



Grounded in  
Purpose



2025  
ANNUAL REPORT

Building for  
Impact

# Message from the Board Chair

To the AACTE Community,

As we reflect on 2025, this year has underscored just how essential AACTE is to the future of educator preparation. In a time of uncertainty and transition, AACTE has been the steady force uniting our community — advocating for our profession, influencing national policy, and bringing together educators, scholars, and leaders who share a steadfast commitment to equity and excellence in education.

The Board of Directors has been fully engaged in guiding this work. We have strengthened our governance by welcoming new members through a more inclusive selection process, ensuring that AACTE's leadership reflects the breadth and diversity of our field. With a smaller Board, our governance is stronger, more focused, and more representative of the profession we serve.

This year also reminded us that advocacy is at the heart of AACTE's mission. The Board worked in close partnership with AACTE leadership to support decisive action — most notably, authorizing litigation to challenge the unfair termination of critical federal grants. This bold step sent a clear message: AACTE will not stand by when the programs that sustain our members and students are threatened. Our collective voice matters — and it carries impact.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on advancing policies that strengthen educator preparation, defending academic freedom, and ensuring that every member institution has the tools and support needed to thrive. Together, we are building not just an association, but a movement—one grounded in purpose, powered by collaboration, and committed to shaping the future of our profession.

As we move into 2026, I am inspired by what lies ahead. Together, we will continue to strengthen educator pipelines, champion research and innovation, and amplify the voices of those shaping the future of teaching. The challenges before us are real — but so is our collective resolve. AACTE's impact continues to grow because of you — our members, partners, and advocates — who embody the power of preparation, purpose, and progress.

With appreciation and optimism,

Anne Tapp Jaksa, Ph.D.  
AACTE Board Chair (2025-26)



# One Year Down. Just Getting Started

To the AACTE Community,

When I began this journey as your CEO one year ago, I knew we stood at a critical crossroads. The educational landscape was becoming increasingly complex, with mounting pressures on funding, visibility, and the perceived value of our profession. Yet, where some saw insurmountable challenges, I saw an incredible opportunity to reset, refocus, and reimagine what is possible for AACTE.

My first year has been defined by three words: **Listening, Learning, and Leading — Together.**

