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Building America's Future: Higher Education as a Catalyst for Talent and Innovation

MILWAUKEE (April 1, 2025) – The U.S. is undergoing significant shifts in labor dynamics, fueled by an aging workforce, domestic labor shortages, declining higher education enrollment, and a growing demand for advanced skills in areas such as AI, quantum computing, and energy—making the urgency for scalable solutions greater than ever. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) and the Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF) is positioned as the solution to maintaining America's status as the home of the world's top talent, which benefits all Americans, our economy, and our democracy.

"At AGB, we understand that higher education is not just about degrees—it's about building a better future for all," said Mary Papazian, Executive Vice President of AGB. "By joining this initiative, we are reinforcing our dedication to advancing the public value of colleges and universities, which is central to our nation's prosperity, national security, and democratic vitality. Together, we can ensure that higher education remains a powerful engine for opportunity and progress."

"The strength and resiliency of the American economy and workforce depends on bold action from higher education and business leaders," said Kristen Fox, CEO of BHEF. "All Americans must be equipped with the skills, experiences, and opportunities to thrive in a rapidly changing economy. Higher education is essential to the creation of our skilled, adaptable workforce—one that drives innovation, fuels economic growth, and empowers individuals to thrive in meaningful careers."

AGB and BHEF join the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), which were among the first national organizations to endorse a new public service campaign created by Serve called 'Proud Sponsor' designed to tell a more complete story about the broad social impact of higher education and highlight the many ways higher education improves life in America. It seeks to address misconceptions about higher education by inviting all Americans, whether they hold a college degree or not, to consider the remarkable value education brings to our communities, economy, national security, health, happiness, and way of life. Additional major endorsements will be added to the [campaign website](#) as they are confirmed.

“The value that higher education brings to American life cannot be overstated and better communicating its full impact is a necessary first step,” said Tamalyn Powell, senior vice president of higher education at BVK and president of Serve Marketing’s board of directors. “As divisiveness around higher education grows and more people question its value, this campaign seeks to reaffirm that college remains as vital to American success as ever.”

The campaign’s central theme is “College: Proud sponsor of America at its best.” It emphasizes higher education’s essential contributions to a prosperous economy, a thriving democracy, healthy communities, and robust national security—all fundamental to building a strong America.

“The United States would not be the global economic powerhouse it is today were it not for its colleges and universities,” said Powell. “If Americans hope to continue enjoying the benefits of today’s ‘knowledge economy,’ it’s vital that we maintain the strongest possible system of higher education.”

If you work in higher education, represent a business or organization that benefits from the talents of college graduates, or are passionate about the future of the United States, we invite you to join the Proud Sponsor campaign. Your support will help spread the word about the vital role that higher education plays in improving American life. We are actively seeking partners to endorse or sponsor the campaign. If you’re interested in getting involved, please contact Tamalyn Powell at tamalyn.powell@servemarketing.org or Greg Summers, senior advisor at Serve Marketing, at greg.summers@servemarketing.org.

About Serve Marketing

Serve is the country's first and only all-volunteer, nonprofit advertising agency, whose mission is to help shine a light on underserved causes. Since 2002, Serve volunteers have helped create behavior-changing marketing campaigns for over 100 non-profits, locally and nationally on issues ranging from teen pregnancy, infant mortality and domestic abuse to STDs, foster care and human trafficking—improving and even saving countless lives in communities across the country.

About the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB)

At the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB), we believe in the power of higher education to transform lives, strengthen inclusive democracy, and support a thriving society. We believe that strong higher education starts with great governing boards. AGB provides advocacy, leading practices, educational resources, expert support, and renowned programs that advance board excellence for 40,000 AGB members from more than 2,000 institutions and foundations. For more than 100 years, AGB has been the trusted authority for board members, chief executives, board professionals, and key administrators on higher education governance and leadership. Learn more at AGB.org.

About BHEF

The Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF) is a national network that connects pioneering corporate and higher education leaders to co-develop solutions that address talent gaps. BHEF empowers and catalyzes collaborations that deliver accelerated, inclusive, and effective solutions across education and work.

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