DENISA GÁNDARA

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy
The University of Texas at Austin
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EDUCATION

PhD, 2016 Higher Education — University of Georgia, Athens, GA

- Dissertation: Constructing "winners and losers": An analysis of higher education performance funding policy designs in Colorado and Texas
- Advisor: Erik Ness

BA, 2011 Majors: Philosophy, Spanish; Minors: Psychology, Linguistics — The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
- Dean's Distinguished Graduate

PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS

2024-present
Associate Professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy
The University of Texas at Austin
Fellow, L.D. Haskew Centennial Professorship in Public School Administration
Faculty Cadre Member, National Disability Center for Student Success (2023-present)
Faculty Scholar, Population Research Center (2022 - present)
Affiliate, Texas Center for Equity Promotion (2022 - present)

2021-present
Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy,
The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
Faculty Cadre Member, National Disability Center for Student Success (2023-present)
Faculty Scholar, Population Research Center (2022 – present)
Affiliate, Texas Center for Equity Promotion (2022 - present)

2016-2021
Assistant Professor, Department of Education Policy and Leadership,
Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX

2020
Visiting Professor, Centre for Higher Education Governance Ghent (CHEGG),
Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

2015-2016
Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Education Policy and Leadership,
Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX

AWARDS AND HONORS

2025 *AERA Palmer O. Johnson Memorial Award Recipient* in recognition of the most outstanding article published in an AERA journal in 2024

2024 *ASHE CPPHE Excellence in Public Policy Higher Education Award Recipient*

2023 *Appointed by President Joe Biden* to National Board for Education Sciences

2022 *Fellow,* The Op-Ed Project Public Voices Fellowship

2022 *Recipient,* Dean's Distinguished Early Career Award (College of Education, The University of Texas at Austin)

2021 *Scholar,* William T. Grant Foundation Scholars Program

2019 *Semi-Finalist*, Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship

2019 *Nominee*, Southern Methodist University Golden Mustang Teaching Award

PUBLICATIONS

Underlined text denotes advisor co-author. Italicized text denotes postdoctoral, postbaccalaureate, or student co-author. a Designates authors contributed to manuscript equally.

BOOK

Jones, T., Jones, S., Owens, L., Assalone, A. Elliott, K., & **Gándara, D.** (2017). Outcomes- Based Funding and Race in Higher Education. Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan. 170 pp.

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES AND PROCEEDINGS

1. **Gándara, D.**, Kim, V., Kaur, N., Jones, M., Ramirez, C. (2025). "It's an Old White Boys' Club:" Faculty of Color's Perceptions of Policy Engagement. The Review of Higher Education, 48(3), 345-377.

2. Billings, M., Rubin, P., **Gándara, D.** (2025). "There's something ennobling… about struggling": State Policymakers' Framing of Deservingness in the New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 33, 21.

3. Li, A., Billings, M., **Gándara, D.**, & Hu, X. (2025). Promise Programs and the Allocation of Institutional Expenditures at Community Colleges. Community College Review, 53(2), 192-225.

4. **Gándara, D.**, Acevedo, R., Cervantes, D., McMullen, I., Quiroz, M.A., Kumar, T. (2025). Learning about Free College: Evaluating the Availability and Accessibility of Information on Promise Program Websites. Innovative Higher Education, 50, 155-180.

5. **Gándara, D.**, Acevedo, R., Cervantes, D., Quiroz, Marco A. (2024). Advancing a Framework of Racialized Administrative Burdens in Higher Education Policy. The Journal of Higher Education, 95(6), 718-746.

6. **Gándara, D.**, Billings, M., Rubin, P., Hammond, L. (2024). "One of the Weakest Budget Players in the State": State Funding of Higher Education at the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 46(3), 458-482-25.

7. **Gándara, D.**, Anahideh, H., & Ison, M., & Picchiarini, L. (2024). Inside the Black Box: Detecting and Mitigating Algorithmic Bias across Racialized Groups in College Student-Success Prediction. AERA Open, 10.

8. Billings, M., Rubin, P., **Gándara, D.**, Hammond, L. (2024). Higher Education Policy Narratives during COVID-19: How are Budget Requests Justified to State Legislatures? Research in Higher Education, 65, 625-654.

9. Felix, E., **Gándara, D.**, & Jones, S. (2024). "All Students Matter:" The Place of Race in Discourse on Student Debt in a Federal Higher Education Policymaking Process. Teachers College Record, 126(2), 147-182.

10. Nezami, N, Haghigat P., **Gándara, D.**, Anahideh, H. (2024). Assessing Disparities in Predictive Modeling Outcomes for College Student Success: The Impact of Imputation Techniques on Model Performance and Fairness. Education Sciences, (14)2, 136.

11. Haghighat, P., **Gándara, D.**, Kang, L., & Anahideh, H. (2024). Fair Multivariate Adaptive Regression Splines for Ensuring Equity and Transparency. In Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence, 38(20), 22076-22086.

12. Rubin, P., Billings, M., Hammond, L., **Gándara, D.** (2023). State Higher Education Funding during COVID-19: Exploring State-Level Characteristics Influencing Financing Decisions. American Behavioral Scientist, 67(12), 1468-1486.