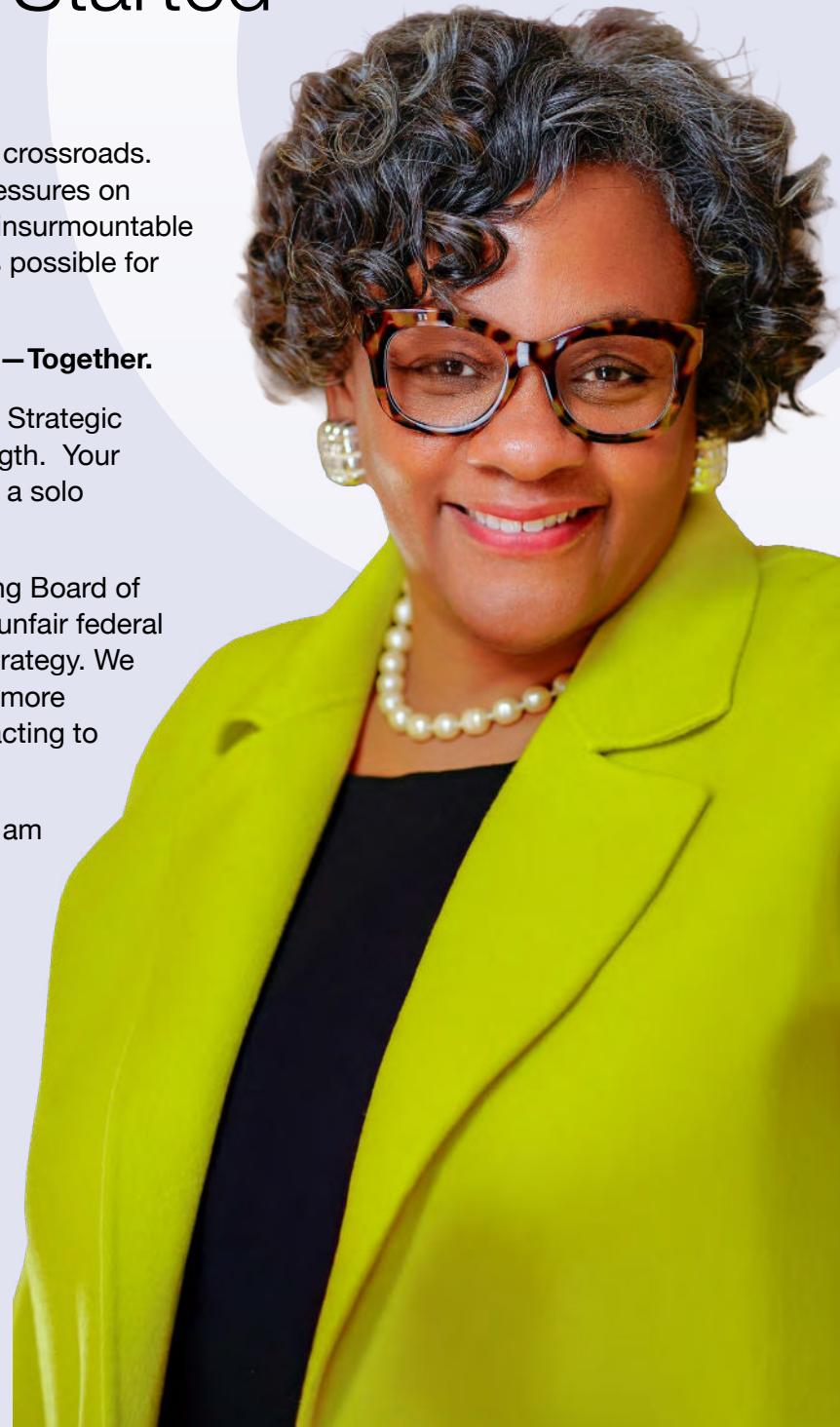
From my visits to state affiliates across the nation to the deep conversations at our Strategic Partners Meetings, I have witnessed firsthand that community is our greatest strength. Your resilience and dedication have fueled my own. I have learned that leadership is not a solo endeavor; it is grounded in purpose and moves forward only through relationships.

While 2025 was a transition year, it was far from quiet. In conjunction with our strong Board of Directors, we took bold action. We filed a lawsuit to defend the profession against unfair federal grant terminations. We modernized our operations with a new three-year budget strategy. We hired a new Chief Financial Officer and are preparing to provide our members with more support and resources. We amplified our voice, ensuring that AACTE is not just reacting to the news cycle but shaping it.

As I reflect on this first year, I am proud to serve and honored to lead. But mostly, I am excited. We have stabilized the foundation. Now is the time to build.

With gratitude and resolve,

Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, Ph.D.  
AACTE President and CEO



# A Year of Bold Action & Operational Reset

In 2025, AACTE moved confidently into its next chapter. We balanced the need for internal restructuring with the urgency of external advocacy. We did not back down from the fights that matter.

## Defending the Profession

- **Legal Action:** AACTE launched litigation to challenge federal grant terminations, securing critical funding from the Schusterman Foundation to support this effort.
- **Academic Freedom:** AACTE convened a committee of Board members and community members to launch a pivotal Academic Freedom Initiative to address the rising tide of censorship in education.
- **Professional Status and Financial Aid:** AACTE is leading national advocacy efforts to ensure that education degrees are recognized as *professional* rather than solely *graduate* programs — an important distinction that impacts access to federal financial aid, student loan eligibility, and the long-term sustainability of educator preparation pathways.

