American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors
February 20-21, 2026
In-Person Meeting, Washington D.C.

Board Members in Attendance: Hala Abou Arraj, Wendolyn Davis, Carrie Jeffers, Caroline Laguerre-Brown, Cassandra Moore, Connie Newsome, Roslyn Perry, Tiffani Robertson, Brenda Selman, Beth Warner, Kristi Wold-McCormick, Max Xiong

Incoming Board Members in Attendance: Scott Campbell, Chris Dorsten, Lenell Hahn,

Staff Members in Attendance: Quintina Barnett Gallion, Tina DeNeen, Melanie Gottlieb, Martha Henebry, Tiffany Hsu, Mike Simmons

Guests in Attendance: Paul Grambsch, Adam Proger, Jason Tyszko, Peter Wolk

Discussion List

Non-Profit Governance and Board Responsibilities

Attorney Wolk joined the meeting to walk the Board through the hierarchy of legal authority, the Articles of Incorporation, the protections afforded to board members, the fundamentals of nonprofit governance structure, and the fiduciary duties of non-profit directors. He also reviewed board member obligations, including acting in the best interest of the organization; ensuring compliance with corporate documents; upholding ethical integrity and accountability; and reviewing, approving, and supporting the organization's mission, vision, programs, and policies.

AACRAO Q4 Portfolio Review and Market Outlook

AACRAO financial advisors Adam Proger and Paul Grambsch joined the meeting to provide the Board with the annual report on AACRAO's investment portfolio performance and an outlook on current market conditions and trends.

Proger reviewed the portfolio's performance over the past year. He noted that this time last year there was significant market uncertainty as a new presidential administration took office; however, the year ultimately concluded as one of the strongest market years in recent history. Strength in the markets was supported in part by the fact that not all goods and services were impacted by tariffs.

Key highlights included:

- U.S. stock market increased by 17%.
- Emerging and international markets finished the year strong.

- Gold increased by 64%; silver increased by 140%.
- Bonds returned 7% for the year.
- AACRAO's overall portfolio increased by 14.7%, ending the year at $11.7 million.
- Year-to-date, the portfolio is up 3.5%. The bond portfolio has outperformed its benchmark index by 7.75%.

Grambsch provided an overview of broader market conditions. He noted that stock valuations are currently elevated, ranking in the 95th percentile compared to the past 20 years. While stocks historically trend upward over time, current pricing suggests a higher sensitivity to market risks.

He outlined several potential risks that could contribute to market volatility, including:

- Reacceleration of inflation
- Negative job growth
- A Federal Reserve pivot back to rate hikes
- Underperformance in AI and technology sectors
- Unsuccessful technology IPOs
- Significant corporate margin contraction
- Weak demand at Treasury auctions
- Renewed concerns about Federal Reserve independence
- U.S. debt downgrades by rating agencies
- Escalating geopolitical conflicts
- Energy shocks causing oil price spikes
- Midterm election-related uncertainty

While not all of these risks are expected to materialize, they could contribute to increased volatility. Some additional observations include:

- Approximately 50% of consumer spending is driven by the top 10% of consumers, who also hold a significant share of stock market assets.
- International markets have less exposure to technology and are more concentrated in industrial and healthcare sectors.

Grambsch concluded that the base case remains supportive of a continued bull market; however, 2026 may bring heightened volatility.

<u>Strategy and Planning Division Overview</u>
Associate Executive Director Barnett Gallion provided the Board with an overview of the Strategy & Planning division, including staff names, titles, and their respective roles within each department and functional area. She also noted that following a recent organizational restructure and the dissolution of the Research and Policy division, the International and Government Relations functions now report to and operate within the Strategy & Planning division.

<u>Employer Trends, Finance & Data: Future Trends & Opportunities</u>

Jason Tyszko, who works with both the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and its affiliated foundation, joined the meeting as a guest speaker. Tyszko noted that most of his work is on the foundation side, where he oversees a significant portion of the organization's education and workforce programs. His presentation focused on three topics: the New Data Paradigm, the National Skills Exchange Initiative, and emerging work related to Skills Savings Accounts.

