



201 Community College Drive Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

December 12, 2025

AACC Committee on Directors and Membership Services, c/o Tammy Reichelt,
1 Dupont Circle NW, Ste 700, Washington, DC 20036

Subject: Nomination of Dr. Howard Spearman for the AACC Board of Directors

Dear AACC Board of Directors Election Committee,

It is with great pleasure and without reservation that I offer my strongest recommendation and support for Dr. Howard Spearman, President and CEO of Rock Valley College, for election to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Board of Directors.

Dr. Spearman is an exceptional leader whose deep, comprehensive experience across student success, workforce development, and executive management makes him an outstanding candidate for this vital national role. His 27 years of dedicated service across two- and four-year institutions have prepared him to contribute immediately to the AACC's strategic direction.

I have had the distinct professional privilege of collaborating with Dr. Spearman directly through our shared participation in Studer Education presentations. This experience has allowed me to witness his commitment to data-driven decision-making, organizational excellence, and the relentless pursuit of student and institutional success—principles that are critical for the community college sector.

During his tenure at Rock Valley College, Dr. Spearman has demonstrated mastery of strategic vision and execution. He successfully navigated a 10-year Reaffirmation with the Higher Learning Commission with no monitoring, a true testament to his focused and effective governance. His leadership in implementing a Four-Pillar Strategic Plan, balanced by fiscal stability and successful capital projects like the Advanced Technology Center, proves his ability to set and realize a complex institutional vision.

Furthermore, Dr. Spearman is a national champion for the community college mission. He currently serves as a Commissioner on the AACC Commission on Structured Pathways, actively shaping high-impact educational models nationwide. His success in forging meaningful industry collaborations, which earned Rock Valley College the 2025 AACC College/Corporate Partnership Award, underscores his commitment to workforce and economic development.

Dr. Howard Spearman possesses the rare combination of proven executive leadership, a deep understanding of student barriers and pathways, and a dedicated commitment to national initiatives aligned with AACC. His experience perfectly connects with the needs and mission of the AACC Board of Directors, and I enthusiastically urge you to elect him.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "W. Smith".

Willie E. Smith, Sr., Ed.D.
Chancellor



Harper College

Dr. Avis Proctor
President

1200 West Algonquin Road
Palatine, Illinois 60067

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aproctor@harpercollege.edu

December 19, 2025

AACC Committee on Directors and Membership Services
c/o Tammy Reichelt
1 Dupont Circle NW, Ste 700
Washington, DC 20036

Subject: Letter of Support for Dr. Howard Spearman for the AACC Board of Directors

Dear AACC Committee on Directors and Membership Services,

This letter of support serves to further endorse Dr. Howard Spearman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Rock Valley College, for the AACC Board of Directors. Dr. Spearman is distinguished not only by his extensive experience—27 years of dedicated service—but also by his profound influence on state and national governance, which makes him an ideal candidate to shape the future of community colleges at the AACC level.

Dr. Spearman's current tenure at Rock Valley College is marked by exceptional executive management and strategic accomplishment. His leadership has secured a successful Higher Learning Commission 10-year Reaffirmation with no monitoring, a testament to his sound fiscal and academic governance. He has driven significant capital initiatives, including the \$20 million Advanced Technology Center, while adhering to a clear Four-Pillar Strategic Plan (Access, Exceptional Education, Exceptional Training, and Cultural Excellence) to ensure sustainable institutional growth and financial stability. His ability to execute these complex operational and financial strategies demonstrates a readiness for the fiduciary responsibilities of the AACC Board.

His career is fundamentally rooted in student success, developed through deep, functional expertise in student affairs. In his previous Vice President roles at Madison College and Rock Valley College, Dr. Spearman oversaw vast divisions encompassing Financial Aid, TRiO Programs, and Academic Advising. He successfully implemented Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) plans at both institutions. This comprehensive background, spanning student support, academic pathways, and the administrative oversight of critical student affairs budgets, provides him with an essential, ground-level understanding of the diverse challenges and needs of community college students today, a perspective that is critical for the AACC's strategic direction.

Dr. Spearman's commitment to the community college mission extends directly into state and national leadership, particularly in Illinois. As a standing Member of the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP), he actively participates in statewide policy and advocacy that impacts the entire Illinois Community College System, a system that is formally recognized by the Illinois Community

College Board (ICCB). This vital state-level involvement gives him crucial insight into how state legislation interfaces with federal community college initiatives. Furthermore, his strong support for student excellence is clear in his role as a Presidential Ambassador for Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) Illinois for ICCP, championing the recognition of high-achieving students and the maintenance of rigorous academic standards within the state.