## Elevating Our Voice

- **Federal Policy Agenda:** We developed a forward-looking *Federal Policy Roadmap* to incubate changes in educator preparation and incentivize sustainable careers in education.
- **Advocacy Accomplishments:**
  - Successfully worked with Rep. Lawler (R-NY) to ensure that graduate degrees in education are included in the “Professional Student Degree Act,” legislation that would define “professional degree” for purposes of federal student loan borrowing limits.
  - Successfully advocated to remove a provision of H.R. 1 that would have required students to take 15 credit hours per semester to receive the full Pell Grant.
  - Successfully advocated to preserve funding for critical educator preparation programs, including TQP, SEED, TSLIF, and IDEA Personnel Prep, in the Senate Appropriations Committee bill.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Convened biannual Strategic Partners Meetings to align with other industry leaders.



## Operating in Excellence

- **New Leadership:** We strengthened our internal capacity by appointing a new CFO (Dwight Frederick), re-structured our COO as Chief Strategy Officer (Marta Perez Drake), and hired a public engagement consultant (Alix DeJean), a short-term fundraising consultant (Danielle Bowes), and a research analyst (Chen-Su Chen).
- **Strategic Operational Plan:** We launched a new three-year operational plan that provides a unified roadmap, aligning the Association's mission with measurable outcomes across three major goals — amplifying AACTE's voice, ensuring financial sustainability, and deepening engagement. Each goal is supported by clear key performance indicators (KPIs) that track progress toward long-term impact, transparency, and accountability.
- **Three-Year Rolling Budget:** Transitioning to a three-year budget model, along with the strategic operational plan, positions AACTE for greater financial stability, strategic foresight, and flexibility — enabling resources to be aligned with long-term goals rather than short-term cycles.
- **Data-Driven Value:** We launched new data briefs and a member dashboard to deliver actionable insights.

## Navigating Challenges with Transparency and Resolve

AACTE's 2025 fiscal year reflected both meaningful progress and significant challenges. For instance, **attendance at the AACTE 2025 Annual Meeting was lower than anticipated** — largely due to the termination of key federal grant programs that restricted travel funding for more than 300 members, and the concurrent wildfire threats in the Los Angeles region. Despite these unexpected factors, member engagement at the meeting remained strong, and member feedback underscored the value of the event's content and community.

Beyond the conference, higher education institutions nationwide faced budget reductions, lost grant funding, and an increasingly hostile political and policy climate affected educator preparation and diversity initiatives. These realities continue to shape our members' capacity to innovate and grow.

Even amid these headwinds, AACTE demonstrated resilience. The Association achieved a 96% membership renewal rate, secured multiple federal policy wins, and expanded our media reach by more than 100% year-over-year. These outcomes affirm that AACTE's strategy — anchored in advocacy, innovation, and community — is building a strong foundation for the years ahead. Below are key metrics that reflect the organization's growth and strength.



# Impact At-a-Glance



## Membership & Community

- **96%** membership renewal rate
- **28** new institutional members
- **46** active Holmes Scholars programs

## Engagement & Learning

- **1,800** professional learning attendees (+12% YoY)
- **25** webinars, **4** town halls, and **8** institutes
- **92%** participant satisfaction rate



## Advocacy & Influence

- **140** congressional meetings
- **50** community sign-on letters mobilizing national partners
- **Launched litigation** to defend terminated educator preparation grants (TQP, SEED, etc.)



## Visibility & National Authority

- **+113%** media reach
- **336%** increase in media mentions
- **4.1 Impact Score:**  
*Journal of Teacher Education (JTE)* ranked 48 of 756



# Looking Forward to 2026

As we move into 2026, AACTE is committed to building on the progress of the past year with a focus on leadership training, advancing research in educator preparation, and expanding resources for our members. We will enhance our professional development offerings with new leadership training modules, ensuring that our members are equipped to lead in a rapidly changing educational landscape.

In addition, we will continue to prioritize cutting-edge research on educator preparation, providing our members with the latest insights and best practices. Our goal is to be the leading source of knowledge and innovation in the field. Finally, we are expanding our resource offerings to better support our members, from advocacy tools to digital learning platforms.

Together, we will continue to lead with vision and create a brighter future for educator preparation in 2026 and beyond.

