

# CITIZEN TRUSTEE SURVEY

SELECTED RESULTS AND ANALYSIS





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## About the Association of Community College Trustees

ACCT is a non-profit educational organization of governing boards representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,100 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States and beyond. These community professionals, business officials, public policy leaders, and leading citizens offer their time and talent to serve on the governing boards of this century's most innovative higher education institutions and make decisions that affect more than 13 million students annually. For more about ACCT, see [www.acct.org](http://www.acct.org).

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### October 2018

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# INTRODUCTION

The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) *Citizen Trustee Survey* is the most current look at the individuals providing leadership to community colleges across the country by serving on those institutions' governing boards. By conducting this survey, ACCT sought to gain a better understanding of trustees' backgrounds, roles, and challenges in serving community colleges and their students. This information is of value to inform the priorities of the association and will help us better serve our members. Furthermore, this information can educate community college leaders themselves, policymakers, and the public about who is leading these institutions which serve nearly 40 percent of all postsecondary students.

From 2017 to 2018, the *Citizen Trustee Survey* was disseminated electronically to trustees across the country. Trustees also were encouraged to participate in the survey while attending ACCT events. Trustees were invited to respond regardless of their institution's membership status with ACCT. ACCT received approximately 1,100 unique responses. This summary report presents selected data points from the survey that we hope will be particularly valuable to those working in higher education, policymakers, and the public. This report addresses four questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of trustees?
2. What were trustees' prior relationships with their community college and their motivations for serving?
3. What are trustees' priorities?
4. What do trustees view as the primary challenges facing their college and community?

A key finding from the survey is that the demographic backgrounds of trustees, particularly with regard to gender and race and ethnicity, are starkly different from the backgrounds of community college students. Among the trustees who participated in our survey, over half are male; comparatively, over half of community college students are female. Furthermore, the trustees who participated in our survey are 76 percent White, 7 percent Black or African American, and 6 percent Hispanic or Latino. In comparison, nationally, community college students are 50 percent White, 15 percent Black or African American, and 24 percent Hispanic or Latino.<sup>1</sup> To ensure that community colleges can fully support their students, trustees must recognize this difference and that their former experiences as college students may not mirror the experiences of today's students. Furthermore, college leaders have the opportunity to reflect on these data and a national dialogue about cultivating college leaders who reflect the demographics of their student bodies and communities. Trustees can act by promoting diversity on their own boards and advocating for equity minded policies and practices to support their students.

While the data reveal important demographic differences between trustees and students, they also describe trustees' strong commitment to service. Prior to becoming trustees, many had existing relationships with their community college, such as by attending as a student or volunteering in a different role. Trustees are motivated to promote students' academic success and well-being, and to serve their communities. Trustees also recognize that their role involves addressing many challenges such as securing funding for their college, improving affordability for students, and strengthening their local economies. Trustees bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences from their careers in fields including education, government, and business to address these challenges.

We hope these data will help to further facilitate dialogue about trustees' strengths and opportunities to support student success and their communities. We also hope these data can lead to more dialogue about diversity and equity in community college leadership and how this ultimately impacts students.

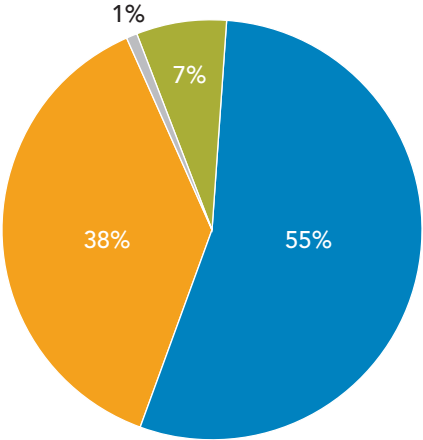
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1 ACCT analysis of the United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) 2016.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

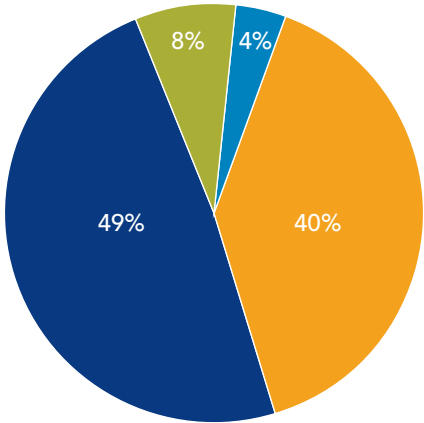
What is the gender, age, race and ethnicity, and educational attainment of trustees?

**GENDER**



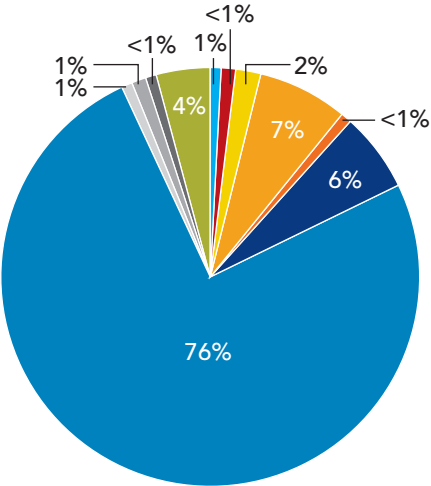
Male Female Other No Response

**AGE**



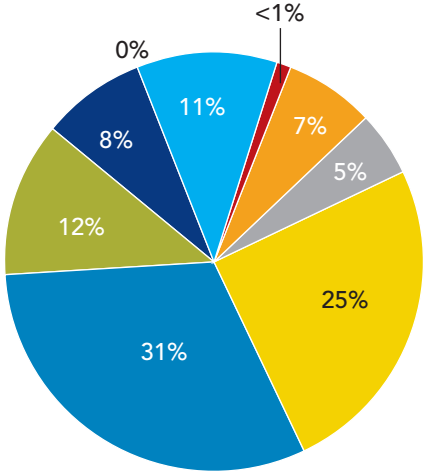
Under 40 40 to 64 65 and older No Response

