



Network for Change and Continuous Innovation

NCCI Early History

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First Steps

The early history of NCCI can be traced to the 1990s, a time when higher education was the subject of widespread critique for what was characterized as detachment, resistance to change, and inadequacies in preparing students for workplace realities, among other concerns. To address these issues, corporate and higher education leaders came together to create the Total Quality Forum, to identify enhancements in business and engineering education and to introduce corporate quality approaches to improve the organizational effectiveness and efficiency of university operations. Partnerships were created between senior university and corporate leaders from Motorola, Procter & Gamble, AT&T, Texas Instruments, IBM, Ford Motors, Johnson & Johnson, and several others. Change leaders at the involved universities were engaged with senior campus leaders, and a series of national and campus-based conversations were held to clarify shared aspirations. From these efforts, NCCI—then the acronym for the National Consortium for Continuous Improvement in Higher Education—emerged quite naturally to become a national network of campus change leaders.

NCCI was founded in 1999 to address the pervasive view that higher education institutions could and should become more adept at identifying, sharing, and applying principles and practices to advance their academic and administrative processes. A further aim was to create a nationally visible network to bring together institutions and individuals with a desire to contribute to the advancement of these purposes and to create an organization that would encourage information and best-practices sharing and the involvement of other like-minded individuals from various avenues of higher education. It was envisioned that the consortium would enhance the knowledge and skills of its members and enable them to be more effective agents for change within their institutions.

Early Leadership and Structure

The first organized board of NCCI in 1999 included:

Ron Coley, University of California–Berkeley, Berkeley, California
Maury Cotter, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, Wisconsin
Susan Hillenmeyer, Belmont University, Nashville, Tennessee
Phyllis Hoffman, University of California–Berkeley, Berkeley, California
Rita Murdoch, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire
Joan O'Brien, Villanova University, Villanova, Pennsylvania
Mo Qayoumi, California State University–Northridge, Northridge, California

Brent Ruben, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, New Jersey
Louise Sandmeyer, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania
Chet Warzynski, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

Brent Ruben of Rutgers served as the founding board president in 2000, followed by Louise Sandmeyer of Pennsylvania State University, John Dew of University of Alabama, Paula Gill of Belmont University, and Maury Cotter of University of Wisconsin–Madison. Ron Coley of University of California–Berkeley served as founding treasurer throughout the first decade. Marsha Moore of Texas State University served as chair of the membership committee for more than ten years. For a complete list of officers and board members: <https://www.nccicu.org/about/history/past-ncci-leadership/>.

NACUBO provided NCCI's administrative support as NCCI was getting established. In 2004, NCCI became separately incorporated, engaging an association management company to provide the infrastructure to support the growing number of members and events. NCCI grew to about 90 members by 2008–10, then dipped to about 50 members, and since then has been on a steady rise to the current 100+ institutions. The Board of Directors approved a name change to the Network for Change and Continuous Innovation in 2012 to reflect both our growing international network and the expanded range of work roles of our members.

Acting on Core Principles

Core principles to advance the goals of continuous and systematic improvement included: (1) forging strong interpersonal and institutional relationships within the existing group; (2) growing NCCI, adding and welcoming new institutions; (3) building collaborations with associations, especially NACUBO and ACE; (4) hosting national events to elevate the continuous improvement platform; (5) promoting individual campus program identities along with the national effort; (6) facilitating communication within and among members and institutions; and (7) providing opportunities for competency enhancement for members.

Partnerships and Alliances

In pursuit of these early goals, NCCI formed an alliance with NACUBO, thanks to the support of Presidents Jay Morley and later, John Walda, and Vice President Susan Jurow. A collaborative relationship was also developed with the American Council on Education (ACE), owing to the vision and support of President David Ward and Vice President Ellen Babby. Together these relationships advanced the goal of maintaining connections with leading administrative and academic associations and their members. NCCI leaders met with ACE and NACUBO presidents/top leaders in Washington on a number of occasions to identify opportunities for collaborative convention programs, publications, and other events. ACE and NACUBO helped sponsor and serve as speakers at NCCI events. Each invited NCCI to provide special sessions and tracks at their annual conferences, which were consistently a strong draw and highly rated, leading to invitations to offer sessions for many years. NCCI served the unlikely role of bringing ACE and NACUBO together on shared issues. These partnerships helped NCCI establish a foundation upon which to advance its aspirations and conferred an important level of legitimacy within the landscape of higher education associations.

