awards, visit www.acct.org/awards.

2019 Charles Kennedy Equity Award
Harrisburg Area Community College, Pa.

2019 M. Dale Ensign Trustee Leadership Award
Gladys Christensen
Central Arizona College, Ariz. (see box, right)

2019 William H. Meardy Faculty Member Award
Amelia Phillips
Highline College, Wash.

2019 Marie Y. Martin Chief Executive Award
William Serrata
El Paso Community College, Texas

2019 ACCT Professional Board Staff Member Award
Karen Campbell
Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, Wis.

For more information about the ACCT Awards program, contact awards@acct.org.
In November, the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program named the nation’s top 150 community colleges. Representing 15 percent of community colleges nationwide, these institutions are eligible to compete for the $1 million Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the organization’s signature recognition of high achievement and performance among America’s community colleges.

The Aspen Prize is based on strong and improving student outcomes — including in learning, completion rates, employment rates and earnings, and equity. Data show that over the last two years, student retention, graduation rates, and degree completion have improved at the top tier of 150 Aspen Prize-eligible colleges.

“Community colleges play a vital role in developing talent and enabling social mobility across the country, and it’s critical for them to get better at what they do,” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. “We’re pleased to see evidence that these institutions are improving, that more are delivering on their promise. We’re also pleased to play a role in honoring outstanding community colleges and sharing what works to ensure great outcomes for students — through graduation and beyond.”

The 150 community colleges named today as eligible to compete for the 2021 Prize were selected from a pool of nearly 1,000 public two-year colleges nationwide using publicly available data on student outcomes. Located in 39 states in urban, rural, and suburban areas, serving as few as 500 students and as many as 75,000 students, these colleges represent the diversity and depth of the community college sector.

The top ten finalists for the 2021 Aspen Prize will be named in May. The Aspen Institute will then conduct site visits to each of the finalists and collect additional quantitative data, including employment and earnings data. A distinguished jury will make award decisions in spring 2021.

Previous winners of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence are Miami Dade College (Fla.) and Indian River State College (Fla.), 2019; Lake Area Technical College (S.D.), 2017; Santa Fe College (Fla.), 2015; Santa Barbara City College (Calif.) and Walla Walla Community College (Wash.), 2013; and Valencia College (Fla.), 2011.

For a full list of the top 150 eligible institutions and to read more on the selection process, visit www.highered.aspeninstitute.org/aspen-prize.

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### 2019 M. Dale Ensign Trustee Leadership Award

**Gladys Christensen**

Central Arizona College

**What does winning the award mean to you?**

To be selected for the ACCT Trustee Leadership Award is both joyous and humbling. This award bears my name, but the award really is for the dedication and endless hard work put forth by the entire Central Arizona College (CAC) family, including all the employees, students, and fellow board members. It means so much since we celebrated our 50th anniversary and our beautiful institution just gets better and better. The honor and the glory of being part of this elite group is boundless.

After 37 years on this board, I still get excited about the learning process and the impact of it on each student. This special acknowledgement is truly icing on my cake of life!

**What advice would you give to other community college trustees?**

Some tidbits of advice I might offer to anyone contemplating whether to become a trustee:

- Do not enter the position to satisfy a personal agenda.
- Always show respect for every individual.
- Assume that personnel were hired for their expertise; do not tell them how to do their job.
- Communicate regarding college business only with the CEO (chancellor, president) or designee.
- Take advantage of training opportunities in order to become a stronger and more knowledgeable trustee.
- Always remember that you are part of a team. As an individual, you are exactly that: one person with no voice for the group. Decisions are made by the board.
- Confidentiality is essential and legally required.
- Love it or leave it.
In Support of Effective Community College Governance, the Board Believes:

- That it derives its authority from the community and that it must always act as an advocate on behalf of the entire community;
- That it must clearly define and articulate its role;
- That it is responsible for creating and maintaining a spirit of true cooperation and a mutually supportive relationship with its CEO;
- That it always strives to differentiate between external and internal processes in the exercise of its authority;
- That its trustee members should engage in a regular and ongoing process of in-service training and continuous improvement;
- That its trustee members come to each meeting prepared and ready to debate issues fully and openly;
- That its trustee members vote their conscience and support the decision or policy made;
- That its behavior, and that of its members, exemplify ethical behavior and conduct that is above reproach;
- That it endeavors to remain always accountable to the community;
- That it honestly debates the issues affecting its community and speaks with one voice once a decision or policy is made.

*The term “board” refers to a community college board of trustees or appropriate governing authority.

New Report Details Opportunities for Community Colleges to Support Working Students

ACCT, with support from The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, released the first report in a new four-part series detailing critical issues and strategies related to community colleges’ roles in workforce development. The College-Work Balancing Act focuses on the need to support the majority of community college students who work while enrolled by detailing national data on this student population and urging community colleges to employ supports that meet students’ academic and non-academic needs. The report also highlights three examples of initiatives that recognize the unique needs of working students from Lakeshore Technical College, Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College, and the Austin Community College District.

“Higher education is a demanding enterprise for any student,” says ACCT President and CEO J. Noah Brown, “and most community college students have to work while they pursue their studies. Through a variety of interventions presented in The College-Work Balancing Act, community college leaders can help to ease the burden on these students so that they can invest their time and their energies in studies and in work that will advance their future careers.”

Major takeaways from the report include:

- Nearly 70 percent of community college students work while enrolled, often in order to meet their educational and living expenses, rather than to gain career experience. Only one-third of students who work hold a job related to their field of study;
- Low-income students are unlikely to earn enough to pay for tuition and living expenses without sacrificing their academic progress. Even with financial aid for tuition, low-income students who earn the minimum wage would need to work over 20 hours per week to pay for living expenses. Prior research shows that working long hours can have negative impacts on low-income students’ academic performance and can increase their likelihoods of stopping out; and
- When it is necessary for students to work to meet their financial needs, colleges should whenever possible help make these work experiences meaningful and tailor their campus environments to accommodate the realities of students’ lives. This report highlights several academic and non-academic supports intended to meet the needs of working students, including opportunities for paid work-based learning such as apprenticeships, flexible scheduling options, and access to affordable childcare.

“Many people are aware that working at least part time is a necessity for most community college students,” said Michael Carren, head of corporate social responsibility at Guardian. “Our hope is that The College-Work Balancing Act and other papers in the series will provoke community college and business leaders to think about, discuss, and develop strategies to help students focus on their studies while obtaining practical, directly applicable work experience.”

Last year, with support from Guardian Life, ACCT released a comprehensive report on community colleges’ role in workforce development, Partnerships for a Future-Ready Workforce. Building on our previous report, ACCT’s new series will provide an in-depth look at critical issues and strategies related to community colleges’ roles in workforce development. Over the next year and a half, ACCT will publish three additional reports on the topics of implementing prior learning assessments, meeting needs for upskilling, and adapting to automation in the workforce.

To download the reports, go to www.acct.org/term/reports-and-white-papers.
Meet Maria, Amarillo College’s Most Promising Student

Amarillo College raised completion rates from 19% to 48% by using a composite personal profile to better understand who the college should cater to.

by Jacob Bray

At Amarillo College in Texas, “Maria” is a composite personal profile of the average student. Maria is a first-generation, part-time student. She is female, Latina, and has substantial financial barriers. She works, on average, two part time jobs, is 27 years old, and raises 1.2 children. She was created to draw attention to the type of student the college should be designing its services to cater to.

“If we are going to be the economic saviors of our community, we have to understand who our community is, and we have to readdress ourselves to reflect our community,” Amarillo President Russell Lowery-Hart said during a presentation given at the 50th Annual ACCT Leadership Congress, now available as an “In the Know with ACCT” podcast.

Amarillo recognized that its academic model served a student who was increasingly in the minority — recent high school graduates, students with ample free time. Supports for Maria are not all directly academic. Creating a concerted effort to, as Lowery-Hart says, “love Maria to success,” involves establishing a personal connection among students, faculty, and staff. Lowery-Hart identified that students could find the administration and institutional design to be confusing and cold. He wants to ensure that students and their families feel welcome at every point of interaction with the college, whether in the bursar’s office or the classroom.

An example of this ethos in practice is making sure all students receive their first grade directly from their professors — not online. This provides an opportunity for human contact. Lowery-Hart described a student, Linda, who excelled in high school mathematics but faltered on her first college-level exam. The exam required the use of a TI-84 calculator, which she didn’t have, instead thinking she wasn’t smart enough. While meeting with her professor, he asked Linda why she wasn’t using a TI-84. She didn’t know it was a calculator, but after the meeting she purchased one and passed the class. Lowery-Hart credits that simple interaction to preventing her from dropping out, and eventually becoming an honors student. It’s an example of how making an effort to understand students’ perspectives — what they know and what they might not understand — can change lives.

Overall, Amarillo uses a threefold strategy to help students persist to graduation: Remove a life barrier, make use of expedited learning, and create a culture of caring. This plan, arrived at through employing Maria as a secret shopper, improved completion rates from 19 to 48 percent in over three years. Maria is smart, capable, and ambitious — she just needs to right supports to succeed.

For more information about Maria, including in-depth detail about the process Amarillo College underwent to increase completion rates, check out the two-part In the Know with ACCT podcast episodes, available via www.acct.org and via the Apple and Android podcast apps.
Sausage Making in 2020

The main Ingredients in crafting current higher ed legislation include financial aid, minority-serving institutions, Higher Ed Act reauthorization, and Title IX.

By Jee Hang Lee

DRAFTING, MARKING UP, AND PASSING legislation has been likened to the making of sausage, something best appreciated once in its final state, and something most people would never want to watch being made. Fortunately, most trustees understand that knowing what goes on in the sausage factory is the only way to make sure the proverbial sausage tastes how they want it to taste when it’s served up to Congress. Today’s ingredients relate to minority-serving institutions, financial aid applications, the Higher Education Act and the roles and responsibilities of colleges with respect to sexual harassment and assaults.

New FUTURE for HBCUs, MSIs, and Tribal Colleges
In late 2019, Congress passed legislation, the FUTURE Act, to provide mandatory funding for grants to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Tribal Colleges under Part F of Title III of the Higher Education Act. The legislation was later signed into law by President Trump. The previous version of the bill was held up due to disagreements about its funding mechanism. However, Senate and House Congressional leaders ultimately agreed upon a funding source, which paved the way to passage. The final agreement showed how negotiation and compromise can lead to enacted legislation that will help college students.

IRS and the FASFA
The FUTURE Act also included provisions to streamline the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) process. The Internal Revenue Service will now share income data with the Department of
Education directly so that income data is imported over to the FAFSA form, as opposed to accessing the information from the IRS and then manually inputting the information. The FUTURE Act also eliminated more than 20 questions on the FAFSA.

Access to and transferring of income data has been a cause of many barriers for FAFSA completion. If chosen for verification, FASFA filers will still need to undertake that process, but the hope is that direct access to income data will decrease the percentage of students chosen for verification. Verification is a major problem for community college FAFSA filers, but even this modification won’t eliminate it. Many community colleges have stated that roughly half of their Pell Grant students are initially chosen for verification.

Hope for Passing HEA in 2020?
The next big question is whether Congress will undertake the process to finally pass the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), which has been pending since 2014. The House Education & Labor Committee passed is its HEA reauthorization (H.R. 4674, the College Affordability Act) on a partisan vote. But the bill has not come to the House floor for consideration. Meanwhile, the leaders of the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) Committee continue to negotiate on a bipartisan HEA bill.

As time winds down on the 116th Congress and the looming retirement of HELP Committee Chair Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), time is growing short for consideration and passage this year. As the calendar gets closer to the general elections, Congress tends to focus only on must-have pieces of legislation, which includes appropriations bills, among others.

Within HEA, there is bipartisan support for several provisions, including further streamlining the FAFSA, increasing the Pell Grant maximum, allowing short-term programs to access Pell Grants, allowing incarcerated individuals to access Pell Grants, and streamlining the loan repayment options. But can Congress overcome the large hurdles that remain? There are strong disagreements about college accountability provisions (including risk sharing) and special measures concerning proprietary institutions.

Drafting, marking up, and passing legislation has been likened to the making of sausage, something best appreciated once in its final state, and something most people would never want to watch being made. Fortunately, most trustees understand that knowing what goes on in the sausage factory is the only way to make sure the proverbial sausage tastes how they want it to taste when it’s served up to Congress.

Negotiating Title IX Rules
One issue that continues to stymie negotiations involves Title IX and the role of colleges in addressing sexual assault and harassment. The Department of Education is slated to release final rules regarding Title IX early this year. In its proposed rules, the department outlined a formal legal procedure to adjudicate complaints, including live hearings and direct cross examination of the accuser. Congress will likely need to look at the final rule and provide a legislative pathway on this critical issue. But it is unclear whether there is common ground among lawmakers.

When Congress moves on HEA reauthorization, we will need everyone’s advocacy to ensure the bill supports the community college mission. ACCT has a wealth of resources available to understand HEA’s role and impact at community colleges. Visit ACCT’s website, www.acct.org/advocacy, to get additional information.

Make your voice heard by visiting your member of Congress and talking about these key issues. Request a meeting on campus with your legislator and talk about the pressing issues important to your institution. To stay up to date on key legislative items, sign up for ACCT’s Latest Action in Washington alerts by emailing publicpolicy@acct.org.

ACCT Senior Vice President Jee Hang Lee can be reached at jhee@acct.org or by phone at 202-775-4667.
PAST IS PROLOGUE

ACCT CONGRESS CELEBRATES A HALF-CENTURY OF LEADERSHIP BY LOOKING TO THE NEXT 50 YEARS.

BY MARK TONER
AS COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS BEGAN CONVENING IN San Francisco for the 50th Annual ACCT Leadership Congress, an earthquake hit the Bay Area. While the moderate quake shook the venue, the temblor paled in comparison to the tumultuous half-century since the first annual ACCT conference convened in 1969.

“This congress has met every year in every decade,” said 2019 ACCT Chair Connie Hornbeck, a trustee at Iowa Western Community College, following a video of historical moments unspooling over the past five decades, spanning eight presidents and life-changing events from the now-universal personal computer and the fall of the Berlin Wall to the Internet and September 11, 2001. “Our work has been shaped by many of these events. In some cases, our work has been crucial to responding to these events.”

“This is an organization of incredible longevity and impact,” ACCT President & CEO J. Noah Brown added. “Millions of people depend on us to make their lives better…Together, we have proved our association is the real deal and now occupies its rightful place in history.”

History in the Making
Despite the historic milestone, a record number of more than 1,800 trustees, presidents, staff, and other community college stakeholders looked not to the past, but instead to present-day challenges and the ones facing their institutions over the next half-century.

“Our real focus will be on what’s to come,” said Hornbeck during the opening session. “We in this room are charged with sustaining the community college sector no matter what changes come…We can’t predict, but we can and must be as prepared as possible, as nimble as possible, to keep our institutions strong for our students.”

The Congress venue represented a microcosm of a transforming nation, City College of San Francisco Board President Alex Randolph told attendees. “San Francisco is a city of huge contrasts…with tremendous wealth, innovations that change the world, and incredible entrepreneurial spirit…but also homelessness, mental health and drug problems, and incredible quality-of-life issues. Education and all of us in this room have the power to bridge the gap between these two sides.”

