

At the Core: Commitment and Complexity

O*pportunities for All* marked its first anniversary in June. AASCU undertook this research-based branding campaign because members voiced a need for more help from AASCU in telling their stories, influencing stakeholders, and communicating the state college and university brand.

On page 15, you'll read case studies from two talented communications professionals—Brenda Alling, campus director of marketing and communication, Washington State University Vancouver, and Steve Swan, vice president for university relations and community development, Western Washington University—who believe not only in the mission and values of their universities, but also in the mission and values of state colleges and universities as a whole. Alling and Swan are implementing AASCU's national campaign, and understand what it can accomplish for our sector of public higher education.

"The fact is that AASCU schools have suffered from an identity crisis both at home on our campuses and nationally. We have gifted and talented leaders and staff at the AASCU national office, but we haven't had the collective commitment of its members to create real awareness of the great difference we make as AASCU institutions," Swan says.

I hope you will read why Alling, Swan and their institutions committed to the campaign, and then go to the member portal on the AASCU website (www.aascu.org/Opps4All/Members/) and sign the campaign pledge.

"We think you'll see commonalities in both our approaches and can now better understand why we devote precious staff time to *Opportunities for All*—because it works, because it's good for all of us, and because it makes us as a group a stronger and more unified presence," Alling says. "Or to put it succinctly: Why get involved with *Opportunities for All*? Because why in the heck wouldn't you?"

The cover story and lead feature in this issue both focus on presidents and chancellors. One of the primary themes in these articles, "The Erosion of Presidential Tenure" and "Leading by Listening," is the changing landscape of campus leadership in the 21st century.

As writer Karen Doss Bowman points out in her tenure story, almost 45 percent of AASCU presidents serve four years or less. The reasons for these short tenures are varied. A search firm executive points out that leadership

literature suggests, "The average human being may have a set of experiences and competencies that are right for a particular agenda. Once they complete that agenda, they either need to reinvent themselves or they need to come up with a new agenda." Read the rest of the piece on page two.

In "Leading by Listening," writer Holly Simmons shows how universities are responding to complex issues, such as

whether to host controversial speakers on campus and how to keep protests safe. In the article, Metropolitan State University of Denver President Steve Jordan says, "Higher education has lost the 'moral authority' it had in the earlier parts of the 20th century, as governing boards became more afraid of letting presidents speak and of offending legislators and stakeholders." However, as Linda Hill, professor of business administration, Harvard Business School, states, the most overlooked leadership skill is having a moral compass and "crucible experiences are especially important to the development of a moral compass." Today's public higher education environment provides ample opportunities for this development. For more, turn to page six.

Whether you are a president, someone who seeks a presidency or are simply interested in leadership, you'll find these articles worthwhile.

"We don't have enough presidents who know what hill they're prepared to die on and who are willing to speak up on those really critical issues." — Steve Jordan

S.M.C.

