



Fellow ACCI members,

Thank you for the opportunity to lead our organization as president in the coming year. It is an honor and a privilege.

Our celebration of the *Journal of Consumer Affairs* in June reminds us of the important role it plays. Rhoda Karpatkin challenged us to be relevant today. Other speakers reminded us of the opportunities before us. How will we respond?

During the next year there are several things I want your help to accomplish. Our work is only useful if it is available to those making critical decisions. One way for us to do that is to strengthen our relationships with policy makers. My Congressman, Morgan Griffith, joined us at the Journal celebration. I have nurtured our relationship for many years since he was elected as my state General Assembly Delegate, rose to Majority Leader in the House of Delegates, and is now my Congressman. There are many things we view differently, but we have worked hard to keep communication open.

As we sought to include policy makers in our celebration, it became obvious that few of us have relationships with policy makers. I try to have relationships with policy makers of both major political parties. In three years, we will return to the Washington, DC area for our conference. I challenge you to begin now to develop a relationship with at least one of your policy makers at the national or state level. It is not necessary to be political or to cross the lines many of us face in our jobs to have these relationships. Some would discourage us from such activity, seeking to make us to be fearful and to avoid it, keeping us from being as effective as we can and should be. Please contact me if you have questions about this. I will be glad to discuss your ideas and concerns.

ACCI has long been a member of the Consumer Federation of America. Each year it reviews its policy positions, involving members across the consumer movement. We have not been active in this process but it is now very easy. The subcommittees meet via email and telephone conference. It is a way that you can get to know others involved in the consumer movement with whom you would not normally meet. You can learn about current issues that may be beyond your normal work, but impact all of us. This is a way to apply your knowledge about consumer issues you research. One of the messages in our conference evaluations is that our programming lacks diversity of topics. Maybe if we engage in the broad-based review of consumer policies led by CFA, it will help us find ways to broaden. Look for a call for participation in late fall and plan to participate between January and March 2017. We will inform you with an ACCI newsletter and on the front page of the ACCI website.

At my university the new administration is increasingly moving toward using externally collected data to make decisions on everything, including base budget. They seek to compare us to peer institutions in many ways. Given all of the restructuring and adjusting that has occurred in our programs and departments, few of us are exactly alike. New programs are being created, sometimes including part of our work. In fact, there is no CIP code in the federal system that

effectively represents my department. I suspect many face this challenge. I'd like for us to explore how ACCI can help our academic programs be better positioned in this age of emphasis on data. Please let me know if this is of concern to you and if you would like to help consider our challenges and possible actions to strengthen our programs.

Finally, we need to work on broadening our membership. Historically, ACCI has had a strong contingent of members from business programs, especially those in marketing. We have realized that there are few such members today and recognize a need to reconnect. We need to Reengage practitioners, including extension professionals, and other educators who use our research. We need your help recruiting and involving new members. Please talk about ACCI with those you know, seeking to recruit them. Encourage them to submit to the Call-For for the 2017 conference in Albuquerque, NM, USA, April 21-23, 2017, as well as the Journal. Also share ideas with the ACCI Board, and I welcome discussions about membership.

Please consider these thoughts and how you can join us in moving ACCI forward during the next year. I have found that I get the most from membership when I am involved in the organization. Each of us has many obligations, but many hands make the job light, so please decide what you can do to contribute this year, helping both our profession and yourself.

I look forward to hearing from and working with you!

Irene Leech  
President ACCI 2016-17