“The work you’re doing now in this moment has never been more important,” said Eloy Ortiz Oakley, chancellor of the 115-institution California Community Colleges system. “You all represent the most important system of higher education in the nation.”

Keynote speaker Barry Posner, professor of leadership at the Leavey School of Business at Santa Clara University, focused on the leadership practices required to navigate these complex times. “The bottom line [is that] trustees are a crucial part of the success or failure of any college,” Posner told attendees. “Whatever the challenges you face, they’ll be faced successfully as a result of leadership.”

Evolving Leadership Needs
Leaders of three state community college systems emphasized the importance of local leadership in navigating a challenging landscape, including declining state support and growing student needs.

“If you want your vision to become a reality, you have to bring it down to the campus level,” said Kim Hunter Reed, Louisiana’s commissioner of higher education. “Someone has to own the passion. That’s the power of the boards.”

Sandy Caldwell, executive director of the Wyoming Community College Commission, cited the growing recognition of the role community colleges play at all levels. “They are at the intersection of where so many things occur,” including K-12 and transfer alignment, bachelor’s degree attainment,
“We can sense the future of learning is looking different today because our students are different,” said Michelle R. Weise, senior vice president for workforce strategies and chief innovation officer of the Strada Institute for the Future of Work. “We can’t necessarily extrapolate from where we are today to even meet the needs of work in 2030.” (Weise’s well-received presentation is one of several sessions currently available as an In the Know with ACCT podcast episode, available at acct.org.)

Along with the exponential growth of so-called nontraditional students on campuses today, nearly half of today’s bachelor’s degree holders are underemployed — and 44 million working adults are at risk of being left behind, Weise said. Looking ahead, increased lifespans suggest that more and more people will need to return to education for retraining and career changes.

“We know we’re going to have to harness the power of education throughout our working lives,” she said. “Our systems are not set up to facilitate seamless movements in and out of work.”

The solution? Focusing on “uniquely human skills” along with broadening technical expertise, Weise said. Doing so will require the creation of a new “learning ecosystem” built around five core elements: navigation, funding, precision learning supports, endorsements, and the opening of doors for program completers. It’s a tall order, Weise said, but one college leaders must begin now.

“We’ve had enough time to admire the problem,” she said. “It’s time to build.”

Among many other conversations, trustees discussed how applying entrepreneurial principles, such as creating seed funding or grant programs for innovative programs, could help their institutions build new models of learning and economic development.
“[Our] board felt that the mindset needed to shift at the college,” said Cathy Kemper-Pelle, president of Rogue Community College in Oregon, which created an entrepreneurial fund and made supporting innovative initiatives one of five key strategic objectives.

Other institutions detailed their own out-of-the-box thinking throughout the Congress. Trustees from the College of DuPage in Illinois outlined plans to generate an estimated $8 million in regional economic impact by sponsoring a major art exhibit featuring works by Frida Kahlo. And in another session, trustees got firsthand exposure to South Puget Sound Community College’s efforts to help redevelop the shuttered Olympia Brewery with programs to support the fast-growing brewing and distilling industries in Washington state.

“It’s an incredible story of desire and vision,” Board Chair Doug Mah said. “It’s also a story of initiative and bias for action.”

Becoming ‘Student Ready’

Building on the “past is prologue” theme, original ACCT co-founder M. Dale Ensign, a longtime trustee at Northwest Community College in Powell, Wyoming, received a standing ovation at the ACCT Awards Gala, where the M. Dale Ensign Trustee Leadership Award is presented in his name annually. He said that when ACCT was formed decades ago, no one ever could have imagined the scale or the influence that the association has today.

“Everyone in this room is your legacy,” Hornbeck told him. As that legacy moves into its next 50 years, 2019-20 ACCT Chair Dawn Erlandson said that institutions will need to redouble their efforts to transform teaching and learning.

“All of education must adapt to meet student needs, interests, and learning styles, all of which are changing in surprising ways,” said Erlandson, a trustee with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. “We have begun to provide wraparound services to address housing and food insecurity, childcare, and mental health services. We now need to take this a step forward and provide customized learning options for students.”

Current lecture- and textbook-focused methods are “not meeting the needs of far too many students,” Erlandson said. “This is especially true of a new generation of young people who embrace innovation and different ways of learning… The sooner we adapt, the more relevant and sustainable our institutions will be.” (See profile, p. 18)

The 2019 Congress ended by giving students the final word, with two nontraditional students sharing their experiences and offering suggestions to serve their peers (see p. 24 for more on their stories and those of a third student). Klayre Guzman, a first-generation college graduate who attended San Jose City College after learning she was ineligible for financial aid as a Dreamer, urged leaders to encourage and provide support to undocumented students.

“Remind people there’s nothing wrong with being undocumented, and that they can achieve whatever they set their minds to,” said Guzman, who ultimately transferred to the University of California Davis and is currently supporting students in the San Jose Evergreen Community College District.

James Elliott, international president of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society and a student at Delaware Technical Community College who successfully advocated for his institution to provide courses through the Second Chance Pell pilot program, spoke on behalf of other formerly incarcerated students, urging college leaders to support all nontraditional students and fight against stigmas.

“Step out against societal standards because our students are brave,” Elliott said. “You might have a single mom who’s raising three kids and wants to go to school again, so she drops her job. She deserves someone just as brave as she is.”
ADOPT, ADAPT, and Create Open Educational Resources

OER CAN HELP TRUSTEES LEVERAGE INVESTMENTS TO INCREASE STUDENT SUCCESS AND FIGHT ENROLLMENT DECLINES.

BY WILLIAM F. KELLEY

HARPER COLLEGE, LIKE SO MANY OTHER COMMUNITY colleges throughout our country, has taken bold steps to dramatically change the trajectory of student success rates. Investing in Open Education Resources (OERs) is a promising strategy we can implement to take student success to the next level while simultaneously fighting the disturbing trend of declining enrollment among our colleges.

It is not uncommon to see students decide not to enroll, withdraw from classes after enrollment, and fail to complete classes or programs because they simply do not have the funds to continue. Finances are among the most common reasons given by students who choose not enroll, re-enroll, withdraw, or fail to successfully complete their course studies. Investment in OER can alleviate these issues.

Harper College’s OER Initiative
Harper’s OER initiative began as a grassroots effort in which literally one faculty member, Dr. David Braunschweig, began leading the charge. He saw students struggling in the classroom and realized many did not have the resources to purchase the required textbooks. He began imbedding OER into his classes, one at a time, and found that success rates increased. In all, he created 15 OERs and co-authored an OER textbook for Harper’s Information Technology program. Use of OER in his classes resulted in a 23 percent increase in student success.

The college leveraged his enthusiasm and engaged a group of faculty, supported by Harper’s Academy for Teaching Excellence, and formed a community of practice, or CoP. This model provides space for a group of faculty to meet and try new pedagogical methods to improve student outcomes. The CoP began expanding

the use of OER in their classrooms and facilitated a grant application with Rice University’s OpenStax program.

Rice University’s OpenStax Program
OpenStax assisted Harper College in creating a three-option model for OER use — Adopt, Adapt, or Create. This is how faculty frame their approaches to OER.

• Adopt – refers to vetting and using an existing open educational resource for courses
• Adapt – refers to modifying an open education resource so that it better meets the course objectives
• Create – refers to the development of a unique open educational resource.

OpenStax also helped Harper define what OER means for the college, and more importantly for our students. We define it as no-cost or low-cost alternatives to textbooks. (For Harper, low-cost means $30 per class or less.)

At Harper College, this initiative has been incredibly successful because it was faculty led. Harper’s board of trustees wholeheartedly supported this OER initiative. We had previously set aside a reserve fund for student success strategies, which the administration uses to offer monetary grants to faculty to expand the use of OER as part of our student success strategies.

OER Metrics
As trustees, it is important to measure new initiatives to ensure they are yielding results. Harper measures four areas: success rates, enrollment, course withdrawals, and course quality. Among our results:

• Success rates in sections with OER exceeded those with
Role of the Board in Bringing OER to Scale

The board’s role in an OER initiative is to ask relevant questions, monitor results, provide encouragement and needed resources to the college, and to consider whether OER is an initiative worthy of bringing to scale. At Harper College:

• The board allocated funds to the administration to try new things that would help with student success.
• Faculty applied for grants to adopt, adapt, or create OER.
• $27,000 in grant funding to faculty was allocated to a pilot, with impressive results.
• Students saved an estimated $75,000 in textbook costs in one semester alone as a result of this $27,000 grant. If these 36 course sections re-use these same OER, another $75,000 will be saved by the students in the following semester and each semester thereafter. If the $75,000 is compounded over 10 semesters, the savings from that initial $27,000 investment will be $750,000 for our students.
• We are now growing the program, with $150,000 in OER grant funding allocated this year by the Board to serve 5,000 students. More than one-third of our credit students will benefit.
• The goal is that this will result in approximately $450,000 in savings for students, which will grow exponentially as current classes continue to use OER and new courses begin using these no- or low-cost textbooks and materials. If we use these same OER resources for 10 semesters, the savings from that $150,000 investment will be $4.5 million more in our students’ pockets.

Lessons Learned

• If students and faculty lead an OER initiative, it is more likely to succeed than if it is a directive coming down from the board.
• Compensating faculty for their valuable time and expertise to develop OER material is a great way to incentivize an initiative.
• OER works best with course redesign. This means changing the flow and construction of the course to complement OER resources. This is true for online as well as blended and face-to-face classes.
• Online homework resources offered by publishing companies are expensive and tied to specific books. Faculty sometimes rely on them to help with homework grading. Limiting the use of these tools can be challenging but should be considered because they are very expensive.
• Savings are one aspect of why OER is an important initiative — and students certainly save money. However, student success metrics are most important. Thus, boards must monitor and affirm that students in OER classes are persisting and completing at the same or better rate.
• OER resources are mainly online. Thus, accessibility needs must be considered. For students who have vision challenges, the way documents appear is important. For those with hearing challenges, online videos and recordings need to be captioned.
• Many Harper students in OER classes are still printing materials. They have access to 500 printed pages per semester as part of their activity fees. Some students are printing all materials, and those 500 pages go quickly. In addition, OER resources may print oddly on pages because of their formatting.

OER is catching fire. At a time when resources are dwindling, costs are rising, and enrollment is declining, this initiative can fuel further gains in student success while simultaneously thwarting enrollment declines in our colleges. A Congress session on OER including leaders from Harper College, South Florida State College, and the Pima Community College District was published as an “In the Know with ACCT” podcast episode in December. The podcast can be found at ACCT.org and via the Apple and Android podcast apps.

I encourage all trustees to ask questions about textbook costs and then provide support to faculty and administration. In my experience, the results have been amazing. In the experiences of many of our students, the results have been transformative.

William F. Kelley is a member of the ACCT Board of Directors, vice chair of the Harper College Board of Trustees, and managing partner at Kelley, Kelley & Kelley Attorneys at Law in Schaumburg, Illinois.
As announced last October, ACCT is conducting a comprehensive assessment of the needs of rural community colleges throughout the country as part of a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This assessment is being performed through the convening of trustees and other community stakeholders to learn about and highlight areas of importance and to strategize creative solutions to challenges. Research includes fieldwork in five states (California, Kentucky, Iowa, North Carolina, and Texas) and will culminate in a report to be published in 2021 that will highlight individual case studies, state profiles, and suggested policy solutions to help strengthen all rural community colleges nationwide so they can continue to support their students and their communities.
What We Already Know
Existing research demonstrates that students who attend rural high schools score higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and graduate at higher rates than their urban peers. Nevertheless, rural high school students are less likely to attend college than their peers living in urban areas. This is largely due to the greater likelihood that students in rural areas face more acute financial challenges, as well as significant transportation barriers, both of which contribute to lower enrollment numbers.

The relationship between college proximity and college attendance is well studied, and rural community colleges offer residents affordable education and vocational training that might not be otherwise accessible. Rural community colleges can lessen the impact of education deserts, close attainment gaps, and contribute to the sustenance of vibrant communities.

What Remains Unclear
But what does it mean to be a rural community college? Surprisingly to some, various federal agencies use different classifications to determine what qualifies as rural. For example, the Census Bureau defines ‘rural’ by exclusion — that is, any area not classified as an ‘urbanized area’ or an ‘urban cluster’ is considered a rural area. The Census’s classifications are based exclusively on population sizes. This causes some confusion, as land used primarily for agricultural purposes is considered by many to be geographically rural, and according to the 2010 Census, more than 95 percent of land in the United States is classified as rural land, while only 19.3 percent of the population is classified as rural. According to definitions from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), about 15 percent of the U.S. population was classified as rural in 2010, while 72 percent of all land was classified as rural. (See page 22 for more about the importance of the U.S. Census to community colleges.) It was immediately apparent as the ACCT rural colleges initiative began that many individuals consider their colleges to be rural institutions, while they are not classified as such according to federal criteria.

According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), a system of surveys within the Department of Education that is considered the industry standard for educational definitions, rurality can be using three classifications: rural remote, rural distant, and rural fringe. Each category is determined based on a college's distance from an urban center (population of 50,000 or more) and from an urban cluster (population between 2,500 and 50,000). For example, schools that are classified as “rural remote” are the farthest from urban areas. To be considered rural remote, a community college must be located more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and more than 10 miles from an urban cluster. By this definition, there are approximately 260 rural community colleges in the United States that educate close to 670,000 students a year. However, because the IPEDS definition of rural is based solely on distance from urban centers, these figures may underestimate the total number of rural colleges and students served.

To put all these figures in context, according to the standards used by the Department of Education, only six of the 24 community colleges in Kansas are considered rural, and only three in Iowa are considered rural. This is surprising, as Iowa and Kansas are states characterized by low population density and high farmland coverage, both qualities that intuitively would seem associated with rurality. Iowa boasts the third largest number of farms in the country, with more than 85 percent land used for farming. Kansas has the third highest acreage of farmland in the country, and with 35 people per square mile, it is one of the least densely populated states (Iowa is slightly denser than Kansas, with 55 people per square mile). Shasta College in Redding, California, the only community college in its county, is 60 miles from the next closest college, surrounded by a 150-acre farm, and not considered rural by this same definition.

Why Definitions Matter
It is important to understand the shortcomings of the federal definitions of rurality, as being designated as rural impacts an institution’s eligibility for state and federal assistance. This assistance can be critical, because while rural community colleges offer unique opportunities and value to their communities, they face an uphill battle to do so.

Access to high-speed broadband data, for example, is inconsistent and there is often limited availability of some basic services, such as hospitals and first responders. It is also challenging to attract and retain highly qualified faculty to many rural institutions. These issues can hinder the academic capacity of an institution and the success of its students, as well as the economic potential of the greater community. While there is no guaranteed means by which to solve the wide variety of challenges faced by these institutions, state and federal policy solutions can be developed in conjunction with innovative local strategies to support the long-term viability of these colleges, whether or not they are federally recognized as rural.

Next Steps
As ACCT convenes rural college representatives over the coming year, we will solicit college leaders’ insights into classifications of rural areas and populations in an effort to determine recommendations that will better serve student, institutional, and community needs and interests. The Association also will work to determine or share creative solutions to common challenges among (formally and informally) rural colleges, such as sourcing faculty, encouraging students to remain local after graduating, partnerships with area businesses such as hospitals. Although five states have been identified for on-the-ground convenings, ACCT members from rural areas throughout the country are encouraged to contact the Association to share needs and innovative solutions for consideration.

