
CHAPTER 4

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT AND VISIBILITY

DAVID R. PIERCE
1991–2000



Major Accomplishments of the Pierce Years

- The association overcame financial challenges and initiated an investment portfolio to provide an ongoing source of revenue.
- AACC's commissions were expanded and restructured to enhance member engagement.
- AACC's stature grew.
- Connections with federal agencies were strengthened, and federal legislation in support of community colleges was fostered.
- Corporate and philanthropic support to AACC increased.
- The importance of technology was elevated in community colleges.
- AACC expanded to the international arena, and communications were established with countries around the world.
- The association's name was changed to provide a stronger and consistent image of community colleges.
- *The Knowledge Net*, the culmination of the New Expeditions Initiative (a joint project of AACC and the Association of Community College Trustees) was published; the report presented a series of recommendations on the role of the community college in making community, learner, and college connections.
- The Council on Higher Education Accreditation was created through coordination of AACC and the other Big Six higher education associations.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

POSITIONS HELD

1991–2000	President and CEO, AACC
1990–1991	Chancellor, Virginia Community College System
1980–1990	Executive Director, Illinois Community College Board
1970–1980	Superintendent/President, North Iowa Area Community College
1967–1970	Dean of Instruction, Waubensee Community College
1966–1967	Chairman, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, Golden West College
1965–1966	Supervisor, Mathematics Student Teaching, Purdue University
1962–1965	Instructor, Mathematics, Orange Coast College

EDUCATION

- PhD, mathematics education, Purdue University
- MS, mathematics, Purdue University
- MA, education, California State University at Long Beach
- BA, mathematics, California State University at Long Beach
- AA, mathematics, Fullerton College, California

HONORS

- B. Lamar Johnson Leadership Award, League for Innovation in the Community College
- Leadership Award, AACC
- Meritorious Service Award, Illinois Community College Trustees Association
- National Person of the Year, National Council on Community Services and Continuing Education
- Outstanding Alumni Award, AACC
- Outstanding Alumnus Award, California Community College League
- Outstanding Alumnus Award, Fullerton College
- Outstanding Contribution to Higher Education Award, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
- Outstanding Illinois Citizen Award, College of Lake County

During my tenure at AACC I was guided by the vision that community colleges should be the centerpiece institutions of the communities they serve. I was further guided by the belief that to achieve this end, community colleges needed to be as strong politically and functionally as possible.

—David R. Pierce (personal communication, 2011)

The AACC Board of Directors considered more than 100 people to succeed Dale Parnell as president and CEO. On April 12, 1991, the board selected David R. Pierce. Pierce's credentials fit the criteria that the AACC Board of Directors had identified as highly desirable—a broad educational and experiential background. Having been in leadership roles in the educational systems in California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and Virginia, Pierce had a broad, national perspective. He had been a state community college director in two states: Illinois and Virginia. Pierce possessed other strengths that were fundamentally important to the AACC leadership position—communication skills, vision, a gift for strategic planning, political skills, a high energy level, enthusiasm for the cause, high ethical standards, empathy, decision-making ability, and creativity.

Before arriving at AACC, Pierce had accumulated 30 years of high school and community college experience (see “Career Highlights,” facing page). He had taught high school and college mathematics and subsequently served as a department chair, dean (involved in the founding of Waubonsee Community College), president, and, finally, chancellor of a major community college system before assuming the presidency at AACC. In addition, he served as executive director of the Illinois College Board and was a member of the AACC board for 3 years during Dale Parnell's tenure as AACC president and CEO. Like Gleazer, he was a community college graduate before going on to earn higher degrees. He was duly honored as one of AACC's outstanding alumni at the 2000 convention in Washington, DC.

STABILIZING AACC'S FINANCES AND STAFFING

Upon his arrival at AACC, Pierce first had to deal with the association's financial challenges. The budget simply was not adequate to support the services

expected by the members. He was able to put things in order through a combination of difficult personnel and benefit reductions, office space reductions and, eventually, a dues increase that was supported by 76% of the membership. Eventually, Pierce was able to establish an investment portfolio through the use of indirect costs from grants; this fund served as a reserve to stabilize AACC's finances.

Pierce was able to restore staff positions as AACC's fiscal health improved. As his tenure ended, AACC had approximately the same number of regular staff positions as when he began (34). The distribution of staff roles was considerably different, however: More staff members were working on government relations, research, membership, information services, and international programs. The changes shifted AACC's efforts toward federal advocacy, member services, and better use of technology. Before Pierce's tenure, government relations staff were shared with the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). Pierce's shift in priorities brought AACC its own dedicated government relations office.

