



**PNPI's
Higher Education Boot Camp (HEBC)
on Program Integrity
Speaker Bios**

October 4th - October 29th, 2021

Speaker Bios



David A. Bergeron
Board Member
College Unbound
dabergeron@me.com

David A. Bergeron is a member of the Board of Trustees of College Unbound, a fully accredited, non-profit degree completion college in Providence, RI. He is also serving as a strategic advisor to a healthcare company. Until recently, David was a Senior Fellow for Postsecondary Education at American Progress where he previously served as the Center's first Vice President for Postsecondary Education Policy. Before joining the Center, David had served for more than 35 years at the U.S. Department of Education. David ended his long government career as acting Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education—a position that entailed serving as the education secretary's chief advisor on higher-education issues and administering the grant and loan programs—and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Planning, and Innovation in the Office of Postsecondary Education.



Jennifer Blum
Principal
Blum Higher Education Advising, PLLC.
Jennifer.blum@blumhea.com

Jennifer Blum is an attorney with her own law and policy firm focused on higher education, Blum Higher Education Advising, PLLC. Previously, Jennifer was the senior vice president of government relations at Laureate Education, Inc., a global higher education company. In higher education policy for more than twenty years, Jennifer has focused on understanding the Higher Education Act's impact on accreditation, institutional accountability, and outcomes. Jennifer has also developed significant experience on U.S. and state legislative and regulatory matters affecting distance education, student financial aid, and state authorization.

Jennifer served as a negotiator during the U.S. Department of Education's most recent negotiated rulemaking on gainful employment and is currently a member of the U.S. Department of Education's National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI). Jennifer earned her JD from the Columbus School of Law at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and her BA in political science from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut.



Barbara Brittingham
President Emerita
New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
BBrittingham@neche.org

Barbara Brittingham is President Emerita of the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), which accredits 220 colleges and universities in the six New England States and twelve American-style institutions abroad. Previously she was Dean of the College of Human Science and Services at the University of Rhode Island, where she was also Professor of Education.

She serves on the Board of the National Student Clearinghouse, and as an advisor to the Transformational Partnerships Fund and Engage-AI. She served as a consultant to NCHEMS for the development of 21st Century Guidelines for Distance Education and as a co-leader on the Lumina-funded project to develop a framework for cooperation between accreditors and public systems of higher education. She has appeared before legislative committees in Connecticut and New Hampshire and has testified on distance education and competency-based education before the U.S. Senate HELP Committee and on accreditation before the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training.

Speaker Bios



R. Yvette Clark
Senior Vice President & General Counsel
Southern New Hampshire University
y.clark@snhu.edu

R. Yvette Clark is Senior Vice President and general counsel at Southern New Hampshire University. She previously served as general counsel at Cambridge College and at Stephen F. Austin State University, and as assistant general counsel at the University of North Texas and the University of North Texas Health Science Center. Yvette was appointed by Texas Governor Ann Richards to the Texas Guarantee Student Loan Board; she served as president of the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education and the Texas Association of State University Attorneys; and served on the Board of Directors of Hospice of Nacogdoches. Yvette currently serves on the Board of the National Association of College and University Attorneys and is a member of the New England Board of Higher Education SARA Regional Steering Committee.

Yvette holds a BA from Yale University and her JD from University of Texas School of Law.



Jillian Klein
Senior Vice President
Strategic Education, Inc.
Jillian.Klein@strategiced.com

Jillian Klein is SVP, Government and External Affairs, for Strategic Education, Inc., where she works on higher education policy, postsecondary innovation, and compliance on behalf of Capella University and Strayer University. She was part of the team that created Capella University's FlexPath direct assessment program offerings, including the first bachelor's, master's, and doctoral-level programs approved to receive federal financial aid by the U.S. Department of Education. Jillian received a BA from Augustana University, an MA from Luther Seminary, and an MBA from Capella University, and she is an alumna of the Policy Fellows program at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. In 2019, Jillian participated as a primary non-federal negotiator in ED's negotiated rulemaking on both the Accreditation & Innovation Committee and Distance Learning Subcommittee, and she served as a commissioner on the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Postsecondary Value Commission. Jillian also serves as a member of the Competency- Based Education Network (C-BEN) board of directors. Jillian lives in Minnesota with her husband and two young girls, and is an active member in her community, including as a board member for Make-A-Wish Minnesota and as a member of the Augustana University Board of Trustees.



Aaron Lacey
Partner
Thompson Coburn's Higher Education Practice
ALacey@thompsoncoburn.com

The Chair of Thompson Coburn's Higher Education Practice, Aaron Lacey has two decades of experience helping institutions to navigate complex legal and policy matters. He and his colleagues are valued for their deep understanding of the postsecondary regulatory framework, including requirements relating to the federal financial aid programs, accreditation, and state authorization. The host of Thompson Coburn's popular Higher Education Webinar Series, and editorial director of REGucation, the firm's higher education law and policy blog, Aaron is a frequent writer and speaker on topics relating to higher education policy and regulation. He currently resides in Saint Louis, Missouri, with his wife and three kids, the world's greatest dog, and eight rowdy chickens.



