I am pleased to share the 2019 AASCU Public Policy Agenda (PPA) with you and express my gratitude to the members of the association’s Council of State Representatives for their dedicated work in crafting this important roadmap for our policy advocacy efforts.

Each year, a revised PPA is adopted at AASCU’s Annual Meeting. This policy document highlights AASCU’s policy priorities for the coming year. I hope this written framework assists our members, other interested organizations, and federal and state policymakers in navigating upcoming challenges.

The year ahead will be consequential for AASCU institutions. The Washington policy debate on the long overdue reauthorization of the Higher Education Act will be ongoing and more complicated as a result of fundamental differences in vision between the parties, each of which now controls one chamber of Congress. In addition, the Department of Education has embarked on important regulatory undertakings that could significantly alter federal student aid programs and create new opportunities and risks for participating institutions. The Department is also attempting for the first time to codify its implementation of Title IX through regulations that would govern how colleges and universities should conduct campus disciplinary processes addressing sexual misconduct. Beyond these, institutions continue to face other challenges that include uncertain funding for federal aid and research programs, the unresolved fate of our undocumented youth, and the future of international education. AASCU will use this PPA as its primary guidebook in navigating these and other issues of importance to public institutions.

I encourage you to use this PPA during your visits with legislators, either at home or in Washington, D.C. When you come to Washington, I invite you to stop by AASCU, your Washington office, for any additional information or support that may be useful for you in your visits on the Hill.

As always, your comments and suggestions on this publication are greatly appreciated.

Warmly,

Mildred García, Ed.D.
President
STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
ARE ENGINES OF MOBILITY FOR THE
AMERICAN DREAM

America’s public institutions of higher education serve a unique role as the portal through which so many of our citizens and much of our future workforce gain the skills they need to face the economic challenges of the 21st century. Our programs offer more than four million students the opportunity to achieve America’s promise of an affordable, high-quality college education. And, across the country, our institutions serve as indispensable venues for access and civic engagement. In addition, as institutions are created by and accountable to the states, they serve as catalysts for economic growth in their communities and as engines of global competitiveness for the nation. Considering the challenges state colleges and universities face—shrinking budgets, increased demand for affordable postsecondary education, enrollment volatility and onerous regulations, to name a few—we must persevere to create opportunities for all students who would otherwise have few real options for realizing the American Dream, a satisfactory career and a fulfilling life.

To this end, AASCU presents its 2019 Public Policy Agenda, which underscores the most compelling policy issues affecting public higher education and promotes policies that help our institutions fulfill their unique role in educating America’s workforce. Each issue has implications at the state, federal or both levels of policy and law. Accordingly, we provide our state and federal policymakers with specific actions to take going forward.

State Colleges and Universities Will Lead on Issues of Affordability, Campus Climate and Quality Assurance

Among the many issues affecting our campuses, conversations about the cost and quality of a higher education, fostering a safe and supportive campus environment for all students, and how to measure the effectiveness of our schools and the success of our students will be front and center heading into 2019. AASCU has prioritized these issues in its advocacy plans at the national level and in our work with state-level partners. Our collective voice will be instrumental to our work going forward to ensure that state colleges and universities are heard and heeded in the policy discussions to come, especially considering deliberations for a comprehensive reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA), the cornerstone legislation for American higher education.
ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY AND VALUE

Policy Actions

◆ Support state/federal partnerships, matching grants, and other federal policies that promote adequate state support for public institutions;
◆ Support collaborations with community colleges to contain costs and promote greater affordability;
◆ Expand and support high-quality dual enrollment programs;
◆ Preserve and increase federal grant aid;
◆ Keep student debt manageable;
◆ Protect income-based repayment and loan forgiveness options;
◆ Maintain tax provisions that support higher education;
◆ Eliminate tax liability on loan forgiveness programs;
◆ Preserve and expand student loan tax deductions;
◆ Expand employer-provided educational assistance benefits;
◆ Advocate for increased state investment in public higher education, and promote policies that align federal and state practices in support of greater affordability and improved access;
◆ Encourage and promote AASCU’s proposed federal matching program and other strategies for leveraging federal resources to incentivize state higher education funding;
◆ Support proposals that promote state-federal affordability partnerships by providing federal incentives for increased state funding of operating costs at public colleges and universities;
◆ Support ongoing regulatory review to streamline compliance burdens whenever possible;
◆ Encourage more targeted risk-based regulations;
◆ Support meaningful analysis of the benefits and costs associated with new regulations;
◆ Support evidence-based regulations, oversight and enforcement initiatives to target problem institutions;
◆ Work with Congress and the administration on devising reasonable financial aid policies to reward institutional accountability and effectiveness;
◆ Ensure any risk-sharing policies enacted by Congress are properly configured to account for student demographics and institutional missions; and
◆ Promote and support completion and graduation initiatives that further reasonable access and academic quality.
CAMPUS CLIMATE: SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

◆ Support policies and programs emphasizing a renewed and sustained commitment to the prevention of all forms of sexual violence and misconduct;

◆ Encourage state and system officials to review and update state laws and campus procedures related to sexual violence and to ensure fair and equitable proceedings;

◆ Continue AASCU’s engagement with the Department of Education and Congress to consult with institutions of higher education in devising policies against sexual violence on campus;

◆ Ensure that state and federal action pertaining to campus disciplinary processes maintains a standard that is fair and equitable to all parties;

◆ Oppose federal and state intrusions on academic practices, including transcription;

◆ Harmonize Clery Act data reporting requirements with the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reporting standards;

◆ Oppose legislation that prevents campuses from exercising discretion regarding events and scheduling choices that may lead to violence;

◆ Oppose state legislation that seeks to strip institutional and/or system authority over campus weapons policy;

◆ Promote free exchange of ideas to the maximum extent possible in a manner that is consistent with constitutional principles;

◆ Sponsor and support activities that educate the campus community about the value and central importance of academic freedom and open discourse;

◆ Ensure and promote broad intellectual engagement;

◆ Oppose micromanagement of constitutional campus operations through new “free speech” laws;

◆ Support and promote difficult dialogues and civil debate;

◆ Highlight the role of education in restoring and promoting the practice of civil discourse as essential to the health of our democracy;

◆ Sponsor and support civic learning and engagement initiatives;

◆ Support programs that provide public service opportunities and learning for students and graduates;

◆ Support programs that build student civic and information literacy in online spaces through broad, cross-institutional projects that enable students to fact-check, annotate, and provide context for emergent news stories promulgated by social media;

◆ Educate students to critically analyze information and act as informed citizens;

◆ Encourage AASCU institutions to facilitate their students’ participation in the elections process to the maximum extent possible;

◆ Oppose state legislative interventions that unnecessarily and inappropriately limit college students’ ability to vote;
CAMPUS CLIMATE: SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

- Defend the legality of university admissions, financial aid and faculty appointment policies intended to promote diversity;
- Support outreach and targeted support programs for underserved populations;
- Support minority-serving institutions;
- Promote policies that maximize an inclusive campus environment for all students, faculty and staff;
- Support and promote policies that assist underserved students in fully participating in and continuing their postsecondary education;
- Promote access not only to high-quality certificates, but also full-fledged academic credentials for all students seeking higher education;
- Restore Pell eligibility for incarcerated individuals to assist with rehabilitation and re-entry into society;
- “Ban the box” on admissions applications and engage in any preventative due diligence and threat assessment based on past criminal convictions only after an academic judgment about applicants has been made;
- Support the continuation and proper funding of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Tuition Assistance Program;
- Ensure active-duty servicemembers and veterans continue to have access to educational programs and credentials that are broadly recognized and have value within the civilian sector;
- Support the maintenance and improvement of GI Bill educational benefits;
- Support less restrictive policies governing active duty and veteran benefits—policies are hamstringing students and putting up barriers to degree completion;
- Improve institutional accountability and oversight for institutional participation in GI Bill educational benefits;
- Support and improve the Veterans Affairs’ efforts to improve efficient delivery of GI Bill educational benefits to veterans;
- Provide active-duty and veteran students with specific support services to meet their unique needs;
- Improve coordination among the agencies regarding the unique needs of servicemembers and veterans;
- Support Executive Order 13607—Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members;
- Support legislation to create a pathway for legalization for individuals brought to the United States as children;
- Advocate for international exchange programs and reasonable international student and scholar visa policies; and
- Oppose inappropriate restrictions on travel to the United States by international students and scholars.
QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND OUTCOMES

◆ Preserve and protect academic freedom and institutional autonomy at public institutions;
◆ Oppose state efforts to politically micromanage academic decisions regarding admissions criteria, faculty, curriculum and instruction at public institutions;
◆ Oppose political interference with research and the academic peer-review process;
◆ Oppose arbitrary restrictions on international exchange and collaborative research activities of public institutions;
◆ Encourage state policymakers to recognize issues of institutional/system governance, equity and academic quality in all policies associated with the state role in higher education financing;
◆ Work with all stakeholders in reviewing and revisiting accreditation’s role within the triad: the federal government, states and accrediting bodies;
◆ Preserve the American tradition of political non-interference in academic judgments about programmatic quality;
◆ Reduce unnecessary costs by more tightly defining the accreditation process and its expected outcomes;
◆ Continue to work with Congress and the administration to chart a workable federal policy on teacher preparation;
◆ Urge policymakers to align teacher preparation requirements with the 2015 reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act;
◆ Support the Teacher/Educator Quality Partnership Program;
◆ Encourage state efforts to develop appropriate licensure standards based on valid, reliable and objective data, and align assessment of teacher preparation programs with those standards;
◆ Ensure states evaluate all teacher preparation venues using the same standards;
◆ Support improved teacher salaries to enable the states to recruit and retain qualified teachers;
◆ Provide appropriations for the Rural Development Grants for Rural Colleges and Universities program. These grants encourage partnerships between rural colleges and universities and local entities that promote greater access to college for rural high school students, increase the number of adults in rural communities with a bachelor’s degree or higher, enhance training opportunities, and stimulate technological innovation;
QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND OUTCOMES

◆ Support continued funding for rural broadband enhancements that provide greater access to postsecondary education;
◆ Support efforts to reauthorize, authorize and fund programs that encourage research and partnerships between urban and metropolitan anchor institutions and their communities. These efforts are designed to promote economic and workforce development, community revitalization, teacher recruitment, and greater access to college for urban high school students;
◆ Recognize the contributions of each higher education sector in the strengthening of STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. The entire community’s resources must be tapped when creating, funding and implementing STEM programs that educate future scientists, engineers and mathematicians, and to create research opportunities for students studying in the STEM fields;
◆ Support and improve basic and applied scientific research and education activities for undergraduate programs to complement established graduate and research programming;
◆ Advocate for programs that recruit and support traditionally underrepresented populations in STEM fields, such as students of color, low-income students and women;
◆ Support the creation of institutional incentives for graduate students in fields associated with high-need jobs identified by state workforce service agencies;
◆ Continue support for undergraduate research and mentoring in STEM fields and for STEM pipeline programs promoting P-20 partnerships and articulation agreements;
◆ Support programs that meaningfully engage students in applied research that addresses the nation’s innovation plans for healthcare, energy and national security;
◆ Support technology transfer and workforce training programs that link institutions of higher education with the manufacturing sector and incentivize corporate and private sector investment in these partnerships;
QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY 
AND OUTCOMES

◆ Fund the development and renovation of laboratory facilities and support equipment acquisition that will promote innovative, collaborative scientific and technical research at all institutions of higher education;

◆ Expand federal efforts to support institutions of higher education in improving efficiency in the physical plant, campus transportation and other institutional operations;

◆ Advocate for grant funding at the Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies that support university research in sustainability, renewable energy and green technology;

◆ Support new and emerging forms of instructional and program delivery;

◆ Support net neutrality to ensure that institutions and students continue to have access to an open internet;

◆ Support campus adoption of new and emerging technologies, particularly for students with special needs; and

◆ Support and promote efforts to connect all college graduates to career paths upon completion of their programs.
Bachelor’s Degrees Conferred at Regional Comprehensive State Colleges and Universities as a Percentage of U.S. Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer and Information Sciences</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Professions</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Military Benefits

- 35% of all students enrolled in the DoD Tuition Assistant Program attend AASCU institutions
- 26% of all students receiving Post-9/11 GI benefits attend AASCU institutions
AASCU’s membership of more than 400 public colleges and universities is found throughout the United States, Guam and the Virgin Islands. We range in size from 1,000 students to 44,000. We are found in the inner city, in suburbs, towns and cities, and in remote rural America. We include campuses with extensive offerings in law, medicine and doctoral education—as well as campuses offering associate degrees to complement baccalaureate studies. We are both residential and commuter, and offer online degrees as well. Yet common to virtually every member institution are three qualities that define its work and characterize our common commitments.

◆ We are institutions of access and opportunity. We believe that the American promise should be real for all Americans, and that belief shapes our commitment to access, affordability and educational opportunity, and in the process strengthens American democracy for all citizens.

◆ We are student-centered institutions. We place the student at the heart of our enterprise, enhancing the learning environment and student achievement not only through teaching and advising, but also through our research and public service activities.

◆ We are “stewards of place.” We engage faculty, staff and students with the communities and regions we serve—helping to advance public education, economic development and the quality of life for all with whom we live and who support our work. We affirm that America’s promise extends not only to those who come to the campus but to all our neighbors.

We believe that through this stewardship and through our commitments to access and opportunity and to our students, public colleges and universities effectively and accountably deliver America’s promise. In so doing we honor and fulfill the public trust.