RESTRUCTURING TO IMPROVE RESPONSIVENESS TO MEMBERS

Pierce committed himself to building on Parnell's accomplishments. His initial priorities were to augment the workforce development efforts of community colleges and to ensure that AACC did a better job of meeting the needs of its members. Perhaps most important, he came on board at a time of massive technological changes in society, and he guided AACC's response to those changes.

Early on, Pierce demonstrated his leadership style and his ability to deal effectively with change and transitions. He respectfully acknowledged the work and accomplishments of his predecessors and preserved programs and initiatives including the Harry S. Truman Award, the Outstanding Alumni Award, and the Leadership Award, each of which became high-profile activities at the annual AACC convention that still thrive today. Pierce had served as a member of the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges and was committed to its recommendations and to those of the Commission on Improving Minority Education. At the same time, he recognized that he would have to establish his own goals and priorities.

When interviewed shortly after assuming the leadership of AACC in July 1991, Pierce quietly and confidently defined how he would lead and set the tone for inclusiveness, collaboration, advocacy, connections, and accom-

plishments (Stanley, 1991). The interview revealed Pierce's depth of understanding of the community college mission and AACC's role as well as his vision, priorities, values, and goals:

I believe that members want their Association to be responsive to their requests, to be alert to their needs, and to be sensitive to those needs that make them unique. More specifically, I believe they expect effective advocacy at the federal level, programs that address the members' common interests, and services that enhance their effectiveness as institutions. Membership expectations, needs, and opinions about the Association's programs and services will be assessed early in my tenure. (Stanley, 1991, p. 8)

To address those themes, Pierce initiated a timely review of AACC's purposes, programs, and priorities to clarify or, as necessary, modify them. The community college network included institutions, organizations, associations, councils, and commissions that had undergone substantial expansion and change. The review process resulted in an examination of and change in AACC's commission structure. Pierce described the restructuring in a 2004 interview as follows:

For the most part, we did not have a good systematic process for getting input from the membership to the board or to the staff. AACC had three commissions aimed at types of institutions: a Small and Rural Community College Commission that dealt with and provided input or advice from small or rural colleges, an Urban College Commission that served the interests of larger urban community colleges, and a Private Independent Commission that dealt with issues affecting those colleges. AACC staff would meet with the Small Rural College Commission, and what the members would be talking about would be essentially the same thing that we would talk about with the Urban College Commission and with the Private Independent College Commission. We concluded that it would make more sense if we would bring all the colleges together into thematic commissions rather than commissions defined by institutional size or type.

So, we created commissions for workforce development, student affairs, instructional affairs, and community building—commissions organized according to the issues and themes

affecting community colleges and not based on institutional size or type. As a result of the restructuring of the commissions, more people became involved in and connected to AACC and provided better and more comprehensive advice to the staff and the board of directors than before.

The commission review process also led to the creation of several strategic and tactical initiatives known as “focus areas,” “curriculum tracks,” or “special focus” initiatives, which were developed for issues that required special attention on a national scale. In his evaluation of the commission restructuring process, Pierce felt that the goals of the new structure were met and that the association’s effectiveness had been increased substantially as a result.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

During Pierce’s tenure, AACC established effective relationships with various federal agencies and, most significantly, with the Clinton administration. For too long, there had been a strong perception on the part of community college leaders that the community college sector was underappreciated and underfunded at the federal level. Pierce was committed to working in a more connected fashion with government officials to remedy the situation. His efforts established a trajectory of increasing awareness and visibility for community colleges within the federal government.

During the Clinton administration, AACC was closely involved in almost every education and training initiative. Pierce established strong federal connections, particularly with the White House and the Departments of Education and Labor. President Clinton, Secretary of Education Richard Riley, and Secretary of Labor Robert Reich all spoke at the AACC annual convention in April 1995 in Minneapolis. During Pierce’s tenure at AACC, Congress passed legislation authorizing the position of Community College Liaison at the U. S. Department of Education. Betty Duvall, who was appointed to that position in the Office of Vocational and Adult Education at the department, established a strong relationship with Pierce and AACC government relations staff. Because of these strong connections, AACC was able to have an impact on federal education and training policy.

