

# Foreword

by *Rachel Hendrickson*

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Welcome to *The NEA 2002 Almanac of Higher Education*. Each year the *Almanac* explores trends and conditions in higher education. Authors focus on areas they believe will affect the work and professional lives of higher education employees. This year there may indeed be a sharp break between retrospective views of conditions such as those presented in these chapters and what might be coming in the next year. Certainly, the economy has dramatically changed, with 25 states indicating that there will be budget cuts rather than increases in the next year. But the fundamental change that could be shaping higher education's future is cultural and political.

In this last year and in coming years the principles of the higher education community will be severely tested. Higher education has long prided itself on the opportunity for free expression in class and on campus. Events on our campuses and in our society subsequent to September 11 opened cracks in our beliefs concerning academic freedom and struck a blow to that pride. Faculty who made unpopular statements were excoriated. Foreign-born or foreign-looking students were harassed on campuses and in their communities, and many of them fled home.

Will the events of September 11 exacerbate the trend in the United States to draw inward, away from the global community? I hope not. Such a withdrawal would be counter to all that our higher education system prides itself on. American higher education is the world standard-bearer. Students from all countries have been able to find a place within our diverse system. American higher education is not for the elite, but for the seeker of knowledge. Any attempt to limit that opportunity to those whose countries pass a litmus test will come back to haunt us.

Where but on our campuses can we have the free dialogue necessary to bring understanding to the parties? Where but in our higher education system can we explore even unpopular ideas and bring truths to the light? Our campuses must stand firm in support of diversity of opinion and culture and our faculty and staff must speak out if we wish, not just to lead the world in education, but simply to live with ourselves.