13. **Gándara, D.**, & Daenekindt, S. (2022). Accountability or Equity: Combining Topic Models and Qualitative Analysis to Examine Public Rhetoric about Performance-Based Funding. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 44(4), 734-758.

14. McCoy-Simmons, C., Orphan, C., **Gándara, D.** (2022). Intermediary Public Policy Organizations and the Discursive Evasion of Systemic Racism and Racialized Violence. Educational Policy, 37(6), 1672-1699.

15. Bell, E. & **Gándara, D.** (2021). Can Free Community College Close Racial Disparities in Postsecondary Attainment? How Tulsa Achieves Affects Racially Minoritized Student Outcomes. American Educational Research Journal, 58(6), 1142-1177.

16. Hu, X., Fernandez, F., & **Gándara, D.** (2021). Are donations bigger in Texas? Analyzing the impact of a policy to match donations to Texas' emerging research universities. American Educational Research Journal, 58(4), 850-882.

17. **Gándara, D.** & Li, A. (2020). Promise for Whom? Free-College Programs and Enrollments by Race and Gender at Public, Two-Year Colleges. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 41(4), 603-627.

18. **Gándara, D.** & Jones, S. (2020). Who Deserves Benefits in Higher Education? A Policy Discourse Analysis of a Process Surrounding Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. The Review of Higher Education, 44(1), 121-157.

19. [a]**Gándara, D.** & Rutherford, A. (2020). Completion at the Expense of Access? The Effects of Performance-Funding Policies on Access to Public Four-Year Universities. Educational Researcher, 49(5), 321-334.

20. **Gándara, D.** (2020). How The Sausage Is Made: An Examination of a State Funding Model Design Process. The Journal of Higher Education, 91(2), 192-221.

21. **Gándara, D.**, & Ness, E.C. (2019). Ideological Think Tanks and the Politics of College Affordability in the States. The Journal of Higher Education, 90(5), 717-743.

22. **Gándara, D.** (2019). Does Evidence Matter? An Analysis of Evidence Use in Performance-Funding Policy Designs in Two States. The Review of Higher Education, 42(3), 991-1022.

23. **Gándara, D.** & Hearn, J.C. (2019). College Completion, the Texas Way: An Examination of the Development of College Completion Policy in a Distinctive Political Culture. Teachers College Record, 121(1), 1-40.

24. [a]**Gándara, D.** & Rutherford, A. (2018). Mitigating Unintended Impacts? The Effects of Premiums for Underserved Populations in Performance-Funding Policies for Higher Education. Research in Higher Education, 59(6), 681-703.

25. Li, A., **Gándara, D.**, & Assalone, A. (2018). Equity or Disparity: Do Performance-Funding Policies Disadvantage Two-Year Minority-Serving Institutions? Community College Review, 46(3), 288-315.

26. **Gándara, D.**, Rippner, J., & Ness, E.C. (2017). Exploring the "How" in Policy Diffusion: A National Intermediary Organization's Role in Facilitating the Spread of Performance Funding Policies in the States. The Journal of Higher Education, 88(5), 701-725.

27. **Gándara, D.** & Toutkoushian, R. (2017). Updated Estimates of the Average Financial Return on Master's Degree Programs in the United States. Journal of Education Finance, 43(1), 21-44.

28. Ness, E.C. & **Gándara, D.** (2014). Ideological Think Tanks in the States: An Inventory of their Prevalence, Networks, and Higher Education Policy Activity. Educational Policy, 28(2), 258-280.

BOOK CHAPTERS

*Designates peer reviewed

1. **Gándara, D.** & Siu, K. (Accepted). The States and Higher Education Finance. In G.R. Serna & J.M. Cohen (Eds.) Administration, Finance, and Budgeting in Higher Education and Student Affairs: Theory, Research, & Practice.

2. DeBray, E., **Gándara, D.**, Saultz, A. (2025). Politics and Policy of Federal Education Policy Research: A Call to Widen the Theoretical and Methodological Periscope. In Cohen-Vogel, L., J. Scott, & P. Youngs (Eds.). AERA Handbook of Education Policy Research (2nd Edition). pp. 699-722.

3. *Billings, M., Li, A., & **Gándara, D.**, Acevedo, R., Cervantes, D., Turcios-Villalta, J. (2023). Financing Promise Programs: Where the Money Comes from and Where the Money Goes. New Directions for Community Colleges, (203), pp. 9-23

4. **Gándara, D.**, & Woolley, C. (2023). Policy Diffusion in U.S. Higher Education. In Jungblut, J., Maltais, M., Ness, E.C., Rexe, D. (Eds) Comparative Higher Education Politics. Higher Education Dynamics, Vol 60. (pp. 455-475). Springer, Cham.

5. Tandberg, D., & **Gándara, D.** (2023). The States and Higher Education. In M.N. Bastedo, P.G. Altbach, & P. J. Gumport (Eds.), American Higher Education in the 21st Century (5th Edition). (pp. 260-288). JHU Press.

6. *Ness, E.C., Rubin, P., **Gándara, D.**, & Hearn, J. (2023). Political Volatility in State Commitment to College Completion Efforts. In J. Delaney (Ed.), Volatility in State Spending for Higher Education. (pp. 173-198). American Educational Research Association.

