WASHINGTON – As community colleges work to develop a national road map to guide their work into a new era of change and work to answer President Obama’s call to raise college graduation rates, they will need skilled leadership and support. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) has selected Dr. Gail Schwartz as senior vice president for academic, innovation and student success to help lead that effort.

“I am thrilled to assume this role during this extraordinarily exciting time for community colleges,” said Schwartz. “I look forward to working with President Bumphus, the 21st Century Commission and the association’s membership, as we work toward meeting the President’s 2020 completion goal.”

Schwartz comes to AACC from the U.S. Department of Education, where she has served as senior advisor for community colleges since 2006 within the Office of Vocational and Adult Education. She crafted a vision for the department’s community college outreach and led efforts on student access, completion and retention issues.

She also served as director of the Division of Academic and Technical Education at the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education. She administered the $1.1 billion Carl D. Perkins Career & Technical Education State Grant Program. She also served as the director of the Discretionary Programs and Innovation Group, as director of the New American High Schools Initiative and director of the Office of Correctional Education.

From 1983-1990, Schwartz served as project director and faculty at George Washington University, where she designed graduate-level teacher training curriculum, taught graduate level courses, coordinated interdisciplinary programs and managed federal grants.

She worked as the training and staff development coordinator for the District of Columbia Department of Human Services Youth Services Administration and as diagnostic team coordinator and instructor. She also worked as vocational development coordinator for Prince George’s County Maryland Public Schools.

Schwartz earned a doctorate in education in 1989 and a master of arts degree in special education in 1983 from George Washington University. She earned her bachelor of science degree at Ohio State University.

AACC President and CEO Walter G. Bumphus, who assumed leadership of the association last January, says the addition to his senior leadership team reflects the growing importance and visibility of community colleges. “Community colleges are increasingly regarded as central players in U.S. economic recovery and global competitiveness. Dr. Schwartz understands our colleges and will bring solid experience and dynamic leadership to our work.”

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Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the American Association of Community Colleges is the leading advocacy organization representing close to 1,200 community, junior and technical colleges nationwide. Community colleges are the largest sector of higher education, enrolling more than 13 million credit and non-credit students each year. To learn more about the AACC, visit www.aacc.nche.edu