

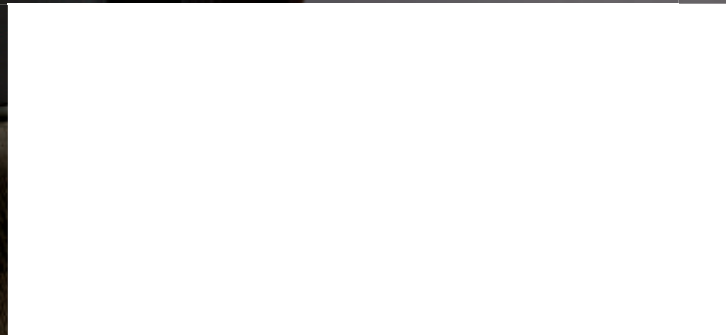


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Leadership in the New Age

Earlier this year, I watched a TED Talk interview with Elon Musk, the noted entrepreneur, visionary, inventor and leader of SpaceX, Tesla Motors, Zip2 and others. Musk spoke on a wide range of topics including interplanetary colonization, developing a “hyperloop” to transport people and materials over huge distances quickly and cheaply, and boring multi-level roadways at deep levels under large, congested cities. I was deeply inspired by the breadth of his gaze of the future. Even more humbling to me was the response he gave to the interviewer when asked why he is working to achieve all of these things in his lifetime. Initially, Musk looked a bit puzzled by the question, but said that it was important to have a future for everyone that was inspiring. Even more notable to me was Musk’s follow-on rhetorical question about the future. He simply asked, “Why do you want to live?”

Musk’s central question, at least to me, struck at the heart of authentic leadership. Musk noted that he wanted to ensure the continuation of humanity and the sustainability of the planet. In my view, he spoke of the higher purpose of leadership. It wasn’t profit, fame or advantage; it was about who he was at his core, and he made no excuses for it. I have since thought a great deal about his introspective and aspirational question as a new way to think about leadership, not only for myself, but also for other leaders in our colleges, and in our profession. I have found the question to be a powerful, reflective discussion tool for various departments and teams. You might wish to consider using it at meetings or a retreat as a way to talk about the “why” for what we do, visioning, authentic leadership and service to others.

Clearly, we are leading community colleges during a true inflection point in society. The changing dimensions in work, generational dynamics and the impact of globalization and opportunity have necessitated a reframing of what constitutes leadership in our changed reality. And while it’s true that the



BOARD CHAIR'S LETTER

Daniel J. Phelan

president is the ambassador and even the very image of our institutions, our reframing of leadership must consider that we can no longer lay the entire mantle of leadership solely upon the shoulders of one person. Rather, we must realize that *leadership is always more than one person*. Little can be achieved by oneself. Consequently we must rely upon others who are enrolled in our common purpose to achieve objectives. Regardless of whether the business card reads president, dean, director, professor, coordinator or janitor, we all have the opportunity to lead and be of service to others. As leaders, we must provide the space for the cultivation of an organizational culture that values curiosity, questioning, informed risk-taking, as well as a growth mindset that encourages leadership at all levels.

Insofar as this is my last article for the Community College Journal, permit me this opportunity to thank each of you for your support of my service as chairman of the board. It has been a sincere honor and privilege. Mary Graham, president of Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, becomes the new board chair on July 1. Mary is a visionary and an exemplary leader in her own right and I know that she will provide the association with outstanding guidance. ■

Daniel J. Phelan is president of Jackson College in Michigan, and chair of the AACC Board of Directors.



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◀ Trump releases budget

The Trump administration's budget includes cuts to education and workforce programs. Read an analysis here: <http://bit.ly/2qnhtnY>



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Congress says #PellYes

By Tabitha Whissemore

In early May, a last-minute budget deal in Congress to keep the government open also called to bring back year-round Pell grants, starting with the 2017–2018 academic year.

Year-round Pell provides grant aid to students to use outside the typical academic year, usually to cover the cost of summer courses. Supporters emphasize it allows students to seamlessly continue their education and even shortens their path to completion.

“Restoring year-round Pell Grants is a bipartisan, common-sense approach to making college more affordable for hard-working students in Missouri and across the nation,” says Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO), chairman of the Senate appropriations subcommittee that oversees education funding.

In 2011, year-round Pell was eliminated after just one year due to a large budget shortfall in the Pell Grant program. The program currently has a substantial surplus.

Last summer, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved a bipartisan education appropriations bill for fiscal year 2017 that called to reinstate year-round Pell. However, a House appropriations committee bill didn’t include similar language.

VOICING SUPPORT

Reinstating year-round Pell has been a legislative priority for the American Association of Community Colleges, which last fall launched a social media campaign to bring awareness to the importance of Pell grants for students. The #PellYes tag on Twitter gained 3.5 million impressions.

Community college leaders are thrilled to see the return of year-round Pell.

“Year-round Pell will be a terrific help in keeping low-income community college students in a timely, efficient completion of their academic pathways into

the workplace or transfer to a four-year institution,” says Patricia A. Gentile, president of North Shore Community College (NSCC) in Massachusetts. “We have seen the results before.”

When year-round Pell was in effect in 2011, NSCC students received nearly \$275,000 more in Pell dollars than in the following summer, when the program was no longer available, according to Gentile.

The reinstatement is good news for employers, too, who often look to local community colleges for their workforce development needs, notes Mark Mitsui, the president of Portland Community College in Oregon who previously served as deputy assistant secretary for community colleges at the U.S. Education Department.

“Employers appreciate that Pell helps to shape a skilled workforce,” he says.

AIMING HIGHER

Also in May, House and Senate Democrats introduced the Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act, which would increase the maximum Pell Grant amount and index it to inflation. It also would expand eligibility to include DREAMers and federal and state prison inmates. In addition, the bill would extend the lifetime eligibility limit from 12 to 14 semesters.

Sens. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii and Patty Murray of Washington and Reps. Susan Davis of California and Bobby Scott of Virginia introduced the bill. It is one of several initiatives House Democrats have proposed as part of their legislative campaign, Aim Higher.

“The Pell Grant is the most important tool we have to help low-income students afford higher education, but for too long Congress has neglected students by allowing the purchasing power of Pell Grants to erode over time,” Scott said in a release. “By reversing prior eligibility cuts and ensuring stable funding for a larger Pell Grant, the Pell Grant Preservation and Expansion Act will help millions of students reach their potential without being forced to take on excessive debt.”

WHITE HOUSE BUDGET

At press time, President Donald Trump released his proposed budget for the next fiscal year, which begins in October. While it calls to maintain funding for the Pell Grant program, it would shave \$3.9 billion from the program’s surplus. Such a move could lead to future shortfalls in the program, according to AACC.

The proposed budget also includes cuts to student aid programs, and lower funding for career and technical education (CTE) and job training programs.

Though Congress will craft its own appropriations bill, education advocates note that Trump’s plan would significantly affected community colleges. “These cuts would severely impact college affordability and all but eliminate an important pathway to the middle class for many Americans,” AACC President and CEO Walter Bumphus said in a statement.

For up-to-the-minute budget information, visit www.ccdaily.com. ■



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The passing of a community college visionary

By Matthew Dembicki

Dale Parnell, who led the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) through the 1980s and championed the need to help all students transition better from high school to college and on to careers, passed away April 20 in his home state of Oregon. He was 88.

Where his predecessor Edmund Gleazer, Jr., laid a foundation for AACC's national leadership, Parnell built on it with a vision of community colleges providing opportunity and quality education for all students.

"If there's one slogan that I developed over my 10 years in Washington, D.C., it was 'opportunity with excellence,'" he said in an interview included in the 2011 book *Legacy in Leadership: Profiles of the Presidents of the American Association of Community Colleges, 1958-2010*, published by AACC and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. "If there's one word that describes community colleges for me, it is opportunity. And we do that in an excellent way. I never want to talk about opportunity alone."

"He laid the foundation for focusing on success for the millions of students served by community colleges, including what he called the 'neglected majority.'"

WALTER BUMPHUS, president and CEO, American Association of Community Colleges

Many of today's foundational concepts for community colleges were established during Parnell's tenure as AACC president from 1981 to 1991—the associate degree was defined and created; community colleges were recognized for their importance to workforce development; and the concept of "2+2" (two years of high schools leading to two years of postsecondary education) was established.

It was his passion to better prepare high school students for college and technical careers that fueled his 1985 book *The Neglected Majority*, in which he outlined a plan for educating "ordinary" people who weren't pursuing a postsecondary education. The book provided a framework for AACC to develop legislative language for a tech prep associate-degree program that would build stronger relationships between high schools and community colleges.

"He laid the foundation for focusing on success for the millions of students served

by community colleges, including what he called the 'neglected majority' of students not seeking a traditional university experience," said AACC President and CEO Walter Bumphus. "This work provided the basis for today's career and technical training programs that educate students to succeed in highly skilled and in-demand jobs."

Another keystone accomplishment for Parnell at AACC was the association's work in helping to create a blueprint for the future. In 1988, AACC published "Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century," a report that culminated 18 months of discussions and campus visits regarding the future of community colleges, addressing issues such as partnerships, curriculum, the classroom as community and the college as community.

CHALLENGING TIMES IN D.C.

Parnell came to Washington at a tough time, when the country was in the midst of an economic recession and the Reagan

administration was threatening to trim many federal programs, including ones that were important to community colleges and their students. In addition to trying to get rid of the U.S. Education Department, the administration also wanted to drop funding for the Perkins Act, which continues to be a vital resource for CTE programs at community colleges.

"They were tough political times, but it was fun for me. I really enjoyed trying to make sure that people know about the role of the community college," Parnell said in a 2003 interview.

He reached out to not only federal agencies, but also to business organizations and associations such as the National Association of Manufacturers.