7. *Billings, M., **Gándara, D.**, & Li, A. (2021). Tuition-Free Promise Programs: Implications and Lessons Learned. New Directions for Community Colleges 2021, (196), 81-95.

8. *Li, A.Y., & **Gándara, D.** (2020). The "Promise" of Free Tuition at Public Two-Year Colleges: Impacts on Student Enrollment. In L. Perna & E. Smith (Eds.) Improving Research-Based Knowledge of College Promise Programs. (pp. 219-240). American Educational Research Association.

ENYCLOPEDIA ENTRY

Gándara, D. (2016). College Students, State Policies, and Undocumented Status. In Lomotey, K., Jackson, P.B., Adem, M., Ruf, P.X., Copeland, V.C., Huerta, A., Iglesias-Prieto, N.V., & Brown, D.L. (Eds.), People of Color in the United States: Contemporary Issues in Education, Work, Communities, Health, and Immigration. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

OP-EDS, BLOG POSTS, POLICY REPORTS, AND OTHER WRITING

1. Li, A.Y., Billings, M., & **Gándara, D.** (2025). Administrators push to improve free college access. Brookings The Brown Center Chalkboard.

2. **Gándara, D.**, & Anahideh, H. (2025). Using AI to predict student success in higher education. Brookings The Brown Center Chalkboard.

3. **Gándara, D.** (2025). Public Comment on U.S. Department of Education's Title IV Regulations. U.S. Department of Education.

4. Piepgras, J.L., & **Gándara, D.** (2024). How can colleges use predictive algorithms equitably? A conversation with Dr. Denisa Gándara. Institute for Higher Education Policy.

5. **Gándara, D.**, Billings, M.S., Rubin, P.G., & Hammond, L. (2024). What motivates state policymakers' decisions to fund public higher education during economic downturns?, PRC Research Brief 9(1).

6. Kim, V., **Gándara, D.**, Ramirez, C., Kaur, N., & Jones, M. (2023). Supporting Public Policy Engagement for Tenure-Stream Faculty of Color. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 55(4), 42-50.

7. **Gándara, D.** (2023). It's Not About the Bot: Can AI Be Used in Education for Good? New Thinking.

8. **Gándara, D.**, & Kim, V., (2022). How Universities Can Support Faculty of Color to Engage with Policymakers and Practitioners. William T. Grant Foundation Blog.

9. **Gándara, D.** (2022). Now Let's Make College Free (Opinion). Newsweek.

10. **Gándara, D.**, Acevedo, R., & Cervantes, D., (2022). Reducing Barriers to Free College Programs. Scholars Strategy Network.

11. **Gándara, D.** & Zerquera, D. (2021). Latino Borrowers: Moving Beyond the "Debt Aversion" Truism. Lumina Foundation for Education.

12. Li, A., & **Gándara, D.** (2021). These Are the Students Free Community College Programs Help the Most. The Conversation.

13. **Gándara, D.** & Li, A. (2020). Free College Tuition Programs Dramatically Increase Black and Hispanic Enrollment. Campaign for Free College Tuition Blog.

14. **Gándara, D.** (2020). Should College Funding be Tied to How Many Students Graduate? The Conversation.

15. Li, A., **Gándara, D.**, & Assalone, A. (2017). Can Equity Be Bought? Minority-Serving Institutions and Outcomes-Based Funding. The Education Trust Blog Post.

16. Ness, E.C., Milan, M. & **Gándara, D.** (2015). Campus Responses to Outcomes-Based Funding in Tennessee: Robust, Aligned, and Contested. Nashville: Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

SELECT MEDIA MENTIONS

A tuition freeze without more state aid would leave Texas universities strapped. Fort Worth Report.

Morning News: Monday, July 22, 2024. NPR WBEZ Chicago.

Colleges Are Using AI To Predict Student Success. These Predictions Are Often Wrong. Tech & Learning.

With new funding formula, community colleges can better prepare students for Texas workforce. El Paso Times.

A New Way of Looking at Administrative Burdens and Race. (2023). Diverse: Issues in Higher Education.

UT assistant professor appointed to National Board of Education Sciences by President Joe Biden. (2023). The Daily Texan.

Oregon's tuition-free community college program has failed to deliver on multiple goals. (2023). The Oregonian.

Study: Congressional Discussions of Student Loans Avoid Race Almost Entirely. 2023. Diverse: Issues in Higher Education.

What are ‘Promise Programs’ and how can they help make college more affordable?. PBS NewsHour. 2023.

How College 'Promise' Programs Can Help Boost Diversity in Community College. Business Insider. 2021.

These Are the Students Free Community College Programs Help the Most. Miami’s Community Newspapers. 2021.

California's Governor Proposes More Higher Ed Funding — with A Catch. Higher Ed Dive. 2021.

Discount, Freeze or Increase? How Universities are Handling Tuition This fall. The Washington Post. 2020.

The Coronavirus Pandemic Is Making College Students Question the Price of Their Education. The Wall Street Journal. 2020.

Small Colleges Facing Virus Cash Crunch Want Help From Congress. Bloomberg Government. 2020.

Texas Universities Have Started Shedding Jobs and Are Bracing for a Serious Financial Hit. The Texas Tribune. 2020.

