

LISTENING SESSIONS TOUR

The Time is Now: Equitably Funding our Public Universities

SPEAKER BIOS



Moderator

Lisa Castillo Richmond, Ph.D

Executive Director,

Partnership for College Completion

Lisa Castillo Richmond became PCC's second Executive Director in 2021 after serving as the founding Managing Director since 2016. Lisa is an entrepreneurial higher education leader committed to collaborative approaches to addressing long-standing racial and socioeconomic inequities in colleges, universities, and higher education systems.

In this role, she is responsible for the overall strategic direction and management of PCC and its programming. She also served as a Commissioner on Illinois' Equitable

Funding Commission for Public Universities. Lisa also holds a number of critical relationships and partnerships across institutions, agencies, and organizations that will be important to the success of this work. Her years of experience in both institutional equity reform efforts within colleges and universities and legislative action for student success will provide important context and guidance for this project. She is a proud first generation college student, holds an M.A. in Education & Social Policy from New York University, and a Ph.D. in Higher Education from Loyola University Chicago. Her research centers on the role of institutional administrative leadership in advancing racial equity on college and university campuses.

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Speakers Panel



Representative Carol Ammons (D),
103rd District,
Illinois House of Representatives

Representative Carol Ammons is the bicameral chair of the Illinois Black Caucus, as well as the chair of the Small Business, Tech Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Committee. Additionally, she is a senior member of the Higher Education and Higher Education Appropriations committees, displaying a deep-rooted passion for educational excellence.

With an illustrious career spanning sixteen years across county, city, and state levels of government, she is currently in her fifth term representing the 103rd district in the Illinois General Assembly. Notably, she is the first African-American elected to champion the interests of the 103rd District, a testament to her pioneering spirit and commitment to diversity and inclusion. Rep. Ammons's dedication to advancing equity and justice extends to her role as Vice Chair of the Women's Caucus and joint chair of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, where she has spearheaded transformative initiatives. Her joint chairmanship of the ILBC is particularly noteworthy, as she has been instrumental in driving forward four Legislative Pillars encompassing Criminal Justice Reform, Education and Workforce Development, Economic Access, Equity, and Opportunity, and Health Care and Human Services. These pillars represent her commitment to creating a fairer and more just society.

In recognition of her exemplary efforts, Rep. Ammons has been honored with prestigious awards such as the Color of Change Thurgood Marshall Award for Public Service for Fair Education in 2022, the Elizabeth Taylor Aids Foundation Legislative Leadership Award in 2021, and the National Shining Star Award from the National Organization of Black-Elected Legislative Women (N.O.B.E.L) in 2019, among others. Her reputation as an accomplished fellow, including her status as an Edgar Fellow, a CSG Midwest's Bowhay



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Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD) Fellow, and a Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellow, speaks to her dedication to continuous growth and leadership excellence.

Rep. Ammons's impact extends beyond her legislative duties, as she serves as the co-chair of the Commission on Equitable Public University Funding Task Force and has chaired critical initiatives such as the Human Trafficking Task Force and the Higher Education in Prisons Task Force. Her past roles also include significant contributions to the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Pretrial Practices Task Force and the Implementation Task Force.

Remarkably, Rep. Ammons currently presides over one standing committee and serves on an impressive eight legislative committees, ranging from Appropriations-Higher Education to Small Business & Tech Innovation and Entrepreneurship, demonstrating her versatility and ability to lead in diverse areas of governance.

As she continues to excel in her multifaceted roles, Rep. Ammons remains a beacon of transformation and policy-making prowess in Illinois. Her enduring dedication to advancing equity, justice, and the well-being of her constituents solidifies her status as a true visionary leader, and her tireless efforts continue to shape a brighter future for the 103rd district and beyond.

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Robin Steans

President
Advance Illinois

Robin Steans is the President of Advance Illinois, an independent policy and advocacy organization working to build a healthy public education system that enables all students to achieve success in college, career and civic life. She is also a Trustee of the Steans Family Foundation, where she helps guide education and community development grant making in the North Lawndale and North Chicago communities. A longtime public school parent, Robin Steans has spent over twenty years working on public school reform. She served as Issues Director of the Small Schools Coalition, as Associate Director of Leadership for Quality Education, and taught at public high

schools in Boston, San Francisco and Chicago before going on to earn her law degree.

Ms. Steans was co-founder and past Board Chair of the Celiac Disease Center at the University of Chicago, helped found and currently serves as a Director of North Lawndale College Preparatory Charter High School, and has served on two Local School Councils.

Robin graduated Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude from Brown University, received her master's degree in Education from Stanford University, and attended law school at the University of Chicago, where she graduated cum laude and Order of the Coif. She is married and has three children, all of whom attended and graduated from Chicago Public Schools.

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Brett Porter

Student

Governors State University

Brett Porter is a dedicated and experienced professional currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer science, with an expected graduation in Spring 2025. With eight years of experience in the social work field, particularly focused on supporting the intellectually disabled community, Brett brings a unique perspective to the intersection of technology and social impact.

Since returning to school, Brett has demonstrated strong leadership across multiple student organizations. He serves as Vice President of the Student Senate, Drone

Engineering Club, Tau Sigma National Honor Society, Innovation Club, and Psychology Club. Additionally, Brett founded and currently presides over the Software Engineering Club, fostering innovation and networking among peers.

This past summer, Brett completed an internship at the University of Notre Dame, contributing to NASA-funded projects, further solidifying their experience in the field. Brett's commitment to academic and extracurricular excellence is also recognized through their appointment to the College of Arts and Sciences Advisory Board. In his spare time, Brett enjoys playing sports, volunteering, exploring nature, and participating in karaoke.

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Corey S. Bradford, Sr., Ph.D.

Vice President for Administration & Finance
Governors State University

Dr. Corey S. Bradford, Sr. is the Vice President of Administration and Finance at Governors State University. With a wealth of experience spanning three decades, Dr. Bradford has consistently demonstrated his expertise and passion for educating disadvantaged students.

Dr. Bradford is armed with a robust educational background in mathematics, business, statistics, and educational leadership. He holds multiple degrees and a certificate from esteemed institutions including Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) and Harvard University, which have served as the foundation for his impactful career. His journey in higher education has seen him navigate various senior leadership roles in Illinois, Texas, and Missouri.

Throughout his career, Dr. Bradford has been instrumental in shaping administrative policies, enhancing institutional wealth, and leading strategic planning initiatives. His visionary leadership has led to the implementation of innovative programs that promote student success and institutional growth.

Dr. Bradford's contributions extend beyond his administrative duties. He is a staunch advocate for diversity and inclusion in higher education, championing initiatives for equity and access for all. His commitment to student mentorship and development is exemplified through his active engagement in teaching freshmen courses, speaking to student groups, and mentoring other young professionals.

In addition to his professional achievements, Dr. Bradford is a thought leader in the field of financial literacy and is often sought after for his insight on personal finance and economic development. He has been married for 30+ years to his wife, Dr. Josette Bradford, and they have two adult children who are attending professional schools in law and veterinary medicine.

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Dr. Theresa Dixon
Chief Executive Officer
Gloria J. Taylor Foundation

Dr. Theresa Dixon, Author, C.E.O., Educator, Presenter and Philanthropist has always had a desire to help people. Dr. Dixon received this passion from her mother, Alderman/Commissioner Gloria J. Taylor who was the first female and first African American elected to a city-wide office in her hometown. Alderman Taylor tried to instill in residents the importance of pride in their community by spearheading City-wide clean-ups, job fairs, back to school gatherings where book bags, school supplies etc. were distributed, and annual Christmas toy-give-a-ways. Dr. Dixon is the co-founder, Chief Executive Officer and executive director of TRIO Programs for The Gloria J. Taylor

Foundation whose mission is: ***“Preparing our Future for the Future”*** The philosophy behind this foundation is: ***“Rooted in community pride and educational success, The Gloria J. Taylor Foundation provides our communities with a nurturing environment that serves to foster a determined spirit that lives beyond a dream, Through collective efforts, we inspire our neighbors with the responsibility of building safe and positive communities. We empower the voices of our children and harness the wisdom of our past to reach our common goal of a bright future.”***

Since the conception of the Gloria J. Taylor Foundation, Dr. Dixon has sent over 5000 students (from California to South Carolina) to the college of their choice and found over 6 million in aid and scholarships for students. She has assisted 83 student-athletes with the NCCA clearinghouse process to ensure their eligibility certificate for athletic scholarships and helped 155 students to receive FULL-RIDE academic scholarships.

Dr. Dixon’s first book reflects love, life, death, and vision. “It is a book for those who enjoy a Christian outlook on life, and who enjoy poetry. From the heart of one woman to the hearts of the world, ***On the Inside of Me*** will touch YOU-Cedar-Hill Publishing.” Currently, Dr. Dixon is preparing to send to print her dissertation titled ***Collaborations: Youth,***



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Schools, Churches and Businesses becoming part of the Community Solution, a must read for all who seek to respond to the inner most needs of our neighborhoods. Dr. Dixon is currently penning another book titled. **“A Peak into my Past will Help you Understand My Praise”** her memoirs growing up and being the daughter of the First Female and First African American elected in the City of Harvey. The book tells of her life story from tragedies to triumphs. Dr. Dixon has successful been awarded several grants from the US department of Education. Because of the work Dr. Dixon and GJTF have accomplished in the school districts she services, she was asked to provide those services to additional districts. The GJTF went from serving 2 schools in 2017 to providing pre-college programs to 6 schools in 2019. Currently, Dr. Dixon serves 8 school Students with over 1200 students receiving quality pre-college programming. GJTF participants are properly prepared for post-secondary academia as well as have had opportunities to explore various colleges and universities across the country.

Dr. Dixon and GJTF was recognized by Rich School District 227 Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction in aiding in the increase of student’s GPA’s SAT scores and the increase of students matriculating into post-secondary institutions. Most recently, Dr. Dixon was Awarded the Community Partner of the Year Award from Rich Township School District 227 and secured 2 additional federal TRIO Educational Talent Search grants from the US Department of Education to service 1,000 additional students.

Dr. Dixon has been member of Bethlehem Temple Church for over 45 years. She serves on the nurse’s ministry. One of her favorite scriptures is Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

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Veronica Nieves

Sr. Director of Postsecondary Success
OneGoal

Veronica Nieves is currently the Senior Director of Postsecondary Success at OneGoal in Illinois. In this role, she sets vision + leads strategy for the Postsecondary Success team, which is focused on establishing + maintaining postsecondary partnerships within the region, engaging + advising students their first-year after high school graduation, and supporting our teachers that have moved into a mentor/coach role with their OneGoal students after high school graduation.

She has been a part of the OneGoal community since Fall of 2012 when she started as an intern, and is committed to building networks of champions + advocates to ensure students have the necessary people in their corner helping them reach their highest aspirations. As the oldest grandchild, daughter, and sister from a Latinx family in Chicago, Veronica was first in her family to enroll & graduate from college, specifically with a Bachelor's in Communication Studies and Sociology from Northwestern University. When not working, you'll find Veronica out on walks, kayaking, cooking, catching up on reality tv, and spending time with her partner.