Ajita Talwalker Menon
President and CEO
Calbright College
ajita@calbright.org

Ajita Talwalker Menon is the president and CEO of Calbright College. Her job is to lead the college to help underserved Californians gain greater economic mobility and to provide skilled talent for hiring employers. Ajita has dedicated her career to supporting government agencies, higher education institutions and systems, and non-profit organizations to drive better and more equitable outcomes in higher education and workforce training. Prior to relocating to California, she served in the Obama Administration as Special Assistant to the President for Higher Education Policy at the White House Domestic Policy Council, where she led efforts to expand college opportunity, affordability, innovation, and completion, ensuring more Americans could access the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the nation's growing economy. She has also held senior roles in the federal government at the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. House of Representatives, in addition to her more recent work as senior advisor to the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee and a master's degree from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Ajita lives in San Francisco with her husband and daughter.



Michale S. McComis
Executive Director
Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC)
mccomis@accsc.org

As the executive director of the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), Dr. Michale McComis serves as the CEO of the accrediting commission, managing the day-to-day operation of ACCSC's Arlington, Virginia, office and staff, and overseeing the ACCSC accreditation process. Michale's tenure with ACCSC began in 1994 and he has been the executive director since 2008. Michale has spent the last 25 years helping to create opportunities for students through the accreditation process by focusing on identifying best practices, developing leadership, and driving institutional improvement, student achievement, and student-centered approaches to quality education.

Michale is a frequent speaker on accreditation matters and has testified on multiple occasions before both the House Committee on Education and Labor and the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions on issues related to accreditation. Additionally, Michale has served as a non-federal negotiator on five separate U.S. Department of Education Negotiated Rulemaking panels for the establishment of federal regulations related to the Higher Education Act of 1965, most recently in 2019.

Michale earned his Baccalaureate of Arts (History), Master of Education, and Doctor of Education degrees from the University of Virginia where he has taught graduate-level courses in education policy as an adjunct faculty member. Prior to joining ACCSC, Michale served in the United States Marine Corps and garnered skills in the trades as an electrician's apprentice and HVAC technician.



Kim Hunter Reed
Commissioner of Higher Education
State of Louisiana
kim.reed@laregents.edu

Kim Hunter Reed, Ph.D., is Louisiana's Commissioner of Higher Education. She is the only female in the country currently serving as a state higher education lead who has led higher education in more than one state, and she was recognized nationally as the 2020 Exceptional Leader by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO). In 2021, she successfully led efforts to secure additional state funding of more than \$100 million, the largest strategic investment in Louisiana higher education in more than a decade.

Working with the Louisiana Board of Regents, Kim leads the state's talent development efforts focused on increasing educational attainment, erasing equity gaps, and increasing prosperity. To reach the state's goal of doubling the annual number of credentials awarded by 2030, she focuses on transformational policies and deep collaborative engagement in line with the Board of Regents' talent imperative.

Kim is a nationally recognized student advocate with extensive higher education and government experience. In addition to leading the Colorado Department of Higher Education, she served in President Barack Obama's administration as deputy undersecretary at the U.S. Department of Education and led the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Collectively, Kim has served in various senior leadership roles with four governors. She also served as an adjunct faculty member and Executive Vice President at the University of Louisiana System.

Kim received a doctorate in public policy from Southern University, a master's degree in public administration, and a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism from Louisiana State University. She is a wife, proud volleyball mom to her favorite Millsaps College student, and Louisiana's chief advocate for talent development.



David Tandberg
Senior Vice President
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO)
DTandberg@sheeo.org

Dr. David Tandberg joined SHEEO in July 2016. He serves as senior vice president for policy research and strategic initiatives, working out of SHEEO's Boulder office. In this role, David leads SHEEO's policy evaluation and research initiatives and SHEEO's efforts to connect empirical research to state practice and policy. He also helps lead SHEEO's strategic direction and partnerships. He is the lead editor of a book dedicated to the investigation of the state higher education executive officer that was published July 2018 by Teachers College Press. Previously, David served as an associate professor of higher education and an associate director of the Center for Postsecondary Success at Florida State University. As an academic researcher, his research was published in numerous peer-reviewed outlets. Before joining Florida State University, David served as a special assistant to the secretary of education in the Pennsylvania Department of Education, focused on postsecondary policy development and implementation. David earned a B.A. in history and government and secondary education/social studies from Adams State College, and a master's in political science and a Ph.D. in higher education from Penn State University.