



July 15, 2015

Dear :

This letter may be as significant as any communication you have received from your Association in many years. So please take the time to read this carefully.

We are writing to share with you important decisions that will define both the future of this organization, and more importantly the work of this Association as your national voice. A series of events and circumstances has resulted in the Association's leadership and board coming together to "Frame our Future" in ways that builds the foundation for the positive, pro-active activities that enhance who we are as a sector, and all that we do.

Background

As you know all too well, the current political and economic environment has been incredibly difficult for our sector. At the national level we have witnessed decreases in Association membership, decreases in attendance at our major events, significant decreases in revenues leading to equally large decreases in our operations. Today, our annual operating budget is \$9 million less than the annual operating budget in 2011-2012. This is the reality we face at the most important legislative moment in our sector's history as the Congress begins the process of Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Our opponents have been on an ideological attack that attempts to define every institutions of our sector with the same negatives. The Administration's incessant attacks over six years have only increased in recent months. The net result may appear to be a sector diminished, but the real outcome is the loss of education, career skills and career opportunities for millions of citizens who were seeking a place in America's middle-class.

Over the last two years, this environment, combined with other factors, has

resulted in the decisions of several publicly-traded institutions to no longer continue their APSCU membership. The immediate impact of this decision is an ever greater loss in membership dues and operating revenues at this critical time. To put it simply; the board has just approved a revised budget for FY16 that reflects \$3 million less in revenue than the budget passed one year ago.

The New Opportunity

But this also presents us with a new opportunity to better define who we are, the students we serve, and the incredible outcomes our students achieve. This week, your Board of Directors convened for a special meeting to chart out the strategies that will guide us as we move forward with new purpose and focus. We are excited to share with you the decisions made by your Board of Directors earlier this week:

1. The Association – and the sector – will be defined by our mission, not the corporate structure of our institutions. Since our earliest history, this sector has been described by our work in empowering students with the career skills that prepare them for career success. Today, that mission is both more important than ever before, and more in need. We will lift up our commitment to providing students with postsecondary career education and we welcome all institutions – public, private non-profit and private for-profit – to join in this common commitment to equipping their students with the education and skills essential for a place in America’s middle class.

2. More than one of you has shared with us the statement, “We seek a more balanced and positive press coverage of our sector.” Recognizing the need to engage in public communications and public relations within the communities we serve, the Board has approved the creation of a new, unique branding and positioning campaign to be made available to every member institution. Unlike previous conversations, this will not be a national media campaign executed by your Association. Rather, we will give the tools to every member institution so that you can engage in effective communications/messaging within your community. But by using common messages throughout the nation, we will lift up the importance of equipping students with postsecondary career education at this critical time. The program will be developed with some of the best research and strategic thinking we can tap. Our goal is for this program to be available for you to use within your community by the end of this calendar year.

As part of this effort, you should also know that we plan to carefully review the current name of the Association – which never really defined either our membership or our mission. A name that focuses on the corporate structure of some members, rather than the mission of providing students postsecondary

career education can be improved upon – and we intend to do just that!

3. As a sector committed to appropriate, effective student consumer protections rather than more government regulations, a taskforce of your Board is now considering what student protections should become a part of our organization's principles. We will be sharing these commitments to student protection in the near future.

4. We will immediately begin to communicate with all institutions, across all sectors of postsecondary education, inviting them to join our efforts in providing high-quality, career education to students in ways that empowers them with real skills, a real job, with real wages and a real chance at a place in America's middle-class. We seek to build a new, growing, energized commitment in government relations, research, communications and professional development centered in postsecondary career education.

Creating our Future, with Your Help

As many of our colleagues across the sector have shared with us in recent days, these changes - no matter how difficult – have the potential to create a new beginning for the sector and the association. But this will only happen with your help and commitment. Today, we have approximately 140 education members. We know there are 600 private sector schools who are not currently members. And we know there are many other non-profit schools engaged in this same mission.

We need your help at this critical time. We need each of us to reach out to our colleagues and emphasize to them the critical importance of having a strong national voice at this time. Whether it be the fight on Gainful Employment; the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act; fighting to preserve continued access for Veterans; or restoring access through ATB, this may be the most important year ever for our sector.

Can we count on your help? Please feel free to call or write to us. We seek your partnership and we want to work with you in ways that frames the future for our sector, our schools and the students we serve.

Sincerely,

Steve Gunderson
President and CEO

Roger Dalton
APSCU Board Chair