State Matching Fund Drives Up Private Donations, Study Shows. Inside Higher Ed. 2020.

Will Federal Relief for Colleges Come before More Budget Cuts Do? Education Dive. 2020.

Racial Equity in Funding for Higher Ed. Inside Higher Ed. 2020.

Program Successful in Increasing Private Donations to Public Universities, Study Shows. Phys.org. 2020.

Study Finds Connection Between Public Community College Promise Programs and Enrollment Increases. Diverse Issues in Higher Education. 2020.

‘Free College’ Programs Sound Great – But Who Gets Excluded? Hechinger Report. 2020.
Free-College Drives Diversity at Two-Year Schools. University Business. 2020.

The Promise and Disappointment of Free College. Inside Higher Ed. 2020.

Study: Free-College Programs Have Led to Large Enrollment Increases at 2-Year Institutions, Especially Among Historically Underserved Students. The Highland County Press. 2020.

Colorado Funding Formula Includes Incentives for Enrolling and Graduating Students From Minority Groups. Inside Higher Ed. 2020.

Tuition Reductions Take Off As the Pandemic Shapes Colleges' Fall Plans. Education Dive. 2020.

Colorado Hopes a New Higher Ed Funding Formula Will Make a Difference For Students. It Might Not Be Easy. Chalkbeat Colorado. 2020.

Students across the U.S. Sign Petitions Demanding Reduced College Tuition. Scripps. 2020.

Alaska Still Hasn't Saved Its Universities. The Atlantic. 2019.

RESEARCH FUNDING

Sponsored Research Funding – PI/ co-PI/ co-I

Current:

Sponsor: William T. Grant Foundation (Scholars Program)
Project title: Administrative Burdens in Free-College (Promise) Programs and Postsecondary Outcomes for Racially Minoritized Students
Funding period: 2021-2026
Role: PI
Total funding: $350,000

Sponsor: Spencer Foundation
Project title: Building Capacity for Fair Prediction of College Student Success at Community Colleges
Funding period: 2024-2025
Role: PI
Candidate funding: $45,852
Total funding: $74,193

Sponsor: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Project title: Fiscal Equity and California's Community Colleges
Funding period: 2021-2024
Role: Co-PI, with Co-PI Kolbe, T. (American Institutes for Research)
Candidate funding: $74,247
Total funding: $448,277

Completed:

Sponsor: William T. Grant Foundation
Project title: Optimization of the Research-to-Policy Collaboration Model: Enhancing Equity and Effectiveness in Improving URE in Child & Family Policymaking
Funding period: 2021-2024
Role: Co-I, with PIs Crowley, M. and Scott, T. (Human Development and Family Studies, Pennsylvania State University)
Candidate funding: $290,065
Total funding: $900,000

Sponsor: Institute of Education Sciences
Project title: Fair Prediction of College-Student Success Using Multivariate Adaptive Regression Splines
Funding period: 2022-2023
Role: Co-PI, with PI Anahideh, H. (Industrial Engineering, University of Illinois Chicago)
Candidate funding: $121,999
Total funding: $299,461

Sponsor: Spencer Foundation

Project title: Students versus Institutions: How Policymakers Distribute Funds to Higher Education during an Economic Recession
Funding period: 2021-2022
Role: PI, with Co-PI Billings, M. (Department of Educational Leadership, Sam Houston State University)
Candidate funding: $34,562
Total funding: $59,757

Sponsor: American Educational Research Association; Previous Institution
Project title: The "promise" of free tuition and impacts on college enrollment: Differences across race and socioeconomic status
Funding period: 2017-2019
Role: PI, with Co-PI Li, A. (Department of Leadership, Policy, & Development, University of Northern Colorado)
Total funding: $35,000

Sponsored Research Funding – Key Personnel Role or Consultant

Completed:

Sponsor: Kresge Foundation
Project title: Understanding student loan debt and financial sustainability at community colleges
Funding period: 2022-2024
Role: Key Personnel, with PI, Li, A. (Educational Policy Studies, Florida International University) and Co-PI Billings, M. (Department of Educational Leadership, Sam Houston State University)
Candidate funding: $9,192
Total funding: $50,000

Gifts and Other External Research Awards or Contracts

Current:

Sponsor: Institute of Education Sciences; Award: R324C230008.
Project title: National Disability Center for Student Success
Funding period: 2023-2028
Role: Member of the Faculty Cadre
Principal Investigator: Cawthon, S.W. Educational Psychology, UT Austin
Co-PI/Co-Is: Dillon, A. (School of Information, UT Austin); Roberts, G. (The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, UT Austin)
Candidate funding: $22,500
Total funding: $4.99 million

Completed:

Sponsor: Kresge Foundation
Project title: The free-college playbook: Evidence-based guidance for policymakers and practitioners
Funding period: 2022
Role: Contributor
Principal Investigator: Adams, M.M. (Upjohn Institute) and Iriti, J. (Learning Research & Development Center, University of Pittsburgh)
Candidate funding: $8,695

Sponsor: California Community College Chancellor's Office
Project title: IMPACT Equitable and Adequate Funding Research Series
Funding period: 2020-2021
Role: PI, with Kolbe, T. (University of Vermont)
Candidate funding: $6,250