ATTRACTING SUPPORT FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Pierce was also able to establish a strong and effective connection with Labor Secretary Reich. There was an understanding at the Department of Labor that the economy had changed and that a world-class workforce was the key to success as a nation—and that the community colleges were ideally positioned to meet workforce preparation needs. Pierce held a strong belief in the importance of workforce development as a component of the mission of community colleges. In a 2004 interview, he said:

The fundamental community college mission hasn't changed for many years—in fact, I don't believe that the fundamental mission has changed since World War II—but the emphasis that we have on workforce education has ebbed and flowed. In most states, community colleges have gotten much more heavily involved in educating and training the workforce—both within business and industry and for industry and business—and that probably will continue for the foreseeable future, given the nature of economy and the change that continues to shape it.

Pierce's commitment to workforce education was exemplified in his work with Microsoft Corporation to develop a partnership that resulted in the Microsoft Instructional Technology Grants to Community Colleges program. On February 1, 1999, Microsoft announced seven grant winners in its \$7 million, 5-year Working Connections program, which was created to support the development of innovative, creative information technology certification and degree programs in community colleges throughout the United States (AACC, 1999). The intent was to match curricula and resources with employer needs within local business communities. Along with the Microsoft grant, AACC generated another \$18.5 million in software donations (Kent, 1999).

Other AACC workforce development projects received grant funding from various sources during the Pierce years. The U.S. Agency for International Development, for example, provided \$1 million to establish workforce development projects shared between U.S. colleges and international educational institutions. The Ford Foundation gave AACC a \$400,000 grant for technical assistance to community colleges in impoverished rural areas. And the Corporation for National and Community Service gave AACC \$532,000 to promote service learning in selected community colleges (Kent, 1999; see also AACC, 2001, for a summary of these and other relationships nurtured by Pierce).

BUILDING AWARENESS

National Awareness Campaign

Pierce believed that community colleges strongly reflected the values and needs of the communities they served. However, he also believed that communities were fragmented along multiple lines and that the fragmentation affected the ability to have a shared community college vision. Lack of a shared vision, in turn, prevented community colleges from coming together on critical issues to present their case to different public entities.

To raise the profile of community colleges nationally, Pierce initiated a 5-year National Awareness Campaign, a joint effort with ACCT. It introduced an ad campaign featuring testimonials from celebrity community college graduates, including baseball great Nolan Ryan, entertainer Randy Owen, and astronaut Eileen Collins. A community college marketing kit, which included the ads, a question-and-answer template about community colleges, a 12-minute video called “One Clear Voice,” and customized TV and radio public service announcements in both English and Spanish, was provided free of charge to member colleges for their use in local markets.

Colleges used the ad format and concept to construct similar ads featuring their local community college “heroes.” The ad series introduced the tag line “America’s Community Colleges—Few things so close can take you so far.” A fundraising consultant for the initiative worked with ACCT and AACC to help the two organizations develop a long-range fundraising campaign from the project.

Pierce was consistently dedicated to a common vision of purpose and to the mission that community colleges should serve the wider community and provide transfer and occupational education and community service. This dedication was acknowledged in the National Awareness Campaign video, which was shown at the opening session of the 2000 AACC convention in Washington, DC, where the retiring Pierce was honored.

Community College Month

At the request of the National Council on Marketing and Public Relations (NCMPR), an AACC-affiliated council, the 1993 celebration of Community College Month was changed from February to April, marking the first time since its 1986 inception that the dates had been moved. NCMPR believed that April would offer more opportunities to showcase and market community

colleges. AACC, along with NCMPR and ACCT, prepared an annual packet of information on community colleges that colleges could use to hold their own local celebrations. Public service ads, press releases, and statistics about community colleges were also mailed to all AACC member institutions to assist them in their promotion efforts.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A New Name for the Association

AACC had been founded in 1920 as the American Association of Junior Colleges (AAJC). In 1972, AAJC was renamed the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges to better reflect the community orientation of most public, 2-year institutions. In 1992, to reflect commitment to the common vision of purpose and mission that Pierce worked so hard to articulate and promote, the association changed its name to the American Association of Community Colleges. Pierce described the thinking behind the name change as follows:

We saw the name change as important to our efforts to promote a stronger and more consistent image of the community colleges. Even with the term *community college*, there is more than enough diversity in what they are and how they vary from state to state. In fact, if you go into Congress and talk to a committee about community colleges, there's going to be seven different pictures that pop into minds of the committee members about what is meant by community college. But it's even more complicated when you have to say "community, technical, and junior colleges" because then they really don't know what institutions are being discussed. In some states they have community colleges or technical colleges or perhaps junior colleges, but these terms don't even begin describe the different names of the colleges. I believed that if we could get the system to support the idea of all colleges being considered community colleges, we would have greater success in developing a common and consistent image of the institutions within Congress and other parts of government and for the public, for that matter.

