

PARTICIPANTS

Lande Ajose is executive director of California Competes, which develops recommendations for improved higher education. She has expertise in education; poverty alleviation; workforce development, especially for low-income adults; and issues of inequity. Before she became executive director she served as deputy director for four years. She also served as managing director at the strategic consulting firm Informing Change and focused on community college success at MDRC and the James Irvine Foundation. She is a member of the California Student Aid Commission—she was appointed in 2014 and reappointed in 2018 by Governor Brown. She is also a commissioner for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. She holds a PhD in urban and regional studies from MIT, an MA in urban planning from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a BA from Occidental College.

Natasha Collins is a principal consultant for the California State Assembly Appropriations Committee. She provides subject matter expertise, analysis, and recommendations to the committee in the areas of K–12 education, higher education, and jobs and economic development. Previously, she served as a senior analyst in the education section of the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO), where she covered various K–12 and higher education budget and policy issues, including education data. In this role, she authored reports on education topics and frequently testified before legislative committees. Other previous roles include working as a research assistant at the American Institutes for Research and at Chapin Hall in Chicago. She holds a bachelor’s degree in politics from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a master’s degree in public policy from the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago.

Deborah Gonzalez is director of government affairs at PPIC. She and her staff work to connect PPIC research with policymakers and community leaders. A longtime Capitol staffer, she served as policy and fiscal director for six legislative leaders and worked on a wide variety of issues—including the state budget, education reform, infrastructure funding, and public safety. She holds a law degree from the McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific, and a BA from Claremont McKenna College, where she majored in international relations.

Jacob Jackson is a research fellow at the PPIC Higher Education Center. His research includes work on college costs, college readiness, community college participation, access to higher education, and college completion. Before joining PPIC, he was a postdoctoral scholar at the University of California, Davis, and a middle school and high school teacher in Sacramento, California, and Columbia, Missouri. He holds a PhD in education from the University of California, Davis, and a master’s degree in education from the University of Missouri.

Hans Johnson is director of the PPIC Higher Education Center and a senior fellow at PPIC, where he holds the Thomas and Marilyn Sutton Chair in Higher Education Policy. As center director, he works with a team of researchers to identify policies that can make higher education policy more successful and sustainable. His own research focuses on improving college access and completion. He frequently presents his work to policymakers and higher education officials, and he serves as a technical advisor to many organizations. He holds a PhD in demography and a master’s degree in biostatistics from the University of California, Berkeley.

Laura Metune is vice chancellor of external relations for the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. She oversees a division that represents the Chancellor’s Office before the legislative and executive branches of the state and federal governments. Before she joined the Chancellor’s Office in 2016, she spent nearly two decades working in and around the California State Capitol; most recently, she served as chief consultant for the Assembly Committee on Higher Education. In that role she helped write and win passage of landmark legislation related to student consumer protections, financial aid, and other postsecondary issues. She was appointed by Governor Brown in 2012 as the bureau chief for the California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education. She is a first-generation college graduate and a product of California’s public education system; she transferred from American River College to earn a bachelor’s degree in government from California State University, Sacramento.

Colleen Moore is the assistant director at EdInsights and has been with the organization since 2002. Her principal areas of focus include college readiness and success, career technical education, state and system policy for higher education, and regional P–20 approaches and pathways development. She has coauthored numerous reports and articles on higher education policy and finance, higher education performance and accountability, community college student success, the community college transfer process, and career technical education. She is interested in the use of data on student progress and success to inform policy and practice aimed at achieving better outcomes for underserved students. Prior to her work at EdInsights, she worked for several public and private organizations conducting policy-oriented research on a variety of topics, including California’s Employment Development Department, the California Institute for County Government, the Defense Personnel Security Research Center, and others. She holds a master’s degree in public policy and administration from California State University, Sacramento, and a BA in psychology from University of the Pacific.