

CALL TO ACTION

Now Is Our Time to Lead

Everyone is painfully aware that our nation is struggling with the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

We read the distressing headlines that record rising unemployment, escalating food and commodity prices and falling stock prices. We see the heartbreak for working families and our students who, despite all odds, still aspire to achieve great things through the unrivaled education and training that our institutions provide.

College trustees and presidents must act decisively and lead boldly now, not later. The nation's 1,200 community and technical colleges are America's greatest hope for restoring economic stability and creating a brighter future for all Americans.

Though we face immense challenges, trustees and presidents, you must not be deterred from your mission by the growing threat of state budget cuts that threaten the viability of community colleges.

Community colleges serve as economic engines, strengthening the fabric that binds our communities together—jobs.

In these difficult times, each and every ACCT member must educate their local, state, and national business and political leaders so they understand that our institutions—which are within reach of every community in America—are preparing the 21st Century workers who will recreate the vibrant economy that America so desperately needs.

Now more than ever before, we must convince local, state, and federal officials to resist the urge to slash our budgets and instead, invest in community colleges and the aging infrastructure of our institutions in all 50 states.

We also must convince more local, state, and national businesses to follow the lead of Wal-Mart, which has pledged \$2 million to community colleges to educate its future workers, and to invest in large and small ways in our institutions.

We must drive home to all Americans the message that community and technical colleges can play a critical role in our nation's economic recovery.

Together, we can make our case by telling our story:

- More than 12 million Americans from highly diverse backgrounds—almost one-half of all those enrolled in higher education—fill our classrooms to prepare for new jobs that are critical to our nation’s economic future.
- Young people and adults are lifted out of poverty through the most affordable and accessible education offered, enabling them to achieve the American Dream.
- Mid-career workers whose jobs have been wiped out by a changing economy are retrained and receive the tools they need to provide for and create better futures for their families.
- Older workers nearing or in retirement receive new opportunities to work longer or to re-enter the workforce and earn a living long past the age when earlier generations enjoyed a secure retirement.
- Cutting-edge courses prepare skilled workers for bright collar and green collar jobs, designing everything from robots and mechatronics to wind-powered turbines and hybrid-energy automobiles.
- Eighty percent of our nation’s first responders—the firefighters, police, nurses, health technicians and paramedics who protect and serve us when disaster strikes—are trained and hone their skills.
- Economic and workforce development is delivered in a low-cost and efficient way that gives taxpayers a \$3 return for every dollar invested.
- Tax rates are kept low and access to capital high and 6 percent of yearly economic growth—as much as \$34.5 billion in 2006 and 2007—is generated for communities and the nation’s economy.



As we highlight our successes, we must seek support for the challenges we face:

- Enrollment, already growing at a double-digit pace, will swell as the economy worsens.
- More students will put greater pressure on our aging facilities, which by some estimates already require \$100 billion to meet our current challenges.
- Increasing regulation and reporting requirements that redirect scarce dollars away from serving students and community.
- As faculty and administrators retire in record numbers, we must train and recruit an army of qualified teachers, administrators and staff to meet the needs of our growing student population.

Given the many challenges we face, **we must not delay.**

I challenge you to begin as soon as you return home from this Congress and to take every opportunity you have—to speak to Rotary Clubs, your local Chambers of Commerce, newspaper editorial boards, and local businesses, and to return to Washington in February for the National Legislative Summit when Congress convenes—to drive home our message.

For 107 years, our community and technical colleges have served America well, but today these institutions are critical to the creation of the vibrant, 21st Century economy that America so desperately needs now.

Because we now have community and technical colleges, the depths experienced during the Great Depression need not be repeated.

It is time for us to **act.**

It is time for us to **lead.**

America deserves nothing less.

J. Noah Brown
President and Chief Executive Officer

Actions You Can Take

- **Contact your Congressional representative:**

Write, email and call your elected officials and the members of the Community College Caucuses. Go to www.acct.org, click on Advocacy, and then click Community College Caucuses to get member names.

- **Reach out to governors, state legislatures, mayors, county and city councils, as well as educational coordinating boards:**

Each state has its own governing bodies that need to know about the importance of sustaining two-year colleges in our communities.

- **Send a letter through ACCT's Web site:**

You can contact your representative directly through ACCT's Web site. Go to www.acct.org, click on Advocacy, and then click Policy Center and enter your ZIP code. The Policy Center will send your message directly to your representatives.

- **Enlist the support of community groups:**

Contact your newspaper and editorial board and your friends who are members of local Rotary and Lions Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and other community groups. Offer to speak to their upcoming meeting and to discuss how community colleges can help job seekers and their community through these tough economic times.

- **Urge businesses to invest in your college:**

There are a million large and small ways that businesses can support their local community colleges. Wal-Mart is a powerful role model for businesses. Our job is to convince others to follow Wal-Mart's lead.

- **Plan job fairs & career counseling fairs:**

Partner with local merchants, businesses, and schools to show off what community colleges do best by co-hosting job fairs and career counseling session on your campus.

- **Be part of ACCT's 2009 advocacy effort:**

Plan now to return to Washington when Congress reconvenes after the election and help us knock on doors and tell our story.

- **Highlight your success stories:**

Every community college has successful students, alumni and teachers. Promote your stars – students who are breaking barriers, alumni who have become stars or big in business, and great teachers – with your local media and on your college website. And tell ACCT about your success stories and we'll highlight them on our own website under our Success Stories column.