Parnell also helped to make AACC a key player among education circles in Washington. The growing recognition nationally of the work of community colleges placed AACC as a member of the "Big Six" higher education associations and



Dale Parnell

a significant member of the Washington Higher Education Secretariat, a federation of higher education associations.

REMEMBERING A LEGEND

Former AACC President George Boggs lauded Parnell's political ability to advance the cause of community colleges and for leading and strengthening 2+2 and concurrent enrollment programs. He also cited the 1988 "Building Communities" report as one the most significant documents of the community college movement at the time, adding that many of its recommendations are still valid today.

"Dale was a great cheerleader for our colleges," Boggs said.

Parnell provided "expanded and challenging visions for American community colleges," said John Roueche, president of the Roueche Graduate Center at National American University and a highly regarded community college expert.

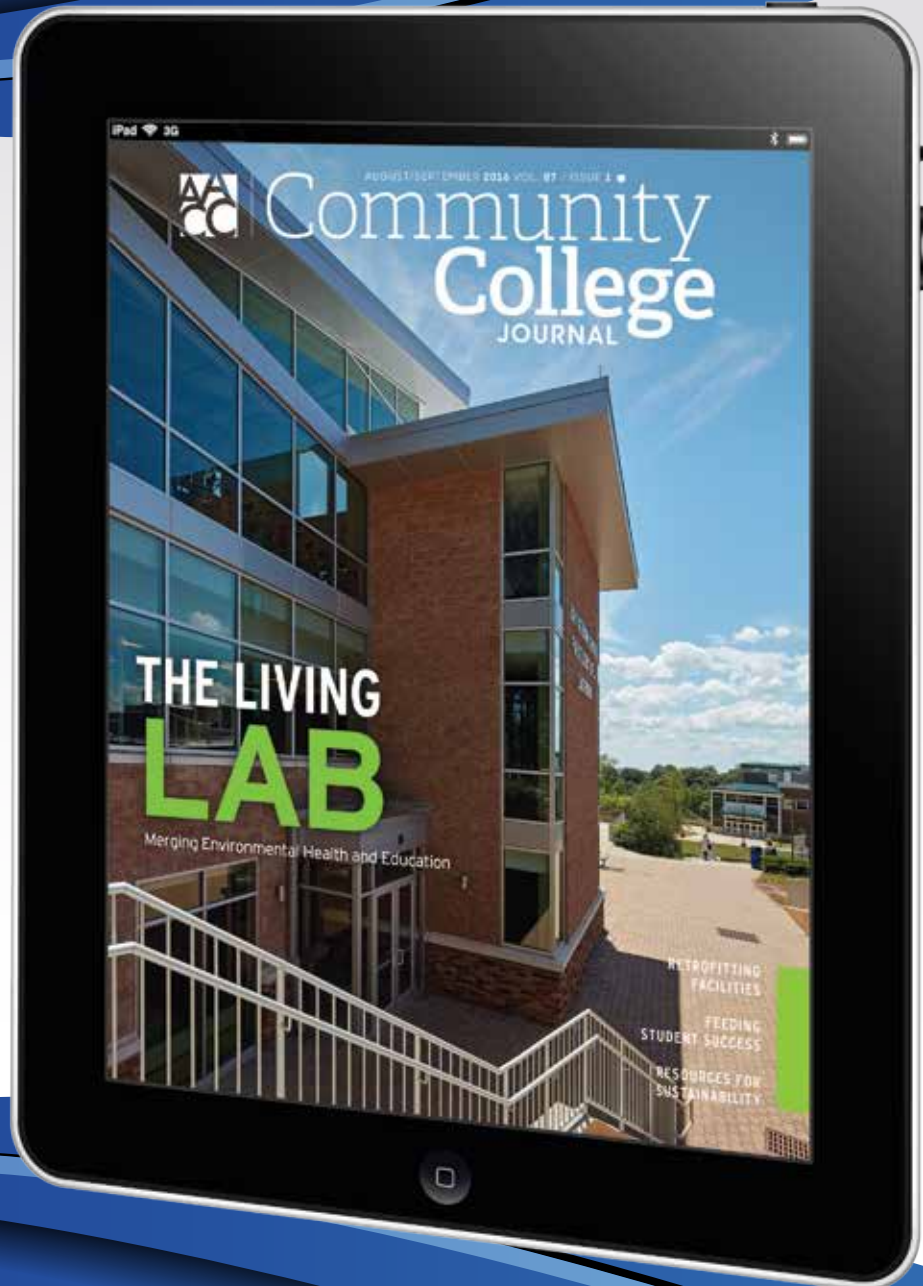
Bernard Luskin, chancellor of California's Ventura County Community College District—who served at AACC as chief operations officer and executive vice president when Parnell was AACC president—also cited Parnell's political savvy.

"Dale stood tall for community colleges, so community colleges stood tall in Washington, D.C.," Luskin said, noting in-roads Parnell made into the Education Department, the House and Senate and among other higher education associations.

Parnell is survived by three sons, two daughters, 17 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren. His wife, Beverly, predeceased him last November.

This is an abridged version of an article that appeared in *Community College Daily*. For the full article, visit <http://bit.ly/2rtY6of>. ■

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Learning to be a leader

By Barbara Viniar

As you read this, most of you will be reflecting on your recent commencement, an occasion when we tell our students to be proud of their accomplishments but encourage them to understand they have a lifetime of learning ahead of them.

Presidents too have a lifetime of learning ahead of them. For many, the presidency is the culmination of a long-standing career ambition, marked by ceremonies and celebrations. Yet leadership development is a never-ending process of informal and formal learning experiences. Like our students, we learn from our successes and our mistakes, from our colleagues and from formal leadership programs.

Leadership programs run the gamut from regional or state-wide programs that focus on issues such as the environment, criminal justice and hunger and build relationships among corporate and non-profit leaders, to higher education programs offered by universities and professional associations. These programs offer a range of opportunities to grow as a leader, but only one program exists specifically for all community college presidents. The American Association

of Community Colleges' (AACC) Presidents Academy Summer Institute (PASI), which this year will be held in New York City, July 21–25, is designed by community college presidents, for community college presidents.

I attended PASI when I began my first presidency in 1994, and there I learned a lesson from my peers that I have never forgotten. One of our activities was a small group project, which I was chosen

“Like our students, we learn from our successes and our mistakes, from our colleagues and from formal leadership programs.”

to lead. At the end of our time together, my group told me I had done an excellent job with the project, but, they chided me, I had done it mostly alone. I needed to learn to rely on others. I confess to having needed some remedial work in this area over the years, but I will never forget their advice.

Merrill Irving, Jr., president of Hennepin Technical College in Minnesota, attended his first institute last summer

and, like me, recognized the influence it would have on his leadership.

“The AACC Presidents Academy Summer Institute provided an opportunity to learn from experienced college presidents from across the country. I enjoyed the high level and engaging interaction. What I learned there influences my daily efforts to provide strategic leadership decisions,” Irving says.

It was many years and a second presidency before I went to another Summer Institute. I had always assumed it was for new presidents, but when I went again a few years ago, I rediscovered the value of time with other presidents to examine current issues, share problem-solving strategies and remember the vital importance of “presidential self-care.” Presidents from large and small, rural and urban colleges exchange ideas, ask questions and offer advice in a safe, confidential environment.

At last year's PASI, “Ready for Anything,” we heard from Rita Cavin, who had been the interim president at Umpqua Community College in Oregon when the shooting occurred there. After her searing presentation, I realized that nothing could actually prepare me for the emotional trauma she and her college endured, but I was able to take concrete steps to improve disaster recovery planning on my own campus.

The theme of this summer's institute is “The Stories We Tell.” Highlights of

what we will learn from experts and each other include:

- How to tell our college and personal stories through social media.
- How to craft the story that makes donors want to invest in us.
- How “legend, lore and legacies” make up the culture we must understand in order to be successful.
- How one college and its president grew stronger after the adversity of 9/11.

- How a major corporation has become a believer in the community college story.

As presidents, we make many choices about how to spend our resources; when these resources are scarce, we may be tempted to forgo our own leadership development. Will Austin, president of Warren County Community College in New Jersey and past chair of the Presidents Academy Executive Committee, reminds us that investing in the president's leadership development is actually an investment in the college.

"I have been fortunate to attend nine summer institutes over a 14-year tenure as president. For a small school this is a significant annual financial commitment. Registration fees have been resources well budgeted, as the colleague advice, professional networks and

sessions developed and learned from at the annual institutes have helped me to manage two public relations crises, various political antagonists, collective bargaining issues, and even provided guidance to help double college graduation rates over the past two years. I cherish the professional networks and friendships that active participation in Presidents Academy activities have provided me as a leader," Austin says.

When I speak to students at commencement I tell them I can only hope they find the fulfillment I have enjoyed as a community college president, combining my love of learning and my commitment to making a difference. It may take a lifetime of learning, but it is worth every moment. ■

Barbara Viniar is the former president of Chesapeake College in Maryland and has served on AACC's Presidents Academy Executive Committee.



Barbara Viniar

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Taking the confusion out of college leadership programs

An AACC leadership mapping initiative will help aspiring community college presidents figure out the best pathway.

By Ellen Ullman

By now, we're all aware of the reality that community college leadership is suffering from both a high turnover and a shortage of qualified candidates to fill empty positions. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), half of the 1,100 community college presidents in the United States may retire during the next decade.

The good news is that there are a lot of ways for people to prepare for presidency, including leadership preparation programs from AACC and other industry organizations, as well as workshops and coaching opportunities offered by higher education institutions. These programs, which help people confirm their interest and learn about the strategies they need for advancement, are absolutely critical, but figuring out a pathway can be complicated.

