

Leader Profile



Leader Profile:
**Margaret "Molly"
 Corbett Broad**

President

*American Council on Education
 (ACE)*

"We need to transform the way the public views higher education and position it as an investment individuals make throughout their lives as well as an investment in the economic well-being of the country."

— Molly Broad

Orchestral expertise defines this leader

"I think a leader is a symphony conductor," says the new president of the American Council on Education (ACE) Margaret "Molly" Corbett Broad. "At a university, leadership is about building and empowering teams."

With higher education issues on the national and international agenda, the goal of ACE's search for a new president was to find an extraordinary candidate. The new leader must be capable of bringing all sectors of higher education together, shaping an inspiring and ambitious vision and working in partnership with policymakers to define and realize the future.

Molly Broad is such a leader. Her career has flourished around her skill at bringing disparate constituencies together and urging them toward solutions that deliver tangible benefits to all. She approaches her stakeholders as if they were an orchestra, recognizing that every one has an important voice that should be heard.

Broad is the first woman to lead ACE since the higher education association was founded in 1918. Based in Washington, D.C., ACE serves as a consensus leader on key higher education issues and seeks to influence public policy through advocacy, research and program initiatives. Its members and associates include approximately 1,800 accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities and 200 higher education-related associations, organizations and corporations.

Broad's economic training, rich experience, personal strength and energy helped her step into the new role and start making things happen from day one. "I have occupied a wide variety of chairs — financial, fundraising and more — in public and private institutions all over the country," she says. "I learned from the political and civic cultures of different geographies and developed a personal capacity to take on projects of significant scale."

ACE has an ambitious, broad-scope agenda: encouraging low-income and first-generation students to prepare for college, promoting the wide range of benefits of higher education to the public, preparing the higher education community for an upcoming substantial turnover in college and university presidential leadership, advancing lifelong learning for adults and helping its members prepare students for a globally interdependent world.

Before accepting the position at ACE, Broad was president of the University of North Carolina (UNC) system at Chapel Hill for nearly 10 years. She also was executive vice chancellor and chief operating officer of the California State University system, chief executive of the University of Arizona's three campuses and served in various administrative positions at Syracuse University.

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***— Ricardo R. Fernandez,
ACE Board Chair***

Broad came into her own with the UNC system. She arrived as a northerner by way of California and was the first system chief executive who was neither native North Carolinian — nor male. The complexity of the system tested her with a budget of \$6 billion and 200,000 students on 16 campuses. Broad had to balance the priorities of various schools of study, ancillary program managers and stakeholders, faculty, athletic boosters and trustees, boards — all constituencies that needed to be heard.

Under her leadership, voters of North Carolina passed a \$3.1 billion construction bond referendum, the largest for higher education in U.S. history. The success of the effort was due largely to her skill in building a coalition that included North Carolina’s community colleges and the state’s largest business lobby. The resulting building program made the UNC physical plants competitive again — and it earned Broad the Tar Heel of the Year award in 2001.

She took on the state’s historic policy of keeping tuition low, making the case and gaining support for a significant increase. She softened the blow by increasing the availability of financial aid, especially through a new state scholarship fund for students with the greatest need.

Broad’s orchestration philosophy extends to the way she approaches her work team. “My management style is very collaborative,” she says. “I like to build a team of individuals who can back one another up. While each has a specific area of responsibility, they also have a broad and deep knowledge of the organization and can step in anywhere they’re needed.”

She credits family support for enabling her success. “I am lucky,” she says. “My husband is a saint, and my mother lived with us for 28 years. My two sons benefited by having a loving grandmother with them as they grew up, and I was able to have a professional life.”

In announcing Broad’s selection as the new ACE president, Board Chair Ricardo R. Fernandez, president of Lehman College, The City University of New York, said, “She clearly has the passion, intellectual strength and diverse experience to articulate a policy agenda for all of higher education, from community colleges to research universities.”

Broad is setting demanding goals for herself, her team and ACE membership. “We need to transform the way the public views higher education and position it as an investment individuals make throughout their lives as well as an investment in the economic well-being of the country.”

Witt/Kieffer is proud to have consulted with the American Council on Education on this important executive search assignment.

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