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## Four Nationally Recognized Education Leaders Join The National Center on Education and the Economy Board of Trustees

*Betsy Brown Ruzzi, James Pellegrino, Aaron Thompson & John White  
Bring Diverse Backgrounds, Expertise to the NCEE Board*

**Washington, DC** – The National Center on Education and the Economy’s (NCEE) Board of Trustees, led by Board Chair Sue S. Stewart, recently elected four new trustees to the organization’s board.

The new trustees are:

- **Betsy Brown Ruzzi**, former Vice President and Chief Strategist, NCEE;
- **James W. Pellegrino**, Co-director of Learning Sciences Research Institute, Liberal Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor and Distinguished Professor of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago;
- **Aaron Thompson**, President of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education; and
- **John White**, Co-founder and Board Chairman, Propel America, and former Louisiana State Superintendent of Education.

NCEE CEO and President Anthony Mackay called the addition of the new trustees a significant moment for the organization’s next phase of growth and development.

“We are fortunate to have had a strong board at NCEE since our founding. We are particularly fortunate to welcome our four new trustees to continue that strength,” Mackay said. “Betsy, Jim, Aaron and John each bring diverse backgrounds and experiences along with a deep commitment to improving public education in the U.S. and beyond. Our new and existing trustees will not only help us continue our leadership in international research, policy development and education system leadership, they will also play a critical role in ensuring that NCEE is fit for a dynamic future.”

**Betsy Brown Ruzzi** is a former Vice President, Chief Strategist and Deputy Director at NCEE where she managed the organization’s international benchmarking research for more than twenty years including, for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the groundbreaking *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers* report. She also oversaw NCEE’s communications, fundraising, and national and state policy work, most recently serving with Marc Tucker as the chief consultants to the Kirwan Commission in Maryland and managing NCEE’s partnership with the National Conference of State Legislatures resulting in the report *No Time to Lose*. Brown Ruzzi is

an expert on international and national education and workforce development systems, occupational skill standards and school leadership. During her career at NCEE she helped create the National Institute for School Leadership, Excellence for All, the National Skill Standards Board, the High Skills State Consortium, the Commissions on the Skills of the American Workforce and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, all initiatives to improve the academic performance of our nation's students with equity and strengthen the skills of our workforce.

**James W. Pellegrino**, is a Liberal Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor and Distinguished Professor of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). He also serves as Co-director of UIC's interdisciplinary Learning Sciences Research Institute. Pellegrino's research and development interests focus on children's and adult's thinking and learning and the implications of cognitive research and theory for assessment and instructional practice. Much of his current work is focused on analyses of complex learning and instructional environments, including those incorporating powerful information technology tools, with the goal of better understanding the nature of student learning and the conditions that enhance deep understanding. Pellegrino's unique blend of expertise which combines knowledge of cognitive science, psychometrics, educational technology, instructional practice and educational policy has led to his appointment as the head of several National Academy of Science/National Research Council study committees. Pellegrino has supervised several large-scale research and development projects and has authored or co-authored over 300 books, chapters, journal articles and reports in the areas of cognition, instruction and assessment and has made numerous invited presentations at local, state, national and international meetings and at universities throughout the world.

**Aaron Thompson** is a nationally recognized leader in higher education with a focus on policy, student success, and organizational leadership and design. He currently serves as the President of the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. A former tenured professor at Eastern Kentucky University, he has served in many faculty and higher education administrative capacities such as Interim President of Kentucky State University, Executive Vice President and Chief Academic Officer, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Associate Vice President for University Programs, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, and Executive Director of the Student Success Institute. Thompson has researched, taught and consulted in areas of diversity, leadership, ethics, multicultural families, race and ethnic relations, student success, first-year students, retention, cultural competence and organizational design throughout his career.

**John White** is Co-founder and Board Chairman of Propel America, a national organization dedicated to helping young adults go from high school into a career and higher education. White served as Louisiana State Superintendent of Education from 2012 until March 2020. During his tenure in Louisiana, the state launched nationally recognized initiatives such as Early Childhood Networks, Louisiana Teacher Leaders, ELA Curriculum Guidebooks, Believe and Prepare teacher residencies, Jump Start career education, the state's Innovative Assessment Pilot, and the Louisiana FAFSA initiative. White and his team in Louisiana also led the post-Katrina renovation and unification of schools in New Orleans and the creation of the Baton Rouge Achievement Zone. Prior to being named State Superintendent, White served as Superintendent of

the Louisiana Recovery School District. He previously served under Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Chancellor Joel Klein as Deputy Chancellor for the New York City Department of Education. He began his career as an English teacher at William L. Dickinson High School in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Brown Ruzzi, Pellegrino, Thompson and White join NCEE's existing trustees in shaping the strategic direction of the organization and advancing its agenda. Existing trustees include:

- Sue S. Stewart, Chair, former Senior Vice President and General Counsel, University of Rochester;
- Marc S. Tucker, Vice-Chair, President Emeritus and Distinguished Senior Fellow, NCEE;
- Peggy Brookins, President and CEO of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards;
- Joyce Elliot, Senator, Arkansas State Legislature;
- Robert L. Joss, Philip H. Knight Professor and Dean Emeritus of Stanford University's Graduate School of Business;
- Lewis Spence, former Court Administrator, Massachusetts Trial Court;
- Vivien Stewart, Senior Advisor for Education, Asia Society;
- Joanne Weiss, President of Weiss Associates and former Chief of Staff to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; and
- Anthony Mackay, NCEE CEO and President.

Reporters interested in speaking with Anthony Mackay or any of the new trustees may contact NCEE Communications Officer Julia Banks at [jbanks@ncee.org](mailto:jbanks@ncee.org) or 202-888-2536.

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The National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) was created in 1988 to analyze the implications of changes in the international economy for American education, formulate an agenda for American education based on that analysis and seek wherever possible to accomplish that agenda through policy change and development of the resources educators would need to carry it out. NCEE has three programs designed to accomplish these goals: The Center on International Education Benchmarking, The National Institute for School Leadership and a consulting service for states and large school districts. For more information visit [www.ncee.org](http://www.ncee.org).