

HOW UNIVERSITIES CAN LEAD IN ADDRESSING INEQUALITY THE 2018 PAUL OFFNER LECTURE

Friday, November 9, 2018

Rebecca Blank became chancellor of Wisconsin's flagship university in July 2013, bringing with her a deep commitment to educational excellence and innovation. Blank is an internationally respected economist who has spent time in Washington, DC, working in three different administrations. Most recently, she served as deputy secretary and acting secretary of the US Department of Commerce under President Obama. She was a member of the Council of Economic Advisers under President Bill Clinton. Blank brings strong academic credentials to her work as chancellor. From 1999 to 2008, she was dean and professor of public policy and economics in the Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy at the University of Michigan, where she launched innovations including interdisciplinary graduate programs and an undergraduate public policy major. Blank also has served on the faculty at Northwestern and Princeton Universities and was a fellow at the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit public policy research think tank in Washington, DC. Blank's commitment to expanding and improving educational opportunities inside and outside the classroom to better prepare students to succeed in a rapidly changing economy has been a hallmark of her tenure at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Simultaneously, she has worked to maintain the university's position as a global leader in innovation and research and has emphasized how the university can nurture entrepreneurship and drive economic development. [@BeckyBlank](#)

Sarah Rosen Wartell became president of the Urban Institute in 2012 and is the third president since Urban was founded in 1968. During her tenure, Urban has articulated its strategy to "elevate the debate" by bringing more of its research insights to federal, state, and local government and practice; becoming a leader in research communications and data visualization; and undertaking an ambitious program of business systems and technology modernization. Previously, Wartell was deputy assistant to the president for economic policy and deputy director of the National Economic Council. At the US Department of Housing and Urban Development from 1993 to 1998, she advised the federal housing commissioner on housing finance, mortgage markets, and consumer protection. After government service, Wartell was the founding chief operating officer and then executive vice president of the Center for American Progress. Her work focused on the economy and housing markets, and she directed the Mortgage Finance Working Group and "Doing What Works" government performance program. Before her tenure in government, she practiced law with the Washington, DC, firm Arnold & Porter. Wartell has an AB with honors in urban affairs from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. She has a JD from Yale Law School. [@swartell](#)

As a scholar, state legislator, congressional advisor, and educator, the late Paul Offner left a special legacy of applying solid, evidence-driven research to public policy solutions, especially for society's disadvantaged. The Urban Institute is proud to partner with the Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs in hosting this annual lecture series to honor Paul Offner.



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