Tyszko noted that Learning and Employment Records (LERs) are a common theme across all three topics. Since his previous presentation to the Board two years ago, the topic has gained increased national attention, including the first congressional hearing on LERs. Consultant Alex Kaplan testified at the hearing, which received bipartisan support, with lawmakers from both parties expressing interest in pursuing further work in this area. Tyszko also referenced efforts by the U.S. Department of Labor, including the launch of the CTO Challenge, which aims to support the development of new workforce talent initiatives.

Tyszko then discussed the New Data Paradigm, a project operating under the T3 Network umbrella. The initiative emerged in response to changes in federal workforce data infrastructure, including the dismantling of several legacy systems, as well as new policy developments such as the passage of the One Big Beautiful Bill. Under the legislation, states must meet certain compliance requirements by January 1, 2027, in order to continue operating Medicaid programs. The New Data Paradigm aims to place individuals (learners and workers) in control of their own records while enabling the secure sharing of verified skills and credentials. The initiative is intended to reduce repetitive reporting burdens for employers and institutions while also improving labor market transparency.

The second topic Tyszko addressed was the National Skills Exchange Initiative, which builds on the concepts introduced through the New Data Paradigm. The initiative focuses on learning opportunity data, much of which can be automated. The National Skills Exchange may initially launch as a demonstration project for the New Data Paradigm and could eventually be deployed across multiple levels of government. For example, governors and state agencies could use tools like this to determine whether particular programs align with eligibility requirements or workforce priorities.

Tyszko also noted that the T3 Network is working toward launching an all-skills talent marketplace. The platform will allow users to access free prototype tools that enable them to create, issue, and store records, validate the contents of those records, and convert them into resumes. These tools could also create pathways for programs such as Infuse to integrate into the system. As more organizations begin issuing records, however, the issue of record intake across institutions will become increasingly important. Historically, AACRAO's work has focused primarily on the issuance of records, but the processes for receiving and integrating these records across institutions remain inconsistent. Tyszko noted that regulatory action may eventually be needed to address these data standardization challenges.

Finally, Tyszko discussed the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's work related to Skills Savings Accounts. The concept would create flexible savings accounts dedicated to workforce skill development, particularly for workers seeking to upskill. The proposal is intended to complement existing benefits under Section 127 of the tax code, which allows employers to provide tuition reimbursement benefits that are not considered taxable income up to a specified amount. These benefits currently support approximately $30 billion annually in investments in employee education and credentialing opportunities. However, Tyszko noted that even when employers offer tuition reimbursement benefits, only about 3 percent of employees typically utilize them. Skills Savings Accounts are intended to provide a more flexible alternative, similar to a health savings account (HAS), that would allow workers to access funds more immediately for skill development. The foundation plans to continue advancing this proposal and hopes to move the concept forward in the coming months.

Call to Order
President Moore called the meeting to order at 12:32 PM EST on February 20, 2026.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes
MOTION 2026.02.01 – It was duly moved and seconded to approve the consent agenda, and the January 21, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. APPROVED

Officer Reports
All officer reports were uploaded to AACRAO Exchange and approved as a part of the consent agenda.

Committee Reports
All committee reports were uploaded into AACRAO Exchange and approved as a part of the consent agenda.

Old Business
<u>New Strategic Plan</u>
Vice President Jeffers presented the board with the final proposal and draft tactics for the new strategic plan. It was noted that the tactics are in draft form as the AACRAO staff continues to develop and finalize those. The tactics are not subject to Board approval. In addition, AACRAO's mission, vision, and values have remained unchanged from the current strategic plan.

