GUEST SPEAKER

Martin Van Der Werf, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce

Martin Van Der Werf is the associate director for editorial and postsecondary policy at the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. He researches, writes, and edits the reports that the center is well-known for: on the value of college credentials, forecasts of job needs, higher education diversity, and other topical issues in higher education. Among other reports, Marty was one of the lead authors of Our Separate & Unequal Public Colleges; The Unequal Race for Good Jobs; SAT-Only Admission: How Would it Change College Campuses?; and The 20% Solution: Selective Colleges Can Afford to Admit More Pell Grant Recipients.

Marty is a former reporter and editor at The Chronicle of Higher Education, where he was responsible for all coverage of the business and financial management of colleges and universities. He is the co-author of the influential report College of 2020: Students, published by the Chronicle. Previously, Marty was an award-winning reporter, columnist and editor at two of the largest daily newspapers in the U.S. - The St. Louis Post-Dispatch and The Arizona Republic, in Phoenix. Before joining the Center, Marty was the thought leadership manager for Huron Consulting Group, the largest consulting company in higher education.

Marty holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism from Boston University, and is currently a candidate for a Master’s degree in Higher Education Administration from Georgetown University.

FUNDER PANEL

Crystal Bridgeman, Siemens Foundation

Crystal Bridgeman is the Senior Director of Workforce Development Programs for the Siemens Foundation, leading a multi-million dollar investment to help close the opportunity gap for young adults in the U.S. through STEM technical careers. The Siemens Foundation focuses on promoting the value of STEM middle-skill jobs and credentials; accelerating effective education and training models; and expanding the national dialogue to include the important issues facing the next generation of STEM technical workers. Crystal has more than a decade of professional experience in workforce development and postsecondary education.
Immediately prior to joining the Siemens Foundation, Crystal led workforce development policy for former Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA) of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP). Crystal led the committee work on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, signed into law by President Obama on July 22, 2014, the nation’s cornerstone policy on workforce development. Crystal also managed policy related to career and technical education, adult education, high school reform, career pathways for youth, and community colleges for the Chairman.

From 2007 to 2013, Crystal managed similar policy and budget issues, in addition to work-family employment and labor policies, for U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) as Chairwoman of the Senate HELP Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety. She crafted legislation on career pathways for high school students, capacity funding for community college training programs, pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship expansion, training provisions in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and health care workforce provisions in title V of the Affordable Care Act of 2010. She joined Murray’s team as Presidential Management Fellow.

Prior to her federal work, Crystal managed a professional development program for graduate students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, helping students translate their academic and professional skills to the demands of non-traditional careers and the regional labor market. She also spent two years in higher education administration in coastal Georgia managing a campus serving non-traditional undergraduate students, including military students, military spouses, dually enrolled high school students and National Guard Challenge program participants.

Crystal earned her graduate degree in public administration at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her undergraduate degree at Mercer University.

**John Fischer, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

John Fischer is a Senior Program Officer on the U.S. Programs Policy & Finance team. John’s focus is supporting K-12 and postsecondary pathways including CTE and Perkins V, the Economic Mobility strategy and the future workforce activities. Prior to this, John served as the lead program officer for the “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) national strategy and earlier on the Foundation’s Florida and Tennessee teams, supporting the College Ready K12 strategy.

Prior to joining the Foundation, John was the Deputy Secretary at the Vermont Agency of Education focused on innovation and transformation of the state’s education system including
school improvement, assessments, flexible pathways, career technical education and competency based systems of learning. In his work, John supported high expectations for all students, smooth transitions to college/career and strong partnerships between PK12, higher education and the workforce/economic development sectors. Earlier in his career, John worked in higher education, serving as Dean, Vice President and Provost in NH.

**Meredith Larson, Institute of Education Sciences**

Meredith is a research analyst and program officer for the National Center of Education Research at US Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES). She oversees education research grants, including those that focus on postsecondary and adult education. This area of research includes programs to help adults earn their high school equivalency, postsecondary credentials, associate degrees, and bachelor’s degrees as well as work that delves into basic cognitive processes, academic domains (e.g., reading, math), and the social and behavioral competencies that support college and career success (e.g., motivation, teamwork). As a program officer, Meredith works with applicants on their submissions to IES and with grantees on ensuring the rigor and relevance of their projects and on disseminating their findings. Meredith has Master’s degrees in literature and cognitive psychology and a Ph.D. in psycholinguistics. She has taught at the postsecondary level and tutored in adult literacy programs.

**Benton Murphy, Greater Washington Community Foundation**

Benton currently serves as Assistant Vice President, Community Investment at the Greater Washington Community Foundation where he co-leads The Foundation’s workforce development portfolio, leads development of our seasonal grant rounds, and leads special projects including VoicesDMV.

Benton has more than a dozen years of experience in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors, originally coming to The Community Foundation in January 2004 through the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington where he supported advocacy efforts on behalf of Washington’s nonprofit sector on issues including regional emergency preparedness and disaster relief.

Benton has led grantmaking and community initiatives including the Walmart Washington@Work work readiness initiative, the Spring Creek Environmental Preservation

Benton leads the Greater Washington Workforce Development Collaborative, a coalition of local and national funders, corporations and private donors who pool their resources to support increased workforce development outcomes for low-income Washingtonians. Currently, Benton is a member of the DC Workforce Investment Council, the DC Youth Apprenticeship Advisory Council, the Maryland Adult Literacy Advisory Council and the Maryland Governor’s Taskforce on Adult High Schools. Benton is a frequent lecturer on effective grantmaking and stewardship of philanthropic capital at GWU and American University. Benton holds a master’s degree in Public Administration from The George Washington University and an undergraduate degree from the University of Washington, Seattle.

Lynn Alvarez, ECMC Foundation, Moderator

As ECMC Foundation’s vice president of programs and strategy, Lynn Alvarez is responsible for directing strategy across the Foundation’s portfolios. She works directly with the Foundation president and all team members to implement the Foundation’s goals, grantmaking, investments and initiatives.

Before joining ECMC Foundation, Lynn operated her own philanthropic advising firm for 15 years, where she helped private and community foundations develop and manage initiatives, refine their grantmaking systems, evaluate their impact, train their grantmaking staff and manage funding portfolios.

Before starting her own consulting firm, Lynn oversaw a large grantmaking portfolio at The California Endowment. She contributed to programmatic and process improvements throughout that foundation, including a comprehensive program officer training program. One of her grantmaking programs involved managing a $30 million grant portfolio that encompassed two strategic initiatives: Native American health and a health grantmaking partnership involving 25 community foundations.

Lynn’s foundation experience also includes working at the California Community Foundation and the Peninsula Community Foundation (now known as the Silicon Valley Community Foundation). As a program officer at those foundations, she worked extensively in the areas of postsecondary education, child development, human services, affordable housing and the arts. As part of the training faculty of The Grantmaking School at Grand Valley State
University in Michigan for five years, Lynn trained more than 400 foundation professionals (program officers, trustees and executives) from foundations around the country.

Lynn also had a career in the legal field, starting in the litigation department of a major New York law firm, but soon changing her focus to public interest law. She was the legal director of a community-based organization representing Central American refugees and subsequently worked on a national level in major class-action lawsuits representing the rights of immigrants. As a professor at UCLA, she taught courses on immigration law and professional ethics. She is fluent in three languages—English, Spanish and French.

Lynn has served on multiple boards including Para Los Ninos, Los Angeles Education Partnership, Human Rights Watch and the Central American Refugee Center. In 2011, she was appointed to the Los Angeles City Recreation and Parks Commission where she continues to provide oversight to one of the oldest municipal park agencies in the country with nearly 450 parks and 7,400 full- and part-time employees.

Lynn holds a J.D. and a BA in political science from the University of California, Berkeley.

**RESEARCH & PRACTICE PANEL**

**Katherine Hughes, American Institutes for Research**

Katherine Hughes is a principal researcher in the Research and Evaluation division of AIR. She has extensive experience in qualitative research; leading and managing large, multi-component research projects; and writing for and presenting to varied audiences. Her work has addressed the high school-to-college transition, college readiness, dual enrollment, career and technical education, community college reforms, and two-to-four-year college transfer, among other areas.

Dr. Hughes serves as the principal investigator for Expanding the Evidence Base for Career and Technical Education (CTE) – Research Network Lead, a five-year initiative funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education.

Prior to working at AIR, Dr. Hughes was project director for Technical Assistance for Advancing Equity in Career and Technical Education, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, and awarded to Manhattan Strategy Group (MSG). Before that, Hughes was Executive Director, Community College and Higher Education Initiatives, at the College Board. In that position, she worked to strengthen
the College Board’s services to and support of community colleges and their students. Hughes was also the Assistant Director for Work and Education Reform Research at the Community College Research Center (CCRC), the leading independent authority on the nation’s two-year colleges, located at Columbia University. While at CCRC, one of her roles was as assistant director of the National Center for Postsecondary Research (NCPR), awarded to CCRC by IES.

Hughes has published results from her work in a range of periodicals including Journal of College Student Retention, Community College Review, Teachers College Record, Techniques, and Phi Delta Kappan, and she co-authored the book Working Knowledge: Work-Based Learning and Education Reform.

