



Reaching Higher in Massachusetts:
Urging Access, Equity and
Excellence for All

August 19th, 2019
Bridgewater State University
Rondileau Campus Center
8 am – 3:00 pm



A NOTE FROM REACH HIGHER MASSACHUSETTS TEAM LEAD

Dear RHM 2019 Convening participant-

I am thrilled that you are here today to join in celebrating the third *Reach Higher Massachusetts Convening*, bringing almost 200 of the region's school counselors, school counselor educators, college access partners, financial aid administrators, college admission officers, K-12 and higher education leaders, graduate students and policy makers to this gathering to learn more about and to help implement the Reach Higher initiative across the Commonwealth.

Our theme for today's program is ***Urging Access, Equity and Excellence for All***, something that we need in this country now more than ever. We have a full and robust agenda which will provide you the opportunity to learn new things, meet new people and explore new opportunities. We have brought together some of the best and brightest thought leaders in the region to help us explore the topic of equity and access and really look at where we want our Pre-K-16 education system to be in the next five to ten years. Your participation here today speaks volumes about your dedication and commitment to your students, their families and our communities. Thank you for giving of your time and your willingness to make a difference for those whom we serve.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Christine Scafidi, Convening Chair, and her Registration helper – Jennifer Bento-Pinyoun. I am so appreciative that they took a leap of faith, believed in the mission of Reach Higher and gave of their time and talents to assist in helping to plan this unique and inspirational event. In addition, I want to thank the numerous volunteers, Bridgewater State University staff and the many others who have assisted in making this program possible. Finally, I want to thank our sponsors – Bridgewater State University, the Massachusetts Educational Financing Authority (MEFA), Massasoit Community College, MassEDCO and the Massachusetts School Counselors Association (MASCA) – for their generous support in making this day possible. Without their financial assistance this program would not have been possible.

I expect your day will be filled with numerous opportunities for learning, networking and action. I hope you leave today's Convening inspired to do at least one new thing to help your students to "Reach Higher" and pursue some sort of training or education after high school graduation. Make a pledge, which in turn will positively impact our youth today, tomorrow and beyond. Your involvement and future actions will no doubt be transformative.

Sincerely,

Bob Bardwell
RHM Team Lead

MEET THE RHM LEADERSHIP TEAM

Bob Bardwell, Monson Public Schools, MASCA
Mark Bilotta, CFO, MassEDCO
Ruth Carrigan, Whitman Hanson High School
Nyal Fuentes, Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education
Apelila Joseph, Springfield Public Schools
Tim Poynton, UMASS Boston
Christine Scafidi, Framingham State University
V. Scott Solberg, Boston University





**Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater MA
August 19, 2019
Rondileau Campus Center**

**Reaching Higher in Massachusetts:
Urging Access, Equity and Excellence**

- 8:00 - 8:30** Registration and continental breakfast – *Lobby, Rondileau Campus Center*
- 8:30 – 8:45** Welcome and Introductory Remarks – *Ballroom, Rondileau Campus Center*
- **Christine Scafidi**, Reach Higher Massachusetts Convening Chair
 - **Bob Bardwell**, Monson High School, Reach Higher MA Team Leader, MASCA Executive Director
 - **Frederick W. Clark, Jr., Esq.**, President, Bridgewater State University
- 8:45 – 9:30** Keynote Speaker – *Ballroom, Rondileau Campus Center*
Dr. Angel B. Perez, PhD., VP of Enrollment and Student Services, Trinity College
- 9:30 – 9:40** Break
- 9:45 – 11:00** Panel – *Ballroom, Rondileau Campus Center*
What Will Higher Education Look Like in Massachusetts in 5-10 Years?
- **Angel B. Perez**, PhD., VP of Enrollment and Student Services, Trinity College, CT
 - **Patricia Marshall**, Deputy Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
 - **Catherine Chiu**, Director of Guidance, Boston Public Schools
 - **Apelila Joseph**, Springfield Promise Program, Springfield Public Schools
 - **Edward Lambert**, Executive Director, Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
 - **Ann Reale**, COO and Undersecretary of Education, Massachusetts Executive Office of Education
- 11:00 – 11:15** Break
- 11:30 – 12:30** **Urging Access, Equity and Excellence Breakout I:**
1. Financial Aid: We're Changing the Narrative
 2. It Takes a Village: Financial Aid Advisor and School Counselor Comprehensive Model
 3. Advancing Wide-Scale Adoption of School Mental Health
 4. Reaching Higher with Industry Recognized Credentials
 5. Using College Knowledge to Improve Access and Equity
 6. A Purpose Driven Education
 7. My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) College and Career Advising
 8. Admitted but Not Accepted: Exploring Imposter Syndrome in the College Admissions Process
- 12:30 – 1:30** Lunch – *Ballroom, Rondileau Campus Center*
- 1:30 – 2:30** Urging Access, Equity and Excellence Breakout II: Same as above
- 2:30 – 3:00** Networking/Wrap up
Tours of campus available in BSU Welcome Center

Breakout Session Descriptions:

Breakout Session 1:

Financial Aid Offers: We're Changing the Narrative

Learn from three Massachusetts Public Colleges how they have turned their partnership into a pipeline strategy and true collaboration. Framingham State, Mass Bay and Northern Essex Community College will share experiences and advice on how to create new partnerships or make stronger ones that can result in more students in both enrollment funnels.

Presenters: **Mark Bilotta**, CEO, MassEDCO, Reach Higher Massachusetts Leadership
Ramon Soto, Director of Policy, Massachusetts, uAspire
Jonathan Sparling, Associate Director of College Planning and Education, MEFA

Breakout Session 2:

It Takes a Village: Financial Aid Advisor and School Counselor Comprehensive Model

The financial aid advisor and school counselor collaboration is a necessary partnership to ensure students, regardless of their post-secondary plans have equal access to explore their options related to college, career, and military. This session will highlight the introduction of the financial aid advisor and school counselor comprehensive model being used by Springfield Public Schools to support students in being college and career ready. Topics include but are not limited to fit and match, financial aid/college affordability, summer melt, career planning, and the use of data to inform our practice. Planning for our students' future cannot be done in isolation- it takes a village.

Presenters: **Apelila Joseph**, Reach Higher Massachusetts Leadership, Springfield Promise Program, Springfield Public Schools
Dr. Leticia Boyles, Springfield Promise Program, Springfield Public Schools

Breakout Session 3:

Advancing Wide-Scale Adoption of School Mental Health

Presenters will provide an overview of the steps taken to form the Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium (MASMHC), an organization of Massachusetts districts supported by local, state, national, and federal partners. The purpose and intent of the MASMHC is to improve the mental health services and supports available to all students. Practical strategies for organizing and sustaining the consortium will be offered as well as a discussion about how wide-scale adoption of SMH was fostered through the formation of the MASMHC.

Presenter: **John Crocker**, Director of School Mental Health Behavioral Services, Methuen Public Schools

Breakout Session 4:

Reaching Higher with Industry Recognized Credentials

The job landscape has changed and so have career and education pathways leading to the viable careers. Industries most desperate for qualified employees include a wide variety of occupations that do not require four or more years of college. Employers in high priority industries such as IT and Healthcare, are looking for knowledge and skills that are backed by **industry recognized credentials (IRC's)**. Just as dual enrollment gives college-going high school students a competitive advantage, trainings that lead to an IRC can do so for high school students who are *and are not* planning to go to college. In this workshop, participants will learn:

- How including training that leads to IRC's in the high school day addresses equity issues and increases access to college and/or employment in high demand occupations
- How IRC's can be stackable and provide sustainable options for students to progress in their chosen field - or change their career direction with reduced risk, costs, etc.
- About IRC's within 3 Massachusetts high priority industries that employers' value most
- About free and low-cost ways to make IRC's accessible to high school students
- How to advocate for expanding access to high value IRC's in our state's high wage, high demand industries for *ALL* students

Presenters: **Shannon N. Doran**, MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board School-to-Career / Connecting Activities Coord., Lic. School Counselor, Career Development Education Specialist
Jackney Prioly Joseph, Director, Career Readiness Initiatives, Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education
Wendy Storm, MACWIC Vocational Coordinator, MassMEP: Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnerships

Breakout Session 5:

Using College Knowledge to Improve Access and Equity

College Knowledge – the knowledge needed to aspire to and plan for attending college – is central to the work of school counselors and college access professionals in postsecondary planning, but no measures previously existed. In this session you will learn about the development of an objective, fact-based measure of College Knowledge; research demonstrating inequitable College Knowledge acquisition in high school; and how you can use free resources to address the inequality in access to College Knowledge.