MOTION 2026.02.02 – It was duly moved and seconded to accept AACRAO's new strategic plan as presented. APPROVED

New Business

Membership Renewal Deep Dive

Associate Executive Director Henebry and AACRAO staff member Lojko provided the Board with an overview of the recent membership structure change and the current composition of AACRAO's membership. Since the implementation of the new membership structure, AACRAO has added more than 10,000 new members. Approximately 85% of institutions have added new members at no additional cost since institutional rosters opened. Among institution types, 48% of small colleges, 75% of community colleges, and 83% of minority-serving institutions have added new members.

Lojko also presented a comparison of membership by position between 2023 and 2026. Senior leadership representation decreased from 14% in 2023 to 11% in 2026, while entry-level or early-career membership increased from 15% in 2023 to 20% in 2026. The overall retention rate has remained steady between 2023 and 2026.

As of February 16, 2026, AACRAO has collected 97% of membership dues, totaling $3,212,000. At that time, 114 institutions had not yet renewed. The Membership Department continues outreach through email, mailings, phone calls, and faxes. Of the 53 institutions that have indicated they will not renew, the group represents a mix of expenditure levels, with many citing budget cuts as the reason for nonrenewal.

Looking ahead, dues will increase by 2.7% for the 2026–2027 membership year. Institutions that remain within their current expenditure categories will see increases ranging from $19 to $190. AACRAO is also exploring growth opportunities, including outreach to new institutions.

Non-Voting Member Exception

Vice President Warner presented a proposal requesting that Melissa Manuel be allowed to continue serving as a member of the Academic Progress Committee, which is housed within Group 3 of the Program Committee. Manuel is currently seeking employment after being laid off from her previous institution, NEOM University. She is presently enrolled as a graduate student and therefore does not meet the standard eligibility requirements to serve on the Academic Progress Committee without an exception granted by the Board. Vice President Warner also provided the completed non-voting member exception rubric for Manuel.

During the discussion, several Board members noted confusion regarding the non-voting member exception rubric. Some had understood that the rubric would be completed by each Board member reviewing the request, rather than solely by the individual requesting the exception. After much discussion, it was noted that the process for completing the rubric needs to be documented. Vice President Robertson, Vice President Warner, Vice President Jeffers volunteered to take on that task on providing clear directions for completing the rubric.

The Board also discussed the appropriate length of time for the exception. Following discussion, the Board reached consensus to grant the exception and allow Manuel to serve on the committee through June 2026.

MOTION 2026.02.03 – It was duly moved and seconded to allow Melissa Manuel to continue serving as a member of the Academic Progress Committee until June 2026. APPROVED

<u>N&E Exception</u>

President Moore informed the Board that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Nominations and Elections (N&E) Committee had brought forward a proposal requesting that the Board grant an exception allowing members of the incoming 2026–2027 N&E Committee to serve even if they are unable to attend the June Leadership Meeting. The June Leadership Meeting is the meeting where N&E Committee members are onboarded. The N&E Commitment and Timeline document states that attendance at the June Leadership Meeting is required. When completing a position profile, all applicants are asked to read the document and then agree to the terms and conditions. The N&E Handbook mentions the June Leadership Meeting, but does not indicate that meeting attendance is required.

The incoming N&E Chair and Vice-Chair were notified that several elected committee members could not attend the June Leadership meeting due to conflicts. It was noted that the language in the N&E Handbook is unclear regarding whether attendance at the June Leadership Meeting is required, mandatory, or strongly encouraged. Additionally, it is unclear whether the 2025–2026 N&E Chair and Vice-Chair informed the slated candidates that attendance at the June Leadership Meeting was required at the time of slating.

The proposal also highlighted the need to revise the N&E Handbook to clarify expectations regarding Leadership Meeting attendance and to outline any consequences for non-attendance if the meeting is deemed mandatory. The Board also discussed whether the current number of Alternates (three per committee year) is sufficient should attendance requirements restrict members' ability to serve.

Following discussion, the Board reached consensus to grant an exception allowing all elected N&E members to serve during this cycle regardless of their ability to attend the June Leadership Meeting. The N&E Chair and Vice-Chair were also encouraged to review the handbook and bring recommended revisions to the Board for consideration.

