



80 presidents, chancellors, and provosts convened in New York City on February 5, 2019 for ATI's third annual Presidential Summit.

"I want to thank all of you for your commitment to the American Talent Initiative. It is because of you and your teams that top colleges are more available to more students, and that is going to change their lives, and it's also going to make our country better." – Michael R. Bloomberg

Taking Stock: ATI Two Years Later

Daniel Porterfield, President and CEO of The Aspen Institute, set the stage by highlighting members' ambitious goals and tremendous progress. He shared his optimism that ATI will meet its 50,000-by-2025 goal, given the **additional 7,291 low- and moderate-income students that members have enrolled** since our launch in 2016.



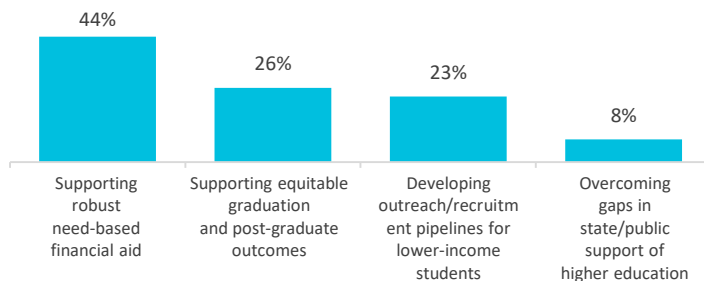
Grounding Our Discussion in Shared Priorities

Live polling revealed that 44 percent of attendees identified supporting robust need-based financial aid as the top priority that they would like to discuss with their peers.

Key takeaways from the group discussion on supporting need-based financial aid:

- Language used with boards and other stakeholders matters. For instance, "need-based" vs. "merit" aid presents a false dichotomy, as need-based aid does go to high-achieving students. Some presidents and chancellors have switched to the terms "need-based" and "non-need-based" to describe financial aid awards.
- For lower-income students, "meeting full need" might not resonate as well as saying "We offer full scholarships" or "You will pay \$0."
- Endowing funds for need-based aid through dedicated campaigns is critical to ensuring the sustainability of ATI-related efforts, but some presidents and chancellors have also had success in optimizing existing financial aid resources (e.g., strategic allocation of named funds to meet need).

What is the top priority related to your ATI goals for which you would like input from other presidents and chancellors?



Engaging Boards with ATI-Related Work

Carol Folt and Dick Chait discussed how ATI presidents and chancellors can, with so many competing priorities, engage their boards with ATI-related work. Dick shared a finding from his work: ***On average, trustees estimate that 35 percent of their time is not well utilized.*** The most successful boards, he has found, work with their presidents to consistently allocate time to a few specific priorities. When it comes to mission-focused work, he said, successful presidents speak the language of board members, discussing concepts that appeal to business leaders, such as market forces, demographics, and workforce development.

At UNC, Carol led the development of a strategic framework that the board embraced: It encompassed the access and success mission, fit on one page, and was revisited at every board meeting. Through co-ownership of this framework, ATI-related priorities became ingrained in the language and identity of the board. Carol expressed confidence that as a result, Carolina's commitment to opportunity for lower-income students would transcend the tenure of many chancellors to come.

Key takeaways from the group discussion on board engagement:

- Presidents shared that it can be difficult to focus boards on longer-term mission priorities when critical emergent issues can divert attention. Suggestions included laying out longer-term objectives in an annual agenda, restricting time spent on day-to-day issues, and linking the generation and lifespan of committees to the delivery of specific end products.
- To foster an effective relationship between the board chair and president, consider a job description for the board chair to set expectations regarding roles, and dedicate time for him or her to provide honest feedback on the annual agenda and his or her working relationship with the president.
- In some instances, boards view high discount rates as negative because they perceive that it will lead to reductions in tuition revenue. Some presidents have found success by reframing the discount rate as a “financial aid rate” or as an investment in talent and providing the board with peer discount rates and blinded admissions files from which they select a class with either unlimited or a constrained amount of financial aid.
- Presidents also shared the benefits they've experienced in focusing the board on ATI-related work. For instance, prioritizing socioeconomic diversity can promote board unity, since it impacts all communities and satisfies bipartisan motives.



Carol Folt, Eleventh Chancellor of UNC, Chapel Hill; Dick Chait, Harvard Graduate School of Education; Josh Wyner, The Aspen Institute (moderator)

In the spirit of “learning together” with the board, it was suggested that ATI could support member presidents in their ATI-related efforts by offering board presentations as a neutral third party. If your institution is interested in such a service, please contact Tania LaViolet (tania.laviolet@aspeninstitute.org).

Outreach to Underrepresented Groups at a Time of Public Distrust in Higher Education

John King and David Brooks discussed declining trust and steady public disinvestment in higher education, and how ATI's work intersects with the racial, geographic, political, and socioeconomic divides playing out on campuses. While media has exaggerated some of these tensions, John said, there are many realities that higher education needs to own, including rising costs as well as underrepresentation of people of color, low-income students, students from rural areas.

Panelists expressed optimism that ATI’s agenda could be an antidote to this distrust. For instance, David shared his belief that trust is built on relationships and that ATI institutions have the opportunity to cultivate those relationships between people from different walks of life. And while these individual relationships might not be enough on their own, the norms created through ATI’s collective efforts to support them could be. The panelists encouraged ATI leaders to be bolder in their ambitions—what would it look like to extend opportunity to even more low- and moderate-income students?