Sponsor: Latino Center for Leadership Development / Tower Center
Project title: Using State Administrative Data to Study College Access for English Learners
Funding period: 2016-2018
Role: PI
Candidate funding: $10,000

Internal Research Funding –PI/ co-PI/ co-I (Southern Methodist University)

Completed:

Sponsor: University Research Council Grant, Southern Methodist University
(Declined due to new academic appointment)
Project title: English Learners and College Outcomes in Texas
Funding Period: 2021-2022
Role: PI
Candidate funding: $15,000

Sponsor: University Research Council Grant, Southern Methodist University
Project title: Target Populations in Higher Education Act Reauthorization Policy Process
Funding Period: 2016-2017
Role: PI
Candidate funding: $3,249

PRESENTATIONS

SCHOLARLY KEYNOTES AND INVITED PRESENTATIONS

"Invited speaker for closing session." Momentum and Barriers Symposium. University of Georgia. Athens, GA. March 2025.

"Evaluating 'fairness' in algorithms to predict college student success." Pennsylvania State University Higher Education Speaker Series. Virtual. April 2024.

"Evaluating 'fairness' in algorithms to predict college student success." Population Research Center Friday Seminar Speaker. Austin, TX. February 2024.

"Keynote for the SHEEO Communities of Practice: Connecting Funding Formulas to State Goals Using Postsecondary Data." State Higher Education Executive Officers. Denver, CO. April 2023.

"Access & Accountability: Examining the Origins and Effects of Performance-Based Funding Policies for Higher Education." University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, PA. March 2021.

"Who Really Benefits from Tuition-Free College? Promise Program Effects on Student and Institutional Outcomes." Vanderbilt University. Virtual. December 2020.

“The Effects of Local Promise Programs on Changes to Community Colleges' Finances.” (With Meredith Billings). University of Michigan’s Causal Inference in Education Research Seminar. Virtual. June 2020.

"The Promise of Free College." The University of Texas at Austin. Austin, TX. February 2020.

"Who Benefits from Promise (Free-College) Programs?" University of Southern California. Los Angeles, CA. January 2020.

SELECT INVITED DISCUSSANT / CHAIR IN SCHOLARLY PAPER SESSION

“Equitable and Adequate Funding: A Focus on Community Colleges, HBCUs, and Broad Access Institutions”. Association for the Study of Higher Education. Minneapolis, MN. November 2024. [Unable to Attend]

"Language Matters: The Implications of Rhetoric in Higher Education Policy." Association for the Study of Higher Education. Minneapolis, MN. November 2023. [Unable to Attend]

"Policymaking and the demographics of higher education governing boards." Association for the Study of Higher Education. Minneapolis, MN. November 2023. [Unable to Attend]

"Higher Education Finance and Accountability: Institutional and Student Behavior." Association for Education Finance and Policy. Denver, CO. March 2023.

"Performance Funding in Higher Education: Connecting 40 Years of Policy, Research, & Practice." Philadelphia, PA. July 2022.

"Can Performance Based Funding Be Equitable?" SHEEO Public Investment in Higher Education: Research, Strategies, and Policy Implications Webinar Series. Virtual. March 2021.

"State performance-based funding and financial aid." Association for Education Finance and Policy. Virtual. March 2021.

"The Development and Influence of Federal Higher Education Policy." Association for the Study of Higher Education. Virtual. November 2020.

"The Clash of Honest Ethics and Corporate Greed in Higher Education Lobbying." Association for the Study of Higher Education. Portland, OR. November 2019.

"The Cost of Doing Business: Budget, Financial Aid, and Student Outcomes at the Institutional Level." Association for the Study of Higher Education. Portland, OR. November 2019.

"Promise / Free-College Programs." Council for Public Policy in Higher Education Summer Research and Policy Forum: Emerging Issues in College Affordability. Washington, D.C. July 2018.

"Contemporary Equity-Driven Policy Work." American Educational Research Association. New York, NY. April 2018.

"A Look How the Sausage Is Made: Understanding the Policy Making Process." Association for the Study of Higher Education. Houston, TX. November 2017.

"State Policies Informing the National Higher Education Discourse." Association for the Study of Higher Education. Houston, TX. November 2017.

SELECT REFEREED SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS

"Algorithmic Bias and Implications for AI in Higher Education": Paper presented at the American Sociological Association's annual meeting. Chicago, IL, August 2025.

“College Readiness and Academic Outcomes for Students Who Use Disability Services in Community Colleges”. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association. Denver, CO. April 2025. (Unable to attend)

“The Delivery and Evolution of Student Support Services at Community Colleges with Promise Programs”. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association. Denver, CO. April 2025. (Unable to attend)

“Hopefully This Thing Is Legit”: Student Experiences of Administrative Burden with a Promise Program”. Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Minneapolis, MN. November 2024. (Unable to attend)

“Determining Equitable Funding Levels for California Community Colleges”. Paper presented at the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Fall Research Conference. National Harbor, MD. November 2024. (Unable to attend)

“Towards Ethical and Transparent Predictive Analytics in Education: A Fairness-Aware Approach.” Paper presented at the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness. Baltimore, MD. September 2024.

