

Town Hall with Assemblymember Das Williams

*Improving Latino College Completion:
Promising Policy and Practice*

Speaker Biographies

Why This Agenda and Why Now? An Overview of Trends and Issues

Michelle Camacho Liu

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Policy Associate, Education Program, National Conference of State Legislatures

Michelle Camacho Liu is an education policy associate for the National Conference of State Legislatures covering higher education issues. Michelle tracks postsecondary education legislation and provides legislators and their staff resources and information on a variety of postsecondary issues including college access and success, improving Latino student success, adult learners, and for-profit institutions. Prior to NCSL, Michelle worked with Colorado Youth Matter providing research and technical assistance on the sexual health of youth and science-based approaches to teen pregnancy prevention to community providers. She also worked and continues to volunteer with the Denver Scholarship Foundation, providing information to students and parents on preparing for college. Michelle holds a B.A. in Psychology from the University of California, Riverside and a Masters in Social Work from the University of Denver.

Dr. Frank Wen

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Manager, Research and Analysis, Southern California Association of Governments

Dr. Frank Wen is the Manager of Research and Analysis with the Division of Land Use and Environmental Planning, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). He joined SCAG in 1988 and served as Senior Economist between 1993 and 2005. His researches and assignments include: producing SCAG region growth forecasts, translating growth and demographic shifts into policy implications, conducting economic impact analysis and environmental justice analysis for regional transportation plan, performing income equity and fair share analysis for aviation plan, tracking and reporting on regional economic, housing, and demographic trends. Dr. Wen taught a graduate level class, "Environmental Justice (EJ) in Transportation Planning and Investment" at the University of Southern California (USC) School of Public Policy and Urban Planning in the Spring Semester of 2005. Dr. Wen received both M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Applied Economics from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Analyzing the Data: Where are the Opportunity Gaps for Latinos in California?

Dr. Joseph Aguerrebere

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Board Member, Excelencia in Education

Joseph Aguerrebere served for eight years as President and CEO of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in Arlington, Virginia, an independent nonprofit organization recognized as the gold standard in their work to advance the quality of teaching and learning in schools. Prior to leading NBPTS, Dr. Aguerrebere was Deputy Director of the Education, Knowledge, and Religion unit of the Ford Foundation in New York, where his grantmaking work focused on the development of human capital in education settings in the U.S. and abroad. His professional career began as a high school teacher in Southern California, and he continued on to serve in many diverse educational systems in various capacities, from principal to central office administrator. He then became a tenured full professor of educational administration at CSU, Dominguez Hills, where he prepared teachers and school leaders to work successfully in urban settings. He serves on numerous boards including the Institute for Educational Leadership, Excelencia in Education, the Center for Education Policy, and ACT, Inc. He is recognized as a national expert on education improvement and is an advisor to education organizations, journalists, and government. Dr. Aguerrebere graduated from Garfield High School (the school made famous in the movie, *Stand and Deliver*), and then attended the University of Southern California where he earned a bachelors degree in political science, and masters and doctorate degrees in educational administration.

Dr. Estela Mara Bensimon

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Co-Director and Professor, USC Center on Urban Education

Estela Mara Bensimon, Ed.D., is a professor of higher education and co-director of the Center for Urban Education (CUE) at the USC Rossier School of Education. Her current research is on issues of racial equity in higher education from the perspective of organizational learning and socio-cultural practice theories. She is particularly interested in place-based, practitioner-driven inquiry as a means of organizational change in higher education. Previously Dr. Bensimon conducted research on leadership in higher education and is the author and co-author of several publications on college presidents, department chairs, and administrative teams. Dr. Bensimon has held the highest leadership positions in the Association for the Study of Higher Education (President, 2005-2006) and in the American Education Research Association-Division on Postsecondary Education (Vice-President, 1992-1994). She has served on the boards of the American Association for Higher Education and the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Dr. Bensimon was associate dean of the USC Rossier School of Education from 1996-2000 and was a Fulbright Scholar to Mexico in 2002. She earned her doctorate in higher education from Teachers College, Columbia University.

