Challenging Perennial Issues Through Innovation

What would you like to know about helping students achieve success? There is no shortage of resources. Amazon lists more than 4,000 books in the area of student success—4,158 to be exact. Titles such as *Student Success in College: Doing What Works* or *It's the Student, Not the College: The Secrets of Succeeding at Any School Without Going Broke or Crazy* are among the first options. And if we want another option, wait until July when a new book, *Becoming a Student-Ready College: A New Culture of Leadership for Student Success,* will be available.

To paraphrase George L. Mehaffy, AASCU’s vice president for academic leadership and change, the problem is not that we don’t know what can lead to student success, the problem is that we’re not doing it. AASCU seeks to address the problem through “Re-Imagining the First Year of College,” a national initiative we launched in early February. To quote George: “The lives of our students, the future of our country, and the fate of our institutions are bound up in the nature and quality of the first year.”

You can read more about the launch in *Currents and Transitions,* including a list of the 44 AASCU colleges and universities selected as participants. I also encourage you to read an edited version of a speech Mehaffy gave in 2014 about the challenges surrounding student success and the relationship with the first year. It is compelling reading.

Financial illiteracy is not an issue unique to any one population. It affects everyone: men and women, young and old, across all racial and socioeconomic lines. No longer can we stand by and ignore this problem. The economic future of the United States depends on it. "—President’s Advisory Council on Financial Literacy

A number of AASCU institutions have implemented programs to help students improve their financial literacy with the goal of embedding the concept and the tools that will last them a lifetime. These programs generally include a review on financing their education that incorporates advice and strategies related to student loans. Loans and the resulting debt can seriously affect their future financial stability. In “Personal Finance Rx” beginning on page 11, Karen Doss Bowman writes about financial literacy programs on five AASCU campuses and covers advice from groups specializing in financial literacy for students.

If you want to know what is predicted to transpire on the state policy front in 2016, AASCU’s government relations staff can tell you. The annual review of the top 10 state policy issues is featured on page 23 of *Currents and Transitions.* And FYI: number 1 is “keeping college affordable through state investment in public higher education,” and number 10 is “student loan financing and debt assistance.” Some issues are evergreen.

S.M.C.