STREAMLINING THE PROCESS

"I've benefitted personally from several programs that helped me expand my network and learn the good, bad and ugly about what I was getting into," says Joseph Seabrooks, president of Cedar Valley College in Dallas, Texas.

However, as Seabrooks points out, the process is anything but intuitive. "Just because you work in higher education doesn't mean we lay out succession

plans and a career ladder for you. If you talk to 100 college presidents, you'll hear 100 different journeys."

Because no pathway is the same, people have to design customized strategies. Helping aspiring leaders—even if they are entry-level employees or simply curious about a president's role—understand their options is not just helpful; it's essential. That's why AACC decided to step in.

MAPPING OUT LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Last year, AACC leadership formed the Commission on Leadership and Professional Development to review leadership competencies and to keep the association apprised of leadership needs in the field.

"AACC felt that it would be beneficial to literally map out the different options available to aspiring leaders and provide guidance on the different pathways one might choose," says Christine Sobek, president of Waubensee Community College in Illinois. Sobek, who chairs the commission, says the goal is to put together an inventory describing the various offerings so that AACC members can determine which program is the right fit.

"We talked about looking at offerings by functions within the pipeline," she says. "Are there key associations offering opportunities for student

development professionals, for chief academic officers, or for people on the business side?"

Seabrooks breaks down training into four different categories: academic affairs, student affairs, administrative affairs and advancement. Depending on a person's current position, the first goal is to become a chief executive in one of those domains. There are organizations offering professional development in each arena, such as the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators' Women in Student Affairs Drive-In Conference. Next up are the higher-level leadership programs such as the American Council on Education's Institute for New Chief Academic Officers.

"Currently, we are sorting through the programs and starting to map out the executive-level leadership programs before tackling the chief executive officer ones," Seabrooks says. "After that, we'll

look at the programs for presidents that help them remain successful."

The commission also is investigating doctoral programs. "We identified the 19 universities that offer a doctorate in community college leadership and are making sure those programs prepare people for a senior leadership position," says John "Ski" Sygielski, president of HACC, Central Pennsylvania's Community College, and another commission member.

So far, the committee has been immersed in collecting data. In April, they met to discuss next steps.

ADDRESSING A NEED

In addition to helping fill the hundreds of upcoming presidential vacancies, college presidents have a duty and a responsibility to mentor upcoming leaders and create pathways.

"People are discovering that the community college presidency is an extremely

demanding job," Sygielski says. "We need to make sure the programs that produce presidents and other leaders offer a well-rounded understanding of everything from human resources and facilities to fundraising and legal issues."

He believes the commission's role is to understand who the leaders of tomorrow are, what issues they will have to address and how to get them from what is currently offered to what will be offered in five to 10 years.

Seabrooks, who knew he wanted to be a college president early in his career, was lucky enough to have a goal and a timeline. "The commission is trying to emphasize that we can't hand you a prescription. By mapping these opportunities, we can help people understand the guidelines to be successful in the community college world." ■

Ellen Ullman is a writer based in Massachusetts.



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GETTING IN SYNC

Community college CEOs, board chairs lay out the keys to unlocking constructive relationships

BY ED FINKEL

Community college presidents and board members come and go. But a major driver of the continued success of two-year colleges is how fruitfully the relationships between CEOs and their boards evolve over time—from the onboarding process when a president first takes the helm to the “outboarding” process that starts with them giving notice, and all the years in between.

At all phases of the presidency, open communication, relationship building and a proper sense of who plays what role—with the board providing broad policy and fiscal direction, and the CEO carrying out the day-to-day leadership—are key to success, say community college presidents and board chairs.

ONBOARDING

Todd Holcomb came to Western Nebraska Community College (WNCC) in Scottsbluff seven years ago and spent six months as vice president before being asked to serve as interim president and then president. With a background primarily in the four-year university environment, Holcomb is grateful that his board supported him attending CEO training through the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and thinks it’s been helpful that his board is so involved in the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). “It’s important to have

those educational components coincide with one another,” he says.

The onboarding process starts during the search process, ensuring the board and CEO have a clear understanding of one another’s short- and long-term expectations, Holcomb says. “Some colleges want a change agent,” he says. “That’s fine, as long as there’s an expectation upfront. What I see happening is sometimes there’s miscommunication between the president and the board on those expectations.”

In Holcomb’s early weeks, the 11-member WNCC board also allowed him the opportunity to get to know the college and its surrounding district, which covers 17,000 square miles, about one-fifth of the state. “The board gave me the latitude to understand and learn the culture before there was any sense I would move forward with certain projects,” he says. “I started going out into the district and meeting the board of governors at their individual locations in town. It’s very difficult to build relationships on ‘board day.’”

Holcomb recalls that he did some “unique things” to build these relationships; for example, one board member, a rancher, invited him to a branding party—which wasn’t about celebrating a marketing communications effort. “It’s where they brand young calves. It was quite an experience,” he says. “I drove out into the middle of the Sand Hills and spent a day getting to know the residents. That



Community College of Philadelphia President Donald Generals speaks with Student Government Association President Troy Bundy.



Image Credit: ©2017 Fernando Gaglianese of Nando Photography



Donald Generals and Board Chair Jeremiah White engage in a discussion on campus.

was a great experience. You have to get outside your comfort zone.”

Julie Walworth, board chair at WNCC since January and a board member for five years, was not yet there when Holcomb took the helm but says it’s important for a new president to visit with the board, staff, members of the community and—most importantly—students.

“Smaller towns on the outskirts aren’t always as involved with the college, and yet they’re still taxed, so we have to make sure our connections with them are strong,” she says. “And it’s important that students get to know him—students are what we’re here for.”

Donald Generals ascended to leadership of the Community College of Philadelphia in July 2014 from the position of vice president of academic affairs at Mercer County Community College in West Windsor, New Jersey. He says that his board had vetted his 30-year career thoroughly and helped smooth his transition by expressing full confidence in him, which included swatting away some people’s questions about a stint he had spent at a proprietary school.

“They publicly, as well as privately, dismissed those accusations or criticisms,” Generals says. “The level of confidence they showed in me was very important. Their confidence infused credibility in the [vetting] process as well as the final candidacy.”

Like Holcomb, he made the effort to get to know his 15 board members on an individual level. “I took the opportunity, and they reciprocated, in trying to get to know each other relative to our personal and

professional identities,” Generals says. “You have to have a relationship with your board as a whole, but you also have to work at your relationship with each individual.”

The board also encouraged him to attend AACC’s New CEO Academy, where he found “a supportive environment and atmosphere” with colleagues who also had been on the job for only a short time. And the board supported Generals’ early steps in reorganizing the college. “I feel like I hit the ground running,” he says.

Jeremiah White, who chaired the search committee that led to Generals’ hire and became board chair last September, says that prior to the search, his board came together on its vision and set out to find someone who could take that and build on it.

“We were all in lock sync about where we were, and what we needed to see in the first year and the second year from the new president,” White says. “Part of it had to do with the board accepting the fact that he had to get in there and get under the hood. We didn’t know all the details.”

Where Generals remains relatively early in his tenure, Millicent Valek, president at Brazosport College in Lake Jackson, Texas, has been going for more than two decades in what she terms with a chuckle, “my first presidency, and probably my last.” She arrived in 1996 after eight years as chief academic officer at Arizona Western, and, like Holcomb and Generals, she serves on the presidential advisory committee of ACCT.

When Valek was hired, her board had gone through a search process that was several months long



Western Nebraska Community College President Todd Holcomb and Board Chair Julie Walworth.



Millicent Valek (right), president of Brazosport College, is encouraged by her board to take part in community activities.

and helped to pave the way. “I was the first external president they had hired,” she says, which heightened people’s curiosity. “There were lots of opportunities, during the finalist stage, for community and faculty forums, which laid the base.”

Since she was new to the community, board members opened doors within their respective spheres of influence—they have included doctors, attorneys, engineers and small business owners. “I got acclimated to the community very quickly that way,” she says. “That’s an important value: They want good town-and-gown relationships. They also had a provision in there for regular performance appraisals, which I thought was wonderful.”

Carolyn Johnson, board chair for the past three years at Brazosport, has been on the board since 1998. She was not there when Valek was hired, but arrived soon enough afterward to know that a major priority had been to find a president who wanted to be an integral part of the community.

“They actually put money in her [budget] to go out and be part of clubs and organizations,” Johnson says. “That has been fantastic for us. For a new president, a good way to start is to get them involved, especially someone who’s not from the community.”

DURING THE TENURE

As Holcomb grew into his position at WNCC, he says he could rely on a couple of his senior administrators with decades of experience to help broaden his vision beyond simply running the institution to representing it statewide. “That takes more time, to understand and advocate for your institution,” he says.

Among the changes Holcomb has instituted: the fundraising department has added staff members, which led to a \$9.6 million campaign to support facilities remodel and upgrade. The virtually non-existent public relations and marketing efforts have grown so that “people understand the importance of our community college to western

“For a new president, a good way to start is to get them involved, especially someone who’s not from the community.”

CAROLYN JOHNSON, *board chair, Brazosport College*

Nebraska,” he says. “I’m proud that we started reaching out to the Latino community and building a diverse student body,” with the Hispanic population growing from 9 percent to 23 percent.

As new board members come into the picture, they’re sent to ACCT training opportunities to help their onboarding process, Holcomb says.

The board holds an annual retreat, and Holcomb has an annual evaluation that he’s found helpful. When the board disagrees with Holcomb or with one another, they’re very good about not making their disagreements public, Holcomb says. “They coordinate opportunities to find agreement and work with one another,” he says.