**RACE AND ETHNICITY**



American Indian or Alaska Native  
 Arab or Middle Eastern  
 Asian  
 Black or African American  
 Hawaiian or Pacific Islander  
 Hispanic/Latino  
 White  
 Unknown  
 Other  
 Multiple races/ethnicities  
 No response

**HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

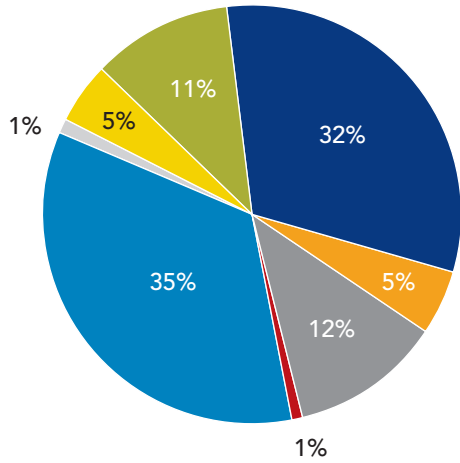


High School or Equivalent  
 Some College or Currently Enrolled  
 Associate Degree  
 Bachelor's Degree  
 Master's Degree  
 Doctorate (PhD, EdD, etc.)  
 Terminal Professional Degree (JD, EdS, MD, MBA, etc.)  
 Other Credential  
 No Response

\*Note: Pie chart values may equal slight less or slightly more than 100% due to rounding.

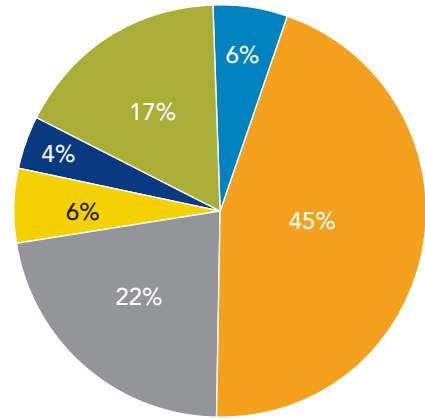
## What are trustees' employment backgrounds and income?

### EMPLOYMENT STATUS



- Employed full-time
- Retired
- Employed part-time
- Self-employed
- Unemployed
- Student
- Multiple responses
- No response

### INCOME



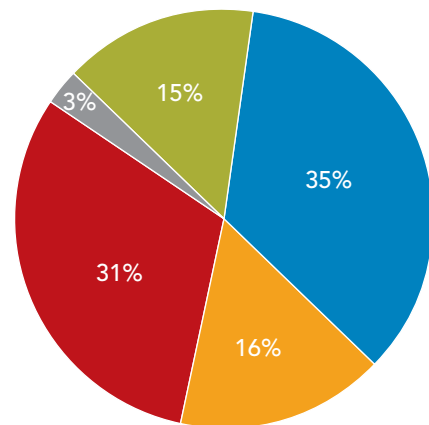
- Under \$50,000
- \$50,000 – \$149,999
- \$150,000 – \$299,999
- \$300,000 – \$499,999
- \$500,000 and over
- No response

### WORK INDUSTRY (TOP 5 RESPONSES)

Industry	Percent of Trustees
Education	28%
Government or politics	12%
Healthcare	8%
Retail, manufacturing, or logistics	8%
Construction or real estate	7%

## What are trustees' political affiliations?

### POLITICAL AFFILIATION



- Democrat
- Independent
- Republican
- Other
- No response

\*Note: Pie chart values may equal slight less or slightly more than 100% due to rounding.

# PRIOR RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND MOTIVATIONS FOR SERVING

What prior relationships did trustees have with their community college?

PRIOR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE (TOP 5 RESPONSES)	
Relationship	Percent of Trustees
Family member attended as a student	36%
I attended events	31%
I attended as a student	29%
I volunteered/made a financial contribution	22%
No prior relationship	18%

What was trustees' motivation for serving on their boards?

MOTIVATIONS FOR SERVING AS A TRUSTEE (TOP 5 RESPONSES)	
Motivation	Percent of Trustees Who Responded as Somewhat or Very Important
Improve programs for students	83%
Serve the college(s)	83%
Serve the community	82%
Promote student success and completion	82%
Improve community's educational opportunities	81%

# PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES

## What are trustees' top priorities?

PRIORITIES AS A TRUSTEE (TOP 3 RESPONSES)	
Priority	Percent of Trustees
Improving student access, success, and completion	40%
Effective governance of the community college	34%
Advocating for the community college	30%

## What challenges and issues are currently facing the college and the community? What challenges do trustees expect to arise over the next decade?

CHALLENGES/ISSUES FACING THE COLLEGE AND THE COMMUNITY (TOP RESPONSES)	
Facing the College	Percent of Trustees
Funding	45%
Improving student access, success and completion	45%
Affordability and access for students	33%
Facing the Community	Percent of Trustees
Workforce development	46%
Economy	34%
Keeping young people in the local workforce	32%
Anticipated in the Next Decade	Percent of Trustees
Funding	47%
Affordability and access for students	28%
Improving student success	25%