The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities existed between January 1996 and March 2000 to create awareness among public universities of the need for higher education reform. The Commission consisted of the presidents and chancellors of 25 major public universities, along with private sector leaders. A final report called for a renewal of

the partnership of the public university with the society it serves. The Commission was coordinated by NASULGC, now APLU—the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. As they were nearing completion, a few members of NCCI (Brent Ruben, Louise Sandmeyer, and Maury Cotter) were engaged to help design approaches for implementing those recommendations. NCCI members also collaborated with the Juran Institute at the University of Minnesota, as it explored and researched effective quality approaches.

In subsequent years, a partnership with Follett, spearhead by Ron Coley, provided sponsorship for the nationally recognized Leveraging Excellence Award program. See Awards section below. Other collaborative relationships were also formed in support of NCCI goals. Follett helped promote and raise awareness of NCCI nationally.

Events and Networks

NCCI's first annual conference was held in 1999. In 2019, more than 300 individuals from dozens of institutions, both national and international, attended the 20th anniversary conference. NCCI's Annual Conference has served as a primary networking and learning opportunity, open to members and non-members. Top leaders, leading experts, and dozens of best practices have been featured at each conference. For more information, visit <https://www.ncci-cu.org/annualconference/>.

In these early years, NCCI earned the support of senior leaders in higher education, adding to efforts to advance change and innovation in higher education while contributing to the organization's growing prominence. Top leaders from NACUBO and ACE were instrumental in NCCI's early years, as noted in the section on Partnerships. A number of university presidents and top leaders served as keynote speakers and advisors, including Fran Lawrence, Rutgers University; John Brighton and Rod Erickson, Pennsylvania State University; Brit Kirwan, University of Maryland; Lee Todd, University of Kentucky; Cora Marrett, National Science Foundation; Mark Becker, Georgia State University; Robert Berdahl, University of California–Berkeley; and Harry Hertz, Director Emeritus of the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) National Baldrige Program.

John Dew imagined and helped NCCI develop a series of “Roundtables,” convened in Washington D.C., that included higher education associations and change leaders from NCCI institutions—about 25 of each—to engage in a dialogue around their shared aim of quality improvement in higher education. These events were unique in that the attending associations did not meet for other purposes, so NCCI served as a neutral party for convening and advancing change in higher education. ACE and NACUBO sponsored, attended, and their top leaders served as speakers.

NCCI Awards

NCCI established its first awards program in 2006 in recognition of its founder, Brent Ruben, who was honored as its first recipient. The **Dr. Brent D. Ruben Award** recognizes individuals who have significantly contributed to NCCI and the higher education community. For a complete list of awardees: <https://www.ncci-cu.org/celebrate/brent-d-ruben-award/>.

The **Leveraging Excellence Award** had the unique distinction of recognizing dissemination or scaling of significant improvements/innovations across boundaries/institutions for leveraged impact. NCCI administered this program from 2008 through 2013 with sponsorship support from the higher education division of Follett. Several of the awardees provided powerful examples that earned

featured articles in NACUBO's *The Business Officer* and ACE's *The Presidency*. For a complete list of awardees: <https://www.ncci-cu.org/celebrate/leveraging-excellence-awards/>.

The **Maury Cotter Leaders of Change** award was established to recognize individuals who have played a key role in advancing major innovation in higher education in academic and/or administrative areas, demonstrating outcomes and impact, and fostering a culture of collaboration. Maury Cotter was honored as the first recipient. A complete list of awardees: <https://www.ncci-cu.org/celebrate/leaders-of-change/>.

The **Ron Coley Scholarship** award was established to enable members to attend NCCI's Annual Conference who would not otherwise be able to do so.

Celebrating 20 Years!

