Cuba Presidential Mission Sets Stage for Joint Collaboration

AASCU, representing its more than 400 members, and the Ministry of Higher Education of Cuba, representing the country’s universities and research centers, signed a memorandum of agreement on September 10 at the conclusion of AASCU’s presidential mission to Cuba.

The agreement focuses on the creation of a joint task force that will be responsible for implementing several goals, including: developing mutually beneficial opportunities for faculty professional development, increasing student mobility, and for joint research at the undergraduate and graduate levels; promoting “Universidad 2016” Congress among AASCU members; creating an academic collaboration framework with specific steps and actions to be signed at “Universidad 2016” Congress; and continuing to support lifting the U.S. commercial, financial and economic embargo of Cuba, which impedes mutually beneficial academic collaboration.

AASCU President Muriel Howard and José Ramón Saborido Loidi, first vice minister, Ministry of Higher Education for Cuba, signed the memorandum on behalf of their respective constituencies.

“We believe there are significant opportunities for collaboration between our members and the Cuban universities and research centers,” said AASCU President Muriel Howard. “The discussions we had with their presidents and ministry officials were productive and provided insight into how students and faculty in both countries can benefit from academic exchanges.”

AASCU presidents and chancellors who participated in the mission are: James Anderson, chancellor, Fayetteville State University (N.C.); Donald Betz, president, University of Central Oklahoma; Katherine Conway-Turner, president, Buffalo State (N.Y.); Steve Michael Dorman, president, Georgia College & State University; Cheryl Dozier, president, Savannah State University (Ga.); John Ettling, president, State University of New York College at Plattsburgh; William V. Flores, president, University of Houston-Downtown; Willie Hagan, president, California State University, Dominguez Hills; Karen S. Haynes, president, California State University San Marcos; Sue Henderson, president, New Jersey City University; Steven Jordan, president, Metropolitan State University of Denver; William LaForge, president, Delta State University (Miss.); Leroy Morishita, president, California State University, East Bay; Bruce Murphy, president, Nicholls State University, (La.); Frank Pogue, president, Cheyney State University (Pa.); and Gregory Weisenstein, president, West Chester University of Pennsylvania.

In addition to President Howard, other staff representing AASCU included Dorcas Colvin, vice president for leadership development and member services; Arlene Jackson, associate vice president for global initiatives; and Sufei Li, academic leadership and change staff member.

A news release issued by the Ministry of Higher Education said that the delegation was “one of the largest to visit the island since December 17 last year, when a new chapter began in the relations between the two countries.” It also noted, “One of the Cuban interests is establishing internships for Cuban professors in the U.S. and vice versa…and there is a desire for exchange possibilities at the post-graduate level including shared research projects…”

Members of the AASCU Cuba mission visit the gallery of a local artist in the community of Las Terrazas.
The 2015 recipients of the AASCU Award for Excellence and Innovation will be honored on October 25 at the opening session of AASCU’s Annual Meeting (October 25-27) in Austin, Texas. In its second year, the program recognizes member institutions for excellence and innovation in several major areas of campus life and leadership that are mission focused.

Selection panels for each award weighed entries that fit both general criteria and specific additional criteria; two awards were given in each category.

Category and award recipients are as follows:

**Student Success and College Completion Award**: Cleveland State University (Ohio) and Western Kentucky University (Bowling Green, Ky.);

**Regional and Economic Development Award**: Northern Arizona University and Washington State University Vancouver;

**Leadership Development and Diversity Award**: California State University, Long Beach and the University of West Georgia;

**International Education Award**: California State University, Fresno and Northwest Missouri State University.

“State colleges and universities have remained committed to their missions of student access and success, and regional and economic progress, and continue their dedication to advancing the quality and distinction of their institutions during the most challenging of times,” said AASCU President Muriel A. Howard. “We believe the innovative and collaborative approaches for which these universities are being honored will inspire not only their AASCU colleagues, but all of higher education.”

Criteria for the winning entries in the awards competition required evidence of top-level administrative support, connection with an institution’s mission and strategic agenda, evidence the initiative contributed to significant institutional improvements or programming, and evidence the initiative was grounded in research and incorporated best practices.

For more information, visit www.aascu.org/MAP/EIAwardWinners/.

**Special Annual Meeting Program to Feature Former U.S. Secretaries of Education**

Members attending the Annual Meeting will have the opportunity to attend a special program celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

A moderated panel discussion with former U.S. Secretaries of Education Shirley Hufstedler, Rod Paige and Margaret Spellings will take place on the Texas State University campus the evening of October 26. Mark Updegrove, historian and director of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, will serve as moderator.

The program will also feature taped messages from President Obama, Secretary Arne Duncan, former Secretary of Education Richard Riley, and Senator Lamar Alexander.

President Johnson signed the HEA into law on November 8, 1965 at Texas State—his alma mater—to “strengthen the educational resources of our colleges and universities to provide financial assistance for students in postsecondary and higher education.”

AASCU President Muriel Howard and Texas State University President Denise Trauth will introduce the program. Peter McPherson, president, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities and David Warren, president, National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, will offer closing remarks.

A dinner following the program will feature Luci Baines Johnson.
Communications Project Focused on Testing Potential National Initiative

Work on the pilot messaging project AASCU began in the fall of 2014 has been completed and an assessment is underway to determine the efficacy of expanding the initiative nationally. This program was the result of national research conducted in 2013 to learn what the general population knew and valued about AASCU institutions and what messages resonated with target audiences; this was a component of the association’s strategic plan in response to members’ request for support in this area.

AASCU set out to develop and implement a pilot communications program that would generate a broader awareness of the value-driven philosophy of member institutions among prospective student populations and their family members. In addition, the goal was to create a better understanding by opinion leaders, voters and state lawmakers regarding how these institutions contribute to the economic development of their region and state.