Presenter: **Tim Poynton**, Ed.D., GCDF, Reach Higher Massachusetts Leadership, Associate Professor, Department of Counseling & School Psychology, College of Education and Human Development, University of Massachusetts-Boston

Breakout Session 6:

A Purpose Driven Education

A postsecondary education today comes in many forms. While students have many options to choose from, their goal should be to choose the option that has a purpose for them. A Purpose Driven Education is important because not all students have the same purpose in mind. A “university for all” mentality does not meet the needs of all students. Come see how applying a Purpose Driven Education to your students can increase the success rate of all your students.

Presenter: **Jerry Ellner**, National Director of High School Development, Universal Technical Institute, Inc.

Breakout Session 7:

My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) College and Career Advising

MyCAP is a student-directed *process* of self-discovery and college and career planning that leads to a unique personalized path towards post-secondary success. As an *electronic platform* MyCAP captures the learning and documents the achievements of the learning objectives at each grade level. The platform may also include an ePortfolio that captures certain artifacts that demonstrate success. The ePortfolio may be part of an online career information system (e.g. Naviance, MEFA Pathways, MassCIS) or a cloud storage system (e.g. google docs) or in a “Linked-In” type system. MyCAP is a multiyear tool that is best developed in a structured program.

College and Career Advising is the systematic implementation of a scope and sequence of learning objectives focused on the three domains of college and career readiness implemented in grades 9-12. Each domain - personal social skills development, career development education, and academic, college and career planning – must be addressed each year for students to be college and career ready. This structured advising program should be a school-wide effort with responsibility for lessons and activities residing with many educators not just school counselors.

Together, CCA and MyCAP ensure students graduate college and career ready.

Presenter: **Lisa Harney**, Office of College and Career Readiness, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Breakout Session 8:

Admitted but Not Accepted: Exploring Imposter Syndrome in the College Admissions Process

In Austin Channing Brown's book, "I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness", she explicates the pain of a woman of color socially engineered for a world that wasn't made for her. As we guide underrepresented students navigate the college admissions process, are we helping them their best fit or their best compromise? Does financial aid even begin to address their "demonstrated need"? Come learn how good intentions by admissions professionals can still lead to deleterious effects for our students.

Presenter: **Lawrence Alexander**, Consultant, Carney, Sandoe & Associates, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Meet Our Speakers

Frederick W. Clark, Jr., Esq. – President, Bridgewater State University

Frederick W. Clark Jr., Esq., is the 12th president in the 178-year history of Bridgewater State University, his alma mater. The advancement of student success has been the cornerstone of President Clark's four years as the institution's leader, with BSU aspiring to become a national leader in removing barriers to academic success, providing the necessary supports to help each and every student grow and succeed, and eliminating achievement gaps among all student groups.

Meanwhile, the university continues to build upon its nationally recognized undergraduate research program and expand experiential learning opportunities for students through its study abroad, honors and paid internship programs. Under President Clark's leadership, BSU's full-time faculty ranks have grown to 358, the largest in the institution's history.

Because ensuring access to high-quality higher education remains a priority, President Clark has forged ground-breaking relationships with neighboring Massasoit Community College and Bristol Community College to help students transition to a four-year degree and is expanding BSU's College of Continuing Studies to serve the needs of adult learners.

President Clark served BSU in many capacities prior to assuming the presidency in July 2015, including as a member and chairman of the Board of Trustees, vice chairman of the Bridgewater State University Foundation, and executive vice president and vice president for external affairs.

His commitment to the commonwealth has been recognized by Governor Charlie Baker, who appointed President Clark to serve as a Massachusetts delegate on the New England Board of Higher Education (NEBHE), which has provided leadership to strengthen the relationship between higher education and the economic well-being of the region.

President Clark was also elected to serve as chair of the Metro South Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors at its most recent annual meeting. The chamber has served the Greater Brockton Area for more than a hundred years. President Clark worked for nearly 20 years as district director, legal counsel and Washington liaison officer for Congressman John Joseph Moakley. He is also the former chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education (BHE).

Like most Bridgewater State University students, President Clark represents the first generation in his family to attend college. He graduated from Bridgewater State in 1983 with a Bachelor of Arts in political science and received his Juris Doctor degree from Suffolk University Law School in 1986.

President Clark was born and raised in Brockton and lives in Easton with his wife Carrie Kulick-Clark, '85, whom he met while they were students at Bridgewater State. They have two sons, Justin, '14, and Derek, and a daughter, Reilly.

Keynote Speaker - Angel B. Perez

Dr. Angel B. Pérez is an education administrator, author, speaker, teacher, and student advocate. With more than two decades' experience in secondary and higher education leadership positions in the U.S., he is now recognized as a national thought leader, and sought after as an international speaker, on issues of educational equity and access in American education. Pérez's work on behalf of underrepresented student populations echoes his own story. Growing up poor in Puerto Rico and the South Bronx, he went on to graduate from some of America's most prestigious institutions and now dedicates his efforts to ensure that all who aspire to higher education have the opportunity to achieve.

Leadership: Pérez is a **firm believer in the liberal arts** as offering students the best preparation for an uncertain future. Currently, as Vice President for Enrollment and Student Success at **Trinity College**, Connecticut, he leads efforts in Admissions, Financial Aid, Career Development, Student Success, Retention, the Individualized Degree Program, and Posse Scholars. He also teaches in the Educational Studies Department and has overseen Institutional Research, Planning, and Strategy. He has transformed enrollment and campus culture by adopting values-based, student-centered strategies, including adopting a **test-optional policy and using character in evaluation**. To reduce the financial and administrative burden on the lowest income students, he **dropped the application fee for first-generation students** and created a **four-year financial aid awarding system**. As a result, Trinity has enjoyed its most diverse classes ever, with more students of color, first-generation students, and international students, as well as a surge in academic quality, yield, campus culture, and retention.

At Trinity, Pérez founded the Office of Student Success and revamped the Career Development Center, to help students find **meaning and purpose** in all aspects of their lives, as well as to prepare for the jobs of the future. He has introduced **new integrated models for student retention and success**, including design thinking courses and workshops, meaningful work programs, personalized advising, and innovative career preparation and exploration programming. For his work in this area Pérez was recently honored by the New England College Personnel Association.

In 2018, Pérez was chosen by the Gates Foundation and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators to serve on **Forward50**, an Initiative to plan for the future of higher education in America and present solutions to Congress. In addition, he consults with various institutions of higher education to address challenges in mission alignment, enrollment, student success, and organizational change.

Service: Pérez is a **Fulbright** Alumnus and serves on its Scholar Peer Review Committee. In 2016, the Governor of Connecticut appointed him to the **New England Board of Higher Education**. He has also served as a Fellow at the **Bowen Institute for Higher Education Policy** and Chair of Deans for NESCAC (New England Small College's Athletics Conference). Trusteeship roles include chair of diversity and inclusion at the **Berkshire School** in Massachusetts, development and fundraising for **United World College** in Costa Rica, and **Hartford Youth Scholars** in Connecticut. He serves on the Advisory Council of the **Mastery Transcript**, a group of schools creating a new high school transcript that reflects the unique skills of each learner. In 2001, he was elected the youngest Chair of Diversity in the history of Skidmore College's alumni association.

Academics: Pérez teaches courses in **Educational Studies** and **Design Thinking** at Trinity, and is an International Visiting Faculty Member at **Rikkyo University** in Tokyo, Japan. Pérez continues to work with students on research projects in areas such as operationalization of institutional mission, college access, and student success. He has been published widely in both mainstream media and academic outlets. He holds a B.S. from Skidmore College, an M.A. from Columbia University, a PhD from Claremont Graduate University, and a Teaching Certification in Higher Education Pedagogy from the **Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning** at Harvard University.

Ann Reale

Ann has served as Undersecretary and Chief Operating Officer for the Executive Office of Education since 2015. Prior to this role, Ann lived in Washington DC for six years and was a Principal consultant in the Education Division at ICF International, providing technical assistance to state agencies and the federal government. Before moving to DC, Ann's experience as a leader in Massachusetts state government included serving as the first Commissioner of the newly formed Department of Early Education and Care, as Senior Policy Advisor to the Governor's Office, and as the State Budget Director.

Edward Lambert

Before joining MBAE in January of 2019, Ed served as vice chancellor for university relations at UMass Boston, where he was responsible for government and community relations, corporate relations and communications. Ed was founding director of the Urban Initiative of UMass Dartmouth, a research center focusing on urban policy and leadership issues. There, he helped organize the state's Gateway Cities Coalition and assisted in designing and implementing state programs and legislation to support them and led the Initiative's work in urban schools assessing practices and serving as the regional satellite of the National Dropout Prevention Center. He also taught Public Policy and Public Management and served as the Chair of the Education Policy Committee of the Kaput Center for STEM Education and Research. Ed's record of service also includes seven years as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, where, as a member of the Education Committee, he assisted in the creation and passage of the 1993 Education Reform Act. He co-chaired the legislature's Literacy Caucus in support of increased funding for Adult Basic Education and literacy programs. He also served twelve years as the mayor of Fall River, initiating a comprehensive school building campaign and creating a series of community education summits. He served 22 years on the Fall River School Committee, earning himself the Massachusetts Association of School Committees Lifetime Achievement Award. Ed served 8 years as a mentor to at-risk youth in the SMILES Mentoring program. He also served on a national task force for the development of the 21st Century Workforce of the Urban Serving Universities. He was appointed Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation by Governor Patrick and, earlier in his career, served as the director of social services at Saint Vincent's Home in Fall River. He earned his BA in psychology at UMass Dartmouth and his MEd in counseling at Bridgewater State College.

Lawrence Alexander

Lawrence has spent a decade as a college counselor in both public and independent schools. He has worked for The Young Women's Leadership School of Astoria, The Business of Sports School, Ross School (NY), and The White Mountain School (NH). For the last three years, he has also served as the Director of Equity and Inclusion at The White Mountain School and has established himself as an industry leader through his work in with East Woods School (NY), Brown University, the Association of Independent Schools in New England (AISNE), and CS&A. Lawrence also serves on the editorial board for Insight Into Diversity magazine. Lawrence received his bachelor's degree from Kean University in finance and his graduate degree from Montclair State University in Counseling in Higher Education.

He lives with his wife, Monique, and together they have five children. Lawrence is also an avid fitness enthusiast and loves Crossfit. He is a three-time Tough Mudder finisher.

Mark Bilotta

Mark serves as the CEO of MassEdCO, the Commonwealths' largest provider of community-based education and career readiness services for low income, first generation college bound students and adults. Prior to that, he served as the CEO of the former Colleges of Worcester Consortium. Earlier in his career, he held positions in the admissions offices at College of the Holy Cross and Worcester State University followed by his tenure as Executive Assistant to the President at Assumption College.

Mark has also authored four annual editions (2015-2018) of *Paying for College: Before, During and After*, designed to strengthen the financial literacy skills of those looking to finance a postsecondary education.

Leticia Boyles

Dr. Leticia Boyles, born and raised in Bermuda, now resides in Springfield, MA. She is the loving mother of her patient son Traleck Boyles who has witnessed her every emotion and has tolerated it all. Dr. Boyles received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology, Master of Art in Educational Psychology and Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Supervision, all obtained from American International College. Her dissertation research study title and focus were Lost in Transition: High School Counselors' Perception of the Ninth-Grade Transition Process. She is currently the School Counseling Department Chair at the High School of Science and Technology (HSST). She has been a Springfield Public School Employee for 21 years. Dr. Boyles was named the 2016 Pioneer Valley Teacher of Excellence Awardee. In addition to supervising the School Counseling Department and counseling adolescents at the High School of Science and Technology, she also is an active Success Coach for Springfield Public Schools' 100 Males to College and an Effective Educator Coach. Dr. Boyles has played a major role in many of Springfield Public School's Initiatives, which have been under the leadership of Dr. Yolanda Johnson. Dr. Boyles has spent most of her life inspiring others to be the best they can be.

Catherine Chiu

Catherine is the Director of Guidance for the Boston Public Schools. She is committed to serving all students, families, schools, and neighborhoods throughout Boston, whether first generation college-going, economically disadvantaged, student with disability, or English Learner. In addition to school counseling, Catherine is also a licensed school psychologist.

