

Learners First Convening III: Reimagining Policy for Modern Learners

April 28, 2021

The economic hardship caused by COVID-19 has been described as the [most inequitable](#) in modern U.S. history. During this period of historic challenges—and great dynamism—for higher education, how can policymakers advance the economic mobility promise of higher education and help underserved student populations better access and complete the education and training that they need? How can policymakers balance the need for innovation with appropriate guardrails to protect students, consumers and taxpayers? What can institutions do within the current policy framework to put learners first? The third installment of the Learners First convening series will draw on insights from member institutions, their learners, and experts exploring the intersection of policy and the realities that learners are facing during a precarious time for higher education.

AGENDA

April 28, 2021

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| 1:00 - 1:05pm ET | <i>Welcome and Introduction</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Gregory Fowler, UMGC+ Jim Manning, Presidents Forum |
| 1:05 - 1:20pm ET | <i>A Student Perspective</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Cordero Holmes, Rio Salado College+ Moderator: Kate Smith, Rio Salado College |
| 1:20 - 1:50pm ET | <i>Improving Policy by Listening to Learners</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Gianina Baker, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment+ Dave Clayton, Strada Education Network+ Julie Peller, Higher Learning Advocates+ Moderator: Rebecca Villarreal, Ascendium |
| 1:50 - 2:30pm ET | <i>Federal Policy</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">+ Chike Aguh, U.S. Department of Labor+ Terry Hartle, American Council on Education |
| 2:30 - 2:35pm ET | <i>Break</i> |

- 2:35 - 3:10pm ET *A 50-Year Compact: The Federal Role in Supporting Lifelong Learning*
Part 1: Accountability
- + Gabriella Gomez, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
 - + Tamara Hiler, Third Way
 - + Kristin Sharp, EQOS
 - + Moderator: Noah Sudow, Whiteboard Advisors
- 3:10 - 3:45pm ET *A 50-Year Compact: The Federal Role in Supporting Lifelong Learning*
Part 2: Financing
- + Beth Akers, American Enterprise Institute
 - + Jane Oates, WorkingNation
 - + Terri Taylor, Lumina Foundation
 - + Moderator: Noah Sudow, Whiteboard Advisors
- 3:45 - 4:15pm ET *The Frontiers of Policy and Innovation*
- + Clark Gilbert, BYU-Pathway Worldwide
 - + Paul LeBlanc, Southern New Hampshire University
 - + Tim Renick, National Institute for Student Success
 - + Moderator: Sue Ellspermann, Ivy Tech Community College
- 4:15 - 4:50pm ET *Moderated Group Discussion*
- + Peter Smith, UMGC
- 4:50 - 5:00pm ET *Wrap-Up*
- + Gregory Fowler, UMGC
 - + Jim Manning, Presidents Forum

SPEAKER BIOS

Welcome and Introduction

Dr. Gregory W. Fowler became the seventh president of University of Maryland Global Campus, the nation's largest online public university, in January 2021. A distinguished scholar and administrator, he is a leader in developing innovative learning models and experiences for adult and nontraditional populations around the world. Prior to joining UMGC, Dr. Fowler served as president of Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) Global Campus. He also held senior-level academic and administrative positions at Western Governors University (WGU) and



Hesser College in New Hampshire. Dr. Fowler served as a board member and commissioner of the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), where he worked with a team reviewing the shift to remote learning and its impact on the future of higher education.

Jim Manning was appointed executive director of the Presidents Forum in October 2019. Jim is a veteran of government and public service with more than thirty years of policy and program management experience. He served under six Presidential Administrations, most recently as the Acting Chief Operating Officer of Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education. He was recruited as the Education Team Leader for the Presidential Transition Team and directed a comprehensive review of the Department of Education programs, activities and initiatives to create an “as is” picture of the current status of the Department’s policies, programs and operations, and make recommendations to the new Administration and the incoming Secretary of Education on retention or changes to the new administration and incoming Secretary of Education.



