

PARTICIPANTS

Marisol Cuellar Mejia is a research associate at the PPIC Higher Education Center. Her recent projects have focused on developmental education, the workforce skills gap, online learning in community colleges, and the economic returns to college education. Her research interests include labor markets, business climate, housing, and demographic trends. Before joining PPIC, she worked at Colombia's National Association of Financial Institutions as an economic analyst, concentrating on issues related to the manufacturing sector and small business. She has also conducted agricultural and commodity market research for the Colombian National Federation of Coffee Growers and the National Federation of Palm Oil Growers of Colombia. She holds an MS in agricultural and resource economics from the University of California, Davis.

Laura Hope is executive vice chancellor for educational services at the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office. She is responsible for overseeing academic affairs as well as student services and special programs. She plays a critical role in the widespread adoption of the California Community Colleges' Guided Pathways framework and other related reforms designed to improve outcomes for students. She launched her career at Chaffey College as a faculty member teaching composition and then later became an administrator, overseeing a number of innovative initiatives aimed at enhancing and diversifying access to learning through programs such as distance education, the Success Center network, the Zero Textbook Cost effort, the Honors Program, and inmate education. She has served as a board member and strategic advisor to both the RP Group and the California Community Colleges' Success Network (3CSN) and has authored publications related to student success and completion. She attended Chaffey College before transferring to California State University, San Bernardino, where she earned a BA in English and an MA in rhetoric and composition.

Jacqui Irwin is a member of the California State Assembly, serving her second term as representative for the 44th assembly district. She was first elected to the assembly in 2014 and serves as the chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee and the Select Committee on Cyber Security. She also sits on committees that oversee agriculture, the budget, higher education, and privacy and consumer protection. While in the legislature, she has had more than thirty bills signed by the governor, including legislation banning powdered alcohol in the state, securing funds to establish an engineering school at Cal State Channel Islands, and investing in business incubators at UC campuses to ensure that research was being transformed into real-world products. She also served for ten years on the Thousand Oaks City Council, including two terms as mayor. Before being elected to public office, she was a systems engineer at the applied physics lab at Johns Hopkins University and worked at Teledyne Systems.

Hans Johnson is director of the PPIC Higher Education Center and a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California. 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 seeking to improve college graduation rates, address workforce needs, and engage in long-term capacity planning. His other areas of expertise include international and domestic migration, housing in California, and population projections. Before joining PPIC, he worked as a demographer at the California Research Bureau and at the California Department of Finance. He holds a PhD in demography and a master's degree in biostatistics from the University of California, Berkeley.

Olga Rodriguez is a research fellow at the PPIC Higher Education Center. She conducts research on the impact of programs and policies on student outcomes, with a particular focus on college access and success among underserved students. Her recent research focuses on statewide developmental education reform, assessment and placement systems, and place-based efforts to help students get into and through college. Before joining PPIC, she was a postdoctoral research associate at the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University. She holds a PhD in economics and education from Columbia University.

Summer Serpas is assistant director of the California Acceleration Project (CAP) and an English instructor at Irvine Valley College. As assistant director of CAP, she leads professional development events for faculty across the state who are working to transform remediation and increase completion of transfer-level classes in English and math. She began working with CAP in 2012, when Irvine Valley College launched a two-section acceleration pilot. She created a local training program for faculty and led her college's efforts to scale up the course. Additionally, she serves on her department's multiple-measures workgroup, which has promoted changes in placement that have nearly doubled the number of students allowed to enroll directly in transfer-level English classes. She has shared her college's experiences at statewide and national conferences, and she has spoken about acceleration to the California Community Colleges Board of Governors and the California State Assembly's Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance. She holds a master's degree in English from California State University, Fullerton.