John Crocker

John has worked in public education for a decade, primarily as the administrator for the Methuen Public Schools Guidance Department. He has overseen the planning and implementation of the "Mental Health Initiative," which has focused on the establishment of a comprehensive school mental health system (CSMHS) in partnership with the National Center for School Mental Health (NCSMH). John has worked with the NCSMH as a member of the National School Mental Health Task Force and as the Massachusetts team leader for the National Coalition for the State Advancement of School Mental Health (NCSA-SMH). He was recently appointed to the role of Director of School Mental Health & Behavioral Services, a position charged with overseeing the district-wide implementation and evaluation of Methuen's comprehensive school mental health system (CSMHS) and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). His work has focused on developing a district-wide system of universal mental health screening, advancing the use of psychosocial data to inform school mental health staff's therapeutic practice, and the development and evaluation of the CSMHS in Methuen. He has worked to scale-up evidence-based therapeutic services across Methuen through the

provision of district-wide professional development and the design and implementation of group- and individual-therapy programs. Mr. Crocker founded the Massachusetts School Mental Health Consortium (MASMHC), a group of approximately one-hundred and twenty school districts across Massachusetts committed to advocating for and implementing quality and sustainable school mental health services and supports. He received the National Center for School Mental Health's School Mental Health Champion Award and is the 2019 Massachusetts School Counselors Association (MASCA) Administrator of the Year.

Shannon Doran

Shannon is a Career Development Education Specialist as well as a licensed Massachusetts School Guidance Counselor. She received her Master's in Education from the Umass Amherst School of Education and has lived in Western Massachusetts since 1996. Shannon has been serving as the School-to-Career and Connecting Activities Coordinator at the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board for that past 3 years. In this capacity, she collaborates with public high schools throughout the Franklin County and North Quabbin area in order to help students make a more informed career and education pathway decision and get more prepared for the world of work.

Shannon is the founding member of the Reach Higher Massachusetts (RHM) Viable Careers and Citizenship Work Group and is excited to work with all stakeholders who are committed to increasing the relevancy of post-secondary education and improving the overall career outcomes of students.

Jerry Ellner

Jerry is the national director of high school development at Universal Technical Institute (NYSE: UTI), the nation's leading provider of training for aspiring auto, motorcycle, diesel, marine, computer numerical controls, welding technology and collision repair technicians.

Ellner began his career at UTI in 1991 as the *first* admissions representative in New England. He advanced to become the regional admissions director for the eastern United States in 2000, and the national director in 2007. In 2009, Ellner embraced the newly created role of national director for high school development. In this role, his expertise in managing admissions and enrollment, and developing and fostering relationships with high schools has enabled hundreds of schools nationwide to better understand the value of a technical, STEM-based education. Ellner has been instrumental in the development of UTI's successful STEM workshop programs for high school students and counselors – helping to further broaden their perspective on STEM careers.

In October 2013, Ellner was selected to serve on the STEM Education Coalition Board of Directors in Washington, D.C. Ellner is also a member of the Industry Workforce Needs Coalition (IWNC) and the Opportunity Nation Coalition. He is an involved contributor to countless other organizations, including the American School Counselor Association, the Association for Career and Technical Education, the National Science Teachers Association, SkillsUSA, FFA, Hot Rodders of Tomorrow and the National Automobile Dealers Association. He has also strongly supported the effort to make a UTI education accessible to everyone, championing the efforts of the Tech Force Foundation, United Way, and the Boys & Girls Club of America. He was the recipient of the 2015 New York Auto Dealers Association Educator of the Year Award and the 2017 ACTE Hero Award. Ellner was invited to present at First Lady Michelle Obama's Reach Higher Convening in June 2016 and in 2018 was invited to the White House to be part of the "Be Best" initiative led by Melania Trump.

Ellner is a Vietnam-era veteran and served as a combat intelligence specialist in the United States Army. He is a graduate of the Joel Hornstein School of Middle East Studies at Brandeis University. He is the father of four adult children and grandfather of nine grandchildren. He lives in Manchester, NH.

Lisa Harney

Lisa is an Education Specialist at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education working in the College, Career, and Technical Education unit. Lisa passionately believes that EVERY student can succeed if every student has the supports and tools to do so. Her priority projects include alternative education, at-risk youth and dropout prevention and re-engagement, and promotion of *My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP)* – a four-year individual planning tool for ALL students.

Prior to working at the Department Lisa was the director of an alternative high school for pregnant and parenting teens operated under the guidance of the South Shore Educational Collaborative. The success of the program was in the holistic design including on-site day care, postsecondary planning, mental health counseling services, and a rigorous academic program leading to a high school diploma.

Lisa holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing from Boston College and a Master of Education from UMass Boston.

Apelila Joseph

Apelila is an alumna of the High School of Science and Technology in Springfield, MA. As a high school student, Ms. Joseph can remember her family receiving and completing their college financial aid applications from a college access organization while her father was on a military deployment to Iraq. This small, yet meaningful, interaction proved to have a lasting impact. Ms. Joseph went on to attend Smith College where she received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Environmental Science and Policy. Later, she received her MBA in Entrepreneurial Thinking and Innovative Practices from Bay Path University. Ms. Joseph's love for her city, passion to support urban students, and firsthand knowledge of the challenge's families face in accessing post-secondary credentials led her back to Springfield Public Schools. Currently, she works as the Springfield Promise Administrator, leading Springfield Public Schools Team of Financial Aid Advisors; she also oversees the District's implementation of Naviance. Ms. Joseph serves as a member of the leadership team for Reach Higher MA.

Jackney Prioly Joseph

Jackney is the Director of Career Readiness Initiatives and is responsible for developing the organization's career readiness agenda by establishing objectives focused on increasing the career readiness of students statewide, developing strategy around advocacy and policy and engaging internal and external stakeholders to implement programmatic solutions. Previously, Jackney served as Policy Director for At-Large Boston City Councilor Ayanna Pressley where she served as the Education and Arts Liaison and led the legislative process for various policy initiatives including Councilor Pressley's liquor licensing reform legislation. Prior to this, Jackney served as Special Assistant in the office of Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, where she conducted research on youth development opportunities in the city of Boston, managed special projects and served on the Leadership Team of the Human Services cabinet. In 2016, she was recognized for service to her alma mater with the Bryn Mawr College Young Alumni Service Award. She is an active Posse alumna, currently serving as a Career Coach to a Posse undergraduate. Jackney received her MA in Public Administration from Northeastern University and her BA in Philosophy from Bryn Mawr College.

Tim Poynton

Tim research interests are in the realm of issues affecting K-12 students and the school counselors who serve them. Current research includes an examination of the postsecondary transition of graduating high school seniors, focusing on how in-school experiences and attitudes relate to postsecondary outcomes with a focus on the transition from high school to college. Professor Poynton is also engaged in research examining instruments designed to measure the attitudes and beliefs of school counselors. Embedded in the above research projects are an interest in technology applications, particularly issues around the use of online surveys and methods for improving their efficacy and usability, and applications for school counselors to collect and analyze data. Dr. Poynton earned his Doctorate in Human Development and Education at Boston University, a Certificate of Advanced Study in School Counseling, Master of Science in Counseling and Bachelor of Arts in Psychology all from The State University of New York at Albany.

Jonathan Sparling

Jonathan joined MEFA in 2018. In his role, Jonathan works with colleges, universities, and community organizations to support their work with students and families navigating the college planning and financing process. Before joining MEFA, Jonathan worked in the financial aid office at WPI and more recently at American Student Assistance. Jonathan received his BA/MA from Assumption College and MBA from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. He also holds the Accredited Financial Counselor (AFC) designation through the Association for Financial Counseling, Planning and Education (AFCPE) and currently serves as co-chair for the Massachusetts Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators Conference Committee.

Ramón Soto

Ramón is the MA Director of Policy for uAspire, where he advocates for higher education policy and systems change solutions for students who need it the most. Prior to joining uAspire, Ramón worked in local and state government for over 14 years, including the administrations of Boston Mayors Tom Menino and Marty Walsh, as well as the Massachusetts State Senate. Ramón is a graduate of Stonehill College, and he recently completed a Master's in Public Administration at Harvard's Kennedy School.

REACH HIGHER MASSACHUSETTS



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