In August 2000, Pierce questioned whether the name change was fully understood in terms of its intention and symbolism:

I am not sure that we have ever come together to capitalize on the Association name change. I don't think people fully grasped what the potential might be for AACC and its member colleges to develop a greater understanding of the colleges and a common vision of what they are. The name change opened the door. I'm just not comfortable that a lot of our colleges walked through that door. It remains an item of unfinished business. (Coram, 2000, p. 11)

An Emphasis on Community

Pierce continually made the case that community colleges should establish meaningful ties within communities. He maintained that colleges never serve a substantial portion of the population in their service areas, reaching 4% to 5% at best. He concluded that adopting an “institutional citizenship” perspective would enable colleges to connect in meaningful ways with larger segments of the population. He contended that “a community consists of people, businesses, governments, and institutions. The healthier a community is, the more effective its schools will be, and the more attractive its business climate will be” (Pierce, 2000, p. 56).

His emphasis on community, as reflected in the association's name change, also was revealed in his strong belief in the importance of community service. Pierce explained,

The phrase *institutional citizenship* was coined during New Expeditions deliberations and parallels, conceptually, the notion of the corporate citizen. Quite simply, it means that institutions are important components of communities and that they have a responsibility to their communities above and beyond merely carrying out the mission they have adopted or have been assigned. The type of responsibility will differ from community to community, but it could take the form of making the campus available for emergency situations or cultural uses by members of the community, as well as taking on responsibility for various community social projects. (Pierce, 2000, p. 55)

Under Pierce's leadership, AACC encouraged community colleges to adopt the institutional citizenship perspective and take an active role in improving their communities.

SETTING A “KNOWLEDGE AGENDA” FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The New Expeditions initiative was launched in April 1998 as a joint project of AACC and ACCT. W.K. Kellogg Foundation supported the project, which had as its goals the identification of issues facing community colleges and development of a vision for the future. The project coordinating committee—chaired by Robert Atwell, president emeritus of the American Council on Education, and comprising the executive committees of the boards of AACC and ACCT—sought the input of educators, students, trustees, business and community leaders, and other stakeholders around the nation. Over a 12-month period, the committee commissioned research papers; sought verbal and written viewpoints; and sponsored 39 public hearings, focus groups, and community conversations across the country. The product of the project was a report, *The Knowledge Net: Connecting Communities, Learners, and Colleges* (AACC & ACCT, 2000). The report, which called for “a nexus of pathways leading to empowerment through the acquisition of knowledge and the honing of skills that permit people to exploit chance successfully” (AACC & ACCT, 2000, p. 1), was intended to serve as an agenda for the first part of the 21st century for the nation's community colleges.

The Knowledge Net contains a series of recommendations on the role of the community college in community, learner, and college connections. It ends with a chapter on challenges. In the area of community connections, the report calls on colleges to forge positive relationships among diverse segments of society, to implement programs to cultivate and enhance current and future community leaders, to provide learners with experiences to build their civic awareness, to encourage staff and students to participate actively in community activities, and to support the arts and cultural events in communities. The report warned of an insufficient and underskilled workforce that threatened the nation's economy and recommended that community colleges embrace both workforce development and basic literacy as important components of their mission.

In addressing learner connections, the report called upon community colleges to embrace “learning” rather than “teaching” as the core of their educational enterprise (AACC & ACCT, 2000, p. 13) and to focus on how different

learning styles affect outcomes. This approach is a principle of the learning paradigm (see chapter 5), which was developed by George Boggs and his leadership team at Palomar College in the early 1990s. (Boggs served as one of Pierce's board chairs and later become his successor as AACC president and CEO.) The report noted that community colleges had a tremendous opportunity to lead higher education in this new, learner-centered model of quality that had an institutional focus on learning and student success.

The Knowledge Net also pointed out that community colleges must aggressively implement strategies to create campus climates that promote inclusiveness as an institutional and community value. Connecting curriculum to community needs, chapter 2 of the report advised colleges to evaluate student proficiencies according to industry-based skill standards to reduce the chances for a mismatch between what students have learned and what they need to know for better jobs.

The Knowledge Net discussed the increasing use of technology and how it was beginning to transform the learning process. College instruction no longer relies entirely on gatherings in a lecture hall or a laboratory, where a teacher distributes information in structured formats and prescribed timelines. This shift means that instructors have had to become facilitators, strategists, and coordinators for learning rather than lecturers or assigners of lessons and homework.

In chapter 3, *The Knowledge Net* called for community colleges to give priority to professional development for faculty, staff, and trustees. Lifelong learning for college personnel and trustees can help keep an institution viable, especially as colleges adopt new technologies. Technology should be considered a permanent part of community college budgets, not an addendum. The report concluded with the following challenge:

Change, driven by accelerating technological development, will be pervasive. Market demands for timely competitive services will accelerate as will demands for accountability at all levels. . . . The global marketplace will require colleges to produce learners with new competencies at the same time that institutions face a staffing crisis. The education community will face continued pressure to keep up with constant change. (AACC & ACCT, 2000, p. 33)

PARTNERING TO CREATE A NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BODY

In 1993, the Council for Postsecondary Accreditation, which had been the umbrella organization for accreditation since 1975, was disbanded, creating a vacuum for coordination of accreditation at the federal level. Until a more permanent body could be established, the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation was formed to continue the recognition of accrediting groups on an interim basis. Pierce and the other Big Six higher education association CEOs formed a working group of college and university presidents to handle the issue. Past AACC board chair Jacquelyn Belcher co-chaired the Presidents Work Group. Past AACC board chair George Boggs served as a member of the group, representing the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges in the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

The report of the Presidents Work Group was mailed to all university and 2-year college presidents. The recommendations of the group and a subsequent National Policy Board resulted in the formation of the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), which held its first board meeting July 1 and 2, 1996. Without a peer system of accrediting agencies at the federal level, there was a concern that the federal government would create a system to fill the gap. The memory of State Postsecondary Review Entities (SPREs) and the controversy they created when they were authorized by the 1992 amendments to the Higher Education Act (Pub. L. 102–325) were still fresh in the minds of college and university presidents, even though SPREs were not funded by the subsequent Congress.

The *Knowledge Net* report noted the importance of accreditation and stated that it is the principal tool for quality assurance because it builds trust. The formation of CHEA was higher education's response to the need to coordinate accreditation nationally. Membership in AACC requires accreditation status granted by regional agencies overseen by CHEA.

BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

National Science Foundation

In 1989, the National Science Foundation (NSF) awarded less than \$2 million to the nation's community colleges. By the end of Pierce's tenure in 2000, the total annual allocation from NSF to community colleges was \$50 mil-

lion with an announced future goal of \$70 million. Much of this increase is attributed to the Scientific and Advanced Technology Act of 1992 (Pub. L. 102–476), which AACC supported and which funded the Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program. This program, designed for community colleges as lead agencies, brought large numbers of community colleges into the NSF fold for the first time (AACC, 2001, p. 22). AACC has hosted the ATE Principal Investigators (PI) Conference since its inception. The 17th annual ATE PI conference in Washington, DC, in October 2010 drew more than 800 attendees from community colleges and their business, high school, and university partners.

Veterans Affairs

Pierce's tenure closed with a most unlikely partnership forged with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (the VA). The impetus was the VA's adoption of nursing hiring and promotional policies that were detrimental to associate degree registered nurses. As a result of strong advocacy on the part of AACC and ACCT, the policies were rescinded, and a formal agreement of cooperation was signed in 2001 by the VA, AACC, ACCT, and the National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing (AACC, 2001, p. 22).

American Council on Education

Pierce built on the relationships established by Parnell among the Big Six higher education associations, especially with ACE. During Pierce's tenure, university groups made four unsuccessful attempts to adopt the "junior red shirt" rule for student athletes transferring from community colleges. The rule would have required community college transfer students to sit out a year after transfer before they could compete athletically, implying that community college academic rigor was not as strong as the freshman and sophomore years at a university. AACC might not have prevailed against these proposals without the strong support of ACE and its staff.