"Learning about Free College: Evaluating the Availability and Accessibility of Information on Promise Program Websites." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Minneapolis, MN. November 2023.

“Inside the Black Box: Detecting and Mitigating Algorithmic Bias across Racialized Groups in College Student-Success Prediction.” Paper presented at the Population Research Center’s TEXPOP Conference. Austin, TX. April 2023.

"‘You May Never ... Publish a Bling Blang Thing’: Supporting Tenure-Stream Faculty of Color's Policy Engagement." Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association. Chicago, IL. April 2023.

"Badgering the Witness: Racing-gendering through Interactions between Policymakers and Witnesses in Congressional Student Debt Hearings." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Las Vegas, NV. November 2022.

"Advancing a Research Agenda for Understanding the Role of Administrative Burdens in Racial (In)Justice in Higher Education." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Las Vegas, NV. November 2022.

"‘It’s an Old White Boys’ Club’: Faculty of Color’s Perceptions of Policy Engagement." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Las Vegas, NV. November 2022.

"'All Students Matter:' The Place of Race in Discourse on Student Debt in a Federal Higher Education Policymaking Process." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Las Vegas, NV. November 2022.

"Deservingness & Political Party: The Role of State Policymakers in New Mexico Opportunity Scholarship's Design." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Las Vegas, NV. November 2022.

"District, State, and Federal Policy and School Finance." AERA Educational Policy Handbook Roundtable Session. Roundtable at the American Educational Research Association. Virtual. April 2021.

"Intermediary Public Policy Organizations and the Discursive Evasion of Systemic Racism and Racialized Violence." Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association. Virtual. April 2021.

"Where the Balance-Wheel Hypothesis Falls Short: Examining State Policymakers' Decisions to Fund Higher Education Amidst an Impending Recession." Paper presented at the SHEEO Public Investment in Higher Education: Research, Strategies, and Policy Implications Webinar Series. Virtual. April 2021.

"Institutional Spending Priorities at Community Colleges after Promise Program Adoption." Paper presented at the Association for Education Finance and Policy. Virtual. March 2021.

"Reconsidering the "Balance Wheel" Analogy: Decisions on State Funding of Higher Education during the COVID-19 Pandemic." Paper presented at the Association for Education Finance and Policy. Virtual. March 2021.

"Local Promise Program Effects on Community College Revenues: Variation across Program-Design Characteristics." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Virtual. November 2020.

"Funding Public Higher Education Fairly: Evaluating The Transferability Of K12 School Finance Frameworks To The Higher Education Context." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Virtual. November 2020.

"The New Rich: Analyzing the Impact of Matching Donations to Emerging Research Universities in Texas." Paper Presented at Council for Public Policy in Higher Education Pre-Conference. Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Virtual. November 2020.

"Stretched Thin? Promise Program Effects on Community Colleges' Revenues." Paper presented at the Association for Education Finance and Policy. Virtual. March 2020.

"Emerging Tier-one Institutions: Examining the Impact of the Texas Research Incentive Program on University Revenues." Paper accepted to the American Educational Research Association. San Francisco. CA. (CANCELLED: COVID-19).

"Why Have Some States Resisted Performance-Based Funding Policy Diffusion?" Paper presented at Association for the Study of Higher Education. Portland, OR. November 2019.

"Different Promises: Emerging Evidence on the Origin, Variability, and Effects of Free-college Programs." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Portland, OR. November 2019.

"Promise for Whom? Free-College Programs and Enrollments by Race and Gender at Public, Two-Year Colleges." Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association. Toronto. April 2019.

"Social Construction of Groups Targeted in the Higher Education Act Reauthorization Process." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Tampa, FL. November 2018.

"Free College Tuition Programs: What Do We Know And What Do We Still Need to Know?" Panel presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Tampa, FL. November 2018.

"College Access for English Learners." Presentation at Texas Association of Bilingual Educators. Dallas, TX. October 2018.

"Making Good on Promises: Design Features and Enrollment Effects of Two-Year Free College Programs." Paper presented at the Association for Education Finance and Policy. Portland, OR. March 2018.

"Completion at the Expense of Access?" Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Houston, TX. November 2017.

"Framing College Affordability across the Ideological Divide." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Houston, TX. November 2017.

"The "Promise" of Free Tuition at Two-Year Colleges: Impacts on Total and Low-Income Student Enrollment." Paper presented at the College Promise Research Conference. Philadelphia, PA. October 2017.

"Texan, Born and Raised: Higher Education Tejano Scholars and Equity-Minded Research Agendas." Panel at the American Educational Research Association. San Antonio, TX. April 2017.

INVITED TALKS (COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC INTEREST)

"Austin 2030 Reverse Site Visit College Promise: What the research shows." Austin, TX. May, 2025.

"Austin 2030 Lunch & Learn with UT Faculty and College Promise Researchers." Austin, TX. November, 2024.

"Policy Perspectives & Seeking Collaborators: Postsecondary Pursuits and Promise Programs": A virtual session she participated in for LONESTARP3. Virtual. January 2025.

"ASHE Presidential Commission on Artificial Intelligence: A Community Conversation". Presidential Session at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Minneapolis, MN. November 2024. (Unable to attend)

“Panelist for Inside Higher Ed Webcast: Redefining Value in Higher Education: Prioritizing Equitable Access and Economic Mobility Over Selectivity.” Inside Higher Ed. Virtual. August 2024.

