

SHEEO/Lumina Leadership Academy  
October 24-25, 2013  
Hotel Teatro Denver, Colorado  
Participant Bios

A native Nevadan, **Crystal Abba** was appointed by Chancellor Daniel Klaich as the vice chancellor for academic and student affairs in January 2012. Prior to her appointment, Ms. Abba was the associate vice chancellor for academic and student affairs. She began her career with the Nevada System of Higher Education in 2002 and has served in multiple positions including assistant vice chancellor and director of public policy. In her previous NSHE roles she worked closely with Nevada postsecondary leadership to identify and develop higher education policies and practices that meet the challenges of a changing state and the needs of its residents. Prior to joining NSHE in 2002, Ms. Abba worked in the research division of the Nevada Legislative Counsel Bureau for several legislative sessions as a policy analyst and committee staffer for both the Senate and Assembly Committees on Commerce and Labor. She received her bachelor's degree (with distinction) from the University of Nevada, Reno, and her MBA from the University of Delaware.

**Geri Anderson** currently serves as the vice president of academic and student affairs and provost for the Colorado Community College System. In the role of chief academic and student affairs officer, Anderson provides leadership for all community college academic and student affairs policy review and development, ensuring the development and enhancement of high-quality career and technical and transfer education programs through on-going program review, assessment of student learning, and high academic standards. Prior to joining the Colorado Community College System, Anderson served as the vice president of student learning at Front Range Community College, the largest community college in Colorado. In her 30 years of experience as a higher education administrator and faculty member, she has worked at large public research institutions, private liberal arts colleges, and public community colleges.

**Christopher Baldwin** leads the Michigan Center Student Success whose mission is to build state-level capacity among the 28 community colleges to promote degree completion. While at Jobs for the Future, Chris also directed the state policy component of the *Achieving the Dream* initiative, which involved work with departments of higher education and community college system offices on the adoption of policies that foster college completion. For two decades, Chris has served in a number of government and advocacy positions including vice president for government and community outreach at a large community college and a stint in the office of the Ohio governor. With a doctorate in higher education administration from the University of Michigan, Dr. Baldwin's research focuses on the tensions between maintaining open access at community colleges while also promoting completion.

**Bridget Burns** is currently the American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow at Arizona State University under the mentorship of President Michael Crow. From 2009-2013, she served as chief of staff and senior policy advisor for the Oregon University System. She was previously a member of the Oregon State Board of Higher Education and chaired the Oregon Student Assistance Commission. She has been an associate with the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and an advisor to TICAS (The Institute for College Access and Success.) She is the 2013 award recipient for the CASE Edwin Crawford Award for Innovation in Higher Education Government Relations.

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**Mark Cavanaugh** has served as the chief financial officer for the Colorado Department of Higher Education since December 2009. Prior to that, he managed special projects under Governor Bill Ritter including oversight of American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) and a statewide government performance review. Mark directed policy at the non-profit Bighorn Center for Public Policy in Denver for six years and served in various budget and management positions for the Department of Defense, the National Park Service and the Colorado Office of State Planning and Budgeting under Governors Roy Romer and Bill Owens. Mark has a business and English degree from Regis University and a JD from the University of Utah.

**Patrick Crane** works for the West Virginia Community and Technical College Council as the program manager for the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCT) Grant Program-funded Bridging the Gap consortium. Dr. Crane oversees the work of the ten-college consortium and their efforts to expand sector-based career pathways, improve academic instruction and strengthen student supports. Prior to joining the West Virginia Community and Technical College Council, Patrick worked as the director of policy and strategic initiatives for the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and as education policy advisor to Governor Joe Manchin. Crane holds a Ph.D. in higher education from the University of Georgia, an MPhil in higher education from the University of Oslo, and a B.A. in anthropology from Wesleyan University.

**Blake Flanders** serves as vice president for workforce development for the Kansas Board of Regents and provides executive leadership for the Kansas Postsecondary Technical Education Authority. In this role, he is the state leader for issues involving the postsecondary education and training system in the development of an educated workforce that aligns with the needs of the Kansas economy. His scope of responsibility includes developing a policy agenda for postsecondary technical education, curriculum and program evaluation, system funding, benchmarks and accountability, and the management of federal initiatives including the state-level evaluation of research proposals within the National Science Foundation's Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCor).

**Matt Freeman** is the deputy director and chief fiscal officer for the Idaho State Board of Education. He is responsible for project management and policy analysis related to system-wide higher education finance and administration. Prior to joining the State Board of Education's management team, he was a budget and policy analyst to the Idaho Legislature's Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee for nine years, with the last four years as the higher education analyst. He received his Bachelor of Arts in political studies from Whitworth University (Spokane, WA) and was awarded his Juris Doctor from the University of Idaho.

**Betsy (Elizabeth) Garlatti** serves as the chief of staff in the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education. Betsy has spent over thirty years working in higher education at both the state and institutional levels in and out of New Jersey. Prior to returning to state government service in October, 2006, Betsy was the executive director of the Child Health Institute of New Jersey, a basic science research institute at the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey).

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**Selena Grace**, associate vice president for institutional effectiveness at Idaho State University, is responsible for institutional accreditation and academic strategic planning, as well as other program development processes. She served as the Idaho State Board of Education's chief academic officer for the last three years; prior to which she served as the director of research where she oversaw reporting and data analysis for the eight public postsecondary institutions in Idaho. She is currently working toward a Ph.D. with a focus on public policy. She earned a Master of Fine Arts in creative writing with a non-fiction emphasis from George Mason University, and has a Bachelor of Arts in English writing, with a Native American Studies minor, from Boise State University.

**Alison Griffin** is the founder and principal of Miles Above Strategies, a higher education policy and government relations practice based in Denver, Colorado. Miles Above Strategies provides strategic and legislative guidance to non-profit and for-profit education clients, organizations and associations. Griffin also serves as a senior consultant to HCM Strategists in Washington, DC. Ms. Griffin served as the higher education policy advisor to the chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce, Rep. John Boehner; served as a policy associate with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), authored policy papers for The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; and served as the federal policy liaison for Lumina Foundation for Education. She holds a master's degree in college student affairs administration from the University of Georgia, a B.A. in psychology and a B.B.A. in organizational behavior and business policy from Southern Methodist University. Alison serves as a director to the executive board of Delta Delta Delta Fraternity, a trustee to Rocky Vista University and an advisory board member of the Southern Methodist University Simmons School of Educational Policy and Leadership. She lives in Erie, Colorado with her husband, Paul and their two sons, Nicholas and Benjamin.

**Deborah Grossman-Garber** serves as the associate commissioner for academic planning and policy for the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education. Formerly, she worked at The University of Rhode Island in various administrative roles related to improving undergraduate student learning experiences. Deborah is a national Teagle Assessment Scholar, and for many years was a board member of the New England Educational Assessment Network and a founding editorial board member of *The Journal of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness*. In 2011, she attended the Harvard Kennedy School of Government Senior Executives in State and Local Government program. She holds a degree in ancient history and Mediterranean archaeology from the University of California-Berkeley.

**John Hayek** currently serves as the associate vice chancellor and chief of staff in the Office of Academic Affairs within the University of Texas System. Dr. Hayek leads the UT System in many strategic initiatives with a focus on student success. Before joining the UT System in 2012, Hayek served as senior vice president for budget, policy and planning with the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (2005-2012), and as senior associate director at Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research (1999-2005). Dr. Hayek received his PhD in higher education from Indiana University, a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Chicago and a master's degree in sports administration from St. Thomas University. Dr. Hayek lives in Austin, Texas with his wife and four children.

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**Kate Henz** began her career as an auditor at KPMG and moved into higher education administration nearly nine years ago. She has worked in all postsecondary public sectors—community college, Carnegie I research universities, and most recently, a state system office. She currently serves as the senior director of academic policy and funding analyses for the University of North Carolina system office. In this capacity, she works with the system executive leadership in both financial and academic policy issues. Ms. Henz holds a B.S. in finance from Santa Clara University and a master's in public administration from the University of New Mexico.

**Becky Klein-Collins** is the senior director of research and policy development for the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), overseeing the organization's research in topics related to higher education innovations, prior learning assessment, competency-based education, mature learners, student veterans, workforce development, and lifelong learning. In addition to her research activities, Becky assists in developing new approaches for policy change at both the federal and state levels, she speaks regularly to national audiences on various topics related to adult learners, and she is the author of numerous articles and policy position papers for CAEL. Becky has a bachelor's degree from Grinnell College and master's degrees from Indiana University and the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy.

**Derrick Manns** currently serves as the Louisiana Community and Technical College System's vice president for academics. In the position, Dr. Manns provides leadership in the development and approval of educational programs and courses, accreditation, international education efforts, transfer and articulation for the system's 13 colleges as well as leadership for LCTCS Online. Dr. Manns has served as both a faculty member and administrator. Prior to his move to Louisiana, he served as the assistant provost for academic affairs at Massachusetts Bay Community College. As assistant provost, Manns served as the liaison for K-12 partnerships and coordinated all articulation agreements with high schools and other colleges and universities. He also coordinated all service learning, honors, and learning community programs and served as the Honor Society advisor for Phi Theta Kappa. Prior to his work in Massachusetts, Manns served as the provost for Wayne County Community College District in Detroit, Michigan. In this role, he provided district oversight and leadership in a multi-campus environment with five campuses serving 21,000 students. Manns earned a doctorate in higher education administration from the University of Toledo and a master's in education and Bachelor of Science degree from Bowling Green State University.

**Neil Matkin** serves as executive vice president for the Louisiana Community and Technical College System. As the executive vice president, Dr. Matkin is responsible for providing leadership in the areas of academic and student affairs programs, career and technical education, workforce development and training, and adult basic education in support of the System's thirteen community and technical colleges. Dr. Matkin holds a doctorate in higher education from Texas A&M University Commerce; an MBA from the University of Dallas in Irving; a master of science in telecommunications management from Golden Gate University in Los Angeles; and bachelor and associate degrees in liberal arts/theology from Ambassador College in Pasadena, Calif., and Big Sandy, Texas, respectively.