Walworth says laying the groundwork for a constructive relationship starts during the interview process in ensuring that the new president will be supportive of the college’s goals. Going forward, openness with one another is probably the most important aspect of the relationship, she says. “Todd was always very open to clarifying things—or if he didn’t have answers, getting the administrative team to clarify it for us,” Walworth says.

Generals and his board at Community College of Philadelphia held a board-CEO retreat when he had been in place for about six months to discuss their evolving relationship. The session covered “how we should function, my expectations of their fiduciary responsibility, their expectations of me, bringing

transparency, and bringing everybody along with the vision,” he says.

That event led to a strategic plan through a process that incorporated both institutional and board input, Generals says. “I was very careful to make sure the planning process had some real meat behind it and real directions relative to ... where the institution should go as far as serving the city,” he says. “I keep them engaged as much as possible. I involve them in top-level hiring decisions.”

He also has taken steps to ensure that the college and foundation are separate institutions on paper only, with the same goals and liaisons on one another's board to keep communication flowing, and he merged the academic and student affairs departments under one vice president.

“We needed an alignment that was more supportive of students,” Generals says. “It was fairly significant given the history of this institution. They [the board] never blinked.”

Day to day, Generals says he works to keep his board members as informed as possible. “My approach is, it's better they hear about it from me than read about it in the newspaper,” he says. “I don't keep them at arm's length. I don't pretend to know everything. My board is [comprised of] extremely wise, strong individuals in their communities. They all have established careers in their own right. The level of expertise I can get from them is incredibly important.”

White says the retreat early in Generals' tenure provided an excellent opportunity to interact and make sure all were in sync on both the vision, and the costs to make it a reality. Board members had the opportunity to hear more detail from senior managers on their objectives and were able to share their ideas. “We are not running the day-to-day,” White says.

“We are interested in, ‘What are the long-term policy objectives we want to support?’”

A board needs to realize that a president will have tough decisions to make and stand behind him or her so long as their vision remains aligned, White says. “The chair doesn't run the company. The chair manages the board, keeps the board involved, keeps the committee working and makes sure we carry out our fiduciary responsibilities,” he says. “We're providing a second pair of eyes and making sure the company is being run appropriately.”

Board members should formally set expectations in the president's contract to ensure they're holding him or her clearly accountable, White says, adding that the board hired an outside firm to survey them about their perceptions at the end of Generals' first year. “That became a fundamental document for understanding how people felt, how he communicated with us and how he used our expertise,” White says.

Valek's relationship with the board has been rooted in the college's legacy of “good boardsmanship, where people aren't on the board for political reasons, they just want to support the college and the community,” she says. Many board members have worked in the petrochemical industry, which is dominant locally, and they have brought a diversity of professional experience that lends different perspectives.

“While they are certainly good stewards, and they take their roles and responsibilities seriously, they also look to the CEO to be the CEO, and them to be policy-makers,” Valek says.

She and the board have established a continuous strategic planning process focused on mutually established goals that helps keep continuity as board members change. “That document, which is looked at on an annual basis, and is the basis for my [performance] evaluation, has really been the glue,” Valek says.

Another aspect providing glue to the relationship has been an annual weekend-long board workshop to supplement monthly business meetings that allows everyone to take a step back and look at the big picture direction of the college. “That's been a good bonding experience for them, as well,” she says.

Strong communication is at the top of Johnson's list of reasons why the board's relationship with Valek has been constructive. “We don't want to surprise the president,” she says. “If for any reason she doesn't know something is going on, we call her. ... When she knows something is going on, she tells the board, so we aren't surprised.”

The board and CEO need to have a shared vision, which at Brazosport focuses first and foremost on student access but also includes broad engagement with stakeholders, effective and efficient service

Image Credit: Brazosport College



Brazosport College Board of Regents Chair Carolyn Johnson (right) swears in board member Roland Hendricks while Valek (center) looks on.

“I don’t keep them at arm’s length. I don’t pretend to know everything. My board is [comprised of] extremely wise, strong individuals in their communities.”

DONALD GENERALS, *president, Community College of Philadelphia*



Image Credit: American Association of Community Colleges

delivery, recruiting and retaining students, workforce development and partnerships, and lifelong learning, Johnson says.

The president’s annual goals reflect those categories, and the board and CEO talk about progress toward this Vision 2020 at annual retreats, she says. The board conducts an open evaluation of the president, rating her from 1 to 5 on a number of attributes. “We ask them to tell us what the president did really well, what are some of the things she could improve upon, and we talk to her about it right there in the meeting,” Johnson says. “It’s open, and no one can sit and not participate.”

OUTBOARDING

Building close and trusting relationships will help lead to a smoother outboarding process when a president or CEO leaves, Holcomb says. “I think that honesty and trust needs to be developed with that board chair, where you will notify them ahead of time if you’re looking for a position, if you’re applying for a position, if you’re a finalist,” he says. “One thing I have tried never to do with my board is surprise them.”

Holcomb occasionally has heard about executives hiding a search from their board and telling them at the last minute. “I think that’s embarrassing and not very professional,” he says. “I’m always surprised when I hear a president resign in one month and start the new position in the next month.”

An exit interview with the departing president would be beneficial to the institution, Holcomb believes. “What were the positive things you’ve experienced, and what do you wish you had changed?” he says.

When a president leaves to take another position, or to retire, Walworth believes the college should show appreciation for a job well done. “A reception would be very important to me, to say thank you, and to give community members the opportunity to come in and thank them for the work they’ve done,” she says.

While Generals feels he’s a long way from transitioning out after only two-and-a-half years,

he says succession planning is the responsibility of every CEO regardless of their tenure. This requires developing in-house talent and laying the groundwork so the institution doesn’t falter on its long-term strategies due to a leadership change and can retain accreditation and budget stability, he says.

“When the time comes, a conversation about 18 months out between us about my plans, retirement or moving on, would be a healthy thing,” Generals says. “Their supporting that idea of a transition, as opposed to treating the president like a lame duck, also would be a healthy thing. And that needs to be communicated to the community.”

Valek and the board at Brazosport have been talking about succession planning for some time, and they have had several dry runs when her chief academic, human resources and workforce officer left within three years of one another, and not long after that, the chief financial officer transitioned out.

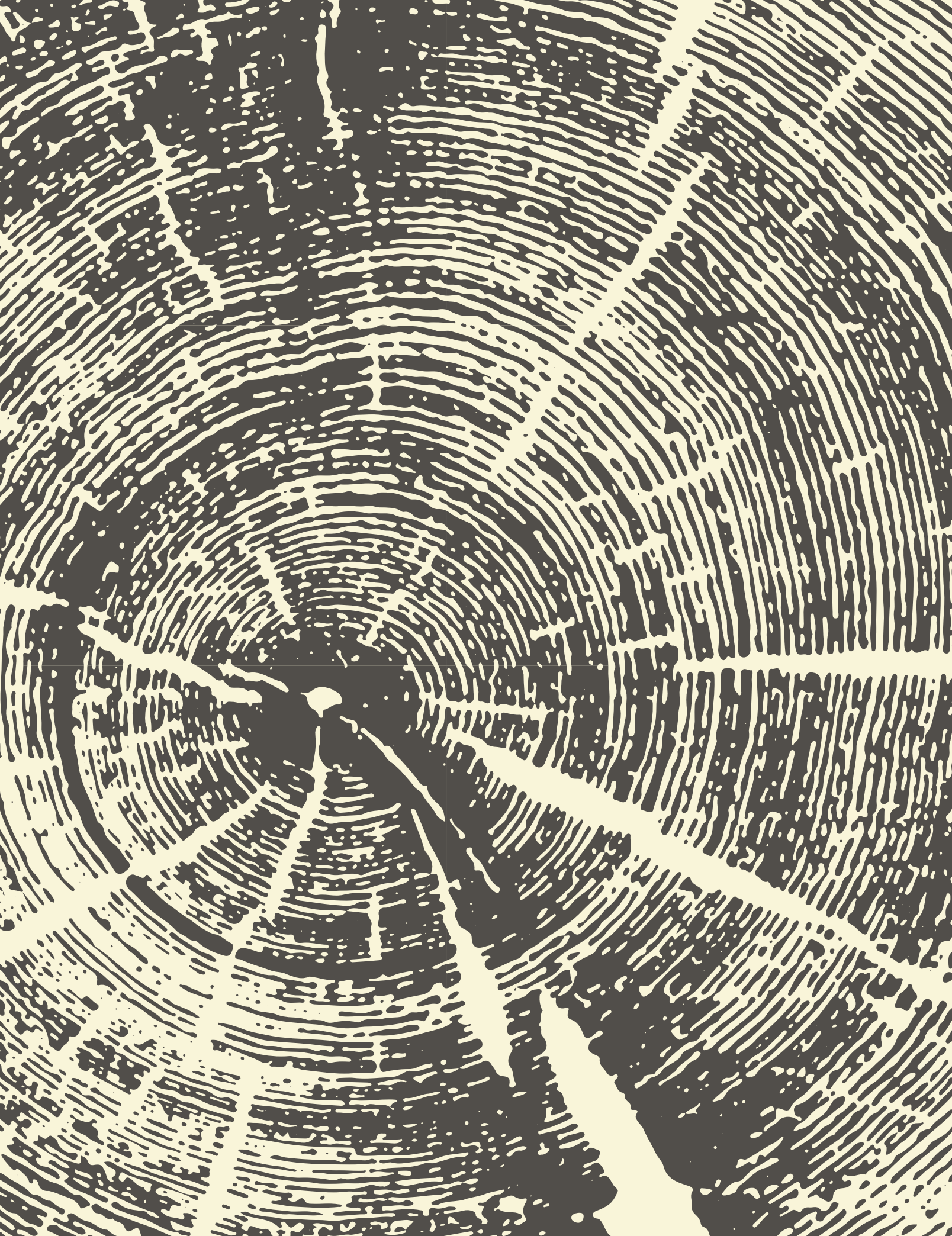
“We saw that we were going to lose all that knowledge base,” she says. “We worked through a methodology [to retain as much as possible] that worked very well.”

When her time comes, Valek says she will give at least a year’s notice and, if possible, will stay on until a successor is in place. Brazosport has money in its budget for succession planning that could create room for some overlap, which they had for a year when the CFO left, moving him temporarily into a vice president role before he retired.

“That was very helpful because the retiring CFO was able to be down the hall for any questions, yet they weren’t doing the same job,” she says, adding, “The ability to have that kind of dialogue [about succession] without it being uncomfortable does not happen overnight, but over a period of good conversations, sometimes about topics that are tough.” ■

Ed Finkel is an education writer based in Illinois.

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Donald Generals spoke at the AACC Annual Convention about his college’s work building pathways for students.





ALWAYS
growing

Even seasoned community college presidents need opportunities for professional development

By Dennis Pierce

With

with nearly a decade of experience as the president of Cabrillo College in Santa Cruz County, California, you might think Brian King would have seen it all before becoming chancellor of the 75,000-student Los Rios Community College District in the greater Sacramento area.

But King, who joined Los Rios in 2013, says he is still learning on the job. He relishes the chance to meet with executives from other colleges and talk shop.

"I can think of several instances where feedback from peers has been helpful," he says. For instance, as head of a district with four separately accredited colleges, King has had opportunities to talk with chancellors of other multi-college districts across the country and has learned the importance of having a collaborative framework for input before making decisions.

"The temptation for leaders is to move too quickly," he notes, "and in talking to colleagues, I have learned the importance of patience."

King's example shows how ongoing professional development is critical even for the very top executives at community colleges. While many community college systems focus on the onboarding of new presidents, professional learning should be a never-ending process. The best institutions recognize this and devote time and resources to the continuing development of their leaders.

"Our search processes encourage candidates to share all the things they know, which is appropriate," King says. "But the reality is, a president—and particularly a first-time CEO—doesn't know everything he needs to know."

A critical form of professional development for presidents and chancellors is the opportunity to network with peers, King says.

"Once someone becomes a CEO, they really no longer have any peers at the college," he notes. "Having an opportunity to interact with others who are in a similar position is very important, so there is a chance to share ideas and bounce certain situations off of other presidents or chancellors to get their insights."

The Los Rios Board of Trustees builds opportunities for King to travel and learn from colleagues at other institutions into the district's budget. "I have been fortunate my whole career to have governing boards appreciate the need for professional development for the president or chancellor," he said. "And I think that's a mistake that some boards make: They assume that once they hire a president, that person is beyond the need for professional development. Really, the opposite is true."

LEARNING FROM COLLEAGUES

The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) offers yearly Leadership Academies for aspiring college leaders



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Brian King (right), chancellor of the Los Rios Community College District, says he is still learning on the job.

and a thorough onboarding process for new presidents. For instance, first-year presidents are assigned to an executive coach—such as a former college president, or the CEO of a business—who helps them develop their leadership skills. But the state also focuses on the continuing development of its sitting college presidents, says Abigail Stonerock, director of faculty development in the VCCS Office of Professional Development.

Many of these activities are structured around opportunities to learn from colleagues. For instance, Virginia's 23 community college presidents gather in Richmond several times a year for an Advisory Council of Presidents meeting. Much of this time is spent discussing policy issues, Stonerock says, but a recent meeting included a workshop on solving enrollment challenges.

"The presidents had a guided discussion on what they are doing to increase enrollment at their institutions," she says. "It was a chance for them to benchmark against each other and learn from each other in a non-pressure situation."

Teaching courses in the state's Leadership Academies for emerging college leaders also sharpens the skills of community college presidents. As a professional development coordinator for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Stonerock helped roll out a leadership academy modeled after best practices from companies such as Boeing, Dell and Procter & Gamble. One of the key differentiators of these high-quality leadership programs from the private sector, she says, was that senior-level executives actually taught the leadership courses—a practice she has replicated in Virginia's academies.

"It's a game-changer in terms of the quality of the courses, but also for

the presidents themselves," she says. Stonerock invites community college presidents to teach courses for aspiring leaders on topics such as communicating during a crisis, understanding fundraising and leading change effectively.

Teaching about these topics "keeps them on their toes," she says. "It encourages them to read up on these issues so they are well prepared."

Another VCCS initiative is the Chancellor's Professional Reading List. Each college president was asked to pick two books that have had a profound impact on them: one on leadership and one on education. They were asked to write a short review of their choices, explaining how the concepts in those books shaped their approach to leading their institutions.

"It was great professional development for them, because it challenged them to revisit and reflect on the great books that influenced their thinking," Stonerock says.

LOOK OUTSIDE EDUCATION

Gene Couch Jr., president of the 3,000-student Virginia Highlands Community College in the southwestern part of the state, has benefited from the support the state's community college system provides.

"The system takes the idea of professional development very seriously," Couch says. "In state meetings, they will bring in experts from the Aspen Institute to talk about best practices in high-performing institutions. They make sure we have access to the latest and greatest practices from across the country."

Teaching in the state's Leadership Academies has been useful as well. "It has helped me consolidate my beliefs about what it takes to be a successful leader," he says. And he has taken some of the ideas he has heard in meetings with colleagues and applied

FINDING THE TIME FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Even college presidents need opportunities for learning, but finding the time can be hard. Here's how some presidents have managed.

Take advantage of down time.

"I have tried to use my captured time well," says Gene Couch, president of Virginia Highlands Community College. For example, Couch listens to books on tape during the five-hour drive to Richmond every other month for his state's Advisory Council of Presidents meetings.

Get it on your calendar. It's important for college presidents to commit to professional development opportunities and then build their schedule around these events. "If we don't get it on the calendar, it won't happen," says Sharon Pierce, president of Minneapolis Community and Technical College.

Be accommodating. "Be flexible about how professional development happens," Pierce advises. "If I'm busy, sometimes I'll just connect with my mentor on the phone for 15 minutes. Or, we'll plan to arrive at a state meeting a half hour early so we can talk beforehand."



Gene Couch Jr. was inaugurated as the sixth president of Virginia Highlands Community College in 2015.

them at his own college, such as how to implement pathways to a four-year college or a career successfully.

But Couch also looks outside the education sphere for inspiration. For instance, he sits on the board of directors for a regional health care network. "Seeing how they operate their institutions has been really helpful," he observes.

Couch also subscribes to Leadercast, an online platform that streams talks and presentations geared toward leadership development. "It doesn't matter

where you find good ideas," he says. "They are still good ideas."

TAPPING A VAST KNOWLEDGE BASE

Minnesota is another state that supports its community college leaders with opportunities for ongoing development.

The Minnesota State system includes 30 community and technical colleges serving nearly 175,000 students for credit and an additional 107,000 non-credit students. "The scale of our system creates a powerful knowledge

base among our leadership that we make sure is available to all our presidents to maximize their performance and that of their colleges," said Doug Anderson, director of communications for Minnesota State.

Like Virginia, Minnesota offers robust professional development to incoming college presidents, including mentoring and executive coaching. Minnesota also has created a Chancellor's Book Club of its own that serves to build a common knowledge base among presidents, and the state's college presidents convene in monthly Leadership Council meetings that give them a chance to network and learn from each other in both small and large group settings.

Sharon Pierce became president of Minneapolis Community and Technical College last July. Before that, she was the chief academic officer at Howard Community College in Maryland. Having both a mentor and an executive coach has been instrumental in her first-year development on the job, she said.

"One of the things that attracted me to Minnesota State was that not only did they have an extensive onboarding process, but also executive coaching for new presidents," she says. "That's a significant investment that I find to be very valuable."

Pierce's mentor is Joyce Ester, who has been president of Normandale Community College in Bloomington since 2014. "I talk with her at least once a month," Pierce says. "I think it's important to have another president to talk with and calibrate against. I can ask her: Am I interpreting this situation correctly?"

The identity of the executive coach remains confidential. "I develop professional goals that we work on together, outside of the formal organizational structure," Pierce says. One of the goals she came up with is to enhance her ability to build a high-performance

“One of the things that attracted me to Minnesota State was that not only did they have an extensive onboarding process, but also executive coaching for new presidents.”

SHARON PIERCE, *president, Minneapolis Community and Technical College*

team. The executive coach “brings resources, insights and suggestions to help me accomplish that,” she notes.

During the executive coaching process, no progress reports are shared with the chancellor, Anderson says—making this a safe space for professional development. “At the end of the second year of a new presidency,” he says, “the president has the opportunity to receive 360-degree feedback administered by the leadership coach, which allows the president to understand how they are perceived, where they have development opportunities and what they are doing well.”

BE DISCIPLINED

Making the time for professional development can be challenging for college presidents, who have many demands on their schedules.

“Obviously, it’s very difficult for CEOs to be away from their institutions, and that’s one barrier that I think keeps some of my peers from taking part in professional development,” King says. “But the reality is, it’s time well spent. And in an era of technology, you can keep very well connected with what’s going on at home while taking advantage of opportunities that involve travel.”

Presidents and chancellors, he says, “have to be disciplined to schedule professional development time, and then honor that scheduling commitment even when the whirlwind of daily activities makes it tempting to cancel.”

For board members, King has this advice: “Hiring a new president or chancellor is just the beginning. No person you hire has every skill set they need to improve. So, building in opportunities for professional development—certainly in the first year, but really throughout the career of the president or chancellor—is one of the best investments a board can make.”

Couch likened professional development to exercise. “We’re all busy, but

we try to carve out time to exercise, because we know it’s important—and ultimately it will help us lead a better and healthier life. I look at professional development the same way.”

