

COSUAA 2013 Speakers

Michael Dannenberg

Michael Dannenberg is the director of higher education policy and education finance at The Education Trust. Prior to joining The Education Trust in 2010, he was a senior policy advisor in the Office of the Under Secretary in the U.S. Department of Education. Other positions include director of New America Foundation's education policy program and a long-time senior education counsel to Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), and prior to that to Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.).

A first-generation college graduate who relied on Pell Grants, student loans, scholarships and work to pay for his own education his personal experiences allow him to draw upon both strong policy expertise and a keen understanding of how issues of college affordability directly impact students themselves.

Mr. Dannenberg is a graduate of Yale Law School and earned a master's degree in education policy and administration from Stanford University.

Jacob P.K. Gross

Jacob P.K. Gross is an Assistant Professor of higher education at the University of Louisville (U of L). His experiences as a Pell Grant recipient and work with underrepresented students in college led him to study policies that promote access to and attainment in postsecondary education. Specifically, his research focuses on financial aid, diversity policies, and student mobility. Dr. Gross teaches classes on administration, diversity, history of higher education, and resource management.

Prior to teaching at U of L, Dr. Gross worked as a policy analyst for the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission. He completed his doctorate in 2008 in History, Philosophy, and Policy Studies in Education at Indiana University, where he also worked in the Center for Postsecondary Research.

Jeff Baker

Jeff Baker is the Director of Policy Liaison and Implementation Staff with the Federal Student Aid division of the U.S. Department of Education, a job he has held for 19 years. He has over 39 years of financial experience, including positions at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee and almost 20 years at San Francisco State University.

Jeff holds a B.S. in Management from Northeastern University, an M.S. in Education from the University of Wisconsin, and has done postgraduate work in higher education administration at the University of Southern California.

Christopher Loss

Christopher P. Loss is an assistant professor of public policy and higher education at Vanderbilt University. He is the author of [Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education in the 20th Century](#) (Princeton University Press, 2012), winner of the 2013 AERA Outstanding Book Award.

Dr. Loss holds doctorates in higher education and in history from the University of Virginia. Prior to joining the faculty at Vanderbilt University, he was a research fellow in the Governance Studies Program at The Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. He also worked in academic administration for four years in the Office of the Vice President and Provost at the University of Virginia.

Zakiya Smith

Zakiya Smith is a Strategy Director at the Lumina Foundation, where she leads the work of the foundation to develop new models of student financial support for higher education. Most recently, Ms. Smith served as a Senior Advisor for Education at the White House Domestic Policy Council, where she focused on developing the President's higher education policy. She also served in the Obama administration as a senior adviser at the U. S. Department of Education.

Previous positions include serving as staff of the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, Teach for America, and for the federal GEAR UP program in East Boston, Massachusetts. She was introduced to federal policy as an intern on Capitol Hill with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, working for her former hometown Congresswoman.

Ms. Smith holds a bachelor's degree in political science and secondary education from Vanderbilt University, and a master's degree in education policy and management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Nick Lee

Nick Lee serves as a Senior Program Officer for the U.S. Program – Policy and Advocacy team at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In his role, he is responsible for making grants focusing on college completion, data systems and metrics, and providing a fiscal and policy lens for the Foundation's broader postsecondary grant-making efforts. Nick joined the Foundation from the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) where he spent the last five years formulating and implementing the George W. Bush and Obama Administrations' student aid agendas, specifically in regards to the federal government's annual \$150 billion investment in the Pell Grant and student loan programs.

Prior to OMB, Nick served at the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Senate with a focus on postsecondary education and social policy issues. A Boston native and life-long Red Sox fan, he received his Bachelor's degree in Economics and International Relations from Boston University and a Masters in Public Administration from The George Washington University.

Washington Update Panelists

George Chin

George Chin joined the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) in 2008 as a Senior Federal Policy Consultant with a focus on student financial aid issues. He came to AASCU after serving 26 years as the University Director for Student Financial Aid at the City University of New York (CUNY). Prior to his service at CUNY, George served as a Branch Chief for Institutional Review in the Office of Student Financial Assistance within the New York Regional Office of the U.S. Department of Education. He also worked in financial aid at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York and at SUNY at Stony Brook.

George holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Management Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a Masters of Education degree in Guidance and Psychological Services from Springfield College.

Megan McClean

Megan McClean is the Managing Director of Policy and Federal Relations at the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). Prior to joining NASFAA in the fall of 2010, she served as the Director of Government Relations for the federal Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, where she contributed to several congressionally mandated reports on the postsecondary access and persistence of low- and moderate- income students. Megan began her career in higher education as an admissions counselor at Penn State University. She received a master's in higher education at Penn State and BA in political science from Allegheny College.

Jonathan Fansmith

Jon Fansmith is the Associate Director of Government Relations for the American Council on Education (ACE). He specializes in budget and appropriations as well as federal student aid funding. He also serves on the Executive Committee for Education Funding, a 100-member coalition of national education associations; coordinates the efforts of the Student Aid Alliance, a coalition of over 80 higher education organizations; and serves on the board of directors of the Foundation for Education Investment.

Jon earned a BA in history from Georgetown University and an MA in government from The Johns Hopkins University. He held positions in the academic and nonprofit sectors before joining ACE.