MOTION 2026.02.04 – It was duly moved and seconded to allow Keisha Campbell, Jonathan Helm, Steve Downing and Rebecca Mathern to serve on the 2026-2027 Nominations and Elections Committee, despite not being able to attend the June Leadership Meeting, and to extend the same allowance to any other N&E members who may have similar conflicts but have not yet notified the Board. APPROVED

The Board resumed information and discussion session on Friday, February 20, 2026 at 9:00 AM EST.

Board Members in Attendance: Hala Abou Arraj, Wendolyn Davis, Carrie Jeffers, Caroline Laguerre-Brown, Cassandra Moore, Connie Newsome, Roslyn Perry, Tiffani Robertson, Brenda Selman, Beth Warner, Kristi Wold-McCormick, Max Xiong

Incoming Board Members in Attendance: Scott Campbell, Chris Dorsten, Lenell Hahn,

Staff Members in Attendance: Mike Bilfinger, Tina DeNeen, Melanie Gottlieb, Martha Henebry, Tiffany Hsu, Mike Simmons

Guests in Attendance: Mona Birchfield, William Donahue, Matt Zieger

Discussion List

<u>LATINX Caucus Name Change Proposal</u>

Vice President Perry noted that the Latinx Caucus has proposed changing the name of the caucus to a term that holds greater meaning for the community it represents. The proposed name is Raíces Caucus, which means “Roots” in Spanish.

The Board discussed whether the caucus might consider an alternative name, noting that individuals who do not speak Spanish may not understand the meaning of “Raíces” or could potentially mispronounce it as “Races” Caucus. Board members also noted that if the caucus moves forward with the name Raíces Caucus, it would be important to provide clear communication about the change, including the meaning of the term and its correct pronunciation.

One Board member suggested that the term “Latine” could be considered as another option. Vice President Perry will take the Board’s feedback and suggestions back to the Latinx Caucus for further discussion.

<u>FY2025 Audit Presentation</u>

William Donahue, CPA and Partner at Aprio, AACRAO's auditing firm, joined the meeting along with his colleague Shane Mowery, CPA and Director at Aprio, to present the audited FY 2025 financial statements.

Donahue began with several governance updates, including the adoption of *ASU 2025-05, Financial Instruments—Credit Losses (Topic 326): Measurement of Credit Losses for Accounts Receivable and Contract Assets*. It was noted that the adoption had no significant impact on AACRAO's financial statements. Donahue also reported that there were no difficulties encountered in working with management during the audit process.

Aprio will issue a management representation letter that aligns with the opinion report date. In accordance with professional standards, Aprio accumulated all necessary audit adjustments identified during the audit, other than those considered clearly trivial, and communicated them to the appropriate level of management. None of the adjustments identified through audit procedures and corrected by management were material, either individually or in the aggregate, to the financial statements as a whole. Donahue also noted that the financial statement disclosures are neutral, consistent, and clear.

It was further reported that at the end of the fiscal year ending September 2024, AACRAO notified the IRS that $198,584 in Employee Retention Credit claims was disallowed and subsequently wrote off that amount. Employee Retention Credit receivables of $7,297 and $578,497 were included on the Statement of Financial Position as of September 30, 2025 and September 30, 2024, respectively.

Donahue concluded by noting that AACRAO received a clean, unmodified opinion on the audit.

MOTION 2026.02.05 – It was duly moved and seconded to accept the FY2025 audit was presented. APPROVED

<u>Generative Topic Discussion: Artificial Intelligence (AI)</u>

Matt Zieger, Chief Program Officer at GitLab, joined the meeting as a guest speaker. He noted that the current wave of artificial intelligence (AI) development began roughly three years ago and that much of the foundation's work has been built during what he described as an "AI-native era."