As previously noted, this is an early history of NCCI, focusing primarily on the first ten years. NCCI has continued for another ten years, weathering challenging times, but evolving and growing along the way. Celebrating 20 years in 2019, NCCI continues stronger than ever and remains well poised to serve higher education through the new decade.

Appendix Awards/Publications/Articles Through 2006

This section summarizes some early awards and publications, through 2006.

Beyond this list, NCCI stories have been featured in national publications, including featured articles from winners of NCCI's Leveraging Excellence Award who were featured in *The Business Officer*, NACUBO, and in *The Presidency*, ACE.

Awards

NCCI members are leaders in advancing excellence in higher education, as evidenced by these awards and honors.

Belmont University

- RIT/USA Today Quality Cup for Belmont Central initiative 1997
- RIT/USA Today Quality Cup Finalist for Enrollment Services Team Concept 1999

Northwest Missouri State

- NIST Baldrige Pilot site visit 1995
- NACUBO Award recipient 1996
- Missouri Quality Award recipient 1997, 2001, 2005
- Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award site visit 2003, 2004, 2005
- AASCU Graduation Rate Outcomes Study Campus 2005

University of Central Oklahoma

- Oklahoma Quality Award for Commitment recipient 2005

University of Missouri–Rolla

- Missouri State Quality Award

University of Wisconsin–Madison

- RIT/USA Today Quality Cup finalist for Graduate Admissions process 1993

University of Wisconsin–Stout

Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award recipient 2001 (first higher education institution recipient)

Member Early Publications

Books

- Dew, J. R., & Nearing, M. M. (2004). *Continuous quality improvement in higher education*. American Council on Education and Praeger Press.
- Ruben, B. D. (2004). *Pursuing excellence in higher education: Eight fundamental principles*. Jossey-Bass.
- Ruben, B. D. (2005a). *Excellence in higher education: An integrative approach to assessment, planning and improvement in colleges and universities*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.
- Ruben, B. D. (2005b). *Excellence in higher education: Workbook and scoring guides*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.
- Ruben, B. D. (2005c). *Excellence in higher education: Facilitator's guide*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.
- Ruben, B. D. (2006). *What leaders need to know: A leadership competencies scorecard*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.
- Sorensen, C. W., Furst-Bowe, J. A., & Moen, D. M. (2005). *Quality and performance excellence in higher education: Baldrige on campus*. Anker Publishing.
- Tromp, S., & Ruben, B. D. (2004a). *Strategic planning in higher education: A leader's guide*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.
- Tromp, S., & Ruben, B. D. (2004b). *Facilitator's guide to strategic planning in higher education: A leader's guide—CD ROM*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.

Chapters

- Ruben, B. D. (2005). The Center for Organizational Development and Leadership at Rutgers University: A Case Study, "Organization development and change in universities." A special issue of *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7(3), 368–395.

CD ROMs

- Ruben, B. D. (2006). *The Leadership Style Preference Inventory (LSPI): Becoming a strategic leader*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.
- Ruben, B. D., (2006). *The communication style inventory (CSI): A guide to social and professional competence*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.
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- Ruben, B.D., (2009). *Understanding, planning, and leading organizational change*. National Association of College and University Business Officers.

Monographs

- Dooris, M. J., Kelley, J. M., & Trainer, J. F. (Eds.). (2004). *Successful strategic planning*, New Directions for Institutional Research, no. 123. Jossey-Bass.
- Dooris, M. J., & Sandmeyer, L. E. (2006). *Planning for improvement in the academic department*, Effective Practices for Academic Leaders. Stylus Publishing.

Articles

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- Paris, K. A. (1996, June). We act like we already know everything. *Quality in Higher Education*, 6–8.
- Paris, K. A. (1996, August). Implications of systems archetypes in higher education. *Quality in Higher Education*, 6, 8.
- Paris, K. A. (1996, September). Storytelling and change. *Quality in Higher Education*, 5–6.
- Paris, K. A. (1996, October). The future is now. *Quality in Higher Education*, 5–6.
- Paris, K. A. (1996, November). Scanning and beyond. *Quality in Higher Education*, 7–8.
- Paris, K. A. (1997a, Spring). Strategic planning in the framework of a campus-wide vision for the future. *NCA Quarterly*, 71, 484–489.
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