AASCU Honors Advancing the Educational Experience

AASCU has announced the winners of this year’s Excellence and Innovation Awards. The awards program, now in its third year, honors AASCU member institutions in several major areas of campus life and leadership. Award categories include: leadership in regional and economic development; student success and college completion; sustainability and sustainable development; teacher education; international education; and leadership development and diversity.

“Innovation at America’s state colleges and universities is focused on advancing the quality of the educational experience for their students and the distinction of their institutions in service to their communities,” said AASCU President Muriel A. Howard. “The programs for which these universities are being honored will inspire not only their AASCU colleagues, but all of higher education.”

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

The Excellence and Innovation Awards recipients are as follows:

- **Christa McAuliffe Excellence in Teacher Education Award**
  Ball State University (Ind.)

- **International Education Award**
  California State University, Fullerton and The University of Guam

- **Leadership Development & Diversity Award**
  SUNY Buffalo State College and Morehead State University (Ky.)

- **Regional & Economic Development Award**
  Metropolitan State University of Denver and Farmingdale State College–SUNY (N.Y.)

- **Student Success & College Completion Award**
  University of Northern Iowa

- **Sustainability & Sustainable Development Award**
  California State University, Northridge and Stockton University (N.J.)

Awards were presented at the opening session of AASCU’s Annual Meeting in October in Miami, Fla. For more information on the award and the award winners, visit www.aascu.org.

Becoming a Student-Ready College

Re-Imagining the First Year is gearing up for its second webinar of the 2016-17 academic year. Scheduled for November 2 from 2–3 p.m. EST, the webinar will feature a presentation on becoming a "student-ready" college by Dr. Tia Brown McNair, vice president of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Student Success at Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). This webinar will assist AASCU member campuses in designing student success models that value the cultural and social capital of today’s college students, while diminishing deficit-minded thinking.

McNair is the lead author of the book *Becoming a Student-Ready College: A New Culture of Leadership for Student Success* (July 2016). She also co-authored the publication *Assessing Underserved Students’ Engagement in High-Impact Practices*. McNair oversees AAC&U’s continuing programs on equity, inclusive excellence, high-impact educational practices and student success, including AAC&U’s Network for Academic Renewal series. In addition, she directs AAC&U’s Summer Institute on High-Impact Educational Practices and Student Success.

McNair chaired AAC&U’s Equity Working Group, which was part of the General Education Maps and Markers (GEMs) project, a large-scale systematic effort to provide “design principles” for 21st-century learning and long-term student success.

For more information on AASCU webinars, visit www.aascu.org/meetings/.
After the presidential election, the Higher Education Government Relations Conference (HEGRC), held November 30–December 2, will assess the new political landscape and its ramifications for higher education. Now in its 23rd year, 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.

Public higher education remains at a crossroads: State political and economic dynamics have led to further disinvestment and cost shifts, while more students and families are calling on candidates and political leaders to fundamentally reform higher education financing. HEGRC is an educational forum for professionals whose responsibility it is to foster effective governmental and community relations on behalf of public colleges and universities and state systems of higher education.

With the 2016 campaign over, the conference will demonstrate how campus government relations professionals can create messages, engage and energize stakeholders, and assemble coalitions that recognize and reflect new realities confronting public higher education and state government. Conference participants will garner insight into strategies that can effectively convey the value of investing in higher education, while also having ample opportunities to network and learn from their colleagues. Participants will also hear about the latest trends in state higher education funding and policy, national economic dynamics, updates from Capitol Hill, and insights pertaining to the next presidential administration.

For more information about the Higher Education Government Relations Conference, visit www.aascu.org/meetings/hegrc16/.

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SOC Invites Members to Join Its Guaranteed Transfer Network

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) coordinates academic networks of undergraduate degree programs designed to provide flexible educational opportunities for active-duty military members. SOC’s programs are designed to allow servicemembers to begin and complete a certificate or an associate or a bachelor's degree program notwithstanding changes in duty station, or other demands of a student’s military career.

The SOC Degree Network System (DNS) recently announced a call for programs, inviting additional undergraduate institutions to join the guaranteed transfer network. This network consists of degrees that must achieve a 40 percent standard of two-way guaranteed transferability in major and major-related courses. The invitation presents a great partnership opportunity for state colleges and universities (SCUs) in states with a strong presence of military installations. SCUs that offer online programs may also be interested in responding, as many SOC DNS Schools offer courses through a variety of delivery methods.

Specific degree programs currently being requested are:

- Health Services Management (baccalaureate)
- Homeland Security (baccalaureate)
- Psychology (associate)
- Applied Science and Technology (associate)

Among other requirements, SOC DNS schools agree to:

- Guaranteed transferability of major and major-related course work between member institutions;
- Issue a SOC DNS Student Agreement to all eligible military students;
- Limit their students’ academic residency requirements to no more than 25 percent of the degree; and
- Flexible policies, including the refund of military Tuition Assistance funds when official military obligations prevent the student from completing a course that s/he has registered for, and readmission to a degree program if the student had to temporarily discontinue studies due to deployment or transfer.