Zieger shared that the GitLab Foundation has reviewed more than 1,400 AI applications to better understand the future of AI and what it may mean for organizations such as AACRAO. He is also the founder of the AI for Economic Opportunity Fund, created in partnership with OpenAI and the Ballmer Group, which has supported more than 50 AI-related grants over the past two and a half years. In addition, Zieger serves as the Co-founder and Chair of OpportunityAI, the largest U.S. network of philanthropies investing in AI applications that advance economic opportunity. He also co-founded the Fund.AI conference in collaboration with Google.org and the McGovern Foundation. Zieger further noted that he helped fund and develop Robinhood's first AI-focused grant fund dedicated to poverty reduction and also founded and led a national funder collaborative focused on improving credential data quality.

President Moore asked Zieger to elaborate on his involvement with Robinhood's AI for Poverty Reduction grant fund. Zieger explained that approximately two years ago Robinhood approached GitLab with an interest in launching a grantmaking initiative focused on reducing poverty. He supported the effort and contributed $1 million to the initiative, which subsequently helped attract an additional $3 million in donations.

Zieger explained that the GitLab Foundation measures success using a single primary metric: increasing lifetime earnings per dollar spent. As a result, when the foundation invests in workforce training programs, the focus is on how those investments translate into increased earnings, financial stability, and long-term economic mobility. He noted that the foundation currently has 192 grant-funded projects underway and maintains public Tableau dashboards that showcase its work and outcomes.

Zieger emphasized that higher education data systems are central to many workforce changes currently underway. While pathways to middle- and upper-class earnings continue to evolve, institutions are working to determine how to make their systems more effective and efficient. One of the major challenges the GitLab Foundation seeks to address is the large population of Americans with some college but no degree. More than 17% of Americans over the age of 18 fall into this category, which translates to an estimated $40,000 per year earnings gap per individual.

He further noted that only about 12% of non-degree credentials deliver meaningful wage gains. At the same time, there are approximately 1.85 million unique credentials in the United States, leaving workers with little guidance on how to navigate this complex marketplace or determine which learning opportunities will lead to employment and increased earnings. Much of the relevant data needed to address these challenges resides within higher education institutions.

According to Zieger, major philanthropic funders are increasingly aligning around a shared thesis: the labor market requires modern data infrastructure capable of verifying what individuals know and can do, independent of whether they hold a traditional degree. AI itself is typically not funded as a standalone initiative but rather integrated as a core strategy within broader workforce and education programs.

Funders are paying close attention to several key issues, including bias in skills inference, data governance, employer-recognized value, interoperability, FERPA compliance, and equitable access. Zieger emphasized that organizations demonstrating responsible, well-governed approaches to AI will be best positioned to attract philanthropic investment and build credibility in this space.

He also noted that the most common use case for AI in the projects his foundation supports is administrative enablement. Examples include assisting students with completing FAFSA applications, screening individuals for eligibility for public benefits, mapping career pathways, and making skills more visible to employers. These efforts often involve transforming large volumes of messy, unstructured data from multiple sources into usable information. Traditionally, this work is expensive and time-consuming for institutions, but AI can help scale these efforts—effectively adding the equivalent capacity of 10–15 additional staff members.

Based on three years of funding AI-related initiatives, GitLab foundation learned four key lessons:

- Infrastructure beats applications.
- Embeddedness wins over overlays.
- Time savings is the gateway to impact.
- AI is a translator of value.

Zieger concluded his presentation by asking the Board to consider a future-focused exercise built around the following prompt:

Prompt: It is the year 2029. AI is dramatically more capable and less expensive than it is today. Error rates are low enough for reliable production use, data governance frameworks have matured, and interoperability standards have been widely adopted.

In this scenario, a veteran transfers from a community college with a combination of credit-bearing coursework, an Anthropic Career Certificate, a publicly funded workforce training credential, military service records, and two years of retail management experience. The institution's student information system (SIS) is able to ingest all of these records, map each element to verified skills, and produce a comprehensive learner record that an employer can easily read and trust within minutes. The student also has access to a dashboard with predictive indicators that outline potential career pathways, as well as related course and degree options based on their verified skills.

Zieger asked the Board to reflect on the scenario and consider two questions:

1) What would need to change at your institution to make this scenario possible?

