



PRESS RELEASE

A Farewell Message from PACE Executive Director Heather Hough

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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

After nearly a decade at [PACE](#), I am writing to announce that I am stepping down from my role as executive director. My time leading PACE has been an extraordinary journey, and I am immensely proud of what we have built together.

During my tenure, PACE has solidified its place in California as a preeminent source of [research and evidence](#) to better inform decision-making. We've led [key initiatives](#), including [Getting Down to Facts II](#); research-policy-practice partnerships focused on organizing schools for [students with disabilities](#) and better serving [newcomer students](#); the [Reimagine and Rebuild](#) campaign; and district research partnerships designed to build California's capacity for [systemic improvement](#). We have produced more than [250 publications](#); our research has been [featured in the media](#) thousands of times; and we've worked with partners at all levels of the education system: leaders in districts, counties, state agencies, and the legislature as well as statewide and local groups representing parents, educators, school board members, teachers, and students.

Throughout the pandemic and the ongoing recovery period, PACE has been a [prominent voice](#) on the impact of COVID-19 and the evidence-based responses needed to address educational inequities and improve student learning, engagement, and well-being. As we move into this new era, where student needs remain high and educators as well as educational institutions need more support than ever, PACE's commitment to addressing these challenges has never been stronger.

However, I now feel called to explore new avenues for impact. PACE will continue to thrive under the leadership of Faculty Directors [Julie Marsh](#), [Michal Kurlaender](#), [Ben Domingue](#), [Cecilia Rios Aguilar](#), and [Michelle Young](#) in addition to the PACE senior leadership team: Director of Strategic Partnerships [Alix Gallagher](#) and Director of Policy Research [Jeannie Myung](#). PACE's mission and dedication to objective, non-partisan, research-based analysis in decision-making will remain unchanged. During the transition, Professor Julie Marsh will take on the role of executive faculty director and will work with the other faculty directors to hone PACE's vision for the period ahead and establish a new executive team; Alix Gallagher will serve as managing director; and I will continue to be involved as a senior policy and research fellow. I am confident that the organization will rise to meet the substantial challenges, along with the opportunities, ahead.

As I embark on this next chapter, I hope to stay in touch with all of you. We are at a critical juncture in both education and democracy. People's rights are being threatened, our government institutions are being undermined, and our democracy itself is under attack. Education is not only at the heart of this turmoil but also at the core of the solution, as our public schools serve as the foundation of our democracy.

Please do not hesitate to reach out at any time ([linkedin.com/in/hjhough](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hjhough)).

Onward!

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