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EARLY ON IN HER TENURE AS A TRUSTEE, DAWN ERLANDSON KEPT HEARING THE SAME buzzword — and wanted to turn it on its head.

“The buzzword was that students need to be ‘college ready,’” says Erlandson, a member of the board of trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, which represents 30 community and technical colleges. “Why aren’t [our institutions] student ready? Why are our graduation rates so low? We need to meet people where they are.”

Now, as 2019-20 Chair of the ACCT Board of Directors, Erlandson is looking to another Minnesota institution — the world-renowned Mayo Clinic — as a model for community college leaders to follow as they seek to better meet the needs of a rapidly changing student population.

“The Mayo Clinic is exceptional because the treatment it provides is customized to the needs of every individual patient — it’s called precision medicine,” Erlandson told trustees after taking the gavel at the 2019 ACCT Leadership Congress in San Francisco last October (see p. 10). “The time has come for precision — or personalized — higher education. Just as there is not only one kind of cancer, one kind of cancer treatment, or one kind of cancer patient, there is not only one kind of student.”

As ACCT chair, Erlandson wants trustees to help their institutions embrace holistic and inclusive education practices with the same intensity and commitment as they have embraced supports outside of the classroom as part of student success initiatives.

“We have to flip the whole thing on its head,” Erlandson says.
The granddaughter of Norwegian farmers, Erlandson grew up in a small town in rural Minnesota; her high school graduating class had just over 80 students. In a small town where most people lived in single-family houses, she was raised by a single mother and grew up in an apartment.

“I identified as an underdog,” she says.

She also identified as a student, graduating at the top of her high school class and becoming the first in her extended family to attend college.

After graduating from Hamline University in St. Paul, Erlandson moved to Washington, D.C., to work as an economist for global consulting firm Deloitte. Following a stint on Capitol Hill and working as an environmental lobbyist and a member of President Bill Clinton’s Council on Sustainable Development as well as launching a similarly focused nonprofit, she returned to Minnesota with her husband Michael, who also grew up in the state and whose car was a “wood-paneled station wagon with no shocks,” she says.

Back in her home state, Erlandson worked at an advertising agency and public policy firm in the Twin Cities, where she would ultimately lead a second nonprofit focused on sustainable development — “not something many people were aware of in the early ‘90s,” she says. She later founded her own public affairs company, Aurora Strategic Advisors, and she remains active in public affairs and environmental issues.

In 2003, Erlandson was approached by a former D.C. colleague who had also returned to Minnesota to lead the Minneapolis Community and Technical College (MCTC) Foundation. She was asked to join the foundation’s board of directors.

Minnesota is unusual in its higher education governance structure — individual community colleges don’t have their own governing boards. Instead, they are represented by the 15-member board of trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, which oversees all the state’s two- and four-year public institutions. The local MCTC Foundation board provided Erlandson with her introduction to the community college sector, one with which she quickly found personal connections.

“I identified with the students,” Erlandson says. “Many are from single-parent households or are first-generation students, and many come from lower middle-class backgrounds — or less than that — like myself.”

Now known as Minneapolis College, MCTC is home to a diverse student population. Minnesota has attracted refugees from around the world for decades, and is home to a sizable Hmong community from Southeast Asia and the largest Somali population outside of Africa, along with immigrants from a wide range of other countries and cultures.

To support first-generation students, MCTC, with the support of its foundation, started Power of You in 2006. A precursor to the College Promise programs that have since proliferated nationwide, the Power of You offered free MCTC tuition to students who graduated from Minneapolis’s public K-12 system. The program was supported by scholarships and other funding from Minnesota companies including Target, and Minneapolis’s mayor visited high schools throughout the city to promote the program to students and their families.

“It really inspired a lot of young people who otherwise would not have thought they were college material,” Erlandson says.

The Power of You included additional supports for students, including mentoring and tutoring — “a lot of the things we’re just talking about more broadly now,” Erlandson says.

Erlandson would spend seven years on the MCTC Foundation board, serving as its president before stepping down in 2010. In 2012, Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton appointed her to the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System Board of Trustees. Dayton reappointed her for a second six-year term in 2018.

On the state board, Erlandson advocated for branding the system with a common identity, something the state’s diverse group of 37 colleges and universities had long struggled with.

“All of our colleges are unique, but there’s a thread that connects them: accessible, affordable, high-quality education,” she says. “Whether two or four years, we are the lowest-cost option in the state — period.”

Today, the system refers to itself as Minnesota State and serves more than 350,000 students on 54 campuses, along with programs serving high school students. The system contributes more than $8 billion a year to the state’s economy, and serves more minority and
low-income students than all of the state’s other higher education providers combined.

“We have more people going to college, which is what we want and need, but this means we have more people who don’t have the means to pay tuition,” she says. “We have to be mindful of keeping tuition as low as we can.”

During Erlandson’s tenure, the Minnesota board also has focused on improving transfer pathways between the system’s community colleges and universities. Her public policy background also led Erlandson to champion trustee engagement at the national level, both with ACCT and its four-year governing board counterpart.

Erlandson attended her first ACCT Leadership Congress in Seattle in 2013 with a fellow board member and a student trustee. She soon became an active participant at the annual Community College National Legislative Summit (NLS) with her public policy background. “It’s important for trustees to understand they’re not alone,” she says of the wide variety of expertise and experiences among board members. “There’s so much to learn from one another.”

Appointed to the ACCT Board of Directors to fill a vacancy in 2015, she ran for election that fall and was re-elected in 2018. Ensuring that institutions were student-ready was a key part of Erlandson’s platform as she sought a seat on the ACCT board, and it is now her chief priority as ACCT chair.

“I believe that even more today than I did then,” Erlandson says. “Community colleges open their doors to everyone from every walk of life. And because we serve everyone, we must ensure that everyone who walks through our doors succeeds.”

For Erlandson, being student-ready is highly personal. Both of her children were diagnosed with learning disabilities while in middle school. She openly acknowledges that she was diagnosed with ADHD as an adult, and suspects her husband struggles with dyslexia.

“The whole family has learning differences, and so does 20 percent of the population, even though few older adults have been diagnosed.”

The new generation of students also has a different approach to learning that institutions must accommodate. Generation Z students, Erlandson says, “expect everything to be accessible and tailored to them. They learn best through interaction with one another and their teachers. They use online learning tools that move at the pace of their learning, and then provide instant feedback.”

Community colleges have already adapted to meet students’ needs outside of the classroom, including wraparound services that address housing and food insecurity, childcare, and mental health services. Now, Erlandson says, their leaders need to ensure they adapt where it matters most — inside the classroom.

“Students sitting in rows listening to faculty lecture — the sage on the stage, as they call it — and reading thick textbooks is not meeting the needs of far too many students,” she says.

Community colleges can integrate hands-on and interactive learning with technology to meet individual student needs in similar ways — diagnostic and aptitude tools to help students identify areas of interest and potential learning challenges, early warning systems to identify when students are struggling in the classroom, and new learning technologies that take static textbook content and curriculum and adapt it for use by visual learners and students with reading disabilities.

“If you bundled that all together, you’d have a solution similar to one for a patient struggling with multiple medical problems,” Erlandson says. “You could say ‘this particular student has ADHD, four kids, works part-time, is strong in math, struggles in reading — and is an extrovert and needs to work in a group.’ That’s the future, and we will get there.”

Erlandson acknowledges that her priorities as ACCT chair are not what she might have predicted. “Having worked on the Hill, I thought my priority would have been more legislative,” she says. “It’s only because of my own experience that I learned about the needs.” But ensuring institutions are student-ready will be critical for community colleges to remain relevant in the years to come.

“It’s a huge educational piece for trustees, and ultimately deans and faculty because they’re the ones in the classroom,” she says. “The sooner we adapt, the more relevant and sustainable our institutions will be, and the more successful our students will be.”
The Power of the Census

RESULTS FROM THE 2020 CENSUS WILL DETERMINE HOW MUCH SUPPORT COMMUNITY COLLEGES GET. HERE'S WHAT TRUSTEES CAN DO TO ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION.

BY LARRY GALIZIO

IT WILL HELP DETERMINE FEDERAL STUDENT AID — INCLUDING THE ALMOST $30 BILLION PELL GRANT PROGRAM — until approximately 2032. It will govern funding for Carl Perkins Career Technical and Adult Education. It will strongly influence federal spending for Head Start, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Medicare. And it will affect the distribution of over $675 billion annually in federal funds, and even more in state funds.

It will govern which states gain and which lose congressional seats in the House of Representatives, and it will regulate the drawing of federal, state, and local legislative districts. Its data will be employed to plan health and education services for people with disabilities, forecast transportation needs, design public safety strategies, develop rural areas, and forecast future housing needs for all segments of the population.

The “it,” of course, is the 2020 Census. And the aforementioned examples constitute only a portion of its federal, state, and local impacts. Illustrative of its broad scope (and with no acknowledgement of singer-songwriter Paul Simon), the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2020 Census Complete Count Committee Guide includes an Appendix A: 50 Ways Census Data Are Used. While not as catchy as Simon’s “50 Ways to Leave Your Lover,” the Bureau’s “50 Ways” list is an attention-grabbing inventory of programs and decisions hanging in the balance during this decennial undertaking mandated under Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution.
Counting on Trustees to Educate and Engage

As locally elected or appointed officials, community college trustees and their institutions are uniquely qualified and positioned to play a significant role in advancing the interests and well-being of the students and communities that they serve throughout this process. Indeed, two of the nine principles of effective boardspersonship identified in ACCT’s Trusteeship in Community Colleges: A Guide for Effective Governance include the need to support and be advocates for the college, and the responsibility to represent the common good. One of any board’s most powerful contributions to its college lies in the board’s connection to the community it represents. These principles of effective boardspersonship argue for a prominent role for trustees and their colleges in encouraging students and communities to promote and participate in the 2020 Census count.

James Madison University, for example, has dedicated a page of its website to information about the 2020 Census, on which it states that it “…presents an important opportunity to foster campus-community partnerships to ensure complete counts through education and engagement with some of the hardest-to-count populations in our states, including in rural communities, communities of color, non-English speaking populations and off-campus, first-generation students, students experiencing homelessness, [and] adult, renter and highly mobile students.”

Boards would be wise to take advantage of the opportunity to promote the importance of census participation while simultaneously educating community members about how census results affect support for the college, and what the college gives back to the community. This is a natural engagement opportunity that comes along only once every 10 years.

Community College Students are Historically Undercounted

Before highlighting how community college trustees and colleges might promote student and community participation in the census count — including a description of efforts in my home state of California — it is important to recognize that, and especially low-income and students of color, have been undercounted in previous census efforts.

Research into census participation makes clear that those most likely to be undercounted are those who have the most to lose. In the 2010 Census, the Pew Research Center found that education level and age were the biggest predictors of participation in the census. Survey respondents with lower levels of education and income were also less likely to participate. In that same 2010 Census, African-Americans were undercounted by at least 800,000, and one-third of residents under age five who were undocumented were Latinx children, as cited in a Community College Daily article published in September 2019.

Another significant barrier to census participation is limited English proficiency. As the institutions of higher education with the largest shares of low-income students, those with limited English proficiency, and students of color, community college students are more likely to be undercounted and as a result to receive fewer resources and services.

One State’s Efforts

In California, where the Department of Education estimates approximately $7 billion in annual funding rests on the results of the 2020 Census, community college trustees and boards are actively collaborating with a diverse coalition of community partners and going far beyond passing local board resolutions encouraging census participation. Trustees in California are capitalizing on established relationships with important local and regional organizations in business, the nonprofit sector, state, local, and tribal government, media, and other influential entities important to this effort. An important resource for such collaborative efforts are Complete Count Committees, which are nationwide regional and local hubs where a broad spectrum of organizations are working collectively to mobilize community resources. A guide to the 2020 Census Complete Count Committee is available at census.gov.

As the statewide community college membership organization, the Community College League of California is working closely with the chancellor’s office, and the statewide foundation for community colleges to create a 2020 Census toolkit for local districts and colleges, student organizations, and affiliated groups that can most effectively tailor information and communication to their respective constituencies. The toolkit includes infographics, presentations, posters, digital buttons and logos, and a diverse array of information and materials distributable and adaptable to different audiences. It is available at www.ccleague.org.

Recognizing that student-to-student advocacy is often the most effective means of communication, the Foundation for California Community Colleges also has organized and is supporting a Census 2020 Student Outreach Ambassadors program that will recruit 50 student ambassadors from colleges in counties with high hard-to-count indexes to conduct outreach from January through May. Student ambassadors are being supported by foundation staff, an on-campus advisor, and each student is being provided with $500 for event costs, materials, a tablet and mobile internet device for onsite census responses. Details are available at www.foundationccc.org.

Civic Education and Engagement

Beyond the very real financial, political, and even cultural impacts of the 2020 Census, this decennial effort highlights the very essence of the mission and role of our nation’s community colleges. This effort includes education, civic engagement, democracy, equity and inclusion, and our core values, beliefs, and functions as community service-oriented institutions. As community and college leaders, trustees embody the very nexus of local communities and democracy’s colleges. The 2020 Census offers all of us an opportunity to educate, support, and engage the multiple and diverse constituencies that we serve.

Larry Galizio, Ph.D., is president and CEO of the Community College League of California.
Klayre Guzman

Born in Oaxaca, Mexico and emigrating to the United States with her family at the age of five, Klayre Guzman is a first-generation college graduate. After learning she was ineligible for most financial aid as a Dreamer, she attended San José City College as one of the first students to participate in the San José Promise program, which provided tuition, fees, textbooks, and additional supports. After receiving her associate degree, Guzman successfully transferred to the University of California, Davis, earning a bachelor’s degree in psychology. She ultimately returned to the San José-Evergreen Community College District — this time as an employee supporting the San José Promise program and interning at the Transfer Center at SJCC. In the process of obtaining a master’s degree in counselor education, she plans to become a community college counselor.

"Where I started didn't matter," Guzman wrote in an essay published in Forbes. "Community college and San José Promise gave me the guidance and assistance I needed each step of the way."

**Q: What was your high school experience like?**

I went to an underserved high school in San José. As a first-generation AB 540 student, I didn’t know the resources that were available to me. [AB 540 allows some undocumented California students to attend college as in-state residents]. It was very scary because there was a lot of shame even talking about it. In high school, you care a lot about what you appear to be. It was hard for me to even say I was an AB 540 student.

I realized that for me, college was going to be a very tough road. I had this idea I was going to go to a four-year university, and my parents had that expectation. They didn’t know the steps or the requirements. I had a counselor [in high school] but felt they didn’t show me all the resources I had as an AB 540 student. No one told me about applying to the UC systems or private schools.

I felt like I had worked so hard in my high school years to get good grades and get into a university. Now I’m really grateful I started at San José City College. If I had to do it again, I’d start at the community college level again.

**Q: What was your experience at SJCC like?**

I felt prepared when I applied, but when I got to college, I realized that my high school hadn’t prepared me enough. I had to start in remedial classes, which was shocking because going through high school, I always got good grades. I put in a lot of hard work, dedication, tears, and stress, and it made me a stronger person and it made me believe more in myself and what I was capable of.

