



The Council of
Independent Colleges



COUNCIL FOR ADVANCEMENT
AND SUPPORT OF EDUCATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sector-wide College | Proud Sponsor Campaign Strengthens Coalition

Two major higher education associations add momentum to the growing national effort to restore trust and confidence in American colleges and universities

MILWAUKEE, Wis. (FEBRUARY 5, 2026) — The national higher education public-service campaign *College: Proud Sponsor of America at its Best* announced today that the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) have endorsed the effort, joining a growing coalition of organizations committed to elevating the public understanding of higher education’s value to the nation.

The campaign, launched formally in 2025 by higher education branding firm BVK and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), is designed to unite colleges, universities, associations, employers, and community leaders around a shared message to the public: higher education is a driving force behind America’s economic strength, innovation, civic leadership, workforce readiness, and global competitiveness.

“There are more than 4,000 colleges and universities serving students across every region of the country,” said Tamalyn Powell, Senior Vice President of Higher Education at BVK.

“These endorsements of the Proud Sponsor campaign from CIC and AASCU send a powerful signal that institutions of all types—public and private, two-year and four-year, religious and non-affiliated—share a common interest in telling a fuller, more accurate story about higher education’s role in advancing the nation.”

CIC represents independent, nonprofit colleges and universities known for their commitment to undergraduate education and student success, while AASCU represents regional public universities that educate millions of students and play a critical role in local workforce development and economic growth. Together, their participation underscores the broad, cross-sector support behind the campaign.

“Regional public colleges and universities are deeply rooted in their states and communities, and their impact is felt every day through workforce development, innovation, and civic engagement,” said Charles L. Welch, president and CEO of AASCU. “We support the Proud Sponsor campaign because it provides a unifying platform to remind Americans how public higher education serves the nation.”

"The Proud Sponsor Campaign aligns with CIC's mission to champion independent higher education," CIC President Marjorie Hass said. "It provides our members with a powerful platform to showcase how independent colleges drive innovation, strengthen communities, and create pathways to opportunity. Being part of this movement will help keep the transformative impact of college visible and valued in the national conversation."

“Universities and colleges play vital roles in society locally, nationally and internationally. The transformative impact of teaching, research and community engagement are critical for our present and for our futures,” said Sue Cunningham, President and CEO of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. “The College Proud Sponsor campaign is designed to deepen public understanding of this impact at a moment where there is a concerning level of doubt. We are grateful to have the partnership of numerous associations in this effort, and, most recently, to have AASCU and CIC join with their voice.”

Organizations interested in endorsing or participating in the campaign can learn more and access resources at whycollegematters.org.

[About College: Proud Sponsor of America at its Best](#)

College: Proud Sponsor of America at its Best is a national public-service campaign created to restore trust in American higher education by providing a unifying platform and a suite of free, customizable tools that institutions and organizations can use to amplify positive, fact-based messages about higher education’s contributions to society. The campaign emphasizes shared outcomes rather than institutional competition, encouraging the sector to speak with a stronger, more coordinated voice about the collective impacts of higher education that all Americans get to enjoy, regardless of whether they earn a degree.

[About BVK](#)

BVK is a full-service advertising and marketing agency dedicated to creating meaningful brand experiences that drive business results. With expertise across strategy, creative, media, and digital, BVK partners with organizations of all sizes to elevate their brand, engage audiences, and deliver measurable impact.

[About CASE](#)

CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Education) is a global, not-for-profit membership association dedicated to advancing education to transform lives and society. It supports over 97,000 professionals across 3,000 institutions in 80 countries, providing guidance, standards, and resources for those in fields like alumni relations, development, communications, fundraising, government relations, and marketing. CASE equips professionals at all career stages, from universities and schools to cultural institutions and nonprofits. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in London, Singapore, and Mexico City, CASE fosters a global community of volunteers and partners to advance education worldwide.

[About AASCU](#)

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) is a Washington, D.C.-based higher education association that represents the sector of over 500 regional public colleges, universities, and systems whose members share a learning- and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to serving today's students, and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions' economic progress and cultural development.

[About CIC](#)

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association of more than 500 independent, nonprofit colleges and universities committed to providing high-quality, student-centered education. CIC institutions are known for their strong academic outcomes, close faculty-student engagement, and deep connections to their communities, preparing graduates for leadership, service, and lifelong success.

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