Phi Theta Kappa

Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) is a national honor society for 2-year college students. Its goals are to "(1) recognize and encourage the academic achievement of 2-year college students and (2) provide opportunities for individual growth and development through participation in honors, leadership, service and fellowship

programming” (PTK, 2011). Pierce became the second AACC president and CEO to serve on the PTK Board of Directors; he served from 1992 to 2003 and was vice chair of the board from 2001 to 2003. He promoted community college presidents’ participation in PTK’s first capital campaign to raise funds for the construction of the Center for Excellence in Jackson, Mississippi. He also began the tradition of recognizing the All-USA Community College Academic Team at PTK’s annual president’s breakfast at the AACC convention. Pierce also assisted with the development of the Centennial Scholars Program, which honored the top community college student in each state at the 2001 AACC convention (the program was established to recognize the 100th anniversary of the founding of community colleges at the 2001 AACC convention). Pierce became an instructor in PTK’s leadership development program and, like Parnell, was elected as an international honorary member of PTK.

CONCLUSION

The body of work and accomplishments of David Pierce are particularly impressive. He spent more than 40 years of his life dedicated to education and, more specifically, to community colleges. Known for his modesty and humility, he is deeply respected by many of the people with whom he worked during his career. His patient team-building, tireless work, and efforts to achieve consensus on issues are a hallmark of his tenure as AACC president. He is widely acknowledged for his statesmanship and stature as a community college leader and for his advocacy efforts on behalf of community colleges. In 2001, AACC recognized Pierce with its Leadership Award.

Past AACC board chair Beverly Simone described Pierce as a strong communicator with the key federal departments and within the higher education community:

With skill, patience, and deep understanding he led a board of seasoned presidents to create a strategic plan that would sustain the organization in a decade of substantive change. His integrity, humility, intelligence, and leadership are valued. It was an honor to learn from and serve with Dave. (personal communication, February 23, 2011)

Augustine Gallego, past chair of the AACC and ACE boards, has credited Pierce with establishing exceptional working relationships between AACC

and the other Big Six higher education associations and with ACCT (personal communication, February 10, 2011). Tony Zeiss, the 1999 AACC board chair, lauded Pierce for his ability to work with all types of constituent members while maintaining a focus on establishing community colleges on the national scene (see Box 4-1). According to Daniel Moriarty, another of Pierce's board chairs,

David was not one to complain, lament, or criticize. Like a good commander, he stood tall and strong and acted in the best interests of AACC. In my mind, David's biggest contribution was to reorganize AACC and put it on a steady platform that would serve community colleges for the foreseeable future. He made things right so that people in AACC at the time and those who would follow could do what the organization said it would do. Everyone came to understand that what David said was what he meant. David was totally honest without even a hint of self-aggrandizement in him. Instead, he was always self-effacing. He exemplified the idea of servant leadership. He came along at a difficult time, a transitional time, and responded successfully to the challenge. We are all better off for his time served. (personal communication, February 3, 2011)

Pierce continued to support community colleges after retirement from AACC. He was executive director of COMBASE (an association of community colleges interested in community-based postsecondary education) for several years; served on the board of governors of Southern West Virginia Community College in Logan, West Virginia; was a consultant for ACCT; continued to serve on the PTK Board of Directors; and taught in the higher education program at the University of Illinois. Northern Iowa Area Community College named a building in his honor in 2007.

Carolyn Williams, the 1999–2000 chair of the AACC Board of Directors, said of Pierce's impending retirement:

On Dave's watch, community colleges have achieved greater visibility and stronger credibility than ever before. He has been extraordinarily effective in reaching out to business, government, and higher education largely because of his own integrity and lifetime commitment to community colleges. (cited in Kent, 1999, p. 5)

4-1 AACC'S COMING OF AGE DURING THE PIERCE YEARS

Asked about the Pierce years in a 2011 interview, Tony Zeiss responded:

The major issues were how to increase AACC's membership base, how to encourage member colleges to embrace workforce development as a core purpose and mission, and how to become more politically active with policymakers and federal agencies.

With Pierce's guidance, we were able to communicate and capitalize on our role in workforce and job development. In fact, President Clinton was the first president to reach out to community colleges and place us clearly in the national scene as valued partners in the country's economic well-being. President Bush followed up by establishing the first grant program designated exclusively for community colleges. It exists even today. We also began to push the idea of focusing on learning and learners as outcomes rather than on teaching and teachers. This movement has now evolved into the student completion or student success movement that is sweeping the country.

David Pierce's ability to work with all types of constituent members while maintaining a focus on establishing community colleges on the national scene was his stellar accomplishment, in my opinion. He held the respect of everyone, treated everyone fairly, and was an outstanding spokesperson for our colleges. We came of age under Dave Pierce.

Tony Zeiss has been president of Central Piedmont University since 1992 and is a past chair of the board for AACC and the League for Innovation in the Community College.