I was very involved in my community college, which is why I felt I had such a great experience. When I first started, I was very timid — I couldn’t talk about my experience as an undocumented student. Being part of the ALMSS program [Advocacy Leadership for Immigrant Access Support and Services], I came to understand there was nothing wrong with having this status — I wasn’t doing anything wrong. I had to speak up because other students were struggling and needed the support. We’d go to high schools and do workshops and talk about what it was like to be AB 540 students. That would have been very important to me.

I started as a premed major, and I was also part of a club called SACNAS [Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science], where I saw a lot of other people of color, and especially girls of color, taking science course.

**Q: After finishing at SJCC, you transferred to the University of California-Davis. What was that transition like?**

The first year was a struggle. I had to restart my whole network system there. At SJCC, I knew a lot of the staff — every time I couldn’t get into a class, I knew who to go to. It’s hard to make connections as a transfer student. Classes were much bigger—one of my biggest at UC-Davis was 500 students, compared to 20 at a community college where you could easily interact with professors.
Q: After graduating from UC-Davis, you returned to San Jose, working at the community college district to support the San José Promise. As a former recipient, why do you think the program is so important?

The first Promise program launched in 2010. Now it’s a much bigger program in partnership with the mayor’s office. It has a mentoring component, which has made a big difference. A lot of first-generation students don’t have anyone to ask for advice at home. I wouldn’t be where I am without the mentors I had.

For a lot of underrepresented students, paying for school becomes a big barrier because they have to help out at home with their families. Maybe it means you can devote more time to your studies — that was a big component for me.

Another important component that is unique to the San José Promise program is that it gives you books and materials before classes start, which is very important to be successful. It wasn’t until I transferred that I realized how expensive books are. (See page 14 to learn how open educational resources can help students with textbook costs.)

Q: What challenges do undocumented students face today?

There’s so much politics around the Dream Act, and there’s a lot of fear, a lot of insecurity about whether they’re going to be able to continue their education. When I was a student, I had a friend who was also undocumented. She ended up dropping out. She asked me, “Why are you still in college? You’re working so hard, but when you graduate, you won’t be able to work in the field because you don’t even have a social security number.”

For me it was hope that kept me going and the reason I never gave up — hope that by the time I graduated things would be different and all my hard work would pay off. But, as an AB540, it’s very hard to stay hopeful when there is so much negativity around this matter and fear to even go outside.

Q: What advice do you have for trustees and other community college leaders?

Definitely create a safe environment for all students so they can feel safe and comfortable, without having fear because they are undocumented.

Part of that is health education — knowing how to address the emotions and anxiety that go behind it. Families don’t always see stress and anxiety as a big factor or understand how it affects their education. Colleges need to recognize the symptoms and how to help students cope with stress and anxiety.

Q: What would you tell other undocumented students?

Find your sense of community and build that with the support systems you’ll need to get through community college. Also, when trying to decide your career, really get experience through volunteering or job shadowing if you can. It’s very different from looking it up in a book. That was one of my biggest challenges — I thought I wanted to be a doctor. I realized that’s what my parents wanted me to do. It can also help you get the mentors and network you need to be supported in your career.

Finally, don’t be afraid to look for help. A lot of times, students don’t want to talk, but if they don’t reach out and take the initiative to get the help they need, they’re not going to get it.

Q: Why do you want to become a community college counselor?

I feel like my counselor had a huge impact in my life, and I feel like that’s where I’m going to be able to help students and my community. I feel like education has a ripple effect. When you educate a person, then they’re able to become leaders and advocate for themselves and help others.

JAMES ELLIOTT

James Elliott is the 2019-20 international president of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society and a student at Delaware Technical Community College. He is also a formerly incarcerated student, convicted of a felony after participating in a home invasion at the age of 19. Sentenced to seven years in prison, Elliott ultimately enrolled in a distance learning program while incarcerated, which “truly changed my life,” he says.

After being released, Elliott returned to Delaware Tech, which he had briefly attended before becoming incarcerated. He has advocated for federal and state legislation that has helped the formerly incarcerated return to society and encouraged the institution to apply to participate in the Second Chance Pell program for incarcerated students.

Now working at Delaware Tech as an aide and taking criminal justice applications, Elliott is preparing to apply to four-year institutions. “Community colleges have the power to open the door and offer that to the student,” he says. “The system had cut off everyone if they made a mistake. We need to open the doors back up.”

Q: What was your experience with school like before you were incarcerated?

Up until middle school, I was an average student. I was at a private school and struggled with racism. I ended up getting kicked out and went to Newark High School. I failed senior year and wound up getting my degree in summer school.

I enrolled at Delaware Tech, but dropped out after the fourth week because that’s when my parents would get their money back. I was actually arrested while I was still enrolled. I wound up spending five years in an actual prison, and six months at a halfway house.

Q: What led you to start taking college classes while incarcerated?

I didn’t want to. My mom was persistent — in my family, everyone has a degree. It was a norm, but it was a norm I hated.
I think what really made me take the course was that I had wasted so many opportunities from my parents — I had nothing but time, and I had run out of excuses to do it.

Delaware didn’t have an in-state university that offered degree-level courses. I couldn’t use Pell, so my family had to pay out of pocket. My mother did some research and found a university in Ohio that offered distance-learning courses.

It was a really hard process because my only communication with them was either through my mother or the mail, which was really slow. But I took a sociology course that really hit home for me — looking at society and why things happen really helped me.

Until I completed that first class, education and school had always been negative for me — nothing good could come out of them. Then I realized that maybe I did have what it takes. I got honest with myself and realized this was the first time I tried.

Education allowed me to see that I had goals and a vision. It truly changed my life.

**Q: What was it like returning to society?**

I didn’t know how I was going to adapt and come out of prison. My whole life had been dictated to me, and I had the shell shock of being out in society. What really hurt me is that I couldn’t take college classes at the halfway house. I had come to love school. I was the only person taking college courses — it was a badge of honor. Then I had the struggles of finding a job. What really hit home was when I was offered a job as a janitor. Then HR did a background check, and they denied me. I could perform, but it didn’t matter. The system was designed for me to fail.

Education was different, because if I worked hard, I got an A regardless of being a felon. I could work hard and see that come back to me.

**Q: What was it like going back to Delaware Tech?**

It was kind of surreal. But I was doing well — I got a 4.0 GPA my first semester.

One of the students next to me in an accelerated math class was the Phi Theta Kappa president. She asked me about an Honors in Action project she was working on. *Newsweek* had run an article on Wilmington labeling it as “Murder Town, U.S.A.,” and she was debunking it. That really enticed me and sparked my passion for prison reform.

**Q: How did you get involved in advocating for Second Chance Pell?**

Our campuses are within 20 minutes of each of the prisons in Delaware. We’re the only community college in the state, and we could serve all of them. I met with one of the college administrators, drew up a proposal, and did a bunch of research on the benefits of education in prisons and how schools involved in the Second Chance Pell program operate. I spent a lot of my time running around Wilmington chasing politicians. My success as a student showed it was something we could and should do.

In September, Delaware Tech applied for Second Chance Pell; they’re waiting to hear back from the federal government.

**Q: How did your involvement in Phi Theta Kappa help with your advocacy for incarcerated students?**

PTK was in the middle of making constitutional changes allowing citizens who had been incarcerated to become full members of the honor society. Both Delaware Tech and PTK had the willingness to go against society’s standards, providing me with the opportunities to change my life.

I was named to the All-USA Academic Team, one of the top 20 community college students in the nation, and awarded the New Century Transfer Pathway Scholar 20th century scholarship, the first time it was ever given to someone with a criminal record.

I had made it my goal to get Delaware Tech to apply for Second Chance Pell. When the press release was published, it was picked up by *USA Today*, and I started getting calls to testify for a state bill for felony expungement. It passed in 2019. I also was asked by Sen. Chris Coons to attend a roundtable in support of The First Step Act, a federal bipartisan prison reform bill.

As international president of PTK, I’m speaking all over the country this year. I’ve been asked to come to prisons to speak, and I’ve been on college campuses to advocate against mass incarceration and community colleges’ role in supporting incarcerated students.

I was always a leader, but I was leading in the wrong ways. I never used my leadership for the betterment of myself or others. PTK gave me a platform to speak on behalf of education reform — and to show the value in having students who have been incarcerated.

**Q: What would you tell trustees about serving the formerly incarcerated?**

Remember that the recidivism rate is 80 percent. With a vocational training degree, it drops to approximately 30 percent. With an associate degree, the chance of returning to prison is just over 13 percent. With a bachelor's degree, it's 5.6 percent, and with a master's degree, it's almost zero. As trustees, there's an incredible power to decide what to do about this on your campuses.

They also need to make sure their community college is a community with the wraparound services it offers — a food pantry, a clothing closet, and mental health counselors. The burden isn’t just providing an education, but also providing what a community would provide.

We can pass all these laws, but we can’t make someone [succeed] if the opportunity isn’t there. Education puts the opportunity to succeed in their hands. It starts with being as inclusive as you can be.

A week or two ago, I was standing with our PTK advisor unveiling one of our chapter’s college projects — we opened up a student success center in the cafeteria. I could remember the day after the robbery, I was standing in the same spot, talking to a friend about it. It’s eerie that I was a totally different person. I was one of the worst Delaware Tech students, and now I’m among the best. It’s hard to think about who I was then and who I am now.
ZAN BENITEZ

A veteran of the U.S. Army Airborne Division, Zan Benitez spent a year in Iraq and several years in Afghanistan. After leaving active duty and working as a contractor, he enrolled at Bunker Hill Community College in Massachusetts, where he ultimately became student government president. Now a student at Stanford University, Benitez is seeking a doctorate in science, technology, and society. "I hope I help people understand just because you're at a community college, you're not any less," he says.

Q: What led you to join the military, and what was your experience like?
I get up in Alaska and went to a boot camp because of a bad home environment. I dropped out of high school in the 10th grade. I got a GED and ended up joining the Army at 17 — I didn't wait until I was 18; I had my mom sign the papers. I didn't come from an education background — even if I wanted to go to college, I wasn't prepared for it. I did my four years in the military, got out, and contracted in Iraq and Afghanistan. It paid really well, but it gave me PTSD and a lot of emotional damage. I came back to the U.S. and was fired three days before getting the keys to a house. I didn't have a job, and I couldn't go back. A friend told me to go to college, and I said it wasn't for me. I didn't need it for my jobs before. But my back was against the wall, and it was the only thing I could do.

Q: What was it like to transfer to Stanford?
It was like hopping into another dimension. Bunker Hill prepared me as much as it could. But everyone's journey is different — I look different, I sound different, I dress different, and I'm older. I'm also a transgendered male, and I transitioned at Stanford. It doesn't mean anything here. People are so respectful and open minded. I also joined the Native community and a service fraternity, the only Latino-based fraternity at Stanford. A lot of times, they're my rocks. It's kind of like having the military experience.

Q: How did you wind up transferring to one of the nation's most selective institutions?
I never had a plan for four-year college. My advisor asked me if I was applying to transfer. He said I was doing all this great work, what was I doing it for? I applied for two scholarships and got denied for both. I could get bitter or get better. I read a book on college essays. I watched YouTube videos and listened to lectures by people from MIT and Harvard about what they expected. I kept at it and wrote again and again until they could feel my heart and soul. I had never taken the SATs, and that was a big burden. I called the colleges — some were definitely "no way." At Stanford, they said email the dean. Boom — they accepted my application, and now I'm here.

Q: What was it like to go to college as an older student?
I turned 28 during my first semester in college. It was the worst year of my life. I had to take four remedial classes — two years of math, remedial reading and writing. At first, I decided I wasn't even going to try. But I'd signed a lease. I had no choice. I made rules for myself — show up for every class, turn in every assignment, sit in front of the classroom to pay attention better. I was able to learn on my own accord. I learned to love learning.
I learned a lot by helping other people. There were a lot of ESL students, and them needing my help grew me as a student, a writer, and a person. Some of my best memories were tutoring in the math space and writing center.

Q: How did being a veteran impact your college experience?
In the military, they need to do a better job teaching us how to acclimate after getting out. I can see why a lot of veterans get into a hole — the way they talk, the way they bond is really different. Their formative years are different. Their communication skills are not conducive to the real world — things which were joking in the military can come across as toxic.

Q: What advice would you give trustees about supporting veteran students?
I would suggest they spend a lot of time helping them psychologically adjust to being a civilian. I would recommend having support groups for veterans to have a safe place to constructively share their experience in changing from the military culture to academia. (The "cancel culture" is really toxic because it doesn't give individuals a chance to grow and learn.) If I was a trustee, I would put most of my funding into making courses and groups that show veterans how to acclimate into society, and especially academia, socially.

Q: How do you talk to others about your experience?
No one in my family had attended college. Now my brother is enrolling in college at the same age I was. My sister is getting an associate degree in accounting. In some shape and form, I hope I help people understand just because you're at a community college, you're not any less. I got into Stanford. A colleague my year got into Yale and MIT. No matter where you go, you're learning, and that's what matters.
The Michigan Community College Association (MCAA) launched an initiative to address student economic instability, including access to food, housing, transportation, and other basic needs. The Michigan-Building Economic Stability Today (MI-BEST) program is funded by a $442,000 grant from the ECMC Foundation’s Basic Needs Initiative.

Nineteen Missouri colleges and universities are participating in the Degrees When Due program. Sponsored by the Institute for Higher Education Policy, the program is helping institutions in 20 states support students who completed some college without receiving a degree or certificate — representing more than 75,000 people in Missouri alone, state officials say.

Moraine Park Technical College in Wisconsin launched a second debt-free tuition program for adult students. The Promising Futures program is targeted at adults between 24 and 64 who have not previously earned a degree and enroll in one of 21 associate degree and 12 technical diploma programs in fields identified by the state Department of Workforce Development.

With the opening of a food pantry at Olive-Harvey College last October, all seven campuses of City Colleges of Chicago in Illinois have their own dedicated food pantries, a goal college leaders hoped to accomplish by 2020.

Howard Community College in Maryland won the 2019 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in the education category, the second year in a row a community college won the national honor. HCC joins the Alamo Colleges District and Richland College in Texas as the only three community colleges to have won the Baldrige award.

Raritan Valley Community College could become the first New Jersey community college to add on-campus housing. “Student housing at RVCC has a number of potential benefits for students, including providing the full college experience, increasing enrollment, improving retention and completion rates, addressing housing insecurity, and expanding athletic programming on campus,” President Michael J. McDonough said in a statement.

College County of Morris (CCM) in New Jersey received a $110,000 grant to launch the Dover College Promise, which will provide low-income middle and high schools students with college readiness training and support along with scholarships to CCM.

Massasoit Community College in Massachusetts will join Boston’s tuition-free community college plan, which covers up to three years of community college for low-income city residents.

A new California law removes references to “at-risk” youth and students, requiring institutions to instead use the term “at-promise.” The bill, which primarily affects K-12 systems, doesn’t change the criteria used to identify these students.

Cuyamaca Community College and College of the Siskiyous are the first two California community colleges to complete mandated changes in remedial math programs. Eliminating remedial math courses has reduced achievement gaps among Latino students at Cuyamaca Community College, where they are outperforming their white counterparts in transfer-level courses, according to a new report.

