



## Mission Statement

AACC Mission: Building a Nation of Learners by Advancing America's Community Colleges

"In times of change, it is the learners who will inherit the earth, while the learned will find themselves beautifully equipped for a world that no longer exists." -- Eric Hoffer

### Framing the Mission Statement:

In service since 1920, the American Association of Community Colleges has aptly been called the "voice of America's community colleges." The Association represents and advocates for nearly 1,200 associate-degree granting institutions enrolling more than 13 million students—almost half of all U.S. undergraduates.

When community colleges celebrated their centennial year in 2001, the AACC Board of Directors used the opportunity to thoughtfully and strategically reexamine the Association's mission as the primary advocacy organization for this dynamic sector. In rearticulating its mission, the Association sought to energize its operation, engage its stakeholders, set priorities for strategic action, and underscore its commitment to continuously improve advocacy for and service to member colleges and their students.

Completing this "Mission Project" took more than a year, during which the Association actively elicited insights from past and current Boards of Directors, college leaders, Affiliated Councils, AACC staff and other stakeholders. Respondents were asked to identify the critical core factors that give AACC vitality and value. These factors were identified as the Association's ability to:

Provide a national voice and advocacy for the community college mission;

Serve as a national information resource;

Create opportunities for peer networking and interaction at all levels, professional initiatives, dialogue, and community-building;

Facilitate collaboration among AACC staff and stakeholders;

Encourage a shared commitment to the community college movement;

Offer leadership and career development opportunities.

From this vast aggregation of information, the AACC Board created the AACC Mission Statement, a statement of core values, a future vision description, and a recommended set of six strategic action areas. The strategic action areas were further refined in 2006 by the AACC Board of Directors. The Board at that time specified that the mission statement and Strategic Action Areas be reexamined in five years

to ensure that the document remains dynamic in reflecting the vital and evolving role of community colleges to serve students and communities and to strengthen the nation.

Following are the principles, values and priorities guiding the work of the American Association of Community Colleges.

#### Mission Statement:

##### Building a Nation of Learners by Advancing America's Community Colleges

This mission statement captures AACC's commitment to advance the recognition of the role of community colleges in serving society today. By providing advocacy, leadership and service for community colleges, the Association will play a key role in assisting the nation as it passes from the industrial era of the twentieth century to the new knowledge-based society of the twenty-first century.

#### Core Values Statement:

Core values are an organization's essential and enduring tenets. They represent the set of beliefs on which an organization bases all its actions and policies. Whereas the mission states what an organization does and its reason for being, the core values define the vital tenets undergirding how the organization will operate both to accomplish its work and to achieve its vision. These core values provide the touchstones for important judgments and decisions to be made by AACC leadership and staff.

#### Core Values

**Integrity:** AACC places fairness and honesty at the center of all of its policies and operations.

**Excellence:** AACC provides services and support of the highest quality to its member institutions.

**Leadership:** AACC promotes the development of community college leaders at all levels and creates opportunities for leadership among its staff.

**Learning:** AACC functions as a learning organization, continuously adapting and improving its services for learning in the field and ensuring that staff have the flexibility to meet a wide variety of member needs.

**Diversity:** AACC affirms that diversity is crucial to a democratic society, that diversity enriches the educational experience, and that diversity respects and celebrates differences among institutions and individuals alike.

Commitment: AACC advances the community college mission and the success of the students at its member colleges through the dedication of its leadership and staff.

Connectedness: AACC fosters a sense of community and responsiveness that supports the ability of its members to network locally, nationally, and internationally, to learn from each other, and to leverage their resources for action.

#### Vision for AACC's Future:

A vision statement must clearly and concretely describe what an organization will look like in the future when it is operating at its best. Together with the mission and core values, the vision provides a compelling scenario of how the organization will evolve. The key ingredients in an individual's ability to participate productively in society and in the economy are learning and the capabilities one develops as a result of learning. In serving 12 million students today and more in the future, community colleges play an essential role in providing access to learning in America. AACC will provide the preeminent leadership to support and advance community colleges in this mission.

#### Vision of AACC's Future

AACC will be a bold leader in creating a nation where all have access to the learning needed to participate productively in their communities and in the economy. Through AACC's leadership, community colleges will increasingly be recognized as the gateway to the American dream—the learning resource needed to sustain America's economic viability and productivity.

AACC will pursue this vision by:

- a) Expanding its role as the nation's primary voice for guaranteeing access to and accountability for higher learning
- b) Influencing federal policy decisions relevant to higher learning as well as media coverage that promotes awareness and understanding of the critical factors of student success
- c) Promoting community colleges as the premier workforce development providers in America and influencing government and corporate funding policies to support the colleges in this key role
- d) Fostering partnerships with P-12 schools, other higher education institutions, minority-serving institutions, corporate learning centers, and businesses that will insure that all students have optimal learning opportunities to meet their goals efficiently and effectively

e) Developing community college leaders at all levels who understand and share a deep commitment to the community college mission and core values

f) Forging community development and renewal by working to ensure access to lifelong learning to benefit individuals, communities, and society in general

g) Providing the best and most accessible information to the media, faculty, researchers, policymakers, and the public regarding the community college mission, student learning, trends shaping education, emerging jobs and exemplary programs

h) Supporting community colleges to prepare learners to be effective in a global society

i) Empowering community colleges to grow as a global force for learning by disseminating information and promoting international partnerships between American community colleges and countries seeking collaborative opportunities.

j) Creating a deeper and broader sense of connectedness among community colleges through technology

k) Promoting public recognition of the value of community colleges and the opportunities they provide

In a world where more and more critical decisions demand sound information, productive actions require the best resources, and mass communication demands articulate spokespersons, AACC will be an agile, aggressive leader promoting better understanding of community colleges as essential resources for the nation's vitality.

Pursuing this vision will require collaborations with other community college stakeholders, with university-based community college programs, as well as with other educational associations. Specific initiatives will be based on identified need and the availability of resources. Given the sizeable turnover that is occurring in community college leadership, potential initiatives include new opportunities for professional development in leadership for faculty and staff as well as the expansion of community college CEO development. With technology available that can provide for rapid sharing of information, the Association will pursue ways to accelerate access to resources on best practices in creating learning opportunities.

Given the transition from an industrial economy to one where knowledge and skill sets are the crucial determinants of career achievement, the Association should explore potential partnerships for monitoring and distributing information about the impact of social, technological, and economic trends on college curricula.

Engaging with its member institutions in new ways to leverage new opportunities, AACC will deepen relations built on trust and confidence while also challenging community colleges to grow and develop even greater competence in areas such as learning accountability, diversity, and globalization.

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