



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE BOARD CHAIR

Higher education is being tested as never before. With our institutions, our students, and even the fundamental pillars on which American higher education stands under attack, the American Council on Education (ACE) has been proud to be the leading voice for our broad and diverse community, speaking with singular conviction and clarity. We have championed the voices of our members before Congress and the courts, defended the principle of institutional autonomy, and fought to protect and reforge the compact between higher education and the federal government that has fueled America's innovation and progress for generations.

Through it all, we have been filled with gratitude for your steadfast commitment to our shared mission. With your engagement and support, ACE has stood firm in defending the value and integrity of higher education, tirelessly advocating on behalf of our nation's colleges and universities.

Despite the near-constant upheaval and disruption of the past year, we've continued to reimagine how to best serve you. We updated the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education to include new research activity designations, updated the Basic Classification (now Institutional Classification), and added a new Student Access and Earnings (SAE) Classification. These changes allow us to better recognize where research is happening on our nation's campuses and to reshape how the field understands access, equity, and student success.

The ACE Experience, which included an exclusive ACE on the Hill Day for members, brought nearly 700 higher education leaders together in Washington, DC to explore the most pressing issues facing the sector. Our government relations and legal advocacy teams have worked tirelessly to protect campuses from harmful policies, expanding our work to meet the unique needs of individual states across the country.

We are profoundly grateful for the commitment of our nearly 1,600 member institutions and organizations. Your partnership makes ACE's work possible. As we look ahead, we will continue to defend and elevate the promise of higher education and the transformational role colleges and universities play in every community across our nation. We do all of this because of one simple truth: Higher Education Builds America.

With appreciation and resolve,



Ted Mitchell
President, ACE



Tom Stritikus
Chair, Board of Directors

MISSION

ACE is a membership organization that leads higher education with a united vision for the future. We galvanize our members to make change, and we collaborate across the sector to design solutions for today's challenges, serve the needs of a diverse student population, and shape effective public policy. As the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities, our strength lies in our diverse membership of nearly 1,600 colleges and universities, related associations, and other organizations in the United States and abroad. ACE is the only major higher education association to represent all types of U.S. accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities. Our members educate two out of every three students in all accredited, degree-granting U.S. institutions.



HIGHER EDUCATION BUILDS AMERICA

ACE launched the Higher Education Builds America campaign in October 2024 with a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times*—an open letter to both major presidential candidates that pledged to work with the election winner to innovate and advance opportunity for all Americans. Since that time, the campaign has become a rallying cry uniting diverse institutions under a shared message. The campaign highlights the central, critical role that higher education plays in building America's workforce, economy, national security, and cultural fabric.

MEMBERSHIP

ACE membership includes representation from all 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam as well as nine other countries.



92% of ACE members renew every year—**136 members** have been loyal to ACE for over 100 years.

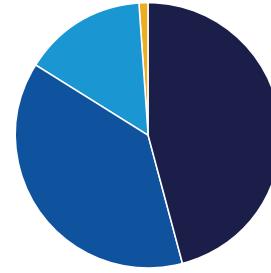
ACE represents **1,520** member institutions and associations that educate 2 out of every 3 students attending accredited U.S. colleges and universities.



Baylor University



Membership By Sector



25% 4-Year Private

21% 4-Year Public

15% 2-Year Public

3% 2-Year Private

University of Tennessee



IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

Outreach

28 ACE webinars attracted **50,000+ registrants**, tackling topics from the value of higher education to artificial intelligence (AI) to campus mental health.



ACE staff presented or spoke at **140+ events** and convenings, reaching **31,000+ participants**, including presidents, policymakers, and higher education leaders nationwide.

Nearly 700 leaders

convened at the inaugural ACE Experience at the Kennedy Center to reimagine the future of higher education.

Season 6 of ACE's dotEDU interactive podcast reached **64,000+ listeners**, including **34,000+** participating live.



ACE experts were quoted and ACE reports, advocacy letters, and other documents were cited **1,400+ times and in 4 op-eds** in major media outlets including *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, CNN, NBC News, *The Wall Street Journal*, and NPR, amplifying the voice of higher education at a critical time.

ACE hosted **4 Capitol Hill events**, including the inaugural ACE on the Hill attended by 53 presidents.



Advocacy



ACE jointly filed **4 major lawsuits** with partner associations to challenge efforts to impose 15 percent indirect cost caps on federal research grants.

ACE led **4 amicus briefs and signed on to 2 more**, shaping higher education's role in pivotal supreme court cases.



55 higher education

organizations signed "A Call to Reforge the Historic Compact Between Higher Education and the Federal Government," an ACE-coordinated statement expressing broad opposition to Trump administration actions jeopardizing the longstanding partnership between the federal government and colleges and universities.