“Panelist for Brookings Event: Is College Still Worth It?” Brookings Institution. Virtual. Dec 2023.

"Adequacy in Higher Education Funding Convening." Advance Illinois and Complete College America. Chicago, IL. September 2022.

"Can 'Free College' Advance Full Participation in Higher Education?" Presidential Session at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Virtual. November 2020.

"ASHE Methods Workshop #4: Causal Inference for Policy Analysis in Higher Education." Research Methods Workshop at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Virtual. October 2020.

"Designing the Post-COVID Tertiary Education Experience: What If Equity, Access, Diversity & Inclusion for Students, Educators and Staff Were the New Normal?" Global Access to Postsecondary Education Webinar. Virtual. October 2020.

"Debt in Texas: Understanding the Impact of Student Loan Debt." Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas. Virtual. September 2020.

"Adapting to the State and Federal Higher Education Financial Landscape." Panel at the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Virtual. September 2020.

"Higher Education Funding Collapse and Inequities." Education Writers Association 73rd National Seminar. Virtual. July 2020.

"Navigating Higher Ed Finance under COVID-19." Virtual. July 2020.

"Managing Higher Education in Uncertain Times, Faculty Panel." Virtual. April 2020.

"Researchers’ Roundtable." PromiseNET. Berkeley, CA. November 2019.

"Using Data to Improve Institutional Effectiveness." California Association of Chief Budget Officers. Lake Tahoe, CA. May 2019.

"What to Expect from College." Keynote at “Understanding Undergrad” Program. Southern Methodist University, College Access Programs. Dallas, TX. November 2018.

"Opportunity through Education." Keynote at South by Southwest Conference: Chartering The Head Start Journey: Measuring Our Success. Corpus Christi, TX. July 2018.

"The Status of Latinos: Educational Conditions & Projections." Panel at the Latino Center for Leadership Development Leadership Academy: The Need for Leadership seminar. Dallas, TX. August 2018.

"Higher Education in a Changing Political Climate." Panel at the Texas Higher Education Symposium. Austin, TX. August 2017.

"Federal Panel on Latino Education." Panel at the State of Latino Education - A Policy Conference on Statewide and National Opportunities and Challenges. Dallas, TX. June 2017.

"Performance Funding Model Designs." Presentation to Vice Presidents for Business Services at Dallas County Community College District. Dallas, TX. January 2017.

"Performance-Based Accountability for Higher Education: How's It Measuring Up?" Presented at the Graduate Student Policy Seminar at Association for the Study of Higher Education Conference. Denver, CO. November 2015.

ADVISING AND STUDENT-RELATED SERVICE

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW SUPERVISOR

- Rosa Acevedo, Higher Education, 2022- 2024
    - Funded with William T. Grant Scholar Award
    - First placement: Assistant Professor of Practice, University of Pittsburgh

- Victoria Kim, Higher Education, 2022-2023
    - Funded with William T. Grant Foundation Subaward
    - First placement: Assistant Professor (tenure track), University of Texas San Antonio

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE CHAIR, PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

- Diana Cervantes (Ph.D., 2024)
- Lauren Shook, with Angela Valenzuela (Ph.D., 2024)
- Mario Villa, with Victor Sáenz (Ph.D., 2025)
- Armando Lizarraga, with Victor Sáenz (Anticipated dissertation defense: Spring 2026)

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE CHAIR, EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING

- Elizabeth Aritonang (Anticipated dissertation defense: Spring 2026)

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE CHAIR, SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY, HIGHER EDUCATION (PREVIOUS)

- Susana Perez (Ed.D., in progress upon leaving Southern Methodist University)
- Christa Rohan (Ed.D., completed 2020)
- Nicole Sonaike (Ed.D., completed 2020)
- Rachael Capua (Ed.D., completed 2019)
- Jennifer Gray (Ed.D., completed 2019)

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBER, PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

Completed

- Alicia Moreno (Ph.D., completed 2023)
- Jase Kugiya (Ph.D. completed 2024)
- Lesley Hernandez Silva (Ph.D.; completed 2025)
- Cat Ramirez (Ph.D.; completed 2025)
- Kim Pack (Ph.D.; completed 2025)
- Stephanie Strayer (Executive Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership; completed 2025)

Ongoing

- Sebastian Nunez (Ph.D.; Proposal defended, Fall 2024)
- Tasneem Sultana (Ph.D.; Proposal defended, Spring 2025)

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBER, SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY, HIGHER EDUCATION (PREVIOUS)

- Kate Montgomery (Ed.D., completed 2021)
- Whitney Thomas (Ed.D., completed 2021)
- Paul Polanco (Ph.D., completed 2019)
- Molly Ellis (Ph.D., completed 2019)
- Scott Hensley (Ed.D., completed 2018)
- Carol Kent (Ed.D., completed 2018)

EXTERNAL COMMITTEE MEMBER

- Amberly Dziesinski (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, completed 2022)
- Pooja Patel (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, completed 2025)
- Grace Shin (Ph.D., proposal defended fall 2025)

