ADVANCING TO A MIDDLE-SKILL JOB: MOVING BEYOND THE FIRST STEP ON A CAREER PATHWAY

Speaker Biographies

Brenda Dann-Messier was appointed Rhode Island commissioner of postsecondary education after having served as acting commissioner. Throughout her career, Dann-Messier has focused on promoting student success and developing the workforce at every level. Under President Obama, she was assistant secretary of education of career, technical, and adult education. She led the US Department of Education's efforts in adult education and career and technical education and helped shape the administration's policies on community colleges and correctional education. In 2013, she was named acting US assistant secretary for postsecondary education. Dann-Messier has also been an education consultant, most recently with the Council of Chief State School Officers, where she helped states develop integrated pathways for college and career readiness. Dann-Messier is an alumna of Rhode Island College, where she earned a BA in history and secondary education and a master's in instructional technology. She went on to earn an EdD in educational leadership from Johnson & Wales University. Dann-Messier began her career in higher education at Rhode Island College and the Community College of Rhode Island before taking a position in the US Department of Education during the Clinton administration and later serving as president of Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center in Providence. She served on the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education from 2006 to 2009 and on the board of the Rhode Island Higher Education Assistance Authority from 2007 to 2009.

Jaime S. Fall is director of UpSkill America at the Aspen Institute, an employer-led movement to expand opportunity for America's workers and to help our economy and communities thrive by promoting training and advancement practices to help workers progress in their careers and move into better-paying jobs. Previously, Fall was vice president for workforce and talent sustainability for the HR Policy Foundation, where she remains a senior adviser. Previously, Fall was deputy secretary of employment and workforce development for the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. As a Senate-confirmed leader in the Schwarzenegger administration, he provided policy and guidance to California's $11 billion workforce system and the nearly 9,000 employees that made up the entities within the agency. Previously, Fall spent more than a decade in Washington, DC, working at the US Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration; at the National Association of State Workforce Agencies; at Fall Communications, a workforce development-focused marketing and website development company founded by his wife; and on Capitol Hill.

Harry J. Holzer is the John LaFarge S.J. professor of public policy at Georgetown University, a nonresident fellow in Economic Studies at the Brookings Institution, and an institute fellow at the American Institutes for Research. Holzer joined the McCourt School as professor of public policy in 2000. He was associate dean from 2004 through 2006 and was acting dean in 2006. He is also a senior affiliate at the Urban Institute and a research affiliate of the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He has also been a faculty director of the Georgetown Center on Poverty, Inequality, and Public Policy. He received his BA and PhD in economics from Harvard University. Before coming to Georgetown, Holzer was chief economist for the US Department of Labor and professor of economics at Michigan State University. He has also been a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation and a faculty research fellow of the National Bureau of Economic Research. Over most of his career, Holzer's research has focused on the low-wage labor market. He has testified many times before congressional and other federal committees or commissions, and his columns appear frequently in major media outlets. Holzer has taught courses for MPP students in statistical methods for program and policy evaluation at the McCourt School and courses on antipoverty, education, and labor market policy.

Yvonne Lau is dean of academic affairs and career pathways at Instituto del Progreso Latino, a Chicago community-based nonprofit that has been nationally recognized for its workforce development and career pathway programs. She is chief academic officer of the recently launched Instituto College, where she is responsible for educational policy and academic programs. Before arriving at Instituto, Lau spent two decades in higher education in teaching and research in ethnic and diaspora studies, academic administration, and multicultural student affairs. She has been passionate about developing innovative educational programs while increasing the retention and well-being of students of color and first-generation immigrant students, especially nonnative English language learners. Lau was the founding president of Asian Americans Advancing Justice, an organization devoted to research, education, and advocacy. She is a graduate of Cornell University and received her MA and PhD from Northwestern University in sociology.

Demetra Nightingale is an Institute fellow at the Urban Institute, where her research focuses on social, economic, and labor policy issues. She was the chief evaluation officer at the US Department of Labor from 2011 to 2016, where she developed what is recognized as one of the premier evaluation units in the federal government. Before joining the Department of Labor, Nightingale was at the Urban Institute for three decades, conducting research and evaluations on employment, labor, welfare, and other social and economic policies and programs, and at the Johns Hopkins University for seven years, where she taught graduate courses in social policy and program evaluation. She is also a professorial lecturer at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at the George Washington University, teaching graduate courses in program evaluation, integrating evaluation, and performance management in the context of evidence-based policymaking. Nightingale is the author or coauthor of five books and numerous articles. Among her books are *Repairing the US Social Safety Net* (with Martha Burt) and *Reshaping the American Workforce in a Changing Economy* (with Harry Holzer). She is a fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration and serves on many task forces and advisory panels. She received her doctorate in public policy from the George Washington University.

Jennie Sparandara, head of workforce strategy and executive director of global philanthropy at JPMorgan Chase, leads the firm's global commitment to workforce readiness through innovative programs, thoughtful research, and the firm's vast resources and talented employees. Her investment portfolio focuses on career-connected education, industry-driven job training, and career pathways. Signature projects include New Skills at Work, JPMorgan's $250 million commitment to building skills around the globe, and New Skills for Youth, a $75 million investment to build more effective career education, benefiting employers and young adults alike. Sparandara was most recently executive director of the Job Opportunity Investment Network (JOIN), a partnership between philanthropy, government, community organizations, and employers in Greater Philadelphia that creates a collaborative space for developing and testing industry-led job training models. Before leading JOIN, Sparandara was the first director of human capital investments in the City of Philadelphia, where she coordinated Philadelphia's antipoverty programs and workforce development initiatives, including the strategic realignment of the city's workforce agencies. Previously, she worked in the federal government and local and national policy organizations. Sparandara holds a bachelor's degree from Barnard College and a master's degree in public policy from Georgetown University.

Margery Austin Turner is senior vice president for program planning and management at the Urban Institute, where she leads efforts to frame and conduct a forward-looking agenda of policy research. A nationally recognized expert on urban policy and neighborhood issues, Turner has analyzed issues of residential location, racial and ethnic discrimination and its contribution to neighborhood segregation and inequality, and the role of housing policies in promoting residential mobility and location choice. Among her recent publications is the book *Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation*. Before joining Urban, Turner was deputy assistant secretary for research at the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from 1993 through 1996, focusing HUD's research agenda on the problems of racial discrimination, concentrated poverty, and economic opportunity in America's metropolitan areas. During her tenure, HUD's research office launched three major social science demonstration projects to test different strategies for helping families from distressed inner-city neighborhoods gain access to opportunities through employment and education. Turner has a BA in political science from Cornell University and an MA in urban and regional planning from the George Washington University.