He concludes: “It’s an investment not just in yourself, but in your institution. I grew up on a farm, and there’s an old saying: ‘If you’re green, you’re growing. If you’re ripe, you’re rotting.’ I like to think I’m still growing.” ■

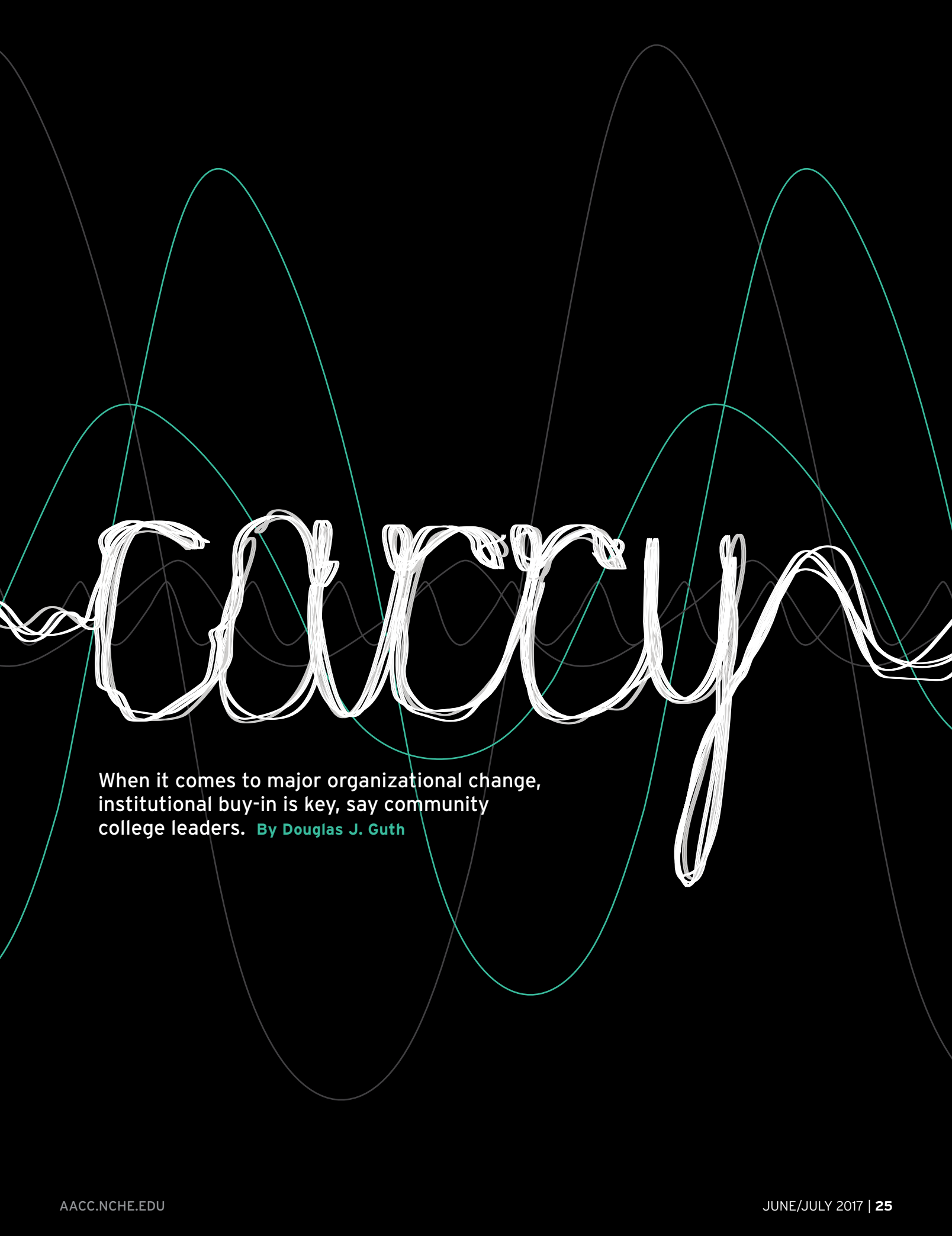
Dennis Pierce is an education writer based in Boston.



Minneapolis Community and Technical College President Sharon Pierce says having both a mentor and executive coach have been critical to her development.



voices



When it comes to major organizational change, institutional buy-in is key, say community college leaders. **By Douglas J. Guth**



Karla Leach, president of Western Wyoming Community College, works with staff to implement guided pathways at the college.



community college's success hinges in large part on the effectiveness of its teaching faculty, no more so than in times of major organizational change. However, any large-scale foundational shift requires institutional buy-in, with the onus on leadership

to create an environment where everyone is working together toward the same endpoint.

Administration-backed faculty engagement has been the modus operandi for colleges selected by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) to participate in its Pathways Project. The initiative, funded through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, implements a model for guiding learners on a course of study that keeps them on track for timely degree completion.

College presidents may be leading the top-down charge to implement Pathways, but it's faculty who must enact day-to-day change in the classroom, program proponents say. With that in mind, administrators at Western Wyoming Community College (WWCC) and other Pathways colleges

are getting their staff directly involved in an ever-evolving transformation process.

"This is a faculty-to-faculty change, and we now have a strong faculty group that acts as our core Pathways team," says WWCC President Karla Leach. "And let's be honest: People would rather listen to their peers than they would administrators, so we just went ahead with it."

INSTALLING A STREAMLINED APPROACH

WWCC and the other selected colleges received funding from a three-year, \$5.2 million grant as the first participants in the Pathways initiative, which launched in 2015. The project is designed to streamline programs of study with a student's employment or educational goals. Through the guided pathways approach, learners are encouraged by their advisers to select at least a general area of study, if not a specific discipline.

Many two-year science degrees, for example, have similar course requirements, so participants on a science track will have a clearer idea of what courses they must take to complete their degree, even if they're not certain of what discipline they

prefer. Ideally, this approach will deter students from taking too many general-interest course credits that may not move them closer to a finished degree.

WWCC, which offers certificates and two-year degrees in the oil, gas and mining industries along with other disciplines, had students in its old academic model graduating with a cumbersome 80 credit hours through programs that only required 64 credit hours to complete.

"Other people weren't graduating at all because we didn't have courses structured for them in a logical order," Leach says. "Or we didn't have those credits offered when students needed them. We had to be more strategic."

Pathways gives WWCC's 3,500 students a program map they can navigate online or with the aid of an adviser. The college then assists its young charges in identifying a large program group called a meta-major, with the aim of getting students into more focused academic areas somewhere down the line.

"If a student gets into a preferred program of study earlier in their career, they're less likely to get lost," Leach says. "We're helping them find efficiency in their path."

Coming from a "cafeteria" model of education that maximized choice via a dizzying array of courses and credential options, WWCC was challenged to integrate a new, institution-wide approach that not only simplified student decision-making, but engaged faculty in the transition as well.

LEND THEM YOUR EARS

To begin, Leach and her administrative team put together a committee that placed faculty in leadership roles. Five or six faculty members were assigned specific instructional areas, acting as Pathways cheerleaders for staff still on the fence.



Image Credit: Skagit Valley College

Skagit Valley College President Thomas Keegan says implementing Pathways helps meet students where they are.

"We did the best we could to defuse any worries," Leach says. "We got good momentum and people came to understand the value of the program. Just getting champions in each area who had the ear of their colleagues was helpful."

As a smaller institution—WWCC employs 81 faculty members—administrators understood the need for staff ownership in this vital endeavor.

"Change like this may be harder for a smaller school, because the work is more personal and intimate," Leach says. "I needed as many people as I could to become interested."

Rocky Barney, associate professor of WWCC's chemistry department and the college's math/science division chair, says

"THERE'S BEEN ANXIETY OVER THE SPEED AT WHICH WE'RE MOVING, AND SOME FACULTY DON'T WANT TO LOSE THE ABILITY TO TEACH A BREADTH OF COURSES."

THOMAS KEEGAN, president, Skagit Valley College

Some faculty were concerned the initiative would limit student choice, while others voiced their worries about low student turnout for specialized programs created through Pathways.

WWCC leadership presented five years of enrollment data to a broad cross section of faculty, allowing them to select courses best suited to their various instructional areas. Staff members worried about choice, meanwhile, saw how course catalogs containing hundreds of classes and dozens of programs could overwhelm students. Many learners have difficulty determining the classes they need to complete a degree or to transfer to a four-year college, a problem that Pathways aims to eliminate.

bringing in faculty on the ground floor was key in establishing dialogue and eventual buy-in with the Pathways process.

As supervisor for the math and science faculty teams, Barney facilitates program maps. Such hands-on involvement has allowed him and his colleagues to better appreciate the initiative's potential outcomes.

"I'm able to coordinate with faculty regarding how students benefit from a clearer path," Barney says. "The data we were given showed other institutions having success with Pathways. Seeing the data was critical for me in getting behind the project and convincing other faculty."



Image Credit: Zane State College

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Angela Hendershot (center), adjunct faculty at Zane State College, with students. Hendershot and other ZSC faculty are helping to implement Pathways.

WWCC staff was wary of eliminating the courses they enjoyed teaching, but quickly recognized the benefits of trimming the fat from the curriculum, Barney notes.

"We took several programs and whittled them down," he says. "Biology now has three programs instead of five or six. Striking that compromise was significant to the buy-in for Pathways. It was difficult with lots of emotions involved, but those emotions stemmed from wanting what's best for our students."

MEETING STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

Skagit Valley College (SVC), a two-year school serving Skagit, Island and San Juan counties in northwest Washington state, has fully embedded Pathways into its culture since procuring the program grant.

"A college must meet students where they are to provide them the tools to succeed," SVC President Thomas Keegan says. "The Pathways program is part of who we are now."

That's not to say the changeover was easy. Starting in 2012, SVC spent 10 months analyzing its mission, values and core themes to establish how a Pathways model would fit. The college shared plan details with its six campuses and presented enrollment data during monthly board meetings hosted by Keegan. Progression toward college-level English and math was of particular importance as SVC's version of the program came into shape.

Before installing the initiative, SVC looked at how students progressed through degrees, with a goal of finding achievement gaps among Latinos, women and other under-served populations.

Teaching personnel are classifying meta-majors and mapping out degree paths, while simultaneously re-organizing instructional infrastructure with help from student services.

"The most important thing was everyone having access, the opportunity to ask questions and even shape measures as they were adjusted over time," Keegan says. "All Pathways practices had to be grounded in our institutional culture."

Open-forum board meetings and quarterly faculty get-togethers further bolster staff commitment to change, notes Keegan. SVC leaders even received input from students on the college's governance committee.

"There's been anxiety over the speed at which we're moving, and some faculty don't want to lose the ability to teach a breadth of courses," Keegan says. "But the faculty themselves are able to influence what the course schedule is going to look like. They're constantly going to be seeking perfection in terms of student achievement."

A FULL PERSPECTIVE

Community colleges across the nation are facing daunting challenges when it comes to completion. According to a 2014 report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, less than four in 10 community college learners have earned a degree six years after enrolling; at urban colleges, the rate is lower.

Zane State College (ZSC) in Zanesville, Ohio, wants to increase its completion rate by 4 percent over the next calendar

year, and is harnessing a Pathways foundation to reach that destination, President Chad Brown says.

Serving 3,500 students, many of them from rural areas in southeast Ohio, ZSC re-constituted about 40 majors into seven meta-majors under Pathways. Student intake, advising and a middle-skills science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) program have also incorporated the model in their day-to-day work.

Utilizing a Loss/Momentum Framework (LMF) to track student interaction with the college, officials view Pathways as an "onramp" to move students from high school to transfer institutions or the workforce.

"Connection, completion and continued enrollment is the goal," Brown says. "Many students won't stick with what they start, so our idea was to maximize transferability within majors. What we're doing reframes the conversation on campus around what success means."

Administration engaged faculty early on, pulling them together to organize meta-majors at the same time ZSC was converting its schedule from quarters to semesters. Associate professor Marcie Moore attended a Pathways Project Institute to learn how she could make such fundamental changes within her department. Sessions focused on design principles, data review and project implementation strategies. Upon her return, Moore presented her findings to colleagues during professional development meetings.

Student Success Center, ideally adding another layer to the college's Pathways plans, Brown says.

"Before this, we were operating in silos," he says. "What we're doing with Pathways represents a fundamental transition for the institution. Success Center personnel will help students with life challenges, while faculty can be more of an academic partner and mentor."

Faculty is maintaining its investment in curriculum changes, using a model where the provost has final authority, adds Brown.

"Our staff is going to lead the process and keep the college moving forward," he says.

STAYING ON THE PATH

Participating colleges continue to engage staff as they further scale up their unique Pathways models. Leach of Western Wyoming Community College says forthcoming town hall meetings will allow faculty to give formal input.

"I'm encouraging people to stop me in the halls to talk, too," Leach says. "I hope that when we hear some worries that are normal and healthy, we'll call a meeting to answer those questions."

SVC will refine its programming via staff collaboration and regular review of data, Keegan says.

Looking ahead, one of the college's objectives is to integrate Pathways into its relationship with K-12 and baccalaureate institute partners. Sharing a strong, common vision across



"WE'RE MAKING SURE THESE VOICES ARE HEARD. WE'RE NOT MAKING DECISIONS THAT WILL AFFECT OTHERS WITHOUT FIRST GETTING THEIR INPUT."

MARCIE MOORE, *associate professor, Zane State College*

"We put the seed in and hit the ground running," Moore says. "President (Brown) and I expected resistance to the concept, but we really didn't get that. We focused on research and gave faculty information in pieces so they weren't overwhelmed. They thought about it logically and said this makes sense for us."

A committee comprised of general education, technical and programmatic faculty continually review curriculum changes and offer suggestions that are then sent to an academic affairs team.

"There's perspective coming from all sides of the academic house," Moore says. "We're making sure these voices are heard. We're not making decisions that will affect others without first getting their input."

Beginning this fall, ZSC learners will build their schedules, plan future careers and get financial advice at a one-stop

campus will only benefit what otherwise would be a difficult transformation process, Keegan says.

"The vision itself is critical, because it pulls a diverse college community around a focused goal," he says. "Pathways is a strategy that's supportive of that vision."

Keegan is pleased to join other community colleges on what he believes is a long-term path to success for his students. Staying on the straight and narrow means emphasizing a participatory work environment for faculty and staff.

"We already have a series of guiding principles like openness, honesty and collaboration," Keegan says. "There's a high expectation that we work with each other in a way that's consistent with those principles." ■

Douglas J. Guth is a writer based in Ohio.

Celebrating America's North Star

A look back at the 97th Annual AACC Convention
in New Orleans.





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1. AACC President and CEO Walter Bumphus discusses AACC's Pathways Project.
2. Former second lady and College Promise advocate Jill Biden accepts the AACC Truman Award on behalf of the Obama Administration.
3. Wes Moore speaks at the opening session.
4. Convention participants get information about implementing guided pathways.
5. Speaker Robin Sharma gives leadership advice at the Hail & Farewell Luncheon.
6. AACC Board meeting.
7. Convention attendees celebrate after the Awards of Excellence.
8. AACC Board Chair Daniel Phelan honors retiring community college CEOs.
9. Emad Rahim accepts the Outstanding Alumni Award. He was one of five recipients.
10. Jenna Bush Hager closes the AACC convention.



N.Y. legislators approve tuition-free program

New York's new scholarship program is aimed at helping middle class families afford college. With the Excelsior Scholarship, state college or university tuition is covered for in-state students whose families earn \$125,000 or less. The "last-dollar" program is unique because it covers four-year tuition, while most tuition-free programs, such as the Tennessee Promise, cover tuition at two-year colleges.

When Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the legislation enacting the scholarship in April, he said college "is not a luxury, it is a necessity."

Hillary Clinton attended the signing. "Paying for college should not defer or destroy dreams," she said during her remarks.

There is a catch with the New York program, though: After graduation, students must remain in the state for as many years as they received the benefit. If they move out-of-state before then, they must pay back the scholarship.

Photo Credit: PeopleImages/Stock



Expanding Student Success Centers

Wisconsin will become the 14th state to implement a Student Success Center. The Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) received a \$1.3-million, three-year grant from Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation & Affiliates to implement the center. The WTCS Student Success Center will build a cohesive approach to policy advocacy across the state's community colleges, ensuring that resources are spent efficiently and reforms help as many students as possible earn postsecondary credentials. Student outcomes data will be analyzed and shared, and a set of common policy goals will be developed, prioritizing completion for all students.

Jobs for the Future will provide technical assistance. Other state and local partners will be engaged in this effort, including local K-12 and workforce and economic development organizations.

Progress for AACC Pathways Colleges

The 30 colleges participating in the American Association of Community Colleges' (AACC) Pathways Project have committed to redesigning their programs and support services by fall 2018 using the guided pathways model. The Community College Research Center (CCRC), part of the Teachers College at Columbia University, issued a report looking at the progress of these colleges in mapping pathways to student end goals, helping students choose and enter a program pathway, keeping students on their path and ensuring that students are learning. Between the beginning and end of 2016, Pathways colleges made progress in several areas, including clearly mapping programs, offering supports to underprepared students, monitoring students' progress and clearly defining learning outcomes.

San Jacinto College (Texas) is redesigning its new student orientation to focus on helping students choose a program. Florida's St. Petersburg College lists all credential options for its "career and academic communities" online, and includes maps—or pathways—for each program. The maps have transfer plans for bachelor's programs offered by partner universities. And faculty at Lansing Community College in Michigan have established three math pathways. They've also outlined the content of each pathway and how it aligns with career- and transfer-oriented fields.

CCRC's report includes several more examples of progress at Pathways colleges. Access the report here: bit.ly/2o7ZHbh.



Challenges face e-learning programs

Online learning has greatly improved access to education, but there are still challenges. This is according to survey results published in the Instructional Technology Council's (ITC) Annual National eLearning Report. Among the challenges facing e-learning programs are student readiness, faculty training, quality course design and student completion. For e-learning administrators, issues occur with addressing accessibility and universal design. In fact, for 2016, only 37 percent of respondents were confident they were either completely or mostly compliant. Another issue for administrators: getting the support staff needed for training and technical assistance.

Access the full report here: bit.ly/2pTKpr7. ITC is an affiliate council of AACC.

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Sharing your message

by Richard Soria

Technology will be the death of me, I once said. In fact, my then 12-year-old niece tried to get her uncle on SnapChat. That was six years ago and I still have not SnapChatted. (That's a word, right?) But today, students are connected to social media more than ever and are not engaged with the traditional types of communication, like letters or emails with no creative content.

At the last meeting of the American Association of Community Colleges' Commission on Communications and Marketing in November, we discussed branding and reaching today's student. I reflected on those meetings and determined to make some changes on how my office communicates with alumni, current and prospective Miami Dade College (MDC) Wolfson students.

SHARE YOUR STORY

The Harvard Business Review discovered that, "in order to motivate a desire to help others, a story must first sustain attention—a scarce resource in the brain—by developing tension during the narrative. If the story is able to create that tension then it is likely that attentive viewers/listeners will come to share the emotions of the characters in

it, and after it ends, likely to continue mimicking the feelings and behaviors of those characters."