The cities of Chula Vista and San Diego in California will participate in a nationwide
initiative sponsored by the National League of Cities to ensure that postsecondary students have access to basic needs, including food and housing. The program is intended to support the nearly 37,000 disconnected youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are unemployed or not looking for work in the San Diego region, officials say.

First-time community college enrollment in West Virginia jumped 10 percent in Fall 2019, the first semester after the state began offering free tuition to community colleges. The number of high school students taking courses through early college programs with the state's nine community colleges also increased 27 percent.

Pitt Community College in North Carolina hosted an adult one-stop day in December, providing on-the-spot enrollment, financial aid, orientation, and course registration. Held on a Saturday, the one-day program was targeted at working adults.

Spartanburg Community College in South Carolina and the United Way of the Piedmont received a $2.1 million workforce development grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. The program will support the previously incarcerated, students with substance abuse disorders, and economically disadvantaged students.

The first five South Carolina inmates who began taking courses at Northeastern Technical College through the Second Chance Initiative from the U.S. Department of Education, a pilot program providing Pell Grant funding to incarcerated students, have graduated.

York Technical College in South Carolina launched an online-only winter semester for the second year running. Dubbed “Wintermester,” the four-week term is targeted at both York students and those from other institutions.

Virginian Governor Ralph Northam unveiled a $145 million budget proposal to make community college tuition free for low- and middle-income students who pursue jobs in high-demand fields. The proposal also includes fees, books, and wraparound assistance for food, transportation, and childcare for students at the lowest income levels. Participating students would be required to complete two hours of work experience, community service, or public service for every enrolled credit hour.

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Colorado Governor Jared Polis announced a three-phase plan to make college more affordable to state residents. His plan initially focuses on reducing time to degree, lowering textbook costs, and creating a website for students and families. It also calls on institutions to expand concurrent enrollment, promote one- and three-year programs, identify duplicate services and cost savings, restructure degree programs to include more work-based credit, and develop closer relationships with industries.

Texas state education and workforce leaders entered a partnership with Amazon Web Services to provide cloud computing education at 22 community colleges, as well as three four-year universities and K-12 districts statewide.

The Alamo Promise program attracted nearly 6,000 students during the first semester it was offered, officials at the Texas college district say. The program was introduced this fall at 25 local high schools and will expand to another 20 high schools this year.

Central New Mexico Community College is participating in the Learning Credential Network, an initiative that will place student academic credentials on the blockchain.

**SOUTHERN REGION**

**WESTERN REGION**

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_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 jbray@acct.org._
THE MAKING OF A COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEE:

CHAPTER THREE

BOARD CHAIR CHARLES FRAZIER EXPLAINS THE NUANCES OF BOARD SERVICE TO NEW TRUSTEE PAM SCHIER.

BY EDUARDO MARTI

THIS ARTICLE IS THE THIRD IN A SERIES THAT WILL TAKE THE READER THROUGH THE eyes of a fictional community college trustee, Pam Schier, and her colleagues at the fictional Filmore County Community College. Informed by my own experiences and those of peers, the series will explore typical scenarios, including a new trustee’s thoughts about experiences as they occur, and will conclude with questions for personal consideration and board discussion. The series is intended to inspire mindfulness among board members, new and experienced, about the full life cycle of trusteeship, from onboarding through transitioning off the board. All scenarios and characters are fictitious, though inspired by real-life experiences.
Chuck Frazier has been chair of the board of trustees of Fillmore County Community College for nearly 10 years. He followed the founding chair, who served 28 years until his health forced him to resign. Frazier has been a member of the board of trustees for 15 years and has enjoyed seeing the college grow. He owns a number of McDonald’s franchises in the county and holds a degree in industrial psychology from the University of Michigan. His employees are generally happy, as he pays great attention to their advancement and provides assistance to those who are interested in higher education.

As he was chair when President Al Pendleton was hired, Frazier feels invested in his success. To ensure clear lines of communications, he meets with him every Monday morning for coffee. At these meetings, they discuss matters affecting how the president is doing in advancing the key performance indicators (KPIs) agreed to at the last board retreat. Also, he serves as a sounding board for the president. During the last meeting, Frazier and Pendleton discussed the new trustee, Pam Schier.

“Chuck, Pam Schier needs to feel part of the team,” Pendleton told Frazier. “I sense that she was not happy with our orientation. It’s not that we want to stifle her enthusiasm, but an uninformed trustee can be disruptive. Would you speak with her?”

“Oh, don’t worry about Pam, Al,” said Frazier. “From all that I hear, she is a good person who cares deeply about our community. I have confidence in her ability and want to give her the necessary tools to help us in advancing the college’s agenda. I’m sure that she will make a good trustee. I will reach out to her.”

“Well, we’d better do this before the union or the faculty tries to influence her thinking,” Pendleton responded. “As we are entering negotiations, the last thing we need is someone who doesn’t understand the process. Coming from the private sector, she might not understand the nuances of negotiations in this sector. Also, we’re currently formulating our budget proposal to the county. We don’t want to disrupt either event.”

“If it makes you feel better, I will set up a meeting next week and discuss it with her,” Frazier said.

Despite all of Frazier’s experiences at the college, every time a new trustee is appointed to the board, he must find a way to engender their trust and explain the parameters of board members’ prerogatives. This is no easy task. It can be misconstrued by a new trustee as the chair trying to minimize any dissent when what he really is trying to do is to ensure that disagreements among board members take place in an orderly manner that does not affect the institution by airing them out in a public meeting.

Shortly after his breakfast with the president, Frazier went to his office and placed a call to the new trustee, Pam Schier. As he placed the call, he pondered how to approach her. He wanted to help her without appearing manipulative.

“Hello?”

“Good morning, Pam. Is this a good time to talk?”

“Yes, I was just getting ready to go to my office. The kids just left for school. I have a few minutes.”

“Great. Well, I wanted to speak with you because I felt that our first meeting at Dr. Pendleton’s office was not as effective as I would have wanted it to be. Also, it appears to me that you were thrust into a meeting of the board of trustees with little preparation. I want to see how I can facilitate your understanding of the college and the board’s priorities and how we can use your considerable talents to help the college.”

Well, well, this is a surprise, Schier thought. After the meeting, she never would have anticipated this conversation.

[Editor’s note: See the Fall 2019 issue of Trustee Quarterly for chapters one and two.]

“I would like to set up a meeting with you to discuss these matters at length. When do you think you would be available to have a thorough discussion with me?”

“Well, let’s see…how about next Wednesday afternoon. Does that work for you?”

“Perfect, I will meet you at the college’s board room at 2 p.m.”

Frazier was glad that Schier agreed to meet. He was at the board room when she arrived.

“I am so glad you could make it,” he said, greeting her with a warm smile. “This meeting is very important to me and to the rest of the board of trustees.”

“Glad to be here,” Schier said.

“As you know, my role as chair is to run effective meetings and maintain parliamentary procedure. That’s why I prefer to have in-depth discussions of the topics at hand at the committee level and just bring reports and resolutions to the board meetings.”

“Sorry to interrupt,” Schier said, “but this is one aspect that I don’t feel comfortable with. Are you saying that I can’t speak my mind at the board meetings?”

“No,” he said, “No. What I am asking is that…we all have to be aware that whatever we say at the board meetings is public information. So, sensitive matters should be discussed at the committee level, where there is more of a chance to resolve any conflict without negative repercussions.”

“OK. But please be assured that I will speak my mind when I think it is necessary.”
“That is your prerogative, Pam,” said Frazier. “Chuck, why is it that I get the feeling that, in your mind’s eye, the perfect board meeting is quick, with all the resolutions and reports unanimously accepted? Are you looking for a ‘rubber stamp’ board?”

“No, Pam,” Frazier said. “Not at all. That is not the point. The point is that we are a group of people trying to coordinate our efforts for the good of the college. So, it’s best to use the committee system to air out our differences and come to the full board meetings prepared. But, of course if you or any other board member objects to what the committee proposes, then, by all means, speak your mind.”

“What if I have a conflict with other board members? What procedure should I use?”

“As chair, I am responsible for ensuring that all opinions are heard. When two or more board members disagree vehemently, I meet with them, hear them out but, in the end, I must rule. I want to ensure that disagreements do not overflow to the personal animosity arena. I don’t always succeed, but I try.”

“That is fair. On another matter, I heard that it’s frowned upon for a trustee to roam the college asking for information. Is that true?”

“As a trustee, you should feel free to go to the college whenever you want. However, you should be aware that while you have a great deal of influence, as an individual trustee, you have no authority. That authority rests on the board as an entity; this entity exists only when the board is in session. Also, you should be aware that persons of the many constituencies we serve will try to enlist your support for items being considered by the board and that sometimes these actions are truly not in the best interest of the college.”

“Oh, Chuck, what do you take me for? I’m not naïve. I know when someone is trying to take advantage of me.”

“No, Pam, you misunderstand me. I’m well aware of your experience and reputation,” Frazier said. “I just also know based on my experience on this particular board that you cannot be aware of the intricacies of our college’s governance from a distance. Until you are well versed in our operating procedures, you may want to be careful. That is all that I am saying.”

“As chair,” he continued, “I make sure that all members of the board of trustees feel comfortable and that their voices are heard. As you know, many board members are powerful individuals used to having their way. Fortunately, most board members are experienced in either not-for-profit or for-profit boards. Therefore, they are familiar with how boards operate. Like most boards, we focus on the fiscal and human resources used by the college to meet stated goals. However, community colleges by nature are different than private businesses in that we serve various constituencies, each with its own level of authority. To advance our agenda, we must engage in consultation and seek collaboration with various influential groups. These constituencies are the students, the community at-large, the elected officials, donors, and the businesses served by the college. Also, our faculty is unionized, so all conditions of employment agreed upon must be adhered to. In addition, the faculty governance bodies have an important role in managing the curriculum. The authority of the board is restricted by the principles of academic freedom, and we must ensure that intellectual debate ensues at all levels at the college without fear of censorship or retaliation. While it appears that our authority is restricted by numerous factors, let me assure you that, as a board, we have a great deal of authority on matters affecting our college. A helpful analogy is to think of our board as a town government rather than as a private corporation.”


“These are perfect examples of the delicacy with which we exercise our authority,” Frazier answered. “Our first responsibility is to keep a safe and open environment for our students. This entails our board members being ever vigilant of anything that can jeopardize the safety and well-being of our students or staff members. For more dicey situations, we rely on our legal counsel for advice. But we are ultimately responsible and, thus, we must adjudicate as best we can within the legal parameters.”

“This is very helpful, Chuck,” Schier said. “So, to summarize, what you are saying to me is that my first order of business is to learn how we have done things in the past and when I see opportunities to improve, I should discuss suggestions with the appropriate committee. Once discussed and agreed upon, we then send them to the full board for approval. And once the board has voted, the suggestions become the ‘law of the land.’ Am I reading your message correctly?”

“Perfectly, yes,” he said. “That’s it. Look,” Frazier said, “our work is difficult, and trusting one another is important. I think the best way to engender such trust is to have clear channels of communication. Don’t you think? But we know blind trust is not healthy. We must make sure that we question each other and that we question all actions taken by the college to make sure that we operate in an ethical manner. In addition to being supportive of our president, we must carefully monitor how he accomplishes what he said.
we would do. As a body, we are ultimately responsible for all actions. Finally — but not least! — the most important task of a board of trustees is that of hiring a president, monitoring their performance, and dismissing them if we are not satisfied with the performance."

“All right,” Schier said, “I understand. This is...a lot of information, but I get the delicacy and intricacy of the position.”

“I hope that this chat has been helpful to you. We didn’t cover everything,” Frazier admitted, “but the reality is that learning the ins and outs of our roles here takes time. In time, serving on the board will become second nature. Please call me anytime, day or night, if you have additional questions or concerns about what is happening at the college.”

“Chuck, you can rest assured that I will. I want to be a productive trustee and advance the strategic objectives that the board has agreed to. I really appreciate this time we have spent together, and I feel much better about our relationship. Frankly, at first I thought that you were trying to sway me in a manner that felt patronizing, but it seems that we’ve turned a page.”

“Thank you, Pam. That was never my intention at all; it’s just my responsibility as chair to properly orient any new board member and clarify roles, responsibilities, and limitations so that we don’t start off on the wrong foot. The truth is, I’m excited to work with you because I know how much energy and insight you’re going to bring to our board. And your questions show that you’re already invested in what we do. That’s what makes a great trustee. I look forward to many years of fruitful cooperation.”

By the time the next new trustee met Schier, she was chair of the human resources committee and eventually would become a member of the board’s executive committee. But these advances only happened over time, as Pam, like all trustees, still had a lot to learn.

Questions for the board:
- What is the role the chair in maintaining parliamentary procedure?
- Should the chair delegate conflict resolution among the staff?
- What is the role of the chair in ensuring that the college operates in an atmosphere where academics thrive and are celebrated?
- Describe the role of the chair vis-à-vis the president.
- Is there any ideal way by which a chair should orient a new board member?

Eduardo Marti, Ph.D., is a trustee at Teachers College at Columbia University and former president of Queensborough Community College (CUNY), Corning Community College (SUNY), and Tompkins Cortland Community College (SUNY).
ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT ISSUES AFFECTING BOARDS TODAY

TRUSTEE TALK

WITH ACCT

Free Speech Issues on College Campuses, Part II

BY NORMA W. GOLDSTEIN, Ph.D.

Author’s Note: This Trustee Talk is part two of a three-part series on free speech in our colleges. Please refer to What Should Boards Know About the First Amendment, Free Speech Rights, and Academic Freedom on Campus? in the Fall 2019 issue of Trustee Quarterly or online at acct.org as a prelude to this discussion of protected and unprotected speech on our college campuses.

Disclaimer: This article is for general illustrative purposes only and is not meant to and does not provide legal advice or guidance. A real-life situation may lead to court decisions inconsistent with the views expressed in this article. Before acting in ways consistent with any conclusions drawn from this publication, it is absolutely necessary for boards and colleges to seek expert legal advice from a First Amendment practitioner or expert.

Question:
What should boards know about Constitutionally protected and unprotected Speech?

Answer:
As stewards of public education, boards should advocate for academic freedom, freedom of expression, and free inquiry. Most boards and college presidents aim to maintain a safe, violence-free campus environment where constitutional free speech rights are honored. However, due to current political and legal complexities, such laudatory goals may not play out totally peacefully on all of our college campuses.

“Upholding free speech is a necessary, but sometimes complicated, task for leaders in higher education,” says Dr. Andrew Q. Morse, former director of policy research and advocacy at NASPA, the leading association for student affairs professionals. Colleges’ “time, place, and manner limitations” of free speech on campus speakers and demonstrators are now being frequently challenged in the court system nationwide. According to Ira Shepard, ACCT’s general counsel, the “presumption is against the college for free speech violations. The First Amendment is sacrosanct in this country.”

Boards need to know that there are very high hurdles to overcome when reviewing their college’s free speech policies about controversial speakers coming to campus, speech codes, free speech zones, and due process, for which the burden of proof is placed on institutions. “The courts require a steep hurdle to those institutions putting curbs on free speech on campus no matter how obnoxious the potential speech is or what the perceived possible danger is. Where the result is possible discipline of a student, faculty member, staff, or other member of the community, due process should be granted to the individual prior to discipline,” explains Shepard. Moreover, very few of these situations involve set responses. First Amendment lawsuits involving colleges today are being decided case by case depending on the specific details of each incident.