2) What new opportunities would this create for students and for the profession that are not possible today?

Board members were asked to reflect on these questions during the lunch break and record their responses on the Post-it notes that were provided.

Non-Profit Board Accounting 101

Principal Birchfield guided the Board through a presentation on how to read financial statements, including the Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Activities, and Statement of Cash Flows. She also explained the distribution of contributions and pledges, as well as net assets with and without donor restrictions. Additionally, she covered investments, endowments, and reserves, clarifying that AACRAO does not have an endowment. She provided a brief overview of the Form 990, including what it covers, how to interpret it, and who is required to file it. Lastly, she discussed the audit process and provided a general overview of the budget preparation process

When does AACRAO make a statement?

Executive Director Gottlieb explained how AACRAO handles issues and determines when to make a statement. Before issuing a statement, AACRAO evaluates it through seven lenses: Public Policy Agenda, Vision, Mission, Values, Strategic Plan, Stakeholder Engagement, and Ability to Impact. The Public Policy Agenda is developed by the PPAG group annually, and shared with the AACRAO Board. All AACRAO work must align with the strategic plan, mission, vision, and values. The Board should keep in mind that member institutions are the core members of AACRAO, while partner organizations, volunteers, governance structures (e.g., PPAG, Caucuses), and the general membership is a stakeholder.

The ability to impact is assessed by considering the following:

- The potential impact of AACRAO's involvement on resources and reputation.
- A national scope with global influences.
- The precedent and AACRAO’s historical stance on the issue.
- The principles of institutional autonomy and decentralization in U.S. higher education.
- AACRAO's reputation and the balance of association risk to avoid negatively impacting other efforts.
- Legal and ethical compliance, including limitations on 501(c)(3) lobbying, exclusions on political campaigning, and required registration and reporting of activities.

Executive Director Gottlieb reminded the Board that as a national association, AACRAO cannot comment on individual state legislature. It can however, help state and regional organizations by giving them the skills to comment on their own state legislature. There are tools and resources offered through the Advocacy Center on the AACRAO website.

Federal Update

AACRAO staff member Bilfinger guided the Board through several federal policy developments to watch in FY 2026, including:

- An estimated $11.5 billion Pell Grant shortfall
- The Department of Defense considering ending graduate tuition assistance at 33 U.S. institutions
- The Department of Justice lawsuit against Harvard
- A warning from the Student Privacy Policy Office that using student voting data constitutes a FERPA violation
- $65 million in Labor Department grants for community college workforce development programs
- A Nevada Supreme Court ruling finding that FERPA does not apply to emails
- Ongoing concerns related to the student debt crisis

The Board was encouraged to remain engaged by subscribing to AACRAO Transcript, following updates and supporting advocacy through The Advocacy Center, and participating in the quarterly webinars hosted by AACRAO's Government Relations team.

AACRAO staff Bilfinger also provided an overview of FY 2026 federal appropriations, noting that Congress passed a $1.2 trillion appropriations package funding most federal agencies, with the exception of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The package includes approximately $839 billion for the Department of Defense, $221 billion for Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and $103 billion for Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development. A proposed $64 billion allocation for DHS stalled during negotiations. The Labor–HHS–Education bill includes $49 billion for the National Institutes of Health (an increase of $415 million over FY 2025), $79 billion for the Department of Education, $25 billion for federal student aid programs, and $3 billion for higher education programs.

The Reimagining and Improving Student Education (RISE) Committee convened September 29–October 3, 2025, to consider changes to the federal student loan system. Proposals discussed included eliminating Grad PLUS loans, establishing new annual and aggregate loan caps, and revising repayment options through the creation of two new repayment plans intended to eventually replace all existing plans.

Representative Mike Lawler also introduced the Professional Student Degree Act, which seeks to amend the One Big Beautiful Bill's definition of a professional degree. Under the proposed legislation, degrees in fields such as pharmacy, veterinary medicine, law, accounting, and public health would be classified as professional degrees.