ACE sent **25 community or ACE-only policy letters** to stakeholders across the federal government.



ACE spent **7 months** working to shape congressional and public views on the One Big Beautiful Bill (OBBB), resulting in numerous changes to the final version of the legislation addressing institutional concerns that better targeted the accountability provisions, protected Pell Grant eligibility, eliminated costly tax provisions, and more.



During the OBBB process, nearly **3,000 people sent letters** to their congressional representatives through ACE's website using the Voter Voice tool, addressing student aid, endowments, the taxability of Pell Grants, Medicaid, charitable giving, and sustainability.

Student Success



Military learners sent over **380,000 transcripts** containing ACE credit for prior learning to institutions.

478 Opportunity Colleges and Universities were designated in the groundbreaking launch of the Student Access and Earnings Classification, the new Carnegie Classification that recognizes institutions that advance socioeconomic equity and foster student success.

Working learners earned nearly **363,000 credits** from courses included on transcripts containing ACE credit for prior learning.



Research

Working with UCLA's School of Education and Information Studies, ACE analyzed responses from **24,367 first-year college students** to shed light on who today's entering students are and how higher education can better meet their needs.



ACE aggregated and analyzed over **150,000 data points** on institutional and labor market outcomes to develop a tool illustrating the economic activities of colleges and universities across all 50 states and the District of Columbia, including 435 Congressional districts.

Over 1,000 members of the higher education community participated in ACE surveys to gauge opinions on a wide range of topics.

Communities

24 emerging higher education leaders

were named ACE Fellows for this year's cohort, joining the program of 2,500+ alumni. Since the ACE Fellows Class of 2020–2021, seven Fellows have ascended into the college presidency.

125 ACE Fellows

—then-current and alumni— attended the 2025 Council of Fellows Gathering held **in Washington, DC.**

The second ACE Commission on Faith-Based Colleges and Universities meeting brought together **128 leaders and affiliates**, including **46 presidents of faith-based colleges, universities, and organizations**.

The commission's executive committee is composed of **18 presidents** of faith-based colleges and universities.

The 2025 Women's Network Leadership Conference brought together **126 participants**. The ACE Women's Network remained vibrant, with 29 active state network chapters.



The **Women's Leadership Speaker Series** continued to draw high interest. **916 people registered** for the March 2025 session on the benefits of mentoring, and **1,133 people registered** for the June 2025 session on empowering women in leadership.



THANK YOU TO FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS, CORPORATE SPONSORS, AND AFFILIATE MEMBERS

We would like to thank all our generous grant funders whose awards help support ACE's program-related work: Mellon Foundation, ECMC Foundation, Gates Foundation, Imaginable Futures, Kresge Foundation, Lilly Endowment Inc., Lumina Foundation, Schultz Family Foundation, Strada Education Foundation, TIAA Institute, Tullman Family Office, Walmart, and other donors who wish to remain anonymous.

In addition, we are grateful to those who sponsored ACE events, research, and editorial products in 2025, including Baylor University; Blue Moon Consulting Group; Cengage; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; Civitas Learning; Coursera; Deloitte; EAB; Ellucian; Fidelity Investments; Florida Atlantic University; Florida International University College of Law; Isaacson, Miller; Lumina Foundation; Pearson; The Registry for College and University Presidents; SOPHIA Learning, LLC; Studiosity; TIAA; University of Georgia; and others.

ACE's contributions to higher education continue to be recognized and supported by our community of donors. This year, we would like to acknowledge a special gift in honor of Kenneth D. Roose, Vice President of ACE from 1968–1970, from his children and their spouses.

Finally, we deeply appreciate the members of our ACE Corporate Membership Program, an affinity group for companies doing business in the higher education sector. ACE's Corporate Membership Program includes the ACE Affiliate Membership program, the ACE Executive Search Roundtable, and our Thought Leadership Circle. This program currently includes 45 members representing technology, consulting, executive search firms, and other sectors that serve higher education. The program provides engagement opportunities for companies, including access to ACE leadership and members, communications, insights to help businesses understand how to better serve campuses throughout the country, year-round visibility and brand awareness, and special opportunities aligned with ACE Connect events.