The most important question for boards
“Doing what you think is the right thing may not win in court,” cautions Shepard. “Different courts decide very similar First Amendment fact patterns differently and for different reasons. The First Amendment is not an absolute science yet.” Nevertheless,
each board must understand the frailties of the First Amendment and ask: “Do we have the appropriate policies in place so that we can deal with these issues effectively?” Reviewing their current policies with the college administration and expert First Amendment counsel is a “must-do” first step for boards.

**Hate speech is generally protected**

It may come as a surprise to many that offensive speech is typically considered protected speech under the U.S. Constitution. Racists, bigots, rabble-rousers, and those who provide hate speech are not only generally protected by the First Amendment, but they also appreciate the ruckus that their presence often causes. For many, protests add to their satisfaction and emphasize the false notion that much of their extremist thinking may not only find sympathetic ears on the campus, but also provide opportunities to push political claims that their free speech rights are under attack.

Except for the black and white situation of calling out “fire” in a crowded theatre to cause imminent panic, many incidents regarding free speech are ambiguous. “It depends” is the mantra that many legal experts tell us. “It depends on the court, the state, the situation,” admits Shepard. Even if the college believes that violence will occur if a particular speaker arrives and that exorbitant security would be warranted, the college president is obligated to provide access to the speaker. “Imminent danger” is not easily accepted by the courts, and the college cannot pass security costs to the speaker or the sponsoring organization on the theory that doing so “chills” free speech rights.

What speech is protected, what speech is not? It depends!

Below is a chart of several First Amendment scenarios that our colleges may face and information on the factors involved when analyzing whether the speech may be considered protected or unprotected under the First Amendment. This chart is for general illustrative purposes only; it is not meant to and does not provide legal advice or guidance. The facts of a real-life situation may lead to court decisions inconsistent with the views expressed in the chart. Boards are advised that before acting in ways consistent with any conclusions drawn from this chart, it is absolutely necessary to seek expert legal advice from a First Amendment practitioner or expert.

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**Is this speech protected or not?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>It depends!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signage protesting a speaker</td>
<td>Generally protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributing pamphlets</td>
<td>Generally protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protesting a speaker</td>
<td>Generally protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expelling students immediately afterward for using hateful, discriminatory language</td>
<td>Due process required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defacing or burning the American flag</td>
<td>It depends on whether accompanied by other threatening activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incivility to faculty and staff</td>
<td>It depends. Incivility could cross the line and become threatening. Due process required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removing a Confederate flag or monument</td>
<td>It depends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing an offensive costume such as the KKK or a Nazi would wear</td>
<td>It depends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prohibiting speech that victimizes and demeans an individual based on religion, race, sex, creed, age, national origin, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, and which creates an intimidating hostile environment</td>
<td>It depends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated, limited public forums for students, employees, faculty</td>
<td>It depends on administration of rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy that disciplines a student for racist comments directed at an individual</td>
<td>Due process required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkouts</td>
<td>Almost always protected unless in violation of a state law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College reserves the right to locate an event to ensure that normative college operations remain uninterrupted.</td>
<td>It depends on administration of the rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech that is a true threat to members of the student body</td>
<td>Have a problem defining “true threat” and the courts do also; depends on the facts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech that threatens an individual or specific individuals</td>
<td>Depends on the facts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling on a crowd to engage in direct acts of violence toward a specific individual</td>
<td>Probably not protected but again depends on the facts. Due process required in any event before discipline no matter what the facts are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shouting down a professor delivering a classroom lecture</td>
<td>Due process hearing required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shouting down a speaker in a student assembly</td>
<td>Probably not protected but again a due process hearing required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holding a protest outside the private residence of a college employee</td>
<td>It depends. Municipal ordinances may play a role in whether the activity is protected (i.e., they might need a permit from the city if the residence is off-campus and due to size, time, or use of amplified sound the protest triggers an event permit).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acceptable ways to show displeasure

Many campus protests against controversial speakers turn to violence, a strategy that college administrators indicated is never acceptable in a 2018 survey by ACE’s Center for Policy Research. Some presidents suggest that there are more acceptable ways to show displeasure with a particular speaker, such as silent walkouts or signage that does not restrict audience views or peaceful protests in designated places. Students holding facilitated class discussions or bringing in speakers with alternate views can also calm the waters without resorting to violence.

First Amendment rights are not a one-size-fits all situation, and the law is not favorable to a college’s attempt to limit free speech even in very dangerous situations. Shepard notes, “Even in the aftermath of Charlottesville, there has not been a new crop of cases upholding a college’s right to limit free speech even in cases of alleged high danger.”

When is speech violent?

Lisa Feldman Barrett, author of How Emotions are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain and psychology professor at Northeastern University, posits that speech can be violence when words have a powerful effect on a person’s nervous system and can cause chronic stress. “Certain types of adversity, even those involving no physical contact, can make you sick, alter your brain — even kill neurons — and shorten your life,” she says. “If words can cause stress, …then it seems that speech — at least certain types of speech — can be a form of violence.” Feldman further argues that certain types of controversial speech that can cause long bouts of stress shouldn’t be acceptable on a college campus or in civil society. While she agrees that “someone else’s distasteful perspective can be educational,” she finds harmful health effects in “a political climate in which groups of people endlessly hurl hateful words at one another, and of rampant bullying in school or on social media. A culture of constant, casual brutality is toxic to the body, and we suffer for it,” she says. “We must also halt speech that bullies and torments. From the perspective of our brain cells, the latter is literally a form of violence.”

Free Speech and Racism

In a May 2018 article in The Washington Post, Susan Nossell, executive director of PEN America, highlights the connections between free speech protests and racism. “Protests have been led by students of color…Their concerns have centered on eradicating persistent manifestations of discrimination that have outlasted decades of efforts at integrations: slurs…racist incidents, …stereotypes, …social segregation and …entrenched norms shaped by and for the privileged.” One only has to look at the makeup of clubs, fraternities, and sororities, the

Is this speech protected or not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restricting use of campus facilities for speakers and university-sponsored events; requiring a permit to use a space for an event drawing over 25 people</td>
<td>It depends on administration of the rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College requirement for a reservation for a place on campus for a rally or speaker invited by a student club</td>
<td>Generally okay; also depends on the administration of the rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal threats toward transgender persons on campus property</td>
<td>Not protected but due process required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing blackface</td>
<td>Inappropriate but due process required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public forum for someone not affiliated with the university, uninvited</td>
<td>It depends on administration of rule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiring control of volume so as not to affect the ability to hold a regularly scheduled class</td>
<td>Probably okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech that incites or produces imminent lawless action or is likely to produce such action</td>
<td>Probably not protected but need more specifics. Due process required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanging a noose in a college dormitory</td>
<td>Inappropriate, but due process required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kneeling in protest on the sports playing field</td>
<td>Due process required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posting a negative social media comment about encouraging a Punish a Muslim Day on the campus</td>
<td>Inappropriate, but due process required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An invited guest speaker calling the U.S. President a white supremacist</td>
<td>Protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing an editorial in the student newspaper that denigrates the president as a moral degenerate.</td>
<td>Protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inviting a known controversial speaker to the campus whose presence has caused violent protests on other campuses previously</td>
<td>It depends; imminent danger defense is very narrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right of colleges to refuse to allow a controversial speaker due to security costs</td>
<td>Courts have rejected this as a valid reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hateful speech that creates feelings of being threatened or emotionally disturbed</td>
<td>It depends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using violence to stop a speech, protest, or rally</td>
<td>Unacceptable, but due process required before discipline.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
representation of students in the academic disciplinary system, and the number of reported nooses and taunts using the n-word to understand what Nossel calls "the stubborn legacy of race in our society."

Racist incidents on college campuses have tripled, according to the Anti-Defamation League. Whether anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic, or anti-black, such incidents explain why students feel menaced when white supremacists chant and march and hang nooses on campus trees. Sociologists and psychologists have documented that persistent slurs and taunts compromise mental and emotional health and academic performance.

Campus lawyers’ views

"Every college — public or private, large or small, residential … or not — is one tweet away from a First Amendment tussle." Those words begin Campus Lawyers’ Deepest Fear: The Protest or Tweet that Spins into a Free-Speech Crisis, an article published by Sarah Brown in The Chronicle of Higher Education in 2018.

ACCT hopes that these articles will help colleges prepare appropriately for any contingency. "I'd like to think the law makes sense," Shepard notes. However, he predicts that in the next five years that there will be a change in case law, particularly to assuage the costs and burdens on our public colleges.

So what can leaders do?

With the support of the board, there are actions college leaders can take to minimize disruption and to prepare the campus for a controversial speaker. An article with specific ideas is NASPA’s The First Amendment and the Inclusive Campus: Effective Strategies for Leaders in Student Affairs, some of which are detailed in the box at right.

Each vice president interviewed for this brief spoke about the importance of, as one put it, "having an all hands-on-deck" approach to planning for and managing speakers or events on campus. One vice president shared, for example, that their campus strove to maintain a "culture of collaboration" by ensuring that all campus partners that held a stake in any particular development or challenge confronting the campus were made aware of the issue and had an opportunity to help plan for or respond as a cross-functional team. "We had a culture of collaboration and communication in place long before [the controversial speaker] came to our campus. That enabled us — our facilities, campus safety, communications, student affairs — to be ready," the vice president said (NASPA).

Disclaimer: This article is offered for general informational purposes only. It is not offered as and does not constitute legal advice, nor is ACCT suggesting that boards act in any particular way regarding any particular issue.

Norma Goldstein, Ph.D., is director of trustee education for ACCT. She can be reached at ngoldstein@acct.org.

First Amendment Strategies for Inclusive Campuses

1. INTEGRATE CAMPUS STAKEHOLDERS IN PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND ASSESSMENT

• Conduct cross-functional scenario planning (prior to a request). Identifying and preparing for problems that may occur during the campus presence of an offensive speaker or organization — or during a protest or other demonstration — enables the campus to be prepared.
• Pull stakeholders together (as soon as possible after a request has been received from a student group.)
• Conduct cross-functional post assessment (for planned or spontaneous speech or demonstrations). Following the speaker, event, or demonstration, the cross-functional team should convene to assess campus strengths or areas for improvement.
• Ensure campus policies are consistently enforced and regularly assessed.

2. COMMUNICATE WITH CAMPUS CONSTITUENCIES

• Presidential statements matter.
• Listen to and empathize with members of the campus community.
• Communicate the (public) campus’s First Amendment responsibilities.

3. EMBRACE SAFETY AS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CAMPUS — AND THE EVENT PARTICIPANTS

• Set expectations on campus diplomatically: Set the expectation with students through in-person visits and other communication channels that violence would not be tolerated prior to, during, or after the divisive event or demonstration on their campus.
• Screen for weapons.
• Distribute participation notices at the door of the event with a written notice that outlines their responsibilities as a participant.
• Maintain reasonable distance between protestors and counter protestors.

4. MANAGE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CONTROVERSIAL SPEAKERS OR EVENTS

• Build police support for campus-based protests and demonstrations into the agreement for police cooperation and mutual aid with local law enforcement.
• Train current staff to perform non-security roles during events and large gatherings.
• Assess security costs for groups or speakers.

5. REMEMBER THAT EDUCATION IS OUR MISSION — AND STRENGTH

By embracing education, college and university leaders can advance the institution’s mission and values by offering programs — before, during, or after an incendiary speaker or demonstration — that speak to the institution’s commitment to deep learning, inclusion, and care.
• Provide open forums on free speech in higher education.
Prior to hosting a high-profile, contentious speaker, one large public research university facilitated open forums to discuss the principles of free speech and how they apply to the public campus. The campus embraced this practice following significant concern shared by students, faculty, and staff that the individual was permitted to speak.
• Hold panel discussions on social issues.
• Offer First Amendment training for students, faculty, and staff.
• Welcome diverse perspectives, emphasize critical thinking, and teach civil discourse through curricular and co-curricular learning.

(Source: NASPA)
SHIFT YOUR MINDSET, TRANSFORM YOUR INSTITUTION

STRATEGIC PLANNING CAN UNITE COMMUNITY MEMBERS, CHANGE CULTURES, AND CREATE FERTILE GROUND FOR INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION.

BY LIZ MURPHY
WHEN YOU REFLECT ON YOUR INSTITUTION’S STRATEGIC planning process, what comes to mind? Cabinet members and campus leaders huddling deep in administrative annexes enduring lengthy, painstaking, and tedious discussions? Endless processes and box-checking — both of which elicit audible groans — for the sake of maintaining accreditation and relegating a beautifully formatted, three-inch thick bound dissertation to the shelf where it will collect dust until the next strategic planning cycle begins?

A tad hyperbolic, for sure, but if this sounds at all familiar, you’re not alone.

Over the last two decades, I’ve worked with countless institutions to change their perspective on, and approach to, strategic planning. As CEO of CampusWorks, a consulting firm dedicated to higher education, my team and I continue to refine a methodology that goes beyond direction setting to unite community members, change cultures, and create fertile ground for institutional transformation by way of the strategic plan.

I invite you to temporarily cast aside your beliefs and biases about this traditionally burdensome process in order to embrace three simple principles that can incite meaningful change.

It Begins with a Mindset Shift
Many colleges think of strategic planning as a project — a finite initiative that a select group undertakes to achieve a specific outcome (that good old three-inch document). This mindset is where the process begins to break down because it lends itself to a “top-down” approach in which the strategic plan is created in a vacuum.

Strategic planning is not a project, it’s the work of the college. It’s not something to be completed and revisited in five years, it’s the goals and objectives your community members work toward every day. It’s the active pursuit to realize your college’s vision and mission. It’s ongoing, never ending. And if you do it right, it’s transformative.

To enable your community members to view strategic planning in this light, the process must be collaborative, transparent, and pervasive. Rather than changing a select group with the task, engage all internal and external community members and give them a voice in the process. Instead of building a several-hundred-page document, create a strategic plan that “fits in your pocket.” A printed booklet of 20 pages or less is a far more powerful way to communicate your institution’s mission, vision, values, strategies, objectives, metrics, and action plan because people will actually read it. And the portability of such a plan enables your community members to carry it with them to meetings, enabling every discussion, decision, and activity to be vetted with the strategic plan in mind. Arizona Western College’s Strategic Plan 2025 demonstrates the power of a pocket-sized plan (see it at: azwestern.edu/office-of-the-president/strategic-planning).

Put Students at the Center
Top-down strategic planning rarely connects with community members in a meaningful way because they often don’t see their contributions or needs reflected in the plan. Without community buy-in, execution falls flat.

Gaining community-wide support begins with inclusion. Invite faculty, staff, administrators, trustees, employers, and students to participate in the strategic planning process. Facilitate listening sessions that allow these diverse voices to be heard. Leverage their experience and ideas to articulate the “desired student experience” your college strives to offer. Use that shared vision as the foundation upon which to iteratively build the college’s strategies, objectives, and action plan.

By including your community members in the creation of the college’s strategic plan, it will not only reflect their contributions and needs, it will naturally earn their support and give them a stake in its success.