Angie Kamath, City University of New York

Angie Kamath is currently a University Dean at the City University of New York, responsible for continuing education and workforce development programs at the nation’s largest urban public university, that serves over 270,000 degree students and has over 250,000 enrollments in continuing education courses. She oversees grant funded workforce development programs that seek to improve the skills and career prospects and outcomes in targeted sectors including IT, finance, healthcare, and municipal government.

Prior to this role, Angie served as an Executive VP and Executive Director at Per Scholas, a national IT job training nonprofit headquartered in the South Bronx. At Per Scholas Angie was responsible for launching the social enterprise team tasked with generating fee for service revenues, as well as overseeing the New York training operation that trained and placed over 500 individuals each year in middle skills jobs in the IT field.

Prior to Per Scholas, Angie worked as a Deputy Commissioner at the NYC Department of Small Business Services for 7 years overseeing adult workforce programs that served over 100,000 New Yorkers each year during the Bloomberg administration.

Angie holds a BS in Business Management from Cornell University and a MPP from the Harvard Kennedy School.

Ryan Kelsey, Achieving the Dream

Dr. Ryan Kelsey is Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer at Achieving the Dream, Inc. In this role, Ryan works to continue strengthening ATD’s internal capacity as an organization and its
outreach to its network of colleges through strategic planning, the design of new products and services, and the scaling of key initiatives across the network.

Ryan comes to ATD from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust where he developed and managed a $45 million portfolio of grants focused on U.S. higher education, STEM learning, K-12 teacher preparation, and educational technology. As part of his work with grants, Ryan convened and supported experts on effective educational practices aimed at systemic improvement and formed networks of colleges and universities committed to campus-wide transformation, often with regional workforce and foundation partners. He was also a frequent speaker at national meetings on the importance of increasing the size and diversity of the STEM workforce. In addition to his focus on systemic change, his grants recognized the value of using external evaluations to increase project outcomes and help build the knowledge base in targeted areas. Of specific note, many of these investments supported work at America’s community colleges, including important ATD work with colleges in integrated planning and advising, labor marker alignment, and improving adjunct faculty engagement.

Before he joined the Helmsley Charitable Trust, Ryan spent more than a decade at the Columbia University Center for New Media Teaching and Learning, serving as Director of Projects and Associate Director of Education & Research. In those roles, he co-led the Center’s strategic planning and new programs. He also led the Center’s research and evaluation efforts, advising staff on evaluation methods and leading workshops for university faculty. He taught graduate courses in educational technology and instructional design at Teachers College, Columbia University, and at New York University as well as introductory undergraduate science at Columbia.

Ryan earned an Ed.D. and M.A. in Communication and Education from Teachers College, Columbia University, and a B.S. in Biology from Santa Clara University.

Leigh Parise, MDRC

Parise plays a lead role in MDRC’s education-focused program development efforts and conducts mixed methods education research. Her program development work focuses on incubating and launching new projects and draws on her expertise and knowledge of education policy and the associated evidence base. She recently helped launch MDRC’s Scaling Up Community College Efforts for Student Success (SUCCESS) initiative, which seeks to improve graduation rates for traditionally underserved students at community colleges by
helping states and institutions align their resources with evidence-driven practices. Since joining MDRC in 2011, Parise has been a lead researcher on several MDRC research projects, including large-scale randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental, and descriptive studies. Parise is currently leading the implementation research on MDRC’s evaluation of the P-TECH 9-14 high school model—a multifaceted pathway model with a strong career focus that begins in high schools and extends into postsecondary education and the workforce. Before joining MDRC, Parise received her PhD in human development and social policy from Northwestern University and a Masters in Teaching from Pace University. Parise began her career as an elementary school teacher in Brooklyn and she is also the cofounder of Classroom Champions, a nonprofit organization that connects Olympic and Paralympic athlete mentors with students in underserved schools to foster students’ social and emotional skill development.

Patrick Q. Bourke, ECMC Foundation, Moderator

Patrick Bourke oversees the strategy for a portfolio of grants committed to improving postsecondary career and technical education outcomes for students from underserved backgrounds. Prior to joining ECMC Foundation, Patrick was research analyst at the University of California, Los Angeles’ Higher Education Research Institute, which is home to the nation’s largest and oldest empirical study of higher education, involving data on some 1,900 institutions, more than 15 million students and more than 300,000 faculty. Previously, he was a senior trainer at The Posse Foundation, where he advocated for young leaders from urban public high schools who may have been previously overlooked by the traditional college admission process.

Patrick holds an MA in education with a focus in higher education and organization change from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a BA in African-American studies and religion from Oberlin College.