

Advocacy: Past, Present and Future

There was a time, long ago and far away, when institutional advocacy was essentially a one-person job. No longer. In the highly politicized climate of the 21st century, advocacy has become a process of mobilizing people and communities on behalf of the university.

In her article “Champions for Higher Education,” writer Karen Doss Bowman explores the role advocates play in boosting support for state colleges and universities. She cites a number of institutional examples that seem to coalesce around one point: “There’s strength in numbers. Chancellors, presidents and government relations staffers are advised to form coalitions and rally champions who can reinforce their messages and promote their institutions’ interests.”

Karen quotes Vincent Pedone, executive director of the Council of Presidents of the Massachusetts State University System and a former state representative in Massachusetts, who recommends that public institutions in a particular state join forces to coordinate their advocacy efforts. “You can present a unified voice in lobbying the legislature when it comes to funding,” says Pedone. “If we find commonality in our messaging, it allows us to speak with a strong, single voice.”

Wise advice. It reinforces the point AASCU has been making with the national branding and messaging campaign *Opportunities for All* (O4A). We must take a collaborative, unified approach in articulating the benefits of state colleges and universities and their value as a critical sector of American higher education.

You can read about how the O4A campaign can help strengthen AASCU member marketing campaigns, and how schools are finding the campaign helps showcase their students and alumni, on page 9.

Our cover story features an interview with AASCU President Mildred García, conducted by writer Stephen Pelletier in January. It is clear that advocating for our members and their missions is a priority for President García, as is member service. Steve’s interview provides a detailed look at her background and where she plans on taking AASCU under her leadership. Like her predecessors, she is committed to student success.

If the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is not on your radar or you’re only somewhat familiar, go to page 16. This piece provides a solid, workmanlike explanation of what it means and how it may affect colleges and universities in the United States. Phrases like “good-faith compliance” make it a must read!

Public Purpose was launched in 2005 to cover topics and programs pertinent to our members and to give them an opportunity to contribute their perspective on issues and trends affecting them and their campuses. I want to thank the AASCU members who have contributed to the magazine. Your participation is critical to its continued quality and relevance.

I am retiring from AASCU in May. Since this is my last column, I want to acknowledge a number of individuals. Constantine (Deno) Curris was president of AASCU at the time we introduced the magazine. I suggested to him that a magazine was a way to improve member communications, engagement and service. He was a president who believed in expertise and said, “Go for it.” Several staff from the divisions of Academic Leadership and Change and Government Relations and Policy Analysis were instrumental in helping determine a framework for content, and over the years have made significant editorial contributions. I also want to recognize the ongoing support of AASCU Presidents Muriel Howard and Mildred García.

My thanks to the Division of Communications staff, including those who helped launch the magazine—Heather Berg and Trudy James—and current staff who work to improve every issue: Jennifer Walpole, Victoria Markovitz, Ina Soepangkat and Isabella Ovalle. Lastly, I’d like to thank the writers, designers and illustrators with whom we’ve worked who have provided exceptional professional expertise: Stephen Pelletier, Karen Doss Bowman, Elizabeth Conrad La Velle and Steven Walker.

My sincere appreciation to all for sharing your talent with AASCU and our members. It has been a pleasure to serve as editor and to work with you.

S.M.C.