The thematic approach, reviewed and approved by pilot participants, was built around the idea that AASCU institutions provide “opportunities for all” with the core equities of high quality, accessibility and responsibility.

A pilot approach enabled AASCU and Sage Communications, an integrated marketing and public relations firm, to explore the following: what messaging implementation worked; what strategies and tactics worked most effectively and efficiently; the reaction of the public and key stakeholders; and what additional research or measurable output can be applied to the messaging.

AASCU universities who served as pilot institutions were Governors State University (Ill.), Henderson State University (Ark.), Indiana State University, James Madison University (Va.), Northern Kentucky University, Sam Houston State University (Texas), University of Central Oklahoma, the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, the University of West Florida, and Western Washington University.

Pilot Stresses Opportunities for All Message

The pilot program initiated a social media contest around the ‘Opportunities for All’ campaign. The universities earned points for using and engaging with the hashtag #Opps4All. Western Washington University was the winner. Here are some creative ways WWU applied the hashtag:

**WWU Peninsulas**
Finding a community is a huge indicator of success in college. Troy Maggart shares: on.fb.me/1L6dn03

**Extended Education**
A college degree not only creates career opportunities, it adds years to your life! on.fb.me/1OppeK4
Conveying Economic, Social Good of Public Higher Education Emphasis of HEGRC

The 2015 Higher Education Government Relations Conference (HEGRC) will be held December 9-11 in Austin, Texas. The conference program will showcase messages, strategies and tactics for articulating public higher education’s leadership role in fostering positive change on issues transcending virtually every human endeavor that impacts citizens, communities and states—from local to global.

The conference goal is to strengthen participants’ ability to effectively convey to state lawmakers and other stakeholders the collective economic and social good generated by public colleges and universities. Attendees will be equipped with the financing strategies and policies required to ensure public colleges remain affordable, publicly-funded and of high quality, enabling them to remain stewards of their communities and states.

Plenary session speakers will include Thomas W. Ross, president, University of North Carolina; Mark Updegrove, director, LBJ Presidential Library; and Andrew Kelly, resident scholar in educational policy studies, American Enterprise Institute.

The conference reflects a unique partnership among four national higher education associations: the American Association of Community Colleges, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. HEGRC is coordinated by government relations’ staff from these associations and the Task Force on Higher Education Government Relations, comprised of state governmental affairs professionals representing the entire spectrum of American public postsecondary education.

AASCU, NAFSA Partner on Institute for New Senior International Officers

AASCU is partnering with NAFSA: Association of International Educators on an institute for new senior international officers (SIOs) scheduled for February 10-12, 2016 in Washington, D.C.

The institute is designed for SIOs working on AASCU member campuses, and offers participants the opportunity to be introduced to the key skills and knowledge a senior international officer must master as a leader in internationalization at a state college or university.

The institute is a two-and-a-half day program that will introduce participants to key issues in each of the critical subject areas for which they are responsible. The program will address topics including regulation, risk management, institutional partnership development, integration into curricula, principles of internationalization, outcome assessment, budget and physical plant management, and the “culture” of international educational exchange.

This is a focused and practical professional development program and participants must apply to attend. New senior administrators are defined as individuals with less than three years of experience. The institute is led by experienced international educators and topical experts.

The application deadline is December 18, 2015. For more information, visit www.aascu.org/meetings/SIO16/.

Meetings Calendar

2015
October 25-27
Annual Meeting
Austin, Texas

December 9-11
AACC/AASCU/APLU/CASE
Higher Education Government Relations Conference
Austin, Texas

2016
February 4-6
Academic Affairs Winter Meeting
Austin, Texas

February
AASCU/NAFSA Institute for Senior International Officers
Washington, D.C.

February 17-20
Grants Resource Center Conference on Funding Competitiveness
Washington, D.C.

March 29-30
Communications Conference for Senior Professionals
Washington, D.C.

March (TBD)
Council of State Representatives
Washington, D.C.
Several times during the fall, situations have arisen that AASCU believed required a response. The following are excerpts from two statements issued by the association.

On the Obama Administration’s College Scorecard: “We strongly support the purposes motivating this initiative, but we are concerned that neither the process nor this first version of its product adequately accomplishes the administration’s lofty and laudable goals.

First, the algorithm continues to track only first-time, full-time students. We understand that the Department of Education plans to present a more nuanced picture of academic outcomes by including additional data from the Student Achievement Measure (SAM), the higher education community’s voluntary data system.

Second, we are concerned that providing wage data at the institutional rather than the programmatic level will provide a highly misleading statistic of minimal usefulness to students and families. Co-mingling earnings and debt data for college graduates in widely different fields may well end up misinforming prospective students in lower-paying fields; it could induce them into borrowing more, while discouraging students in higher-paying fields from pursuing their preferred majors out of concern with average institution-wide lower-than-expected earnings data.”

On the Gallup-Purdue Index Report: “Among public college alumni…80 percent either “strongly agree” or “agree” that their college education was worth the cost, compared to only 8 percent that “strongly disagree” or “disagree” about the value of their education. In an era of state budget cuts to public colleges and universities and a subsequent state-to-student cost shift, AASCU and its members remain committed to the core value proposition in public higher education.

Unfortunately, some have chosen to cherry-pick the results of this survey and write misleading headlines about the value of a college education. At a time when the nation needs more college graduates to compete in the knowledge-based global economy, these context-free “college is not worth it” headlines feed into a false narrative that does irreparable harm to our efforts to reach low-income students and those from historically underrepresented communities.”

The full text of these statements and others issued by AASCU are available at www.aascu.org/Statements/.