Student Perspective

Cordero Holmes is a student at Rio Salado College, where he is studying the ins and outs of addiction and substance use disorders. He has a 4.0 GPA and a Level I Certification in Addiction and Substance Use Disorders, and he is on schedule to obtain his Level II Certification this semester, an associate in applied science degree in the summer, and an associate in arts degree with an emphasis in psychology in the fall. He is one of ten Student Senators for the Maricopa County Community College District, an Arizona Regional Development Officer for Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, a full-time worker, and a father to four children.



Kate Smith is the Interim President of Rio Salado College. She is known for her enthusiasm, energy, and collaborative leadership style and is dedicated to eliminating barriers by making education affordable, accessible, and equitable for all students. Previously, Smith was Rio’s Chief Academic Officer and champion for student success. She has nearly 30 years’ educational leadership experience and is currently a 2020-21 Aspen Rising Presidents Fellow. She is passionate about learning, student empowerment, and giving back.



Improving Policy by Listening to Learners

Dr. Gianina Baker is the acting director at the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA), a resource-research institute



founded to discover, document, and disseminate effective assessment of student learning practices at colleges and universities. Dr. Baker holds a PhD in Educational Organization & Leadership with a Higher Education concentration from the University of Illinois, a M.A. in Human Development Counseling from Saint Louis University, and a B.A. in Psychology from Illinois Wesleyan University.

Dave Clayton serves as senior vice president at Strada Center for Education Consumer Insights, which focuses on improving education after high school by hearing directly from individuals about its role in their plans and lives. The center gives all Americans a voice in the future of education and includes research gathered from hundreds of thousands of interviews. These insights inform work with education providers, employers, thought leaders, innovators, elected officials, policymakers, and community leaders that improves the education value equation for individuals and families.

Clayton also leads the center's work on Public Viewpoint, a research project aimed at better understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the education, work, and lives of American adults. Clayton completed his doctoral degree in clinical psychology at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.



Julie Peller is the executive director of Higher Learning Advocates, where she works to ensure that policies support a postsecondary system that enables all of today's students, regardless of age, income or background, to reach their goals. Prior to joining Higher Learning Advocates, Julie was Lumina Foundation's first director of federal policy. She also has significant legislative policy experience, serving as a senior policy advisor and the deputy staff director for the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor. Prior to her time working in Congress, she was a Presidential Management Fellow and served at the U.S. Department of Education as a budget analyst for a variety of K-12 programs. Julie received her master's degree in public policy from Georgetown University and earned a bachelor's degree in political science and public policy from The George Washington University.



Rebecca Villarreal is Ascendium's Director - Education Philanthropy, where she leads the team's grant activities from developing and refining grantmaking priorities to oversight of the grantmaking and grants management teams. She joined the organization in 2018. Previously, she served as a program officer on the education team at The Kresge Foundation. She has also held positions with the Association of Public & Land-grant Universities, the University of Maryland-College Park, Excelencia in Education, and the National Association of College Admission Counseling. Rebecca earned Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Arts degrees in Higher Education Administration from the University of Maryland-College Park. She also earned a



Bachelor of Journalism degree in Strategic Communications from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Federal Policy

Chike Aguh (Chee-kay Ah-Goo) was sworn in on January 20, 2021, as the Chief Innovation Officer in the Office of the Deputy Secretary at the United States Department of Labor. There he leads organization-wide efforts to use innovative technologies, partnerships and practices to accelerate the Department's mission of ensuring that every American is included and respected in the future of work. Previously, Chike was the inaugural Head of Economic Mobility Pathways at the Education Design Lab where he launched the Community College Growth Engine Fund, an innovative multimillion dollar effort turning community colleges into bridges to careers in high growth fields. He has also served as a Technology and Human Rights Fellow at the Harvard Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, Venture Partner at New Markets Venture Partners, member of the Council on Foreign Relations' Future of Work Taskforce, and inaugural speaker for the Social Good Lecture Series at the University of Maryland School of Public Policy. Additionally, Chike worked as an education policy official under the Mayor of New York, second grade teacher and Teach For America corps member, Fulbright Scholar in Thailand, director of corporate strategy at Education Advisory Board (EAB), CEO of a national social enterprise that helped connect 500,000 low-income Americans to affordable Internet and digital skills, and Senior Principal and Future of Work Lead at the McChrystal Group. Chike holds degrees from Tufts University (B.A.), Harvard Graduate School of Education (Ed.M), Harvard Kennedy School of Government (MPA), and University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School (MBA).