Beyond Illinois, Dr. Spearman maintains an active national profile. He is a Commissioner on the American Association of Community Colleges Commission on Structured Pathways, ensuring the standardization of high-impact educational models. He continues to invest in his own professional growth through participation in the Presidents Academy Summer Institute (PASI) and remains committed to the future leadership pipeline through his involvement with the Lakin Institute. His dedication to equity is further solidified by his active affiliation with the National Council on Black American Affairs (NCBAA) and his implementation of a Vice President of Cultural Excellence position at Rock Valley College, earning the Insight in Diversity 2024 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award.

Dr. Howard Spearman's extensive experience—from overseeing student services budgets to leading comprehensive colleges and driving key state and national initiatives—makes him a uniquely qualified and highly valuable candidate for the AACC Board of Directors. He is ready to bring his proven leadership and collaborative spirit to the Board's work, and I urge you to grant him this opportunity.

Sincerely,



Dr. Avis Proctor



Office of the President

December 1, 2025

AACC Committee on Directors and Membership Services,
c/o Tammy Reichelt,
1 Dupont Circle NW, Ste 700, Washington, DC 20036

Subject: Nomination of Dr. Howard Spearman for the AACC Board of Directors

Dear Members of AACC,

It is with enthusiasm that I recommend Dr. Howard Spearman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Rock Valley College, for election to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Board of Directors. Dr. Spearman has 30 years of dedicated service in higher education, bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, and a Ph.D. in Leadership for the Advancement of Learning and Service from Cardinal Stritch University. He has a profound commitment to student success through community, campus, and leadership program development that makes him a great candidate for the AACC Board of Directors.

Dr. Spearman is a champion of the community college's role as a primary engine for workforce and economic development, which is critical to AACC's mission. He has significantly expanded Rock Valley College's capacity and reputation as a resource for industry partners by developing programs that meet critical workforce needs. His success in this area is nationally recognized, evidenced by Rock Valley College earning the 2025 American Association of Community Colleges College/Corporate Partnership Award with AAR Corp, succeeding a similar state-level award from the Illinois Community College Trustee Association (ICCTA). These awards are direct outcomes of his ability to forge meaningful collaborations that enhance student outcomes and community revitalization.

Dr. Spearman's commitment to AACC and the national community college movement is active and ongoing:

- He currently serves as a Commissioner on the American Association of Community Colleges Commission on Structured Pathways.
- He is very involved with the Lakin Institute for community college leaders for professional development and mentorship.
- He is actively affiliated with the National Council on Black American Affairs (NCBAA), aligning with the AACC's mission to support all students.
- He also invests time and effort into his own professional development by participating in the Presidents Academy Summer Institute (PASI).
- He understands the national policy landscape, the power of collective advocacy, and the imperative for equity and inclusion, as demonstrated by the implementation of a Vice President of Cultural Excellence position and the resulting Insight in Diversity 2024 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity Award.
- He has successfully led a multi-campus, comprehensive college serving six counties, resulting in significant institutional advancements and national recognition through a Four-Pillar Strategic Plan—focused on Access, Exceptional Education Opportunities, Exceptional Training Opportunities, and

Cultural Excellence and Belonging. This led to a successful Higher Learning Commission 10-year Reaffirmation with no monitoring; major infrastructure growth, including the state-of-the-art Advanced Technology Center in Belvidere and the forthcoming \$57 million downtown campus in Rockford; and significant honors, including the 2024 Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award from Insight Into Diversity magazine, the 2024 Illinois Community College Trustees Association Business/Industry Partnership Award with Born & Koch, and the 2025 AACC Award of Excellence for Outstanding College/Corporate Partnership with AAR Corp, and a successful fundraising efforts totaling approximately \$8 million.

In conclusion, Dr. Howard Spearman is an exceptionally well-rounded candidate who brings a powerful synergy of profound institutional insight, demonstrated executive capabilities, and active involvement in national community college leadership. His diverse professional trajectory, spanning from critical on-the-ground roles like managing advising centers to high-level governance as a college president and service on influential AACC commissions, uniquely equips him to advance the Board's strategic objectives. I strongly recommend him for this appointment.

Sincerely,



Dorey Diab, Ph.D.
President & CEO
North Central State College
Mansfield, Ohio





December 18, 2025

AACC Committee on Directors and Membership Services,
c/o Tammy Reichelt
1 Dupont Circle NW, Ste 700
Washington, DC 20036

Subject: Nomination of Dr. Howard Spearman for the AACC Board of Directors

I am writing to recommend Dr. Howard Spearman for a position on the AACC Board. He is an accomplished administrator and would be an invaluable strategic asset to the organization. Dr. Spearman, President and CEO of Rock Valley College has not only distinguished himself through his presidency but has also been a tremendous asset to the Illinois Community College Council of Presidents. Given the opportunity, he will undoubtedly be a tremendous asset to the AACC Board as they continue development of a future-focused vision for the organization.

