Dear Board Members:

I am writing from Phoenix, where I am attending the annual American Council on Education (ACE) meeting along with Board Chair Mary Spilde, Past Chair Keith Miller, and Board members Marie Gnage and Anna Solley. Eduardo Padrón, President of Miami Dade College, presented the Robert H. Atwell Lecture Sunday evening. Eduardo was also elected as Vice Chair of the ACE Board of Directors. In her keynote address, Hilary Pennington, Director of US Education, Postsecondary Success, and Special Initiatives at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, challenged the audience to improve college completion rates. She mentioned the Achieving the Dream Initiative, our current work on the Voluntary Framework of Accountability, and the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) program that was started by AACC in the 1970s. Her comments were closely aligned with our values and our work at AACC.

**Membership Update.** I am very pleased to report that your efforts are paying off—and I appreciate all that you are doing. As of Monday, March 8, we have received $5,267,825 in dues from 982 colleges or 101% of our budget projection. Since we budgeted conservatively, I am hoping that we will continue to increase our 2010 membership numbers. I sincerely thank each of you for your efforts to convince your colleague CEOs to stay with us during this challenging but important time.

**Convention.** We have a powerful lineup of speakers for the 2010 convention (see [http://www.aacc.nche.edu/newsevents/Events/convention2/Pages/speakers.aspx](http://www.aacc.nche.edu/newsevents/Events/convention2/Pages/speakers.aspx)), featuring The Honorable Carlos Gutierrez, Former CEO and Chairman of the Board of the Kellogg Company and Former US Secretary of Commerce; The Honorable Marc Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League and Past Mayor of New Orleans; The Honorable Martha Kanter, US Under Secretary of Education; The Honorable Jane Oates, Assistant Secretary for the Employment Training Agency at the US Department of Labor; and Melinda French Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Many of the presentations are focused on providing practical information on federal and foundation funding support for community colleges and for the goals of improving college access and completion.

Given the effects of the current economy, many of your colleague community college leaders may well be weighing whether they should come to Seattle to be with us. Please take the time to contact the CEOs in your state or region to encourage them to attend along with their leadership teams for what promises to be a strong meeting that is focused on useful and practical topics.

**SAFRA/AGI.** Monday’s Inside Higher Education provided a good overview of the political landscape that is holding up the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act
(SAFRA) and how it has been tied to the Health Care issue. See http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/03/08/safra. While the Administration remains committed to SAFRA and the American Graduation Initiative (AGI) that it would fund, health care is just a bigger political issue. I appreciate all you are doing to make your US Senators and your local communities aware of the importance of AGI.

Nursing. On Monday, February 22, I provided brief testimony on the importance of Associate Degree Nursing at the Institute of Medicine (IOM) hearing in Houston. Although I am not sure what the recommendations of the Committee will be, I felt that we represented our positions well through a number of presenters.

On Thursday, March 4, I convened a meeting in conjunction with Tony Bryk, President of the Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching, to follow up on the recent Carnegie Foundation book on nursing. I was very pleased by this meeting as all sides agreed to put aside the debate over entry into nursing practice and to focus instead on the education progression of nurses, particularly to the MSN degree. The National Organization of Associate Degree Nursing, the National League for Nursing, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing agreed to work together to develop next steps. The lead author of the Carnegie publication, Patricia Benner, was in attendance and agreed to write a piece for the Community College Times to shift the issue from entry into practice to progression. Noah Brown, President of ACCT, was in attendance for the full meeting as was Roxanne Fulcher from AACC.

Other Meetings and Presentations of Note.

- On Monday, February 15, a presentation on national community college issues to the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin.
- On Wednesday, February 17, a presentation from Washington, DC, to the Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology Leadership Program.
- On Thursday, February 18, a lunch meeting with Noah Brown regarding AACC and AACC coordination.
- On Friday, February 19, a panel presentation at a Forum at the National Press Club sponsored by the Committee for Economic Development—in reaction to Peter Smith’s new book, Harnessing America’s Wasted Talent.
- On Saturday, February 20, a meeting of the Advisory Committee for the State Department-funded Community College Initiative in Houston, TX.
- On Saturday, February 20, signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for future cooperation between AACC and TAFE Directors Australia in Houston, TX.
- On Sunday, February 21, a Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Community Colleges for International Development (CCID), an affiliate of AACC, in Houston, TX.
- On Tuesday, February 23, a meeting with Frank Chong, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Community Colleges at the US Department of Education.
- On Wednesday, February 24, from Washington, DC, a teleconference connection to the Steering Committee for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching meeting on Statistics and Mathematics Pathways.

[Type text]
• On Thursday, February 25, a meeting with Tom Snyder and Jeff Terp from Ivy Tech Community College on federal advocacy.
• On Monday, March 1, a meeting of the VFA Partners and staff.
• On Tuesday, March 2, with Mary Heiss, a meeting with Denis Udall, Program Officer for the Hewlett Foundation, and Linda Collins Director of the Career Ladders Initiative.
• On Tuesday, March 2, a meeting of the Secretariat on Higher Education Philanthropy.
• On Tuesday, March 2, a meeting of the Big Six on federal issues.
• On Wednesday, March 3, a welcome presentation to the attendees of the AACC/ETS/CAEL conference on Addressing Achievement Gaps in Adult Education at the National Press Club.
• On Thursday, March 4, a meeting with Andree Lewis and Steve Pappas from the US Department of Education on rebuilding the educational infrastructure of Haiti.
• On Saturday, March 6, the ACE Board meeting in Phoenix, AZ.

Until next time, best wishes.

George