Trustees Are the Guiding Light
For many colleges, the board of trustees’ role in strategic planning tends to be ambiguous. But make no mistake, trustees are essential to this process and should be fully integrated into all activities. At a high level, trustees should be the guiding light. They should own the college’s mission and vision, ensuring they accurately represent the institution’s aspirations and, in conjunction with the strategic plan, chart the path toward the desired future.

Though trustees are not responsible for setting the college’s strategy or writing the action plan, they are responsible for approving these pieces and, in concert with the institution’s leadership, ensuring the plan is executed in a timely, measurable manner. The college’s progress toward its strategic goals should be evaluated at every board meeting, not just at the end of the year, to allow for adjustments and course corrections.

Final Thoughts
Shifting your college’s mindset about strategic planning may not be easy, but embracing these simple principles are worth it. If you’re not sure where to begin, consider partnering with an independent strategic planning facilitator. An experienced partner can help you drive progress (and stay on track), infuse the process with a “best practice” perspective, and offer objective feedback on politically charged topics. When it’s done right, strategic planning will no longer be a dreaded project but a powerful, unifying experience that lays the groundwork for a successful future.

To learn more about CampusWorks’ collaborative approach to strategic planning, listen to “Strategic Planning for Boards” with Liz Murphy on ACC1’s In the Know podcast.

Liz Murphy is the CEO of ACC1 Corporate Council Member CampusWorks, a strategic higher education consulting firm that has helped countless community colleges achieve transformative results. Learn more at campusworksinc.com.
WHEN I BECAME A TRUSTEE SEVEN YEARS AGO, I QUICKLY learned through ACCT and my state association board training sessions that community college boards were “policy” boards and that our role was to set policy and not to get involved in the administration of our colleges.

Staying on a policy level is rule number one for effective board governance. But once trustees accept this role, how can a community college board actually adopt new policies to guide their colleges and support our shared mission to support student success?

This article details three avenues to policy setting, two of which offer limited opportunities to shape policy, while the third — goal setting as a board — provides the best path to shape policy.

The Budget Process

One of our major responsibilities as community college trustees is to review and approve an annual budget for our colleges. Budgets reflect the policy priorities of a college and require many decisions on where to deploy resources and where to reduce or restrict funding.

Boards have two opportunities to impact the budget process. The first is to set policy regarding priorities, such as new initiatives to fund Promise or free-tuition programs or to establish special reserves for new impacts like retirement-system demands. It is expected that these priorities be represented in the college budget.

Second, boards have a budget approval or adoption process. Boards see proposed budgets after priorities and decisions are set by college leadership and the shared decision-making process of campus governance. After that budget development process, there are still limited opportunities for a board to set policy by making final budget decisions. While the degree of board budget oversight varies by state and district, there is usually an opportunity for the board to set policy by making the final tough decisions on resource allocation. Unfortunately, all too often this involves adjusting or concurring with administration recommendations for needed cuts in response to declining revenues.

Board Policy Documents and Administrative Guidelines

Most, if not all, boards have a set of policies. The San Diego Community College District, for example, has a complete set of board policies covering a full range of district operations, including administrative services, board operations, governance, facilities, human resources, IT, and instructional services. For our district, board policies represent “the voice of the Board of Trustees and defines the general goals and acceptable practices for the operation of the District. It implements federal and state laws and regulations. The Board of Trustees, through policy, delegates authority to and through the Chancellor to administer the District. The Chancellor and District employees are responsible to reasonably interpret Board policy as well as other relevant laws and regulations that govern the District” (see www.sdccd.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/board-policies/index.aspx).

These policies are typically reviewed by staff periodically and brought to the board for approval. From my experience, I expect that most trustees have little detailed knowledge of their own board policies and only refer to them rarely if circumstances come up where a review is needed.

But there are occasional opportunities that fall within the board role to create and review policies. This type of policy can be an opportunity to implement a desired change or to comply with state and federal directives. As an example, our district has a Board Policy (BP 0505) that designates the district as a Smoke and Tobacco Free District that prohibits smoking and the use of any tobacco product on all properties owned or controlled by the district. Over the years, that policy has certainly transformed staff and student behavior in the interests of public health.

Board Goals: The Best Path to Policy for Trustees

At a recent meeting of community college trustees from around the nation, I took an informal poll, asking a few trustees if their boards created an annual board goals document and what
types of goals they set. The responses to my informal poll were interesting, ranging from: “no, we don’t set separate board goals” to “yes, we have an extensive annual goal setting process for our board.” While I found a range of approaches to board goal setting in my little poll, I also concluded that most trustees don’t see the possibilities and potential offered by a board goal setting process as a path to explore and initiate new and innovative policies for our colleges.

Each year, our five-member board at the San Diego Community College District prepares a detailed set of Board Goals that sets priorities for our chancellor and gets translated into her annual goals. These goals are developed by a board subcommittee and approved each year in conjunction with our annual board self-evaluation process (see our goals at www.sdccd.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/board-goals.aspx).

Our board goals are aligned with accreditation standards which are referenced throughout the document. They also are consistent with and supportive of the district’s five-year strategic plan. This type of annual goal setting process gives trustees the best opportunity to bring forward new policy ideas and innovations that could be explored by college leadership and then brought back to the board for consideration and adoption.

Opportunities for Innovation and New Policy Directions

The board goal setting process offers trustees an opportunity to present new policy ideas to their colleagues and college leadership through a process that keeps a board in the policy setting role rather than the administration role.

In San Diego, one of our board members attended an ACCT Leadership Congress session on Open Educational Resources (OER) and was excited about their potential to reduce the overall costs of education for our students by reducing textbook costs. After returning from the Congress, the trustee suggested that we include a new policy goal of increasing the use of OER resources in our district in our annual goal setting process. This new goal was adopted two years ago as follows:

Ensure that a strategic approach is developed to reduce escalating textbook costs for students in the San Diego Community College District (*Strategic goals 1-2; ACCJC Accreditation Standards IV.C.1; IV.C.4-5, IV.C.8) by:

1. Ensuring a program to introduce Open Educational Resources (OER) to all of SDCCD’s campuses.
2. Encouraging voluntary faculty participation in the pilot program, with the goal of achieving 15% of available classes as OER compatible.
3. Receiving regular reports regarding the progress of the program.

This new policy goal remains in our annual board goals document, and progress is monitored through annual reports presented to the board each year. As a result of this board goal, our district has substantially increased OER in class sections in all of our district colleges and as a result reduced the costs of education for our students.

This year, our board continues to use the annual board goal setting process as a path to policy innovation. We are working collaboratively with our chancellor to implement new policies for environmental sustainability and to address climate change. In our 2019/20 Board Goals, the board subcommittee has proposed expanded goals as follows:

Ensure that the District remains a prominent leader in sustainable practices (Strategic goals 4 and 5; ACCJC Accreditation Standard IV.C.1; IV.C.4-5) by:

a) Ensuring that the District continually assesses alternative opportunities that would reduce the District’s overall impact on the environment.
   i. Explore the possible implementation of a single-use plastics use policy, similar to the policy adopted by the California State University system.
   ii. Explore the possible conversion of the District’s vehicle fleet to electric vehicles over time.

b) Supporting the District’s participation in regional climate change coordinating efforts.

c) Receiving regular reports on the progress of climate literacy educational initiatives and programs within the SDCCD.

d) Ensuring that all buildings built with Proposition S and N monies be LEED certified or equivalent and that all due diligence be made to use green products and materials whenever economically feasible.

Board goals can also be set in collaboration with the K-12 school districts serving your college district. The SDCCD board has collaborated with the board of the San Diego Unified School District to develop joint goals benefiting the broader community. Examples of our joint goals include a specific goal to develop middle college partnerships and to expand opportunities for dual high school/college enrollment. As a result of this joint goal setting process, thousands of students are being given opportunities that they would not have had without the shared vision of the two governing boards.

While this type of goal setting does set a policy direction for the district, it is important that goals be set in collaboration with the chancellor or president to ensure that they are realistic and attainable. Aspirational goals are best set as exploratory, giving district leadership the opportunity to explore their feasibility before final policy adoption, as demonstrated by our request to “explore” a single-use plastic policy and an electric vehicle fleet for the district in the goals listed above.

Community college trustees have an opportunity to bring new ideas and new policy direction to their colleges through the board goal setting process. If Board goals are set in alignment with a college strategic plan, accreditation standards and in collaboration with your chancellor or president, new policies suggested by individual Board members can become positive contributions for students and the communities we serve.

Bernie Rhinerson is a board trustee of the San Diego Community College District.
Legal Issues Impacting Community Colleges
Recent developments include retaliatory discharge complaints, First Amendment issues, and college disciplinary policies.

By Ira Michael Shepard, ACCT General Counsel

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

Federal court allows retaliatory discharge claim to proceed. A former Title IX coordinator at the University of Cincinnati who was fired for insubordination but allowed to voluntarily resign has filed a complaint of retaliatory discharge against the university on the grounds that she was critical of the university’s Title IX compliance and may have been dismissed in retaliation. The federal court is allowing her complaint to proceed on the grounds that she was constructively discharged and should have the same rights of any other university employee to be free from retaliation for raising a Title IX concern. The court rejected the university’s argument that complaints made within the scope of one’s job responsibility are not protected activity in the Title IX context.

The case involved the university giving an achievement award to a student who, unknown to the university, was a convicted sex offender as a result of prior activity at another college. Students who discovered that the awardee was a sex offender complained to the Title IX office, and the coordinator submitted a draft letter to administrators with the intention of submitting it to the student newspaper. The claim alleges that administrators reacted angrily, told her the letter was unsatisfactory, and directed her not to send it in. She revised the letter and sent it to the student newspaper, which did not publish it. She was later told that she would be terminated for insubordination but was instead allowed to resign.

The Court of Appeals concluded that “Title IX coordinators, who are often the best able to recognize and oppose unlawful policies, should be entitled to at least the same anti-retaliatory protections as every other university employee.”

State appellate court rules campus sex harassment complaint is not subject to a defamation action even if false and malicious. An Illinois appellate court recently ruled that sexual harassment complaints and allegations are privileged and immune from defamation actions even if the defamation action is false and malicious. The court reasoned that Illinois law and public policy allows alleged victims to report such allegations without fear of repercussion. The court concluded that holding otherwise would render a college or university’s measures for fighting sexual misconduct “toothless.” The court added that it would also require sex harassment victims to carefully parse through their statements to avoid future defamation claims.

The case involved a campus police officer at the University of Chicago who accused another campus police officer of sex harassment. The accused officer claimed that the plaintiff had made the allegations in retaliation for him writing her up for employment infractions, that her claims were dismissed as meritless, and that she refused to sign an affidavit following her initial complaint and refused a follow up interview.

Nonetheless, the court dismissed the defamation action also holding that the statements, even if false, were filed consistent with the university’s federally mandated policies and procedures for reporting and investigating sexual misconduct.

Coaches lose age and sexual orientation discrimination-based termination lawsuit. The plaintiffs in the case were the former head coach and associate coach of women’s volleyball at the University of Delaware, both fired during the middle of the 2016 season by a new athletic director for allegedly unprofessional conduct. The women, 55 and 56 years old, respectively, and married to one another

“Well, I was bitten by a radioactive lawyer and ended up with the power of attorney.”
since 2013, were both hired by the university in 2002.

The new athletic director stated that she witnessed unprofessional and overly aggressive conduct from the women at practices, and she received a complaint letter from the parents of a teammate alleging that their daughter was mistreated. She also took into consideration the “incredibly alarming” survey responses completed by the team the previous year.

The judge ruled that the four previous conference-winning seasons proved that the coaches were qualified for their respective positions, and they stated a prima facie case of discrimination. The judge ruled that the plaintiffs were unable to demonstrate that the university’s proffered reasons for discharge (i.e., unprofessional conduct) were either factually inaccurate or a pretext for age or sexual orientation-based discrimination.

A professor fired for producing videos critical of his college loses his wrongful discharge case that alleged the college failed to follow its disciplinary procedures. The court ruled that the former professor is not entitled to job reinstatement following his termination, which resulted from his producing and airing of videos that criticized and mocked the college president and administration.

The plaintiff argued that the college did not follow the terms of his employment contract, which incorporated the college’s disciplinary procedure. The professor in question had planned a speech on campus to be delivered by a controversial speaker. He posted flyers on campus advertising the speaker with the college’s approval. A number of his flyers were taken down. In response, he made and aired the two critical videos. The president suspended him for his conduct and recommended the professor’s termination on the following day. A faculty committee review requested by the professor upheld the decision to terminate him.

After his termination, the professor sued the college, alleging that it did not follow the multi-step disciplinary procedure outlined in the college’s policies. The college defended its decision, explaining that its policies include two different procedures: one for “personal and professional problems,” which was a multi-step process, and another for “suspension and/or termination for serious violations of professional responsibility.” The college argued that it followed the latter procedure, and that it was not required to use the former procedure.

The court agreed with the college, concluding that the multi-step process was permissive, not mandatory, and that the college followed the procedure that the court agreed was applicable. The Court of Appeal affirmed the ruling, holding that the employment contract was ambiguous and that the trial court had the authority to resolve the ambiguity. The appeals court held that it must affirm unless it concluded that the trial court was clearly wrong in its interpretation.

Back wages restored and tenure renewed for professors at Louisiana college who were furloughed following Hurricane Katrina and lost benefits without due process. Three former professors at Louisiana Southern University and A&M College lost tenure as a result of the college’s decision to act on an emergency situation following the hurricane and eliminate faculty through either voluntary resignation or furlough. The three professors sued, claiming lack of due process in tenure removal, and received a state court judgment totaling $422,000 in lost wages and reinstatement of their tenured positions.

Appeals court rules student harassment and violations of college policies on student privacy are not protected by First Amendment. A University of Illinois professor lost tenure and was fired after he harassed honor society students who gave a student award to another professor. He filed a First Amendment claim alleging that his speech, which allegedly harassed a student, was protected by the First Amendment. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit (covering Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana) recently affirmed the federal trial judge’s dismissal of the case.

Interviewing one honor society student about why the society awarded another professor, the professor’s “aggressive” behavior made the student cry. He then criticized student honor society leaders by name on his website. He also posted a Committee of Academic Freedom report on his website after the university board of trustees revoked his tenure for violating the university rules on privacy and for disrespecting students. The professor argued that the First Amendment allows professors to make information about students public, regardless of how embarrassing it may be.

The court rejected the professor’s argument, holding that the First Amendment does not govern how employers respond to speech, which is part of a public employee’s job. The court also concluded that how faculty members relate to students is part of their job, noting that professors who harass and humiliate students cannot teach them successfully, and that a university that permits this sort of harassment cannot fulfill its educational functions. The appeals court concluded that speech concerning “personal job-related matters” is outside the scope of the First Amendment and, finally, that the $500 award and plaque in question, while important to the professor, are not matters of public concern subject to First Amendment protection.

