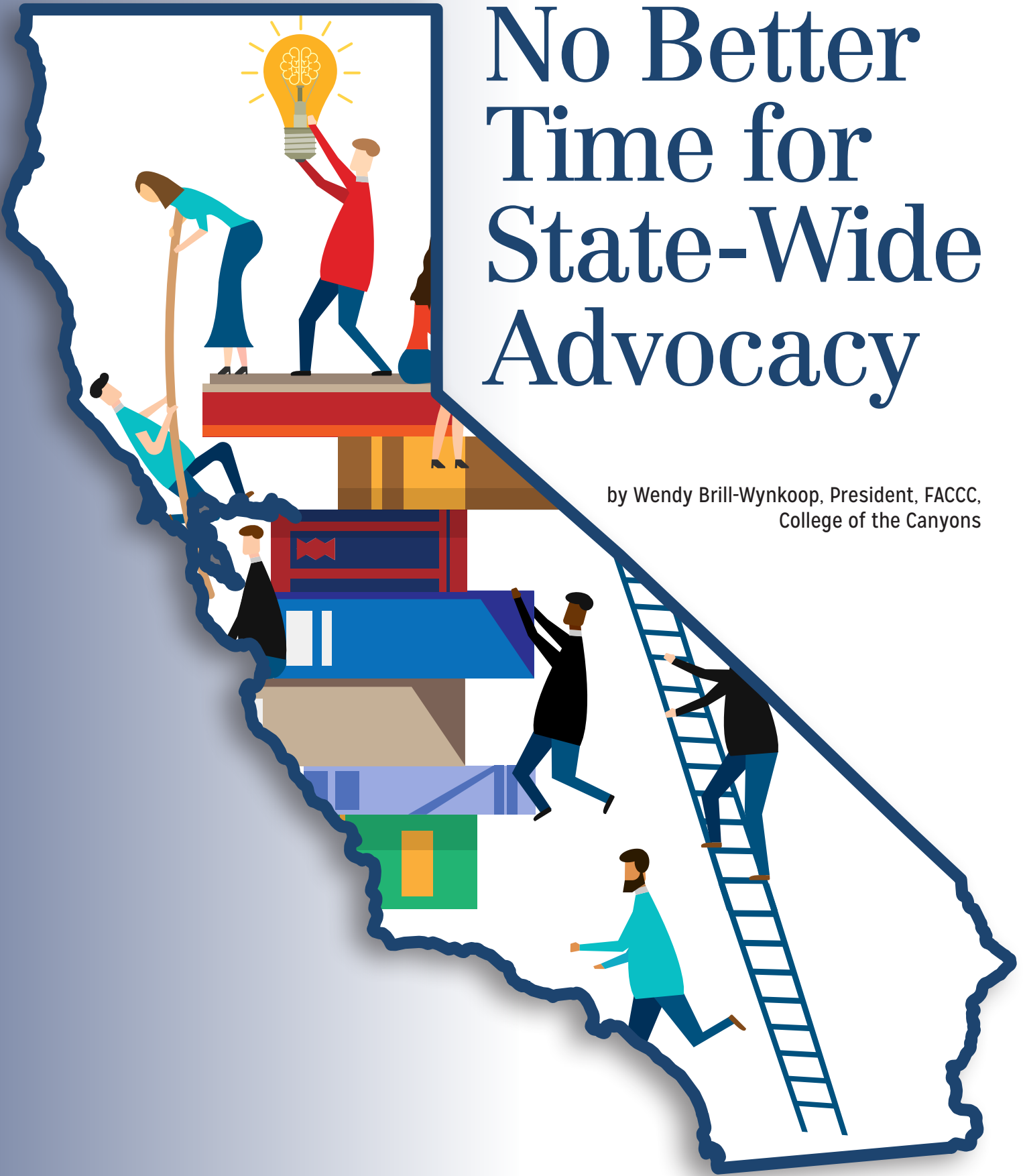


No Better Time for State-Wide Advocacy

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A decade ago, I participated in faculty leadership training through the National Education Association.