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**Rick Melmer** is a senior advisor for three educational agencies. He is assisting the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) (Common Core State Standards), the South Dakota Board of Regents (teacher and administrator degree programs) and Mid-Central Education Cooperative (Indian Education). Melmer served as the dean of education at the University of South Dakota from 2008 – 2013 and the secretary of education for the State of South Dakota from 2003 – 2008. Prior to that, Melmer worked as a classroom teacher, building administrator, and superintendent of schools in Wyoming, Iowa, and South Dakota.

**Demarée K. Michelau** is the director of policy analysis at the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. In this role, she co-manages WICHE's Policy Analysis and Research unit and directs externally-funded projects related to adult learners, articulation and transfer, and college access and success. The author of numerous reports and policy briefs, she also has experience in a variety of higher education policy issues, including the Common Core State Standards, accelerated learning options, college affordability, and K-16 reform. Previously, she worked for the National Conference of State Legislatures as a policy specialist. Michelau received her bachelor's degree in public law from Northern Illinois University and her master's degree and Ph.D. in political science from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

**Andrew H. Nichols** is the director for research and policy analysis at the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC). Dr. Nichols leads the research division in the development and production of analytical and information reports examining key higher education issues and advises the Secretary of Higher Education, Governor's Office, and General Assembly on postsecondary education policy in the state. As the research director, he also serves as a member of the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education Editorial Board and as the chief assessment officer for the Plan. Prior to joining MHEC, Dr. Nichols was as a senior research analyst for the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, which is the research arm for the Council for Opportunity in Education. He completed his Ph.D. in higher education from The Pennsylvania State University and has co-authored several book chapters, research reports, and peer-reviewed journal articles that have been published in the *Review of Higher Education*, *Journal of College Student Development*, and *Teachers College Record*.

**Shelley Nickel**—When you need to consolidate universities, or run a college, or know the numbers on a state budget or lead the nation's top merit scholarship program, who you gonna call? A good start would be **Shelley Clark Nickel**, who in her career has served as the interim president of Gordon College, director of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget and president of the Georgia Student Finance Commission. Today she helps turn vision into reality for the University System of Georgia in her role as associate vice chancellor for planning and implementation overseeing the Board of Regents' Strategic Plan. A die-hard Nittany Lion, Nickel holds both a bachelor's and master's degree from Penn State University.

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**Chris Rasmussen** is vice president for research and policy analysis at the Midwestern Higher Education Compact, where he leads a comprehensive program of policy research and programmatic initiatives designed to inform decision making and improve practice in higher education. Additionally, Chris has taught graduate level courses in education at the Universities of Minnesota, North Dakota, and St. Thomas, and for Capella University. Chris received his Ph.D. from the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan. Previously, he held positions in student affairs administration at Valparaiso University and at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

**Vic Redding** was appointed by Chancellor Daniel Klaiich to serve as interim vice chancellor for finance and administration in June 2012, overseeing a variety of functions in the areas of fiscal policy, capital budgeting and financial reporting, as well as the day-to-day operations of the NSHE Risk Management office, Banking and Investment office, and System Facilities office. Prior to this, he served as assistant vice chancellor of finance and the senior fiscal operations officer in the NSHE System Administration office. Before joining System Administration in 2005, Mr. Redding was the assistant CFO for the University of Nevada School of Medicine. He has a bachelor's degree in business management and a minor in accounting from Montana State University, Bozeman and a master's of business administration from the University of Nevada, Reno. Mr. Redding is also a certified management accountant (CMA). Mr. Redding was also appointed by Governor Brian Sandoval in February 2012 as a Nevada Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE) commissioner. In this role, he oversees the operations of the Nevada WICHE office and is one of three Nevada commissioners representing the state on a variety of higher education issues.

**Blanca E. Rivera-Alicea** is a higher education analyst at the Puerto Rico Council on Education. Dr. Rivera-Alicea has a B.A. in psychology from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, an M.A. in industrial-organizational psychology from the InterAmerican University of Puerto Rico, and a Ph.D. in education policy, planning and administration in higher education from the University of Maryland, College Park. She has worked as a legislative staff member for the Puerto Rico Senate, professor, administrator in higher education, evaluator for licensing processes, and researcher. She has been an active participation in the Puerto Rico Psychologist Association, coordinating several committees over the last 26 years. Dr. Rivera-Alicea's research interests include: the university as organization, regulation and accreditation of institutions and academic programs, styles of leadership in academia, and public policy in higher education, among others.

**Courtney H. Thornton**, associate vice president for research and graduate education at the University of North Carolina General Administration, interprets and implements academic program planning policies as related to graduate degree programs. Dr. Thornton provides system leadership for the implementation of REACH NC, a web-based expertise and assets portal, and a comprehensive suite of electronic research administration tools. Dr. Thornton holds bachelor's degrees in chemistry and science education, and master's and doctoral degrees in higher education administration, from North Carolina State University. Dr. Thornton's work experiences span K-12 education, private industry, and higher education. Her research on higher education engagement and student civic responsibility has appeared in *The Journal of Higher Education*, *Research in Higher Education*, and the *Journal of College Student Development*.