California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force

Chancellor Dr. Brice Harris

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California Community Colleges

Dr. Brice W. Harris is the 15th chancellor of the California Community Colleges, the largest system of higher education in the nation, and officially assumed the position in November, 2012. Prior to this, Harris served 16 years as chancellor of the Los Rios Community College District. Harris understands the important connection between community colleges and the economy and believes that building bridges with the business community will increase student access to job skills and resources necessary to compete in today's tight job market. He is renowned for his relationships within the community college system, the Sacramento community and the Legislature, and has served on a host of local, state and national boards and commissions. He is also a recognized leader on national education issues and currently serves as a board member of the American Council on Education (ACE) in Washington, D.C., and serves as a member of the ACE National Commission on Student Attainment. He also served as a member of the board of directors of the American Association of Community Colleges, previously chaired the Task Force on Leadership in California Community Colleges, the Community College Task Force on Global and International Education, and the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force. Harris did his post-doctoral study at the Harvard University Institute of Educational Management, received his doctorate in education at Nova Southeastern University, his master's in communication from the University of Arkansas, and his bachelor's in communication from Southwestern Oklahoma State University.

Promising Policy and Practice in Re-envisioning Basic Skills Education

Dr. Bruce Vandal

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Vice President, Complete College America

Bruce Vandal is a national expert on remedial education reform strategy, Bruce Vandal serves as CCA Vice President, where he leads CCA's remedial education reform efforts and provides key policy leadership on CCA's completion agenda. Before his role at CCA, Bruce was the Vice President of Development and Outreach as well as the Director of the Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development Institute with the Education Commission of the States, where he directed Getting Past Go, a Lumina Foundation project that leveraged investments in remedial and developmental education to increase college attainment. He also directed Boosting College Completion for a New Economy, a two-year project supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which is working with state legislators to spur economic growth in states through increased college attainment rates. He earned his Ph.D. in Education Policy and Administration with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration from the University of Minnesota.

Dr. Katie Hern

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Director, California Acceleration Project

Katie Hern, Ed.D., is an English Instructor at Chabot College and has conducted extensive research into her department's longstanding accelerated developmental course. Along with math instructor Myra Snell, Hern leads the California Acceleration Project, supporting faculty from the state's 112 community colleges to redesign their English and Math curricula to increase student completion (<http://cap.3csn.org>). Their work has been featured in the *New York Times*, KQED public radio, and *Inside Higher Education*, along with national reform organizations Complete College America, Getting Past Go, and the Developmental Education Initiative. She speaks nationally on the subject of accelerated models of remediation, and her article about the spread of accelerated English and Math was recently featured in the national magazine *Change*.

Working Collaboratively to Improve Latino College Completion

Eloy Ortiz Oakley

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Superintendent-President, Long Beach City College

Eloy Ortiz Oakley is best known throughout California and the nation for implementing innovative programs and policies that help students succeed in college. Oakley strongly believes that California's emerging economies demand a workforce with certificates and degrees and that the state's 112 community colleges play a pivotal role in moving California forward. Under Oakley's leadership, the Long Beach Community College District has received numerous awards for its efforts to improve student completion rates and for teaching small business owners throughout the greater Los Angeles area how to succeed and grow their businesses.

Oakley was appointed as the Superintendent-President of the Long Beach Community College District (LBCCD) in 2007. Since his appointment, he has fostered strong relationships with members of the community, his Board of Trustees and members of the faculty senate, faculty unions and classified staff. Oakley himself is a community college success story. After serving four years in the US Army, he enrolled at Golden West College. He then transferred to the University of California, Irvine where he received his degrees of Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Analysis and Design and Master of Business Administration. He is a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the Association of California Community Colleges Administrators (ACCCA), the Presidents for Entrepreneurship Forum and a founding member of the President's Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability.

Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez

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President, California Latino School Board Association

Board Member, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez currently serves as a member of the Board of Education of the Azusa Unified School District. First elected at 26, she is the youngest person to ever hold that position. Her primary focus as a local policymaker is to ensure that the children of Azusa schools receive and successfully complete a rigorous, high-quality and well-rounded education that prepares all students for post-secondary education. She believes strongly that the economic success of our country will only truly be achieved through educational equity. She currently serves as the President of the California Latino School Boards Association (CLSBA), a statewide nonprofit focused on serving the needs of Latino students through the empowerment of school board members. She also serves as a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO).