

ACCESS & EXCELLENCE

Bridging the growing divide in higher education

On January 15, Opportunity America and Arizona State University hosted a conference in Washington exploring the role of higher education as an engine of economic mobility. What new challenges are created by the push for mass education at the postsecondary level? What can college do – how must it change – to make quality higher education available to an ever broader and more diverse student body? Educators and scholars from four pioneering universities talked about the ideas and innovations enabling their schools to offer expanded access while maintaining quality.



Hilary Pennington vice president at the Ford Foundation

"The American public believes that our higher education system creates a path for upward mobility This no longer is the way the system is operating, and we really risk the opposite – that higher education will reinforce privilege rather than disrupt it."

Michael Crow president of Arizona State University

"We have to change, we have to innovate It turns out the country that was designed to be open and accessible was only theoretically open and accessible Higher education has to be part of rectifying that."

"We [colleges] found that we were part of the problem – our notion that somehow the kid is unprepared They may be differently prepared, they may be less prepared. But they're not unprepared."



Mitch Daniels president of Purdue University

"We're swimming upstream against phenomena we didn't face a generation ago: the sadly deficient social capital that students bring [to college] and structural changes in the economy. This makes it much harder for higher education [to boost mobility]. But clearly that's where the answer has to come from. We have to do it."

"The conventional wisdom has it all wrong. Where you go to college matters very little. How you go to college matters overwhelmingly."

The presidents' conversation was moderated by **Jeffrey Selingo**, special advisor to ASU.

"In 1940, 5 percent of Americans had a four-year college degree. We're now close to a third, and people in the higher education establishment want to double that . . . What this means is that an institution that was created and designed to prepare the nation's elite is now charged with a very different, more democratic task."

– **Tamar Jacoby** *Opportunity America*



A first panel framed the challenge facing colleges and universities today.

"Kids from the [poorest] 20 percent of households who get a four-year college degree cut their odds of staying at the bottom by 80 percent."

– **Ron Haskins** *Brookings Institution*

"We build higher education institutions as if we were building hospitals for healthy people."

– **Anthony Carnevale** *Georgetown University Center on Education & the Workforce*

"We learn almost nothing about how to educate students by looking at the top colleges. They let in [only] the best, yet they set the tone for the entire sector."

– **Andrew Kelly** *American Enterprise Institute*



The last session explored what four institutions are doing to help more students succeed.

Allison Barber *Western Governors University Indiana*

Josh Jarrett *Koru*

Timothy Renick *Georgia State University*

Adrian Sannier *Arizona State University*

Moderated by **Amy Laitinen** *New America Foundation*

"There's a basic bargain between capitalism and democracy, and that is upward mobility . . . Higher education has become the critical institution in that bargain, so however difficult it is, however acrimonious it is – it is a must-do agenda."

– **Anthony Carnevale**