The Accountability in Higher Education and Access through Demand-Driven Workforce Pell (AHEAD) Committee – Part 1 convened December 8–12, 2025, to address the creation of the Workforce Pell program. The program would allow Pell Grant funds to be used for certain short-term programs lasting 8 to 15 weeks. State governors would have significant authority to determine eligible programs. Workforce Pell awards would count toward the $7,395 maximum Pell Grant, with implementation scheduled for July 1, 2026. The first disbursement date has not yet been determined.

The AHEAD Committee – Part 2, which met January 5–9, 2026, addressed new accountability measures, including the Earnings Premium metric and revisions to Gainful Employment regulations. The previous debt-to-earnings ratio used under the Financial Value Transparency/Gainful Employment framework was rescinded. The Earnings Premium metric would apply to all institutions receiving Title IV funds, not only for-profit institutions. It would require that at least half of an institution's Title IV recipients and half of its Title IV funds are not tied to programs classified as low-earning outcomes. These determinations would be based on comparisons between the median earnings of graduates from specific programs and the earnings of working adults in the same state who did not complete a comparable postsecondary credential.

On August 7, 2025, a Presidential Memorandum called for increased transparency in college admissions. As part of this effort, the Admissions and Consumer Transparency Supplement (ACTS) survey was added to the existing annual IPEDS data collection. The ACTS data collection opened December 18, 2025, and will close March 18, 2026. The survey requires four-year institutions with selective admissions to report detailed, disaggregated data on applications, admissions, enrollment, and financial aid, broken out by race-sex pairings, GPA quintiles, test-score quintiles, family income ranges, Pell eligibility, parental education (first-generation status), application round, and other factors, across seven academic years (2019–2026). Graduate and professional program data must be reported by field of study (CIP code).

AACRAO staff Bilfinger noted that IPEDS does not currently collect admissions and financial aid data at this level of detail. The expanded reporting requirements come at a time when the Department of Education recently cancelled the IPEDS training contract that supported campus data reporters. Concerns were also raised about the requirement to report seven years of historical data, particularly because some state data retention policies require records to be maintained for as little as one year. The administrative burden is also significant: the Department of Education estimates that ACTS data collection will require approximately 200 hours, compared to 78.5 hours for all other IPEDS survey components combined.

AACRAO staff Bilfinger also provided an update on the work of the Accreditation, Innovation, and Modernization (AIM) Committee, which is exploring regulatory changes aimed at encouraging the entry of new accreditors, ensuring accrediting agencies enforce their standards, and reducing unnecessary costs and administrative burden on institutions. The committee is also considering expectations that accreditors assess quality through data-driven student outcomes, ensure compliance with federal civil rights laws, strengthen the separation between accrediting agencies and related trade associations, and improve college affordability by reforming transfer-of-credit policies.

Finally, AACRAO staff Bilfinger noted several additional policy developments involving AACRAO. The association submitted comments on September 25, 2025, in response to the Secretary’s supplemental priorities and definitions related to career pathways and workforce readiness. A congressional hearing on Learning and Employment Records (LERs) took place on December 5, 2025, followed by a $15 million grant competition announced on December 15, 2025, to support the development of state talent marketplaces. Learning and Employment Records will also be a focus of AACRAO’s 2026 Hill Day, scheduled for July 14, 2026, with applications open through March 30, 2026.

Division Overview

The AACRAO Executive Team provided the Board with an overview of the four divisions within AACRAO, introducing each staff member and their responsibilities. The Strategy & Planning division overview was covered by Associate Executive Director Barnett Gallion during Thursday’s board meeting.

Associate Executive Director Simmons discussed the various grants AACRAO is involved in, outlining the timelines and funding amounts for each project. He also informed the Board that, following the recent organizational restructuring, Dr. Wendy Kilgore, who leads AACRAO’s research efforts, now reports through the Business Development and Strategic Partnerships division.

For FY 2025, 47 corporate members joined or renewed, generating $139,500 in dues revenue against a budget of $112,000, exceeding the target by $27,500. For FY 2026, AACRAO has collected $43,610 in corporate dues to date, which is on pace with the end-of-February target of $62,000.

