PARTICIPANTS

**Jorge A. Aguilar** became superintendent of the Sacramento City Unified School District in 2017. He has more than 20 years of K–12 and higher education experience, with a strong focus on issues of equity and student achievement. Previously, he served as associate superintendent for equity and access at Fresno Unified School District. At Fresno Unified, he successfully led data-driven efforts to increase graduation, reduce dropouts, and increase a–g course completion. Prior to that, he was associate vice chancellor for educational and community partnerships and special assistant to the chancellor at the University of California, Merced. In 2015, he was appointed by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson to the Advisory Task Force on Accountability and Continuous Improvement. He is also a recipient of the Winston Doby Impact Award. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley, where he majored in Latin American studies as well as Spanish and Portuguese. He holds a JD from Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

**Jim Dragna** is executive director of university initiatives and student success at Sacramento State University. As “graduation czar,” he is responsible for coordinating graduation programming that is aligned with California State University’s Graduation 2025 Initiative. Under his supervision, the Finish in Four campaign at Sacramento State has seen an overwhelming student response. In 2012, about 20 percent of first-year Sacramento State students enrolled in 15 credit hours during their first semester. In 2017, 64 percent did so, and more than 80 percent pledged to take 30 credit hours in their first year. Previously, he served as director of student success at the University of Canterbury, in Christchurch, New Zealand. His professional career includes progressive responsibilities in student affairs and services at North Dakota State University, the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, and the University of South Florida. In addition, he has taught psychology and psychodynamic theory to undergraduate, graduate, and medical school students. He holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame and graduate degrees in counseling education from the University of Colorado.

**Niu Gao** is a research fellow at PPIC, specializing in K–12 education. Her areas of interest include accountability and the teacher labor market, with recent work on funding for K–12 education, digital learning in K–12 schools, and STEM education. Prior to joining PPIC, she worked as a quantitative policy analyst at Stanford. She holds a PhD in educational policy and an MS in economics from Florida State University.

**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.

**Hans Johnson** is director of the PPIC Higher Education Center and a senior fellow at PPIC. 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. Previously, he served as research director at PPIC. 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.

**Kimberly Rodriguez** is chief education advisor to Kevin de León, president pro tempore of the California State Senate. She advises on K–12, higher education, and child care budget and policy issues. She has 20 years of legislative experience in the California State Legislature and as a lobbyist for school district organizations. She has served as an education policy and fiscal consultant for the Assembly Education Committee, the Assembly Budget Committee, and the Assembly Appropriations Committee.