In March, the American Association of Community Colleges hosted two first-of-their-kind meetings to address issues crucial to its institutions: workforce development and leadership.

The first of these meetings, held March 15, was the AACC Summit on Workforce Development. The workforce Summit, created by AACC President and CEO George R. Boggs, began development of a national community college workforce strategy. The goals of the strategy are: to help community colleges assess changing forces in human resource development and articulate and promote a national perspective on workforce development; assess ongoing, fundamental changes in the workforce preparation environment and determine more aggressive strategies for community colleges to be involved at the national level; evaluate structures for delivering workforce training; determine what should be retained and what should be jettisoned; and identify ways to raise the visibility of community colleges as the nation’s primary public training provider, and develop strategies for implementation.

The second meeting, held March 16, was the AACC Community College Leadership Summit. The leadership Summit’s main goal is to ensure the stability and quality of future community college leaders. Drawing on the Vision of AACC’s Future statement, the Association pledged to develop “leadership capability at all levels to ensure that community colleges are served by people who understand and share a deep commitment to the community college mission.”

Two of the Summits’ participants, Paul A. Elsner and Kay M. McClenney give their analysis of the major themes and ideas proffered at the two meetings.

—Paul A. Elsner

CONVENING OUR PARTNERS:

Al Lorenzo, CEO of Macomb Community College, (head of table) addresses participants at the AACC workforce summit.

AACC Summit on Workforce Development

—Paul A. Elsner
“Community colleges are the only American learning institutions that effectively link general education to the dynamic of skill changes in the work force.” Anthony P Carnevale and Donna M. Desrochers

George Boggs, President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), stepped into his crucial role at debate, how the AACC Summit on Workforce Development on March 15, 2001. Approximately 30 participants gathered at AACC headquarters to participate in this major roundtable. In addition to several community college CEOs, whose colleges represent aggressive and successful records in workforce preparation (policy leaders ranging from such diverse perspectives as youth, labor, an interest in more growth, and business and training alliances participated and led the discussions.

Other interested parties including representatives from industries, such as Intel, and the National Governors Association (NGA) offered their views on this central issue: What is the role of community colleges in workforce development?

Translating the Role

The session opened with Boggs shaping a framework and background for the day’s discussion. The community colleges are the system workforce development is well established, according to Boggs, but “we cannot assume that our role is taken for granted or well known among the broadest of our constituencies.” Although community college associate of arts (AA) degrees are the fastest growing degree granted by association; for community colleges in his area, but are just as likely to use well-established technical education programs because of workforce situation, and of their established track record for producing skilled workers.

In an expansive presentation, translated a different role of the community colleges for the workforce development debate and his experience; he should worry less about roles, and more about the larger community’s collective interest.

The National Debate

It is possible to become “defined out of the debate,” according to Jones. He added that it is impossible to dismiss the idea of a different role for community colleges, but the paths to solution are still being opened better possibilities for community colleges. “You enter these debates with established credibility, flexibility, responsiveness to emerging needs when called upon, but you must capture the opportunity to reframe, recast, and redesign an old system.” The educational community can disagree to many other providers such as training alliances, charter schools, proprietary institutions, community colleges and corporate universities to seek solutions. It “is not necessarily about traditional groups,” said Jones. “It is about who can for a force a solution for manpower development in the national interest.”

Jones cited many new opportunities for community colleges not the least of which is the workforce development agenda. Data presented showed that 19 states incorporated workforce development as part of state appropriations; 32 reached to access other state funds; 31 states used non-state sources such as local economic development or direct state funds; 8 million individuals by early 2000, according to Jones.

“Moreover,” Jones continued, “we must ask ourselves, for all that changing power are at an important crossovers of the public policy debate. Workforce preparation is a national and state of applied sciences (AA) degree completers earn more than the AA degree completers. Moreover, Boggs pointed out that AAAs completers do nearly as well as BA completers.

Both Roberts T. Jones, president of the National Alliance for Business (NAB), and Tony Carnevale, who can forge a solution for manpower community colleges are now foregoing real educational opportunities because they cannot deploy sufficient and ready-to-execute workforces.

“Is this an institutional or a business situation, but business will find its own remedies where, however, and any way they can find them,” according to Jones.

Boggs had pointed out in his opening presentation that only 33 percent of businesses regarded community colleges as effective partners in the labor market. In the future, community colleges can lead the conversation for all that are involved in workforce development. The solution is a workforce development system that will deliver the best results; it is not how good, but, if inadequate, community colleges are. “It is,” according to Jones, “how community colleges are in a position to reshape the debate and the principal catalyst for a national solution.”

“Do we also offer what the debate is not about:”

• It is not about completions; it is about competencies.
• It is not about traditional credentials; it is about credentials employers want to recognize.
• It is not about institutional alignment; it is about outcomes and outputs.

Jones underscored that government, higher education, and schools need to come together. They must collectively realize that market responses are the driving debate. There are no substitute for creativity. Tony Zeiss, President of Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, N.C., noted the collective nature of solving the national problem of workforce development. “We don’t do much alone. Our economic development partners are part of the larger engine that propels us into the future work force.”

The workforce and the business community have to be a part of it and that means being in the middle of it.”

Jones would argue that if community colleges continue to differentiate education the workforce demand for credentials and beyond. Ultimately, they are the standards every institution must meet (p. 31).

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During this favorable condition, Jones challenged community colleges to take advantage of positive winds. It means moving beyond higher education legislation. It means establishing our visible leadership position on national or regional workforce issues. He urged that community college faculty and staff become experts on the market forces, on workforce trends, on changing skill sets, and on the crucial policy issues.

Floten’s facilitation brought out discussion around the gaps that we must acknowledge and subsequently fill, and to be an active player in the workforce solutions evolution. Other CEOs said that they might start with a program that either complements or substituting relevant credentials for the new economy. They suggested that there were gaps in our pedagogy and gaps in our reliance on theory. Even so, we possibly spend too short on time on learning theory. Decision-makers discussed whether we have gaps in leadership preparation.

When Boggs opened the discussion to wider participant contributions, many observed that while local community colleges were asked to frame the salient points raised during the discussion and add these considerations:

Boggs urged focus on the hot spots, such as Seattle, Palo Alto and Cupertino, Calif., Austin, Texas, and others. Boggs also asked whether real wide-ranging competencies to forge a workforce agenda in our colleges, much less in our communities. He cited his invitations to companies. They are scary and companies. They are as a part of the economic development, and on the National Business Forum. Such a Forum will be framed the salient points raised during the discussion and add these considerations:

Boggs highlighted that they are sometimes referred to as “shadow colleges.” They do not shape or develop the capacities of the core faculty. They are more difficult to get out of its offices,” Jones emphasized. Government has to know us firsthand. “Government has to be our foremost.”

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Translating Missions

Concluding the wrap-up of the day’s summit, Al Lorenzo, a long-standing and respected figure in the National Business Forum. Such a Forum will be framed the salient points raised during the discussion and add these considerations:

Conclusion

As the Summit closed, George Boggs framed the salient points raised during the discussion and added these considerations:

Boggs challenged the summits participants to consider their college’s transformation needs. He emphasized the importance of existing resources such as the AACC. Workforce Development mission and projects like the Knowledge Net effort to help state and local initiatives. The joint “white paper” produced by the National Council of Occupational Education and the National Council for Continuing Education and Training was cited as an additional resource. These foundational resources can aid in building a new vision of workforce development.

Finally, Boggs pledged to get our workforce message out. “We will publish these deliberations to the broader membership and public review.” The group was thanked for their contributions, and their pledge to continue supporting.

References

Carnevale, Anthony P. and Desrochers, Donna M. “The Role of Community Colleges in the New Economy.” Community