Through this training, I worked with faculty from other states, including Florida—a state I realized has a strikingly different higher education governance structure than our own.

I was shocked by the absence of faculty power in Florida’s academic senates, the almost nonexistent unions, the lack of academic freedom in and out of the classroom, and how the politicians determined the curriculum. Recently, Florida reached new extremes when the governor and legislature banned public K-12 elementary school teachers from holding classroom instruction regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

It’s hard to imagine California’s liberal Legislature taking such harsh actions; however, our Legislature spent the last decade handing down many initiatives rooted in short-term political goals. Simultaneously, faculty have found themselves stripped of their rights and responsibilities to provide a solid educational foundation for students.

Taking its cue from the 2010 White House Summit on Community Colleges, the 2012 California Community College Student Success Task Force made poor policy recommendations during the Great Recession of 2008, when it cut funding and turned down hundreds of thousands of students wanting to attend community colleges. Instead of investing more in our public education system to ensure that education remained accessible and affordable for all, our policymakers chose to narrow our mission and limit who we serve to support “equitable access” only for students who could “achieve success.”

In the last decade, the shift to student success has created policies that support full-time students who attend college straight out of high school and have a goal to transfer. Degrees that lead to transfer, dual-enrollment programs, completion-based funding, college promise for full-time students, the redesign of remedial education, and common course numbering have been bolstered or implemented. Even AB 705 (Irwin 2017), which began as a homegrown faculty initiative to reduce lengthy remedial pathways by providing access to transfer-level course work, is now limiting the ability of colleges to provide students with access to preparatory courses.

In his 2012 article, “Closing the Door, Increasing the Gap,” Dr. Gary Rhoades predicted:

“The productivity policy push is leading community colleges to focus on those students who are most likely to succeed. That makes for quite a shift from the historic Statue of Liberty type mission of these colleges. In the name of ‘we can’t do everything’ colleges are engaged in an exercise in probability. But since we know it is middle- and upper-middle-income Anglo students who are most likely to succeed in community colleges, it is actually an exercise in privileging the already advantaged. To move in this direction is to defeat the purpose and give up on the fundamental mission of these colleges. Yet in the name of being ‘realistic,’ that is what colleges and state systems are doing.”

Due to the mandates and initiatives that hurt students on nontraditional paths, equity gaps have remained, and enrollment has declined significantly for older students and students of color. Without a dramatic shift in the rhetoric and focus of community college policies, we will lose students, lay off faculty and staff, and close colleges.

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The legislature has often dismissed the voices of California Community College (CCC) faculty and other CCC system practitioners. Special-interest nonprofit organizations with powerful lobbyists funded by corporate foundations have backed the decade of legislative mandates and convinced our legislators that these policies are best for our students.

So what do we do about it? Faculty must take action—now.

1. Faculty must be involved in the state advocacy process. FACCC and the ASCCC have partnered to grow our faculty advocates. Learn how to advocate for community colleges on the state level, and develop the confidence to connect with local and state-wide representatives.

- **FACCC/ASCCC February's Advocacy Webinar** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7GpFrD5tgk>)
- Attend the **FACCC Advocacy & Policy Conference** in March 2023

2. Get your civic engagement on! Following this upcoming election, over a third of our elected representatives will be new to the state legislature. Make sure our legislative FACCC champions are elected by **volunteering your time to help with their campaigns.**

3. Legislators are elected to create and pass legislation. Working through FACCC and the faculty unions, **faculty need to help propose and sponsor new legislation** that promotes equity among our students, like increasing per-student funding, prioritizing student basic needs and mental health, capacity at UC/CSUs, supporting equal pay for part-time faculty, and providing faculty resources and opportunities for professional development.

If you support FACCC, you can help amplify the faculty voice by expanding our ability to lobby at the Capitol.

Join our 2022-23 FACCC Membership Drive (<https://www.faccc.org/membershipdrive>) to contribute to our mission.

FACCC: Every faculty a member, every member a FACCCtivist!

