

College Tuition and Equity

Is there such thing as free college? This session will consider the value proposition of higher education from all angles, sparked by the national conversation around affordability and access. Speakers will address the financial implications of participation with special attention to race, ethnicity, and geography, by exploring recent developments in college tuition and public aid policies at all levels. In what contexts can they lead to equity and prosperity?

Wil Del Pilar
Vice President for Higher Education
The Education Trust



Wil Del Pilar is vice president of higher education policy and practice at the Education Trust where he works to advance Ed Trust's [higher education advocacy agenda](#) by developing and implementing strategies to leverage research, policy, and practice to improve access, affordability, completion, and post-enrollment success for low-income students and students of color.

Wil has experience at both the state and institutional levels. Most recently, he served as deputy secretary of postsecondary and higher education for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, where he implemented the strategic vision for higher education in the commonwealth. Prior to that, he led development activities at the University of Florida and Pennsylvania State University. Del Pilar has also served in admissions roles at Chapman University in Orange, California, and the University of California Santa Cruz, as a financial aid counselor at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, and as a research assistant at The Pennsylvania State University.

Dr. Del Pilar's work in higher education has shaped his research interest which focuses on postsecondary access, retention and policy. Specifically his interest centers upon the intersection between policy, social capital and school factors on the postsecondary enrollment of student populations.

Email: wdelpilar@edtrust.org

Robyn Hiestand
Director of Research and Policy
College Promise Campaign



Robyn Hiestand is the Director of Research and Policy at the College Promise Campaign providing strategic direction on research, policy, and outreach. Prior to joining the College Promise Campaign, she was a consultant on matters relating to education finance and the federal budget and appropriations process. Her background includes approximately eight years at the U.S. Senate Budget Committee in various levels of influence and authority. One of her many accomplishments includes the draft and design of multiple education legislative proposals designed to increase student access to high quality college education without the burdens of carrying large amounts of student loan debt. A native of Duluth, Minnesota, Robyn holds a BA degree from Augsburg College and a Master's in Public Policy from the

London School of Economics.

Email: robyn@civication.org

Twitter: @robynhiestand

Angela Kirtdoll
Admissions Advisor
Eastern Gateway Community College



Angela Kirtdoll is the Executive Coordinator of the United Methodist Appalachian Ministry Network. The network (UMAMN) serves as an advocate for Appalachian ministries projects for communities. She also serves as a Mentor in the Appalachian Education and Workforce Network. In 2011, Kirtdoll made history by becoming the first African American woman to serve on the City Council in Steubenville, OH. She has a B.A. from West Liberty University (WV), and a Master's Degree in Higher Education from Geneva College in Beaver Falls (PA), and is an alumna of the Education Policy Fellowship Program (Ohio Site).

Email: asuggs@egcc.edu

Deborah Santiago
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Excelencia in Education



Deborah A. Santiago is the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of *Excelencia* in Education. For more than 20 years, she has led research and policy efforts from the community to national and federal levels to improve educational opportunities and success for all students. She co-founded *Excelencia* in Education to inform policy and practice compel action, and collaborate with those committed and ready to act to increase student success. Deborah has been cited in numerous publications for her work, including *The Economist*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *AP*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Deborah serves on the advisory board of *The Dream.US* and board of directors of *Higher Achievement*.

Email: dsantiago@edexcelencia.org

Twitter: @ds_excelencia