AACRAO also launched the Business Solutions Showcase, which has already reached its budgeted revenue goal of $25,000. Conference sponsorships continue to perform well: the Annual Meeting in Seattle generated $90,245 in sponsorship revenue and $12,500 in first-time corporate registration fees; the Tech & Transfer Conference generated $30,100 in sponsorship revenue; and the SEM Conference in Las Vegas generated $69,195 in sponsorship revenue.

Associate Executive Director Simmons also provided a brief update on the Consulting department, noting that there are currently 57 leads, 36 proposals have been sent, and 29 projects are active. Registrar-related projects remain the most frequently requested service area, with 23 requests to date.

Next, Associate Executive Director DeNeen provided an update on the Education and Member Development division, including a brief introduction to the staff members on her team. She also reviewed the locations for upcoming Annual Meetings through 2028 and introduced the Board to Brian Gann, the new SEM Conference Director, who will assume the role beginning with the 2027 SEM Conference.

Associate Executive Director DeNeen also reminded the Board of several upcoming events, including the June Leadership Meeting, The Assembly, and Convergence. In addition, she introduced the newly appointed Program Committee Coordinator appointees.

She then provided a brief overview of key updates for the upcoming Annual Meeting in New Orleans. Board members were reminded to sign up for individual board photos. Associate Executive Director DeNeen also highlighted several plenary speakers and shared some new things planned for this year's meeting. For example, photography will not be permitted during caucus meetings, and attendees will be able to opt in to be identified in event photos and receive a link to images in which they appear.

Additionally, a new competency framework will be introduced to the membership at the 2026 Annual Meeting. The Professional Integrity Task Force remains on track to submit recommendations to the Board by July 2026. Finally, the number of ASCEND scholars has increased by 10, bringing Cohort 7 to a total of 21 participants.

Associate Executive Director Henebry provided an overview of the roles and departments within the Operations Division. The Membership Department serves as the association's primary customer service function, managing membership dues as well as recruitment and retention efforts. AACRAO Jobs and the AACRAO Awards program are also housed within this division.

AACRAO Jobs is an online job board focused on positions in registration, admissions, and enrollment management. The AACRAO Awards program, which was established in 1959, currently includes nine awards recognizing contributions to the profession.

The IT department, which supports all AACRAO programs and services, is also part of the Operations Division. In addition, the division oversees accounting, outsourced to CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA), as well as HR.

Staff Report
Executive Director Gottlieb directed the Board's attention to Exchange for additional details on her February report.

MOTION 2026.02.06 – It was duly moved and seconded to accept the Executive Director's report for February 2026 as presented. APPROVED

The meeting was adjourned at 3:42 PM EST.

Board committees met on Saturday, February 21, 2026 from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM EST.

Attachments
Agenda
January 21, 2026 Meeting Minutes
Gitlab Presentation
VP Leadership Report February 2026
HRC Committee Report February 2026
Non-Profit Governance & Board Responsibilities Presentation
N&E Exception Request
Division Overview_2026
Aprio Presentation
AACRAO Membership Update Presentation
AACRAO Positioning Presentation
ATAC SIS Principles.pdf
Final Public Research_Brief_AI_Student_Outcomes_v4.pdf
BOD_Feb_2026_AACRAO_AI_Strategy.docx.pdf
ED Report Feb 2026
AACRAO Q4 2025 Portfolio Review & Market Outlook
Non-Profit Boards Accounting 101 Presentation
February 2026 PSR Committee Report
Finance, Investments & Audit Committee Report – February 2026 Report
VP for Finance – February 2026 Board Report
Past President Report – February 2026
VP at Large Davis – February 2026 Report
President-Elect: February Board Report
VP for Records & Academic Services Board Report
President's Report
Governance-February 2026
VP International Education Report February 2026
Vice President for Information Technology Officer Report
External Board Member Report – February 2026
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