Three ways ATI institutions can build trust emerged from the panel conversation and table discussions:

- **Cultivate a culture of listening.** Colleges should aspire to protect free speech while instilling the value of listening. Institutions can work to create environments in which students listen and learn from each other through genuine interactions by admitting more diverse groups of students and providing equitable access to service learning and study-abroad programs.
- **Prioritize nontraditional pipelines.** Community college transfers, veterans, first-generation, and incarcerated students disproportionately include students of color and students from low-income low-income and rural communities. David shared stories of the unique and powerful perspectives that veteran students brought to his classroom, while John urged ATI institutions to be intentional about making sure that community college transfer pipelines reach underserved communities rather than providing alternative pathways for wealthier students.
- **Emphasize and embody the public spiritedness of higher ed.** The one public institution that has maintained high public trust is the military as it is perceived as a public good. The benefit to the individual, rather than its civic mission, is more often the perceived focus of higher education. ATI leaders should demonstrate that their institutions benefit the public good—not just individuals—by ensuring more equitable access.



John King, CEO of The Education Trust; David Brooks, op-ed columnist for The New York Times; Catharine Bond Hill of Ithaca S+R (moderator)

Engaging the Business Community

Peter Grauer and Terry Hogan shared the strategies their corporations have used to reach and support talent from diverse backgrounds—early engagement with middle- and high-school students, mentoring programs, and collaborations with colleges and universities—shedding light on how a diverse student body can be attractive to prospective corporate partners. Echoing ideas from the morning session on board engagement, Peter and Terry underscored the importance of business leaders persistently elevating diversity as a priority and creating the systems necessary to combat misconceptions and implicit biases.



Mary Schmidt Campbell, President of Spelman College (opening speaker)

Key takeaways from the conversation with business leaders:

- **Share evidence from the business community.** In discussing ATI-related work with boards, presidents can reference the emphasis that top businesses are placing on recruiting and retaining diverse talent because of the competitive advantage it offers. Terry shared that the highest-performing teams at Citi had inclusive leaders who could leverage the diversity of their teams. She directed presidents to the book [The Diversity Bonus](#), which provides evidence that diversity and inclusion benefits businesses. Peter suggested research from [McKinsey](#) and [Deloitte](#) and shared his belief that diversity in his leadership team has elevated the quality of board debate.

- **Encourage early career exploration.** Often, lower-income and first-generation students do not have people in their immediate networks connected to corporate employers, and may not consider professions in financial services, technology development, or other knowledge-economy fields. Colleges and universities can ensure that lower-income and first-generation students gain exposure to and have the opportunity to explore a wide range of career options early on.

- **Encourage lifelong learning.** Both Peter and Terry indicated that their businesses want their new hires to be ready learners and strong communicators with the motivation to excel. Beyond a strong foundation of soft skills—the hallmark of a liberal education—Terry shared that research has prompted a revised understanding of what makes a successful employee at Citi. For instance, the most successful hires weren't necessarily finance majors with the highest GPAs, but rather graduates who held a job while pursuing their degrees.



Peter T. Grauer, Chairman of Bloomberg L.P.; Terry Hogan, Global Head of Diversity and Managing Director, Talent Management at Citi; Andrew Ross Sorkin, The New York Times (moderator)



Presidents, chancellors, and provosts participate in table discussions and large group sharing throughout the day.

Setting Priorities for 2019–2020

The closing session explored what ATI members, in partnership with the Aspen Institute, Ithaca S+R, and Bloomberg Philanthropies, can do to advance our work over the next year.

Research and Tools

- **Group initiatives:** Scaled and sustainable outreach to high-achieving, lower-income students, especially those in education deserts.
- **Data:** A data dashboard for peer comparisons and a set of standard definitions and measures for postgraduate success.
- **Research:** Strategies to support middle-income student enrollment, practices that promote inclusion and belonging, and work to define success after college.

Practice-Sharing Opportunities

- **Board engagement:**
 - Develop case-making materials to support board and trustee engagement with ATI efforts, including evidence and cases related to the business community valuing diversity.
 - Provide opportunities for boards from different institutions to meet so concerned trustees might see other perspectives.

- **Supporting need-based financial aid:**
 - Facilitate opportunities for discussion amongst presidents, provosts, or CFOs about reallocating resources to support need-based financial aid.
 - Identify and discuss innovative strategies to raise funds for financial aid for lower-income students.

Advancing Our Public Campaign

- **Sustain the drumbeat:** Continue to engage news outlets, editorial boards, legislatures, and the general public in our efforts to build trust through ATI's demonstrated work and progress.
- **Elevate student stories:** Promote diversity and inclusion through sharing stories of students from historically underrepresented backgrounds.
- **Reach local audiences:** Focus on placing op-eds and other stories in regional/local media outlets to garner more support among regional/local communities and stakeholders.



ATI's Steering Committee

*Martin Kurzweil, Ithaca S+R
Eric F. Spina, University of Dayton
Carol Quillen, Davidson College
Michael V. Drake, The Ohio State University
Ana Mari Cauce, University of Washington
Josh Wyner, The Aspen Institute College Excellence Program
Christopher Eisgruber, Princeton University
Dan Porterfield, The Aspen Institute*



Patricia E. Harris, CEO of Bloomberg Philanthropies, and President Michael Drake of The Ohio State University, celebrated the strength of ATI's collaboration alongside donors, trustees, alumni, and other key stakeholders at evening reception.

ATI would like to thank Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Gray Foundation, and the Aronson Family Foundation for supporting the 2019 Presidential Summit.