As a SOC DNS member, you will assure that students can be confident that your school and degree program meet specific requirements to assist them in achieving their educational goals, even after they transition out of the military.

Institutions interested in having their programs reviewed should submit degree requirements and course descriptions no later than November 30, 2016, to socdnscirc@aascu.org. Also note, SOC’s Career and Technical Education program will issue a Call for Certificate Programs later this fall.

For more information regarding SOC membership, visit www.soc.aascu.org.
As the fall semester kicked off, 44 institutions of higher education participating in AASCU’s “Re-Imagining the First Year of College” (RFY) project began to implement innovative practices and programs on their campuses aimed at helping first-year students.

As part of RFY—a three-year initiative funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USA Funds—the 44 state colleges and universities (SCUs) are working together as a learning community to develop comprehensive institutional transformation that redesigns the first year of college and creates sustainable change for student success. The project is aimed at ensuring the success of all first-year students, but particularly those who have historically been underserved by higher education: low income, first generation and minority students.

Indiana University (IU) Kokomo is one of five Indiana University System campuses participating in RFY. According to Christina Downey, Kokomo’s interim assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs and student success, the RFY project differs from most homegrown campus change initiatives because participants are supported by the RFY community, which lends a unique energy to the project.

“AASCU has done a great job of providing the structure and support for change, while giving campuses the autonomy to find their own paths,” said Downey.

Unlike past pilot programs focused on student success, the RFY initiative is a large-scale undertaking involving the implementation of promising practices and sharing of collective knowledge among SCUs of all sizes and types. The project entails both a comprehensive and collaborative approach that engages the whole campus in focusing on four key areas to help first-year students succeed: institutional intentionality, curriculum redesign, changes in faculty and staff roles, and changes in student roles.

The 44 institutions participating in RFY have developed comprehensive implementation plans and formed a virtual learning community that reviews and shares evidence-based practices, programs and implementation strategies. A number of student success experts from across the country and 14 corporate partners are also part of the learning community.

For more information about RFY, including a list of participating institutions, please visit www.aascu.org/RFY/.

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Competencies for State College and University Presidents Important Leadership Tool

AASCU has released Competencies for State College and University Presidents, a model that AASCU plans to use to inform the building of a developmental assessment program for current and future presidents. The document reports on the evolution and validation of the AASCU State College and University Presidential Competency Model.

AASCU is particularly interested in helping current and future higher education leaders develop and refine the skills needed to better serve students. The association seeks to apply assessment center methodology, an underutilized tool in higher education, to improve the professional development of those seeking increasingly more responsible leadership positions in state colleges and universities.

Over time, this work will help provide standardization in assessing university leadership and identify national benchmarks to better understand both individual and systemic gaps in leaders’ commitments and skillsets. Collectively, these insights will better enable AASCU and other higher education organizations to train a next generation of effective higher education leaders who are oriented toward student success.

Building on both commissioned qualitative research and the outcomes of a planning symposium with experts in assessment center methodology, higher education leaders and search consultants, a draft competency model was prepared. The competency model was then vetted and revised, based on further literature review and structured critical incident-style interviews with 14 prestigious subject-matter experts. The revised version was then presented to the entire AASCU membership for comment via a quantitative-content validation survey.

Survey results confirmed the importance of the competencies identified as necessary for state college and university presidents to meet strategic higher education goals. And the report concludes by mapping the AASCU competencies onto other competency models used by two assessment consultancies identified as potential partners in this endeavor.

The report was distributed at the 2016 AASCU Annual Meeting.

For more information and to download a free copy, visit www.aascu.org.

New State Outlook Explores Policy Issues Affecting Higher Ed

In October, AASCU released its latest State Outlook report, Fiscal and State Policy Issues Affecting Postsecondary Education. Compiled by the AASCU State Relations and Policy Analysis team, the report explores the national and state economic and revenue conditions affecting public colleges and universities today and in the future. In addition, it offers information on tuition changes for a number of public college and university systems, and a review of leading policy changes that have occurred in the states this year.

Analyses are provided in four categories: (1) U.S. economic forecast; (2) state economic conditions; (3) state higher education financing; and (4) higher education policy outcomes—2016 state legislative sessions. The report addresses the weak economic growth in 2016 and contends that state higher education funding for FY2017 “looks to be mixed, with many states experiencing modest increases, while other states will face cuts” (p.2). Likewise, another finding notes that, “Forty-three executive budgets recommend modest spending increases for FY2017…Net spending increases for higher education amounted to $1.1 billion across 35 state budget blueprints, while 11 states cut funding for higher education” (p.2).

Also provided: highlights from the 2016 state legislative sessions, aligned with the Top 10 State Higher Education Policy Issues for 2016, as published by AASCU. This higher education policy measures list contains categories such as secondary-postsecondary education alignment, college access for veterans, sexual assault and guns on campus.

Visit www.aascu.org/policy/publications/ to download the full report.