FINANCIALS

FISCAL YEAR 2025 REVENUE*

By Activity | Year Ending 9/30/25

25% Grants & Contracts

21% Membership Dues

15% Royalties

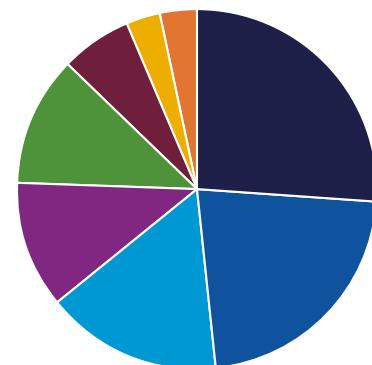
11% Sales & Other Income

11% Investment Income

6% Review & Other Fees

3% Conferences & Workshops

3% Contributions



FISCAL YEAR 2025 EXPENSES*

By Activity | Year Ending 9/30/25

18% Adult Learning & Educational Credentials

17% General & Administrative

17% Building Operations and Other Ancillary Services

11% Carnegie Classification

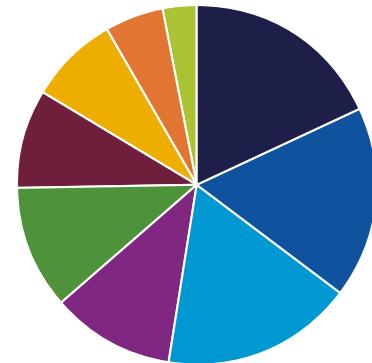
11% Government Relations

9% Professional Development Programs

8% Annual Meeting & Other Programs

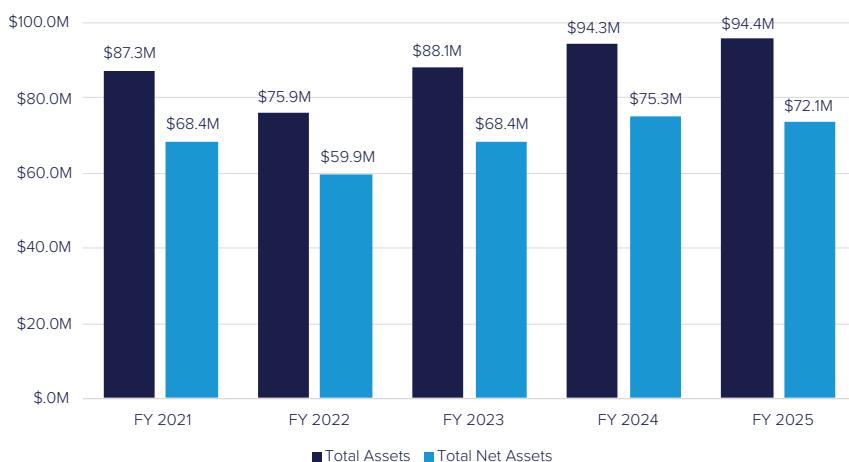
5% Research

3% Fundraising



ASSETS AND NET ASSETS*

FY 2021–FY 2025



*Numbers are unaudited.

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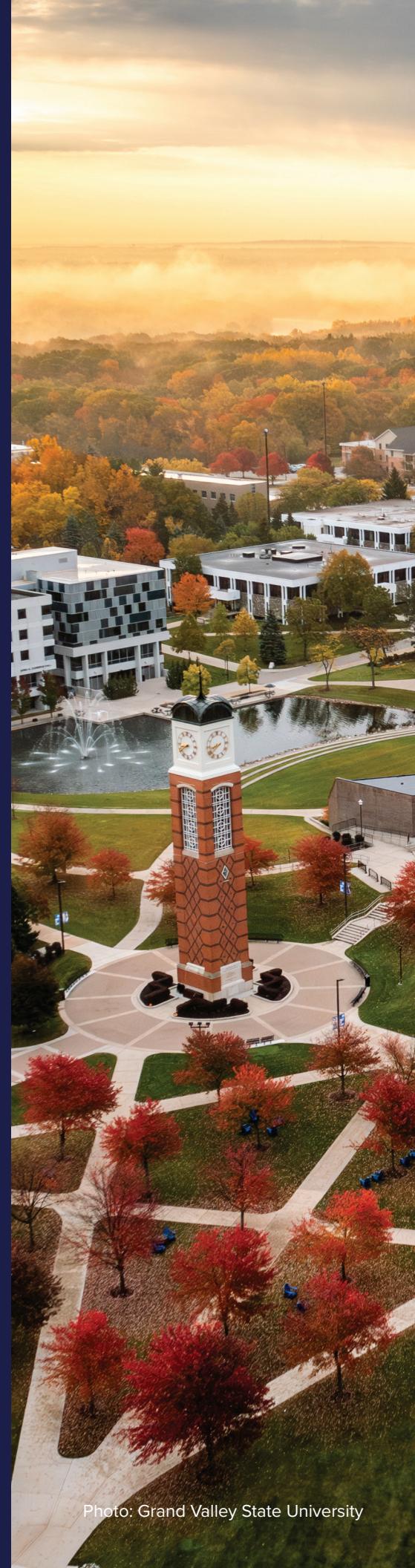


Photo: Grand Valley State University