DOCTORAL STUDENT ADVISOR, PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

- Kassandra Rocha 2025-present
- Alexis George 2025-present
- Shannon Hickson 2025-present
- Julio Mena Bernal 2025-present
- Catalina Vasquez 2024-present
- Sasha Smith 2023-2024
- Diana Cervantes 2022-2024
- Mario Villa (with Victor Sáenz) 2022-2025
- Armando Lizárraga (with Victor Sáenz) 2023-present

DOCTORAL STUDENT ADVISOR, EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PLANNING

- Liz Aritonang 2023-present
- Lauren Shook (with Angela Valenzuela) 2022-2024

MASTERS STUDENT ADVISOR, PROGRAM IN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

- Amelia Pace-Borah 2025-present
- Citlali Santibañez 2025-present
- Véronic Boire 2025-present

- Paola Martinez 2025-present
- Elena Aguayo 2025-present
- Gesselle Sanchez 2025-present
- Tarini Kumar 2024-present
- Sergio Nuñez-Xoconoxtle 2024-present
- Zorayda Sanchez 2024-present
- Amanda Vachon 2024-present
- Vallery Valle, Program in Higher Education Leadership 2022-present
- April Cafaro, Program in Higher Education Leadership 2023-present

POSTBACCALAUREATE FELLOWSHIP FACULTY SUPERVISOR

- Michaela Jones, Texas Behavioral Science and Policy Institute 2022-2023
- Jamie Turcios-Villalta, Texas Behavioral Science and Policy Institute 2022-2023

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

DEPARTMENTAL AND COLLEGE-LEVEL SERVICES

The University of Texas at Austin

Co-Chair, Graduate Studies Committee, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy (2024)

Co-Chair, Faculty Search Committee, College of Education, Tenured Associate/Full Professor in School Leadership (2023-2024)

Specialization Qualifying Exam (SQE) Reviewer, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy (2022-present)

Graduate Studies Committee Member, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy (2021-present)

College of Education Teaching Awards Subcommittee Member (2023-2024)

Ph.D. Admissions Committee Member, Program in Higher Education Leadership (PHEL), Department of Educational Leadership and Policy (2022-2023)

Grant-writing and Research Fellowship Workshop Facilitator, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy (2022)

Southern Methodist University

Higher Education M.Ed. Program Recruitment (2020-2022)

Higher Education Ed.D. Admissions Committee (2017-2019, 2021)

Higher Education M.Ed. Admissions Committee (2017-2019, 2021)

Department of Education Policy & Leadership Budget Committee (2020-2021)

Diversity Committee, Simmons School of Education and Human Development (2017-2019)

Ronald. E. McNair Scholars Advisory Board (Invited; 2018-2019)

Higher Education M.Ed. Comprehensive Exam Committee (2018-2019)

Department of Education Policy & Leadership International Course Committee (2016-2017)

Local Service

Dallas County Promise Alignment Council Member (Invited; 2018-2020)

JOLT Action Board Member (Invited; 2019-2022)

SERVICE TO THE PROFESSION

Editorial Service

Associate Editor (selected by invitation)	*The Journal of Higher Education* (2021-present)
Editorial Board Member (selected by invitation)	-*Higher Education Policy* (2024-present) -*Journal of Postsecondary Student Success* (2020-present) -*The Journal of Higher Education* (2019-2020)
Ad-Hoc Journal Reviewer	-*AERA Open* -*American Educational Research Journal* -*Berkeley Review of Education* -*Community College Review* -*Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* -*Educational Policy Analysis Archives* -*Educational Researcher* -*Higher Education* -*Higher Education Policy* -*Journal of Student Financial Aid* -*Research in Higher Education* -*Teachers College Record* -*The Review of Higher Education*

Other Professional Service

Board Member	National Board for Education Sciences (2022-present)
Secretary, Board of Directors	Institute for Higher Education Policy (2022-2025) - Secretary (Elected) (2024-present) - Member of the Policy Committee
Committee Member	AERA Palmer O. Johnson Memorial Award Committee (2024-2026) ASHE Position-Taking Committee (2022-present) ASHE Presidential Commission on AI (2024-present)

Research Grant Reviewer (ad hoc)	-William T. Grant Foundation -Spencer Foundation
Conference Program Committee Member	-Association for Education Finance & Policy (2021-2022; 2020-2021) -Summer Forum Council for Public Policy in Higher Education, Washington, D.C. (2018) -Texas Higher Education Symposium Program Committee, Austin, TX (2016-2017)
Conference Proposal Reviewer	-American Educational Research Association -Association for the Study of Higher Education -Council for the Study of Community Colleges -State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) State Authorization Research
Working / Advisory Group Member	-SHEEO Adequacy and Funding Working Group (2023-present) -TRIO Faculty Alumni Network (2022-present) -Lumina Foundation for Education Working Group for Student Borrowers of Color (2019-2020) -Ithaka S+R / Joyce Foundation Performance-Based Funding Advisory Group (2019) -The Education Trust Working Group on Higher Education Accountability and Equity (2018-2019)
Member-At-Large (Elected)	Council for Public Policy in Higher Education (2016-2019)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

American Educational Research Association
Association for Education Finance and Policy
Association for the Study of Higher Education
Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness