

# Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education: *Conversation Series*

SPONSORED BY THE ALBERT SHANKER INSTITUTE AND THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

## The Affordability Crisis: Rescuing the Dream of College Education for the Working-Class and Poor

June 10, 2015

Noon to 2 p.m.

### **SARA GOLDRICK-RAB**

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Sara Goldrick-Rab is professor of Educational Policy Studies and Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is also senior scholar at the Wisconsin Center for the Advancement of Postsecondary Education and an affiliate of the Center for Financial Security, Institute for Research on Poverty, and the Consortium for Chicago School Research. Goldrick-Rab's commitment to scholar activism is evidenced by her broad profile of research and writing dissecting the intended and unintended consequences of the college-for-all movement in the United States. In more than a dozen experimental, longitudinal and mixed-methods research projects, she has examined the efficacy and distributional implications of financial aid policies, welfare reform, transfer practices, and a range of interventions aimed at increasing college attainment among marginalized populations. Her academic articles have appeared in *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *Sociology of Education*, *Review of Educational Research*, and *Teachers College Record* among other peer-reviewed outlets, and she also publishes regularly for broader audiences in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed*, as well as on her blog, The Education Optimists. This year, Harvard Education Press is releasing her new book, *Reinventing Student Aid for the 21st Century*, co-edited with Andrew P. Kelly. In 2006, Goldrick-Rab was named a National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation postdoctoral fellow, and in 2010 she received the five-year Faculty Scholars Award from the William T. Grant Foundation for her project "Rethinking College Choice in America." In 2014, the American Educational Research Association honored Goldrick-Rab with its Early Career Award. She provides extensive service to local, state, and national communities, working directly with governors and state legislators to craft policies to make college more affordable, collaborating with nonprofit organizations seeking to examine the effects of their practices, and providing technical assistance to congressional staff, think tanks and membership organizations throughout Washington, D.C. In spring 2013, Goldrick-Rab testified about her work on college affordability before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, chaired by Sens. Tom Harkin and Lamar Alexander. In May 2014, Goldrick-Rab became the founding director of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, the nation's first translational research laboratory aimed at identifying new and effective ways to minimize barriers to college completion so that more students can reach their full potential. She is a member of the Albert Shanker Institute board of directors.

*The Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education conversation series is designed to engender lively and informative conversations on important educational issues. We deliberately invite speakers with diverse perspectives, including views other than those of the AFT and the Albert Shanker Institute. What is important is that these participants are committed to genuine engagement with each other.*

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**BETH HUANG**

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Beth Huang recruits and develops student organizers at the Student Labor Action Project, a joint project of Jobs with Justice and the United States Student Association. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Huang organized at AFSCME, primarily working on campaigns to improve language access for Medicaid patients and to win respect for emergency medical services professionals in California. Before working at AFSCME, she was a highly active student organizer on campus, orchestrating student mobilizations in support of public workers during the Wisconsin uprising in 2011. As a member of the United Students Against Sweatshops, Huang spoke at the National Teach-In on Debt, Austerity and How People Are Fighting Back in April 2011. In addition, she served as vice president and chair of the board of directors of United Council of UW Students, the statewide student association in Wisconsin, and helped lead a campaign that won an unprecedented two-year tuition freeze for 180,000 University of Wisconsin system students. At UW-Madison, Huang studied biochemistry and history.

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**MARY CATHRYN RICKER (MODERATOR)**

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Mary Cathryn Ricker is executive vice president of the American Federation of Teachers. She was elected to that position in July 2014. Ricker was elected president of the Saint Paul (Minn.) Federation of Teachers in 2005, served as an AFT vice president from 2012-14, and as a member of the AFT K-12 Teachers program and policy council beginning in 2006. As president of the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers, Ricker championed innovative, teacher-built solutions that improve teaching and learning as well as strengthen public education. These include the union's alternative teacher recruitment and licensure program, CareerTeacher; a full-spectrum peer assistance and review program; site-based school redesign and governance; a parent-teacher home visit project; comprehensive by-teachers/for-teachers professional development, including an annual SPFT professional conference; and meaningful community engagement in the union's work. In addition to being a National Board Certified middle school English teacher, Ricker serves on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards board of directors. She has been recognized with a number of other honors, including receiving Education Minnesota's Peterson-Schaubach Outstanding Leadership Award, qualifying as a semifinalist for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence, and serving as a contributor in the Annenberg Foundation's professional development series "Write in the Middle." A native of Hibbing, Minn., Ricker taught in classrooms in St. Cloud and Saint Paul, Minn.; Camas, Wash.; and Seoul, South Korea. She has represented the AFT and the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers abroad in Finland, Germany, Mexico and the Middle East. Ricker serves on the Education Minnesota governing board and is past president of the Education Minnesota Foundation for Teaching and Learning. She is a member of the Albert Shanker Institute board of directors. She has also served as a member of the boards of TakeAction Minnesota, the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation, the Saint Paul Public Schools Foundation and the Twin Cities Generation Next. In 2012, Ricker was selected to co-chair the Minnesota Department of Education Teacher Evaluation Work Group, and she has served on the department's Education Finance Working Group since 2011. Ricker's husband, Robert Cudahy, is a teacher of English language learners, and their two children are students in the Saint Paul public schools.

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**ZAKIYA SMITH**

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Zakiya Smith is strategy director at Lumina Foundation, where she leads the work of the foundation to develop new models of student financial support for higher education. Most recently, Smith served as a senior adviser for education at the White House Domestic Policy Council, where she focused on developing the president's higher education policy. Smith also served in the Obama

administration as a senior adviser at the U.S. Department of Education where she developed programmatic, policy and budget solutions to respond to pressing challenges in college access, affordability and completion. Prior to her work in the Obama administration, Smith served on the staff of the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance, where she conducted research and authored reports on college access programs, community colleges, and on the ability of low- and moderate-income families to afford college.

Earlier in her career, Smith worked on staff in various capacities for Teach for America, helping to train new teachers, and for the federal GEAR UP program in East Boston, Mass., providing college preparation and financial aid information to high school students. She was introduced to federal policy as an intern on Capitol Hill with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, working for her former hometown congresswoman. Smith holds a bachelor's degree in political science and secondary education from Vanderbilt University, and a master's degree in education policy and management from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Smith leads Goal 2025 Strategy No. 6: Student Financial Supports.

### **SEN. ELIZABETH WARREN**

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Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a fearless consumer advocate who has made her life's work the fight for middle-class families, was elected to the U.S. Senate in November 2012. Sen. Warren is recognized as one of the nation's top experts on bankruptcy and the financial pressures facing middle-class families. She is widely credited for the original thinking, political courage and relentless persistence that led to the creation of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. President Obama asked her to set up the new agency to hold Wall Street banks and other financial institutions accountable, and to protect consumers from financial tricks and traps often hidden in mortgages, credit cards and other financial products. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Sen. Warren served as chair of the Congressional Oversight Panel for the Troubled Asset Relief Program.

Sen. Warren was a law professor for more than 30 years, including nearly 20 years as the Leo Gottlieb Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. Two graduating classes at Harvard recognized her with the Sacks-Freund Award for excellence in teaching. She taught courses on commercial law, contracts and bankruptcy, and wrote more than 100 articles and 10 books, including three national best-sellers, *A Fighting Chance*, *The Two-Income Trap* and *All Your Worth*. The *National Law Journal* named her one of the Most Influential Lawyers of the Decade, *Time* magazine twice named her one of the 100 most influential people in the world, and she has been honored by the Massachusetts Women's Bar Association with the Lelia J. Robinson Award.

The senator learned firsthand about the economic pressures facing working families, growing up in a family she says was "on the ragged edge of the middle class." She married at 19, and after graduating from college, was an elementary school teacher. Her first child, Amelia, was born when Warren was 22. When Amelia was 2, Sen. Warren started law school. Shortly after she graduated, her son, Alex, was born. She hung out a shingle and practiced law from her living room, but she soon returned to teaching.

**THE CONVERSATION SERIES WILL RESUME ON SEPT. 9, 2015.**

Videos of previous conversations can be found at [www.shankerinstitute.org](http://www.shankerinstitute.org).