Dr. Spearman's career reflects his continuous work in higher education, applying a practical, student-centric philosophy to increasingly large-scale operations. His work spans nearly 30 years of embracing multiple opportunities for personal and professional growth. His experience, along with his journey, has given him a broad understanding of the educational ecosystem, from student advising to executive governance. He will be a strong advocate for AACC, student success and the overall sustainability of community colleges. Dr. Spearman's journey, accompanied by his Ph.D. in Leadership for the Advancement of Learning and Service combine to provide him with the institutional empathy required to connect high-level strategy with on-the-ground impact.

The core of Dr. Spearman's value lies in his track record of turning a college into a primary engine for regional economic growth. He understands that the modern community college must function as a dynamic talent pipeline, proactively addressing workforce demands. His work at Rock Valley College reflects this understanding. Under his guidance, the college has secured national recognition, including the 2025 American Association of Community Colleges College/Corporate Partnership Award with AAR Corp. This recognition is a testament to his systemic approach to building lasting partnerships.

Since taking the helm in September 2020 as Rock Valley College's eighth president, Dr. Spearman has demonstrated a capacity for stable, high-level governance amidst challenging times. His leadership is structured around a clear Four-Pillar Strategic Plan—focusing on Access, Exceptional Education/Training, and Cultural Excellence/Belonging—which acts as a blueprint for comprehensive success.

As important to his consideration as a new Board member, Dr. Spearman has also been active with the organization on the national level. He currently serves as a Commissioner on the AACC Commission on Structured Pathways. He has also been a participant in the AACC Presidents Academy Summer Institute (PASI) and the Lakin Institute. This work confirms his active engagement with national policy and future leadership development, and his ability to lead and bring national insights.

In summary, Dr. Spearman offers the Board strong executive experience, a deep understanding of educational-economic linkage, and a documented history of strategic execution. He is a leader who can help shape policy that is both visionary and operationally sound.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charlotte J. Warren".

Charlotte J. Warren, PhD
President
Lincoln Land Community College

Mary S. Graham, President

Supported by Harrison, Stone, Jackson and George Counties

January 5, 2026

AACC Committee on Directors and Membership Services,
c/o Tammy Reichelt,
1 Dupont Circle NW, Ste 700
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Nominating Committee Members,

It is my honor to recommend Dr. Howard J. Spearman, President and CEO of Rock Valley College, for election to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Board of Directors. Having participated alongside Dr. Spearman in various national leadership capacities, I have seen firsthand his unwavering dedication to the community college mission and his ability to drive transformative change at both the institutional and national levels.

My professional respect for Dr. Spearman has been solidified through our shared experiences in the AACC Presidents Academy Summer Institute (PASI). In that high-level environment, Howard distinguished himself as a visionary leader who possesses the rare ability to balance complex executive management with a deeply human-centered approach to education. His insights into institutional sustainability and his willingness to share best practices make him a trusted peer and a natural leader among presidents.

Furthermore, Dr. Spearman provides strategic contributions as a member of the AACC Commission on Structured Pathways. On the Commission, Howard has been a vocal and effective advocate for dismantling systemic barriers to student success. He understands that "Pathways" is not just a framework, but a promise we make to our students to provide clear, navigable routes to economic mobility. His work in integrating workforce development with academic rigor—evidenced by Rock Valley's recent national accolades—serves as a model for the very initiatives the AACC Board seeks to champion.

Dr. Spearman represents the next generation of national community college leadership. He brings a vital perspective that bridges the gap between functional student affairs expertise and high-level executive strategy. His commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is not merely academic; it is woven into the fabric of his



Advanced Manufacturing & Technology Center 10298 Express Drive Gulfport, MS 39503	The Bryant Center at Tradition 11203 Old Hwy 63 S 19330 Hwy 67 Biloxi, MS 39532	George County Center Lucedale, MS 39452	Haley Reeves Barbour Maritime Training Academy 1000 Jerry St. Pe' Hwy Pascagoula, MS 39568	Harrison County Campus 2226 Switzer Road	Jackson County Campus 2300 Hwy 90 Gulfport, MS 39507	Keesler Center Sablich Center, Rm 219 500 Fisher St. Biloxi, MS 39534	Naval Construction Battalion Center Bldg. 304, Ste. 402, Office #5 3190 John Paul Jones Ave. Gulfport, MS 39501	Perkinson Campus 51 Main Street Perkinson, MS 39573	West Harrison County Center 21500 B. Street Long Beach, MS 39560
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Mary S. Graham, President

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leadership, as seen in his active involvement with the Lakin Institute and the National Council of Black American Affairs.

I am confident that Dr. Spearman will bring a balanced, insightful, and energetic voice to the AACC Board of Directors. He is a leader of high integrity who understands the national policy landscape and the imperative of collective advocacy. I offer him my strongest possible endorsement and urge you to support his candidacy.

Sincerely,



Mary S. Graham, Ph.D.

President



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& Technology
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Gulfport, MS 39503

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Center
at Tradition**
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19330 Hwy 67
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**George County
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