Terry W. Hartle is the senior vice president of government relations and public affairs at the American Council on Education (ACE) and is one of America's most effective and experienced advocates for higher education. At ACE, where he has served for more than 25 years, he directs comprehensive efforts to engage federal policymakers on a broad range of issues including student aid, government regulation, scientific research and tax policy. His work involves representation before the U.S. Congress, administrative agencies and the federal courts.



A 50-Year Compact: The Federal Role in Supporting Lifelong Learning Part 1: Accountability

Gabriella Gomez serves as the Deputy Director for Policy and Finance at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, where she is charged with overseeing the overall policy and advocacy agenda for the US Education Programs. Prior to joining the Gates Foundation, Gabriella worked at the

U.S. Department of Education, leading the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs, and most recently served as the Acting Assistant Secretary for the Office in charge of the overall budget and policy efforts for the agency. Her other experience includes serving as the lead higher education policy advisor for Chairman George Miller (D-CA) on the U.S. House of Representatives Committee for Education and Labor, a lobbyist for the American Federation of Teachers, and a legislative assistant for U.S. Representative Ciro Rodriguez (D-TX). She is a graduate of the Harvard School of Education and Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles, CA), and is a recipient of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institution Fellowship.



Tamara Hiler is the director of education at Third Way, where she leads the organization's efforts to create demand for a comprehensive college quality agenda by helping change the national policy conversation about higher education from cost to value. This includes forging strong relationships with Hill staff and other advocacy groups dedicated to improving student outcomes through increased transparency and accountability in higher education. She graduated with a B.S. in Public Health from the University of Southern California and holds a Master's in Public Policy & Administration from Northwestern University.



Kristin Sharp is the CEO of the Education Quality Outcomes Standards Board (EQOS). Prior to joining EQOS, Kristin was the workforce innovation partner at Entangled Solutions. She also co-founded the Shift Commission and launched the ShiftLabs and Work, Workers, and Technology projects at New America, examining the impact of automation and AI on the workforce. Earlier in her career, she had a long stint in technology, innovation, and national security policy in the US Senate, working in senior staff roles for senators and committees on both sides of the political aisle.



Noah Sudow is a senior vice president at Whiteboard Advisors. He has worked for over a decade on the front lines of postsecondary education and is a trusted advisor to investors and entrepreneurs working to translate innovation into institutional outcomes. Noah previously served as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation at the Ohio Board of Regents, where he was responsible for the state's university commercialization agenda and creating public-private partnerships.



Part 2: Financing

Beth Akers is a resident scholar at AEI, where she focuses on the economics of higher education. Previously, she worked at the Manhattan



Institute, the Federal Reserve Board, the Brookings Institution, and the Council of Economic Advisers under President George W. Bush. She is the author of two books, *Game of Loans: The Rhetoric and Reality of Student Debt* (Princeton University Press, 2016) and *Making College Pay: An Economist Explains How to Make a Smart Bet on Higher Education* (Penguin Random House, 2021).

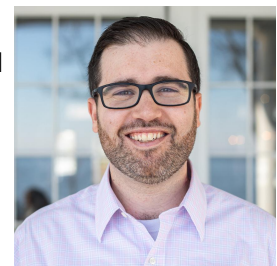
Jane Oates is the President of WorkingNation, an LA-based non-profit media entity that tells the stories of solutions bridging the education and workforce worlds. Before joining WorkingNation, she worked at the Apollo Education Group managing Corporate Social Responsibility and linking the universities with employers through thought leadership events. She also previously served as the Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training at the US Department of Labor (DOL) under Secretary Hilda Solis and the Commissioner of the New Jersey Higher Education Commission under Governor Jon Corzine. Oates became a national leader in education and workforce programs during her ten years with Senator Edward M. Kennedy on the US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP). She began her career as a teacher in the Boston and Philadelphia Public Schools and went on to become the Director of Field Services at the Temple University Center for Research and Human Development, working with K-12 districts nationwide.



