Public College and University Associations Form Collaboration to Increase Certificate & Degree Completion Levels as Part of White House Summit on College Opportunity

*American Association of Community Colleges, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, & Association of Public and Land-grant Universities Develop New Collaborative Efforts to Support & Accelerate College Completion Efforts of Their Member Institutions*

*Washington, DC* – In an effort to bolster educational attainment efforts and strengthen pathways for students, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) today formally pledged to work collaboratively to support and accelerate the college completion efforts of their member colleges and universities. The three associations, whose more than 1,500 member institutions educate nearly three-quarters of all postsecondary students in the country, outlined three key areas they will collaborate on as part of a formal commitment made for today’s White House College Opportunity Summit.

As part of their commitment, AACC, AASCU, and APLU pledged to work together to facilitate and accelerate efforts to reach important national educational attainment goals. Collectively, the associations can better assist their member institutions in tackling obstacles that impede students from earning a degree or certificate in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

“This new public higher education collaboration allows our three associations -- whose institutions serve nearly three-quarters of our nation’s college students -- to work more closely together to expand access and improve completion,” APLU President Peter McPherson said. “Together, we will build on the efforts of our institutions to help drive innovation, create partnerships, and identify solutions as we steadily work to ensure post-secondary success for more Americans.”

“AASCU is proud to continue our work in college completion with this new commitment with AACC and APLU,” says AASCU President Muriel Howard. “Educational attainment and degree completion have never been more critical to the future of our nation, and AASCU member institutions play a pivotal role in student access, opportunity and success.”
“AACC recognizes the good fortune of being part of this Camelot moment for community colleges – where the promise of community colleges and their contributions with AASCU & APLU to serve students’ goals toward the completion agenda, workforce development and the nation’s citizenry has been realized,” said AACC President Walter Bumphus.

This new commitment reinforces the existing partnerships and provides opportunities for the three associations to work more closely together on critical issues related to educational attainment, particularly for low-income, minority, and adult students. The areas of intended collaboration include:

• Creating seamless transitions for students across sectors and institutions through strategies such as proactive, enhanced advising; improved transfer of credits, including more robust articulation agreements; and innovative enrollment and student financial aid policies that support successful transfer and subsequent degree attainment as well as facilitate reverse transfer when appropriate.

• Improved access and opportunity by building clear educational and career pathways through better alignment among K-12, community colleges, and universities – especially in the STEM fields and in other areas of local/national need. Enhanced engagement with K-12 education will be necessary.

• More accurate and comprehensive outcomes measures of student progress and success for external accountability and institutional improvement. The work will include whenever possible common public policy positions designed to buttress ongoing voluntary efforts.

This collective commitment by the three associations will more effectively position public colleges and universities to build networks, share ideas, evaluate promising practices, and, most importantly, institute reforms within each of these important areas.

Members of APLU, AACC, and AASCU are already taking actions to dramatically increase the proportion of individuals with high-quality degrees and certificates to reach our nation’s educational attainment goals. As nearly three-quarters of U.S. postsecondary students are enrolled in public institutions, public colleges and universities are critical to increasing college completion.

Within the four-year public university sector, members of AASCU and APLU affirmed their commitment to accessible, affordable, and quality public higher education for all students as part of Project Degree Completion. Together the associations and nearly 500 institutions have committed to doing their part in reaching the goal of 60 percent of the working age population having a degree or certificate by 2025. Specifically, they have committed to raising as a group the number of high-quality baccalaureate degrees by 3.8 million between 2011 and 2025.
For the community college sector, AACC’s *Reclaiming the American Dream, Community Colleges and the Nation’s Future* pledges that community colleges together will produce 50 percent more students with high-quality degrees and certificates by 2020. In addition, AACC offers implementation strategies and resources through its [21st Century Center](#) to support its member colleges in reaching the target goal.

AACC, AASCU, and APLU have a history of collaboration on initiatives such as the Student Achievement Measure, the Post-Collegiate Outcomes framework, and other public education advocacy efforts.

As the voice of the nation’s community colleges, the [American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)](#) delivers educational and economic opportunity for 13 million diverse students in search of the American Dream. Uniquely dedicated to access and success for all students, AACC’s nearly 1,200 member colleges provide an on-ramp to degree attainment, skilled careers and family-supporting wages. Located in Washington, D.C., AACC advocates for these not-for-profit, public-serving institutions to ensure they have the resources and support they need to deliver on the mission of increasing economic mobility for all.

The [American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)](#) is a Washington, D.C.-based higher education association of more than 400 public colleges, universities, and systems whose members share a learning- and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to underserved student populations, and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions’ economic progress and cultural development.

The [Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)](#) is a research, policy, and advocacy organization representing 239 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations. Founded in 1887, APLU is North America’s oldest higher education association with member institutions in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, Canada, and Mexico. Annually, member campuses enroll 4.8 million undergraduates and 1.3 million graduate students, award 1.2 million degrees, employ 1.4 million faculty and staff, and conduct $41.4 billion in university-based research.

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