The background of the cover is a photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a white button-down shirt and a grey skirt. She is holding a clipboard and a pen, and appears to be in the middle of a conversation with other people in a meeting. The setting is a bright room with large windows overlooking a city street with brick buildings.

Emerging Leaders Development Program

2021 Participant Bios

ELDP Participant Bios



Julia Barnard
Center for Responsible Lending
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Julia Barnard is a researcher at the Center for Responsible Lending focusing on student loan debt and debt collection. Her recent publications include [The Road to Relief: Supporting Federal Student Loan Borrowers During the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond](#), [Court System Overload: The State of Debt Collection in California after the Fair Debt Buyer Protection Act](#), and a brief data point highlighting the disparate impact of the exclusion of federal student loan borrowers who are or have recently been behind or in default on their loans from the Paycheck Protection Program (titled [SBA Student Loan Restriction Disproportionately Impacts Black and Latino Business Owners](#)). Along with expert advocacy from a broad coalition, this last report led to the removal of this barrier in February of 2021, which expanded eligibility to tens of thousands of business owners. She co-leads the student loan team at the Center for Responsible Lending, which advocates at the state and federal levels for cancellation, repayment reform, for-profit accountability, and other policy solutions to the student debt crisis. Prior to CRL, Julia was a research associate at the Center for Community Capital at the University of North Carolina, where she conducted research on student lending, housing policy, and financial services. She graduated from the University of Kansas and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Erica Cuevas
Jobs for the Future (JFF)
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Erica Cuevas is an associate director at Jobs for the Future (JFF). In that role, she leads analysis, research, and communications efforts to strengthen federal and state policy to improve pathways across K-12 and postsecondary education systems.

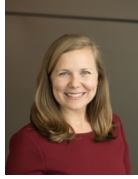
Erica focuses on engaging leaders and policymakers to ensure that they understand the challenges facing our education systems, as well as the solutions to those challenges. She also helps on-the-ground practitioners develop the skills to effectively engage in policy advocacy.

Before joining JFF, Erica was a policy advisor at the U.S. Department of Education, where she focused on federal programs designed to make postsecondary education more accessible and more affordable. She also managed a workgroup dedicated to improving the student borrower experience. Before formally joining the Department of Education, Erica worked with the department's White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, playing a lead role coordinating the initiative's Federal Interagency Working Group on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

A past participant in the McConnell Foundation Scholars Program, which provides financial support to first-generation, low-income college students who want to bring positive change to their communities, Erica now helps choose new McConnell Scholars each year as a member of the program's selection committee.

Erica says she was drawn to JFF because of the organization's bipartisan approach and its strong relationships with policymakers, which strengthen its ability to influence policy. Additionally, JFF's policy work is informed by practitioners on the ground who actually work in communities.

ELDP Participant Bios

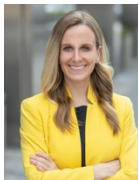


Eleanor Eckerson Peters
Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)
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Eleanor Eckerson Peters is the associate director of research and policy at the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP). In this role, she supports research, policy, and advocacy projects for the research team, centering on college access and affordability, student outcomes, and federal higher education policy.

Before joining IHEP, Ellie was a research fellow at the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR). Her work on IWPR's Student Parent Success Initiative focused on supporting students with dependent children who are pursuing postsecondary credentials, such as by improving access to quality on-campus childcare. Before shifting to higher education policy, Ellie worked to elevate teachers' voices in state and national K-12 policy conversations and to improve access to educational opportunities that lead to college success for underserved students in Boston.

Ellie earned an M.A. in public policy with a concentration in women's studies from the George Washington University. She holds a B.A. in women's studies from Hobart and William Smith Colleges.



Leanne Hotek
University of Iowa
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Leanne Hotek is the director of federal relations for the University of Iowa, a role she has held since 2016. In this role she is responsible for developing and executing the university's federal priorities, which include robust investments in financial aid programs and federal research agencies. She works closely with the university's senior leadership, students, faculty, staff, and the entire Iowa community in advocating for the Hawkeyes in DC.

Prior to her time at the University of Iowa, Leanne spent five years as a staff member of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, serving as an education policy advisor to Ranking Member Patty Murray and in various roles for then-Chairman Tom Harkin. During her time on the Committee, she was responsible for a portfolio of legislative issues, including higher education, STEM education, rural education, and career and technical education.

Leanne has served in a variety of leadership roles within the higher education community including as a Higher Education Task Force Chair for the Council on Governmental Affairs at the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) and the Council on Federal Relations at the Association of American Universities (AAU); a board member of the Science Coalition; a steering committee member for the Council on Federal Relations at AAU; and, currently, a member of the executive committee for the Council on Governmental Affairs at APLU.

Leanne is an Iowa native and graduate of the University of Northern Iowa.

ELDP Participant Bios



Kalwis Lo
Scholarship America
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As director of policy, Kalwis leads Scholarship America's public policy and government relations program. In this role, he works in collaboration with education stakeholders, national organizations, and government agencies to strengthen the impact of both public and private financial aid. Kalwis' focus includes advancing federal and state policies that improve college affordability, persistence, and completion rates, and reducing student loan debt on the front end. He recently led a multi-year advocacy effort to ensure that emergency financial aid grants are available to high-need community college students in California. That campaign resulted in the unanimous passage of Assembly Bill 943, which was signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom. In 2013, Kalwis also worked with the Obama Administration and Congress to pass the Bipartisan Student Loan Certainty Act (H.R. 1911), lowering federal student loan interest rates for millions of student borrowers.

Prior to joining Scholarship America, Kalwis worked for Hmong National Development addressing issues that impact minorities in America's rural communities. He started his career in Washington, DC, as the legislative director for the United States Student Association, the nation's oldest and largest student-led advocacy organization.



Amanda Martinez
UnidosUS
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Amanda Martinez is an education policy analyst focusing on higher education at UnidosUS (formerly National Council of La Raza). In her role, Amanda works to advance higher education policy priorities, including issues related to student debt by examining barriers to post-secondary success and advancing key legislative efforts with coalition partners.

Prior to joining UnidosUS, Amanda was an intern at New America, where she wrote and published blogs on higher education federal aid policies and issues facing underrepresented students. Before working at New America, she was a Young Invincibles Fellow, where her research on the contingent workforce was presented to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives legislative staff. Amanda holds a master's degree in public policy from American University in Washington, DC, and a bachelor's degree in political science from California State University at Fullerton.

ELDP Participant Bios



Jenna Sablan

State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)

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Dr. Jenna Sablan serves as a senior policy analyst at the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) in the Washington, DC, office. In this role, Jenna contributes to SHEEO's work on student success, equity, and federal policy. Before joining SHEEO, Jenna was an assistant research professor at Georgetown University in the Center on Education and the Workforce where she led research on free college and higher education policy. She previously served as the inaugural 2016–17 American Educational Research Association/American Association for the Advancement of Science Congressional Fellow on the Senate Budget Committee, where she focused on college affordability policy. She has also held various research and teaching positions at American University, Loyola Marymount University, and University of Maryland. Jenna received her Ph.D. in urban education policy and M.A. in economics from the University of Southern California, and her B.A. in political science and social policy from American University, where she was a Ronald E. McNair Scholar.



Nicole Siegel

Third Way

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Nicole Siegel has always maintained the belief that quality education is a human right and is dedicated to helping transform and improve our nation's educational system through her work as the deputy director of education at Third Way. In this role, Nicole elevates Third Way's efforts to focus the national higher education conversation on improving outcomes, particularly for low-income students, and works to expand that discussion beyond the higher ed works in our nation's capital to the people it impacts every day across the country. Nicole manages and executes a multi-faceted advocacy effort to persuade policymakers and those who influence them that students and taxpayers deserve a better return on their investment by elevating the research and ideas of Third Way's higher education team and creatively deploying them to shape the federal higher education conversation on social media, on the Hill, through public and private events, and in the press to focus on student outcomes.

Prior to joining Third Way, Nicole managed her parents' restaurant in the mountains of Western North Carolina, consulted with the Asheville Chamber of Commerce on a workforce development initiative to better connect local college students to career and professional development opportunities, and served as the communications specialist for Smarter Balanced, one of the two testing consortia for the Common Core State Standards. She graduated with a B.A. in anthropology from North Carolina State University and holds a Master of Public Administration degree from American University.

ELDP Participant Bios



Satra Taylor
Education Trust
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Satra Taylor is the manager for higher education justice initiatives at the Education Trust, where she manages the Justice Fellows Policy Program and leads Ed Trust work on federal, state, and institutional policy issues at the nexus of higher education and the criminal legal system. In this role, she leads an ambitious, innovative effort to advance an equity agenda at the federal, state, and institutional level for students of color by collaborating with key stakeholders—including policymakers, coalition partners, researchers, and advocates—to identify and develop policy opportunities in response to opportunity gaps in higher education.



Danielle Zaragoza
HCM Strategists
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Danielle Zaragoza is an associate with HCM Strategist’s postsecondary team, where she focuses on a range of postsecondary policy areas including higher education finance, college affordability, and student transfer. Danielle also assists the postsecondary team in collecting and analyzing student data and facilitating strategic planning processes, as well as the analysis and presentation of data-based findings for HCM clients. She enjoys working with the postsecondary and K-12 teams because of her passion for education policy and the goals and mission of HCM.

Prior to joining HCM, Danielle began her career working at the Texas State Capitol as an education policy analyst for State Representative Mary González. She eventually went on to serve as a legislative aide for Texas Senator Royce West through the Gregory Luna Fellowship program. In this role, she worked with advocacy groups, constituents, legislators, and other stakeholders to develop policy recommendations. During her time at the Texas State Capitol, Danielle also provided analysis for education and workforce databases, as well as produced press releases, speeches, and social media content.

Danielle graduated from Texas Tech University with a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy. She then went on to receive a master’s degree in educational leadership and policy from the University of Texas at Austin. Danielle believes that education policy should work to improve the lives of all students by creating equitable educational systems that allow more students to earn a high-quality education.