We created a team charged with outlining a plan. We brought together persons in the media services department and technology and engineering, and faculty, staff and students. You will be amazed to learn what students share works for them as a "consumer." And, part of the plan included telling our story.

Who better to tell the MDC story but our alumni? We are proud to have one of the largest alumni groups in the nation with more than 2 million MDC graduates. Our alumni programs provide a great opportunity to connect with fellow alums, share memories and maintain strong ties with their alma mater. Every day, we highlight an alum through Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts.

We took engaging alumni a step further. We developed an application where current students and alumni come together. In this application, alumni can post job and internship openings and offer to serve as mentors. Current students are the audience. Alumni want to give back to their alma mater, and they can do that by supporting the current

student body. In fact, we've found this connection has improved our philanthropic efforts, too.

VIDEO MESSAGING AND MARKETING

This past August was my first convocation. In years past, faculty and staff were sent invitations to their home. I thought it would be fun to email the campus team a video invitation. The invitation was about five minutes in length and it touched upon my "firsts" as the campus' newest president. The video was shot over the course of a couple of hours at various places on campus, and the script was energetic and intentional. The data analytics demonstrated that today's faculty and staff want messages in new and creative ways. We've created a YouTube channel where these videos are tagged and archived.

GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

At the end of this past fall's semester, we wanted to get the message out that students could still register for the spring 2017 term. The team thought it would be ideal for current students to be part of the video message. So, with a script in hand, a group of diverse students wearing MDC gear and the media services department worked together to create a video message to students, and applied-but-not-registered students. We posted the video in all our social media outlets. We were able to track the number of hits this video engaged. We experienced an increase in students who applied but did not yet register. We believe this new communication tool had much to do with this increase.

Be open to new ways of communicating with internal and external constituents. When my team suggested to turning to video, for example, I was a bit unsure because of the amount of time it would take, but it was worth it.

The good news is that I have an active Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn accounts, but still have not tackled SnapChat. One step at a time. ■

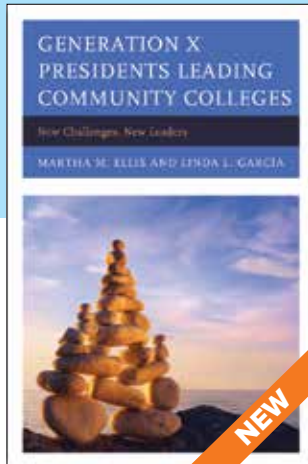
Richard Soria is president of the Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus in Florida.

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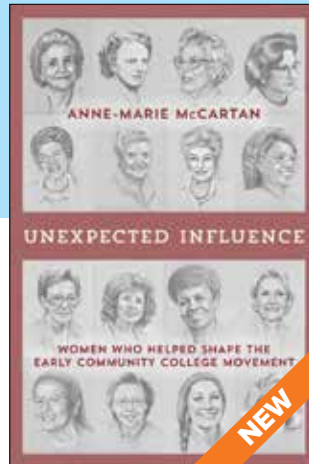
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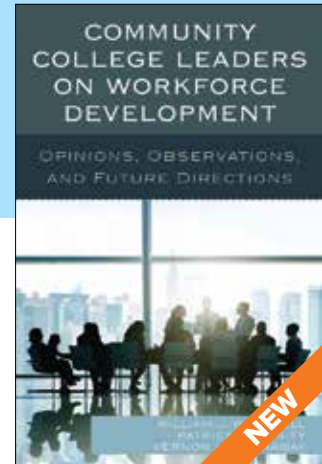
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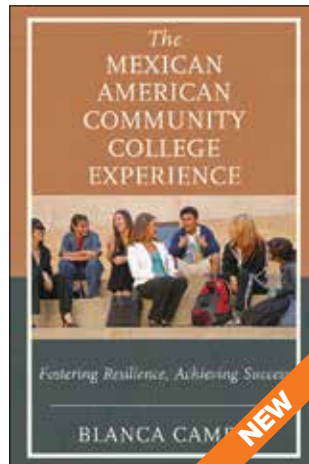
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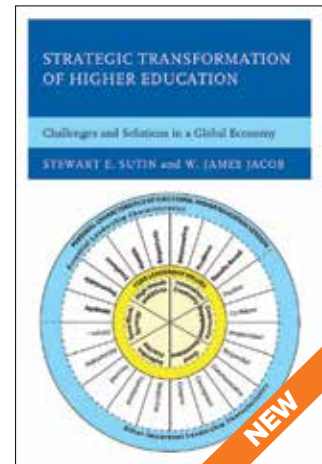
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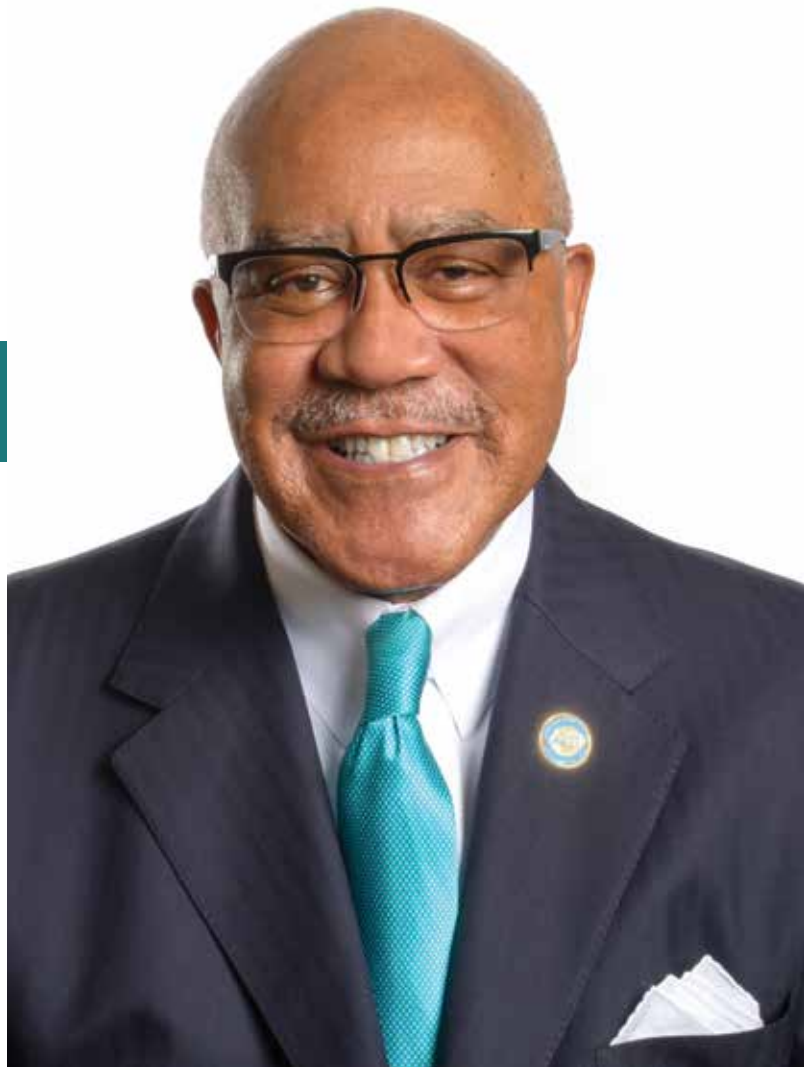


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The next generation of leadership

By Walter G. Bumphus

I hope you were able to join us for the AACC Convention in April. As always, it was a great meeting that provided access to the latest community college trends and information from around the country. You've heard me tout the importance of face-to-face connections, and AACC's convention provided ample opportunity for that. Seeing dear colleagues and friends always recharges my energy and renews my commitment to our shared mission. This year also provided me with the chance to meet new and up-and-coming leaders and I was so pleased to welcome them to AACC.

These new leaders were no surprise. In fact, for many years I have been reporting on the number of leadership transitions within our community colleges and we have all read the many articles on the Baby Boomer generation reaching retirement age. At the AACC Convention there were books for sale and sessions focused on the Generation X leaders. The time has come for the next generation of leadership.

So, how do they prepare to take on these leadership roles? The community college president faces unprecedented internal and external pressures and scrutiny. Budget revenues that fluctuate despite student needs, increased examination from the community and local press, and increased complex regulatory demands from state and federal legislatures are just a few of the challenges we face as college leaders. One of our most important roles, however, is the responsibility that we have to ensure the next generation of leaders is prepared to take up the challenges and succeed.

“Community colleges on the whole have benefitted from the notion that current leaders value and invest in the next generation.”

Without mentoring and leadership development programs, I know that I would not have enjoyed the many opportunities afforded to me throughout my career. One of my most cherished roles is that of mentor and I have never regretted providing leadership development to others. In fact, I think it is incumbent upon each of us to pay it forward and provide mentorship, training, leadership development classes, support of advanced degree attainment, etc.—whatever it takes to build the skill set of a new leader.

One of my proudest accomplishments is seeing the 28 former deans, directors, vice presidents and assistant presidents who have worked for me now as successful presidents and chancellors. I understand that this may require investing both time and money. I have heard many times that shrinking budgets and busy schedules make it difficult to rationalize the investment in professional development—especially if that investment will result in a valued leader leaving your organization to become a college president somewhere else. Your investment will pay off for them but will leave you with a vacant position and fewer resources at your disposal.

I get it. We have all been there. But, we have also been aspiring leaders. We have all benefitted from learning how to be a leader. We may have taken different paths and learned in different ways, but someone invested in us. Community colleges on the whole have benefitted from the notion that current leaders value and invest in the next generation. Leading our community colleges is a complex job that pays off when students achieve their goals. Our students deserve nothing less than leaders who will continue to aspire toward removing barriers to that achievement, and it is up to us to ensure that the legacy of student success is carried into the future. ■

Walter G. Bumphus is president and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges.

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