Terri Taylor is strategy director for innovation and discovery at Lumina Foundation. She leads the foundation's efforts to develop new strategies to respond to the increasingly common question, education for what? She also oversees work to increase adult learner participation in bachelor's programs. Previously, Taylor led the foundation's postsecondary finance portfolio, including state-level efforts to support adult learners, address the needs of borrowers of color, and promote innovative postsecondary finance approaches.



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The Frontiers of Policy and Innovation

Clark G. Gilbert became the first president of BYU-Pathway Worldwide, a global online organization serving over 50,000 students in over 150



countries, in 2017. President Gilbert previously served as the president of BYU-Idaho, the CEO of the Deseret News and Deseret Digital Media, and on the faculty of the Harvard Business School. President Gilbert currently serves as a General Authority, a senior leadership responsibility in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He and his wife Christine are the parents of eight children.

Dr. Paul J. LeBlanc is the president of Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU). Since 2003, under Paul's leadership, SNHU has grown from 2,800 students to over 150,000 learners and is the largest nonprofit provider of online higher education in the country. *Forbes* magazine has listed him as one of its 15 "Classroom Revolutionaries" and one of the "most influential people in higher education." *Washington Monthly* named him one of America's ten most innovative university presidents. Paul was the first person in his extended family to attend college and is a graduate of Framingham State University (BA), Boston College (MA), and the University of Massachusetts (PhD).



Timothy Renick is the founding Executive Director of the National Institute for Student Success and Professor of Religious Studies at Georgia State University. Between 2008-2020, he directed the student success efforts of the university, overseeing a 62% improvement in graduation rates and the elimination of all equity gaps based on students' race, ethnicity or income level. For six consecutive years, Georgia State has graduated more African American students with bachelor's degrees than any other not-for-profit college or university in the nation. Dr. Renick has testified on strategies for helping university students succeed before the U.S. Senate and has twice been invited to speak at the White House. His work has been covered by *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, and CNN and cited by former President Barack Obama. He has been principal investigator for more than \$30 million in research grants focused on promoting better and more equitable outcomes for college students. At Georgia State, he has served as Chair of the Department of Religious Studies, Director of the Honors Program and Senior Vice President. A *summa cum laude* graduate of Dartmouth College, Dr. Renick holds his M.A. and Ph.D. in Religion from Princeton University.



Dr. Sue Ellspermann became President of Ivy Tech Community College on July 1, 2016. Prior to that she served as Indiana's 50th Lieutenant Governor from 2013 until March 2016. As the vice chair of the Indiana Career Council she led efforts to align Indiana's education and workforce development system to meet the needs of employers which is her continued focus at Ivy Tech. Her public service began in 2010 when she was elected as the State Representative for District 74. Ellspermann was the founding Director of the Center of Applied Research and Economic Development at the University of Southern Indiana and also owned and



operated Ellspermann and Associates, Inc, an independent consulting firm licensed in the training and facilitation of Simplex Creative Problem Solving. Early in her career, she spent time with Frito-Lay and Michelin Tire Corporation. Ellspermann holds a Ph.D. and an M.S. from the University of Louisville in Industrial Engineering and a B.S. from Purdue University also in Industrial Engineering.

Moderated Group Discussion

Peter Smith, Ed.D., whose distinguished career in higher education includes serving as founding president of both California State University Monterey Bay and the Community College of Vermont, currently holds a five-year term as the Orkand Endowed Chair and Senior Vice President/Senior Advisor to the President at the University of Maryland Global Campus (UMGC). Smith served as Assistant Director General for Education for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization in Paris, France. Smith also served Vermont as a state senator (1980-82), Lt. Governor (1982-86) and Congressman (1989-90).



Wrap-Up

Dr. Gregory W. Fowler became the seventh president of University of Maryland Global Campus, the nation's largest online public university, in January 2021. A distinguished scholar and administrator, he is a leader in developing innovative learning models and experiences for adult and nontraditional populations around the world. Prior to joining UMGC, Dr. Fowler served as president of Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) Global Campus. He also held senior-level academic and administrative positions at Western Governors University (WGU) and Hesser College in New Hampshire. Dr. Fowler served as a board member and commissioner of the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), where he worked with a team reviewing the shift to remote learning and its impact on the future of higher education.



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