Ira Michael Shepard is Of Counsel with the law firm of Saul Ewing, LLP, in Washington, D.C., and ACCT’s general counsel.
Executive Searches

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

College of The Albemarle, North Carolina
Dr. Jack Bagwell
President
“Dr. Bagwell brings to COA a tremendous amount of leadership experience, a passion for the educational opportunities available within the community college setting, and a genuine commitment to the relationships built within the community. We are confident that Dr. Bagwell will be a dynamic and transformative leader for COA, and we look forward to working with him on goals and plans for the future.”
—Marion Harris Jr., Board Chair, College of the Albemarle, North Carolina

Guilford Technical Community College, North Carolina
Dr. Anthony Clarke
President
“We could not be more excited about this appointment. Dr. Clarke brings the highest level of expertise from his work within the North Carolina Community College System and his experience in private industry. We are confident that he is a dynamic leader for the future of GTCC, and we look forward to introducing Dr. Clarke to our community partners throughout the region.”
—George Ragsdale, Board Chair, Guilford Technical Community College, North Carolina

Santa Barbara City College, California
Dr. Utpal Goswami
Superintendent/President
“Dr. Goswami is a proven leader with a commitment to students and their success. He brings a depth of experience, exceptional accomplishments, and expertise. We are certain he will move Santa Barbara City College forward.”
—Robert Miller, Board President, Santa Barbara City College, California

Niagara County Community College, State University of New York
Dr. William Murabito
President
“Since the beginning of his interim role as president in fall 2017, Dr. Murabito brought stability to the NCCC campus by negotiating a contract for faculty, redesigning the role of the college association, and the laying the foundation for the STEM Center funding. Dr. Murabito has proven to be a collaborative, strategic leader, and we are confident that he will continue to provide strong leadership to NCCC going forward.”
—William L. Ross, Board Chair, Niagara County Community College, SUNY, New York
The staff and consultants of the Association of Community College Trustees are pleased to have assisted in the search for the following community college executive officers.

Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, California
Dr. Lynn Neault
Chancellor

“Dr. Neault brings decades of knowledge and experience in local community college administration and is well-versed in the statewide issues of student outcomes and enrollment and their impact on state funding. She also brings a strong commitment to participatory governance and decision making that comes after many years of working and consulting with varying constituency groups from a multi-college district.”

—Linda Cartwright, President, Governing Board, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, California

Pennsylvania Highlands Community College, Pennsylvania
Dr. Steve Nunez
President

“Our presidential search reviewed many candidates across the country with an abundance of talent and expertise. The entire PHCC community is excited with the decision to bring Dr. Steve Nunez on board. His extensive professional background with community college education, along with his engaging personality and enthusiasm for the position, will be a tremendous asset for both the college and our entire community. We were very pleased with our ACCT partnership throughout our search.”

—Greg Winger, Board Chair; Pennsylvania Highlands Community College, Pennsylvania

Clovis Community College, New Mexico
Dr. Charles Nwankwo
President

Dr. Charles Nwankwo has a proven record of success, and he has a proven record of student success, and [a record] as a visionary and true servant leader. ‘Servant leader’ — he used that [phrase] several times during his interview. He is committed to expanding access, promoting student success, shared governance, utilizing data-informed decisions, and making and promoting partnerships with community organizations and businesses. He believes in building a strong collaborative, cooperative, team-centered environment. Charles’ leadership style is rooted in core values of authenticity, courtesy, respect, trust, and personal growth.”

—Raymond Mondragon, Board Trustee and Chair, Presidential Search Committee, Clovis Community College, New Mexico

Western Nebraska Community College, Nebraska
Dr. Carmen Simone
President

“Dr. Carmen Simone’s experience as a college president along with a variety of other roles elevated her to the top of the long list of applicants. In the end, Dr. Simone has the best set of skills needed at this time for this institution. Her years of experience as a community college president, coupled with her expertise as a faculty member, division chair, and administrator, elevated her to the top of the long list of candidates.”

—Lynne Klemke, Board Chair, Western Nebraska Community College, Nebraska
Executive Searches

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

Lee College, Texas

Dr. Lynda Villanueva
President

“The Lee College presidential search provided the board of regents four very qualified and competitive candidates. Ultimately, the board chose Dr. Villanueva, in part for her demonstrated leadership with many of the student success programs and initiatives already underway at Lee College and the vision she shared to move Lee College forward in the years to come.”

—Mark Hall, Board Chair, Board of Regents, Lee College, Texas

Big Sandy Community & Technical College, Kentucky Community and Technical College System

Dr. Denise King
Chief Academic Officer (CAO)/Provost

“ACCT took time on the front end of the hiring process to determine what was important to Big Sandy Community & Technical College in our search for a provost/CAO. As a result, we have selected Dr. Denise King to fill this position. She is a welcome addition to our staff, and she brings a wealth of knowledge and depth of experience to our college.”

—Dr. Sherry Zylka, President, Big Sandy Community & Technical College, KCTCS, Kentucky

Quinsigamond Community College, Massachusetts

Dr. James Keane
Vice President of Academic Affairs

“We are excited about the level of experience, vision, and commitment to equity and student success that Dr. James Keane brings to our college. I look forward to having him join our executive team as we move into a new decade.”

—Luis Pedraja, President, Quinsigamond Community College, Massachusetts

Learn how ACCT Search Services can help your college find the ideal CEO, vice president, or other visionary leader at www.ACCTSearches.org or contact ACCT Vice President for Search Services Julie Golder at jgolder@acct.org.
Thank you to the following colleges who have recently used ACCT to facilitate a board retreat, board self-assessment, or CEO evaluation. We appreciate your trusting ACCT to assist you with your board development needs.

Olympic College, Wash.
Columbia Gorge Community College, Ore.
Atlantic Cape Community College, N.J.
Bergen Community College, N.J.
Cape Cod Community College, Mass.
Everett Community College, Wash.
Ohlone College, Calif.
College of Lake County, Ill.
Dallas County Community College District, Texas
Northern Wyoming Community College District, Sheridan College, Wyo.
Klamath Community College, Ore.
Hudson County Community College, N.J.
Tarrant County Community College, Texas

Los Angeles County Community College District, Calif.
Riverside Community College District, Calif.
Lake Tahoe Community College, Calif.
Essex County College, N.J.
Hawkeye Community College, Iowa
Alamo Colleges District, Texas
Lone Star Community College, Texas
Kirtland Community College, Mich.
Anne Arundel Community College, Md.
Aims Community College, Colo.
San Bernardino Community College District, Calif.
Chaffey College, Calif.

SEE THE INSIDE BACK COVER FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ACCT BOARD SERVICES.
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Wednesday, April 15 – Friday, April 17, 2020 | Tucson, Arizona

TOPICS
• The Board’s Policymaking Role & Fiduciary Responsibilities
• How Boards Can Move the Needle on Student Success & Equity
• Board-CEO Relationship: Team-Building Strategies
• Ethical Leadership
• The Board’s Role in a Time of Innovation and Transformation
• And More!

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Professional Board Staff
Network Updates

By Jeannie Moton
Portland Community College

WELCOME TO 2020!

I hope you were all able to recharge and find time to enjoy yourself over winter break!

San Francisco was just lovely last fall and I am looking forward to “skating” into D.C. for the Community College National Legislative Summit in February. PBSN kicked off the ACCT Leadership Congress with a pre-conference reception Wednesday at Jasper’s Tap and Kitchen. We had about 40 attendees networking with each other; it was great to see some first-time attendees! Thanks to Pam Payne and El Paso Community College for hosting the reception. The Thursday workshop featured a presentation on “Five Decades in the Workplace” and roundtable discussions. Friday was our annual business meeting, where officers ascended and elections were held for vacant positions. We also had a presentation from Attorney Cobby Caputo on the appropriate board staff response to requests for information. I would like to also thank Lansing Community College and Austin Community College for their sponsorships.

It was the first time using an electronic tool for our elections, and there has been some thoughtful feedback on the process that I plan to incorporate into next year’s elections.

PBSN Vice President Benita Duncan is the executive assistant and liaison to the Lansing Community College Board of Directors. In October 2014, she received the Central Regional Professional Board Staff Member Award from ACCT. In 2008, her Board of Trustees adopted a resolution honoring her service as lead support for the hiring of the sixth college president.

PBSN Secretary Esther Sonen Yun is from Austin Community College in Texas. Esther served the Western Region last year. She is the coordinator of board affairs at Austin Community College. She acts as a liaison between the president’s office and the board of trustees to provide information and address complex and confidential issues, while serving as the primary point of contact for internal and external constituencies. Esther joined ACC in 1999, and she has held various positions within the college. A native Texan, she resides in Austin with her husband.

Communications Coordinator Kristen Grimes is from Mt. San Jacinto College, California. Kristen is the director of board and executive services, a position she has held since January 2017. She is a graduate of Mt. San Jacinto College, earning her A.S. in office administration in 2006, followed by her B.A. in organizational leadership from Brandman University in 2018. Kristen’s hobbies include spending time with her family, reading, all things Disney, and running “for fun.”

continued on page 50
Immediate Past President Pam Payne is from El Paso Community College in Texas. Pam did a wonderful job as president last year, and her leadership will be truly valued in the upcoming year. Pam is the executive assistant to the president and board of directors at El Paso Community College, which just celebrated its 50th anniversary. Knowing the time commitment those anniversaries take, I am in awe of how she was able to balance a very busy year.

Our new Pacific region representative is Debra Nascimento from Chabot Las Positas Community College District in California. She is the executive assistant and board coordinator, serving in that role since 2016. From Tracy, California, Debra attended Delta Community College. She enjoys camping, traveling, cooking, working out, and spending time with her boys. Debra is also the events coordinator for a non-profit organization that fosters youth.

Mandi Reiland will serve as the Western region representative. Currently manager of executive operations for the chancellor and board of trustees at San Jacinto Community College, Mandi supports the college’s chancellor, board of trustees, and strategic leadership team. In her role, she is responsible for managing the staff and daily operations of the chancellor’s office, assisting in planning and executing of special events and projects for the college, and coordinating all board-related activities. Mandi recently was chosen by a committee of her peers as a 2019-20 League for Innovation Excellence Award recipient for San Jacinto College.

The Central region member-at-large is Terri Grimes. She is the executive assistant to the president and board secretary at Highland Community College in Illinois, a position she’s held for almost 23 years. Terri has been a member of PBSN since 1998 and has held a number of positions within the organization, including serving as the 2010-11 PBSN president. She and her husband have two sons, who have blessed them with three grandchildren, and they are looking forward to welcoming another grandchild in June.

Bridget Abraham will be the Northeast region representative. She is the board of trustees operations and services specialist at Montgomery College in Rockville, Maryland. Bridget has been in the role for two years. Having almost 20 years of experience in higher education, she has served as senior administrative assistant in the office of the president, as well as in an administrative support position for a university’s board of trustees. Her previous higher education experience also includes serving in the student affairs arena as director of student services as well as a transcript evaluator and academic coordinator. Bridget has a bachelor’s degree in organizational management and is currently pursuing a master of professional studies degree in industrial/organizational psychology. Bridget lives by this motto: Leadership and Service Can Co-Exist!

The Southern region member-at-large is Sherri Weddle Bowen. She is the executive director for administration and board liaison at Forsyth Technical Community College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Sherri has worked in her role with the president and the board for 19 years and has been at the college for 26. She has been a member of the PBSN since 2007 and was the 2011-2012 PBSN president. Sherri has two boys, Cody and Dakota, who keep her very busy with travel hockey, soccer, and lacrosse.

I want to thank all of these network members for stepping into these leadership roles. I am excited to be returning to Chicago this fall and working with this team.

Right before the holiday, I sent out an email to the PBSN membership. Did you know there are almost 700 of us? In the email was a link for an online survey regarding how you engage with PBSN and your feedback on how we did in San Francisco. To date, I have received 42 responses — it would be great to get more. Please take a few minutes and submit responses at this link: https://tinyurl.com/yfde9nu5. It would be most appreciated.

I will be serving as your president for the next year and am honored to be in this role. I look forward to working ACCT and PBSN this next year to move us forward.

For now, I will sign off and hope to connect with you at NLS or in Chicago at the Leadership Congress.
Essential Skills to Serve with Excellence

By Benita Ann Duncan, Lansing Community College

Being able to type 75 words per minute used to be the primary skill required for a great executive assistant. Today, those skills have evolved into so much more. Executive assistants who serve the board or president must be trusted confidants, problem solvers, and strategic partners.

The professional board staff member is among the most important roles at any college. The people who fill this role often are the glue and the liaison between the board, the president, and the administration. If you desire to fulfill these duties with excellence, here are a few skills you must have:

Organizing and multitasking. In a fast-paced environment, you must prioritize and be organized. Develop a good organizational system. A to-do list and checklist are essential. Prioritize tasks weekly and then set out to accomplish them daily. Set time limits (25 or 30 minutes) to stay focused on tasks throughout the day.

Prioritizing. The majority of trustees have full time commitments besides their service on their boards. Annually assist the board with collaborating with the president and executive leadership in establishing the college’s annual goals and objectives. Establish a system to help them prioritize and achieve those goals throughout the year.

Networking and resourcefulness. Sometimes you will be given a task with a short timeline at a moment’s notice. Learn to network with other executive assistants and people within your organization for support, resources, connections, and advice. Take time to help others when they are in need so it can pay forward when you need help.

Effective communication. You will often be the spokesperson for the board and the president. Interacting with the board, president, and other employees gives professional board staff a unique perspective. Listen, present facts accurately, and be persuasive. Your opinion and honest viewpoint are valuable.

Decisiveness. Professional board staff must be decisive. Sometimes when there is no clarity, you must gather information quickly and ask questions to act fast. Professional board staff often must work quickly and be confident in their decision to move forward.

Parliamentary skills. Study Robert’s Rules of Order to ensure board meetings run smoothly and follow parliamentary procedures. To ensure the integrity of meetings, speak up when proceedings are out of order. It’s also helpful to know your state’s open meetings laws to make sure meetings are posted properly.

Tech savvy. Professional board staff must stay current with meeting technology to present board meeting materials in an easy, efficient, and effective way. You also must be able to troubleshoot quickly when traveling with the board and president.

Discretion. Professional board staff will constantly deal with confidential and sensitive information from closed sessions or legal matters. Maintaining confidentiality and trust are the biggest factors for success in your role.

Serving a college board and president takes a lot of effort, but with perseverance and patience, it is a very rewarding job.
2019 ELECTION RESULTS

Northeast Region
David Mathis
Mohawk Valley Community College, NY
(Two-Year Partial Term)

Northeast Region
Marsha Suggs Smith
Montgomery College, MD

Pacific Region
Stephan Castellanos
San Joaquin Delta College, CA

Southern Region
Tamela Cullens
South Florida State College, FL

Western Region
Steven Anderson
Northeast Community College, NE

DIRECTORS-AT-LARGE

(3-year terms)

Judy Chen Haggerty
Mt. San Antonio College, CA

Rosaelena O’Neil
Northern Virginia Community College, VA

Art Reyes
Mott Community College, MI

APPOINTED BOARD MEMBERS

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee Chair
Meredith Brown
Peralta Community College District, CA

ACCT DEADLINES

- ACCT Leadership Congress Call for Presentations
  April 15, 2020
- ACCT Awards Nominations
  June 1, 2020
- Director-at-Large Candidate Nominations
  July 1, 2020
- Amendments to ACCT Bylaws
  July 1, 2020
- Submitting Resolutions
  July 1, 2020
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Call to learn more about ways to engage your board and make use of each trustee’s skills and expertise.

Contact:
Colleen Allen
Director of Retreats and Evaluation Services
callen@acct.org

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