



NJ PATHWAYS TO CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Aligning Education to Build an Innovative Workforce

SUMMIT

June 7 & 8, 2023

Bally's Atlantic City
Hotel & Casino



New Jersey's
Community Colleges



NJCCC & NJBIA



AARON R. FICHTNER, Ph.D.
President,
New Jersey Council of County Colleges

Aaron R. Fichtner, Ph.D. is the President of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, a nonprofit organization, enshrined in state law, that supports and strengthens the state's 18 Community Colleges.

Fichtner served as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development from September 2016 to January 2018.

He joined the Department in 2010, serving as Assistant Commissioner for Labor Planning and Analysis and Deputy Commissioner.

Before joining state government, Fichtner was the Director of Research and Evaluation at the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. Fichtner earned a Ph.D. in Planning and Public Policy from Rutgers University, a master's degree in City Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and a bachelor's degree in History from Vassar College.



MICHELE N. SIEKERKA, ESQ.
President and CEO,
New Jersey Business & Industry Association

Michele N. Sierkerka, Esq., President and CEO of the New Jersey Business & Industry Association (NJBIA), leads the nation's largest, most influential employers' organization, advocating on behalf of New Jersey's large and small businesses for policies that will make New Jersey more affordable and regionally competitive.

Sierkerka came to NJBIA in 2014 from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), where she served as Deputy Commissioner, following her service as Assistant Commissioner for Water Resources Management. During her time at DEP, Sierkerka was a principal player in the state's charge to restore New Jersey after Superstorm Sandy with the responsibility of coordinating funding, outreach and resources for rebuilding environmental infrastructure.

An attorney by trade, Sierkerka's background includes serving as President and CEO of the Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce, senior legal counsel and vice president of human resources with the Automobile Association of America, and as a partner in a Mercer County law firm.

Sierkerka is the Co-founder and Co-chair of Opportunity New Jersey. She serves on the Board of Directors of Investors Bancorp; Choose New Jersey; the New Jersey Innovation Institute; Junior Achievement of New Jersey; Young Audiences of NJ; and Better Choices Better Care.

AGENDA

NEW JERSEY PATHWAYS TO CAREER OPPORTUNITIES SUMMIT JUNE 7 – 8, 2023

Overview

The Summit will feature a number of nationally recognized thought leaders including Rachel Lipson formerly of The Project on Workforce at Harvard, Dr. Annelies Goger of the Brookings Institution, Dr. Holly Zanville of Credentials As You Go and Iris Palmer of New America.

Day 1 – Wednesday, June 7, 2023

10:30 AM REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING

11:30 AM LUNCH

Opening Remarks:

- Dr. Michael McDonough, President, Raritan Valley Community College
- Michele Siekerka, Esq., President and CEO, New Jersey Business & Industry Association

The Importance of Pathways and the NJ Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative

Speaker: Aaron Fichtner, Ph.D., President, New Jersey Council of County Colleges

National Lessons Learned on Community College-Industry Partnerships

Speaker: Rachel Lipson, Co-Founder, Former Director, The Project on Workforce at Harvard, Co-Author, America's Hidden Economic Engines

Moderator: Aaron Fichtner, Ph.D., President, New Jersey Council of County Colleges

1:00 PM NETWORKING BREAK

1:15 PM PATHWAYS IN A CHANGING WORLD: SESSION 1

Stackable Credentials

Speaker: Dr. Holly Zanville, Co-Lead, Credentials As You Go, and Research Professor and Co-Director, Program on Skills, Credentials & Workforce Policy, George Washington University

Moderator: Catherine Starghill, Esq., Executive Director, NJ Community College Consortium for Workforce & Economic Development

2:30 PM NETWORKING BREAK

2:45 PM PATHWAYS IN A CHANGING WORLD: SESSION 2

Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeships

Speaker: Dr. Annelies Goger, Fellow, The Brookings Institution

Moderator: Maria Heidkamp, Chief, Innovation and Partnerships, New Jersey Council of County Colleges

3:45 PM BREAK

5:00 PM RECEPTION / DINNER

AGENDA (CONTINUED)

Day 2 – Thursday, June 8, 2023

9:00 AM OPENING REMARKS

- **Catherine Starghill, Esq.**, Executive Director, NJ Community College Consortium for Workforce & Economic Development
- **Michele Siekerka, Esq.**, President and CEO, New Jersey Business & Industry Association

BREAKFAST: DELIVERING HIGH-QUALITY NON-DEGREE WORKFORCE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROGRAMS

Speaker: **Iris Palmer**, Deputy Director, Community Colleges, New America

Moderator: **Maria Heidkamp**, Chief, Innovation and Partnerships, New Jersey Council of County Colleges

Discussant: **Katrina Bell**, Assistant Vice President, Workforce Development and Experiential Learning, County College of Morris

10:30 AM NETWORKING BREAK

10:45 AM PATHWAYS IN A CHANGING WORLD: SESSION 3

One-on-One with NJ Employers

Speakers:

- **Michael J. Bzdak**, Global Director of Employee Engagement in the Office of Global Community Impact, Johnson & Johnson
- **Terence Kelly**, Manager, External Affairs, Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind, LLC

Moderator: **Christopher Emigholz**, Vice President, Government Affairs, New Jersey Business & Industry Association

11:45 AM NETWORKING BREAK

12:00 PM LUNCH

The Future of Work and Where We Go From Here

This final session will be an interactive discussion with an opportunity for several discussants and attendees to reflect on Summit themes and to help design NJ's agenda for moving forward.

Aaron Fichtner, Ph.D., President, New Jersey Council of County Colleges

SPEAKERS



DR. ANNELIES GOGER

**Fellow,
The Brookings Institution**

Annelies Goger is an economic geographer focused on developing innovative policy solutions to address rising inequality and increase access to economic opportunity. Dr. Goger's recent work investigates how to scale earn-and-learn opportunities in the U.S., how to build equitable skills-based hiring data systems, and how to leverage federal investments in infrastructure and innovation ecosystems to improve access to quality jobs and learning opportunities.

She is an expert in U.S. workforce development policy, global supply chains, and inclusive economic development. Dr. Goger's work has been prominently featured in CNN, NPR, Washington Monthly, the Hill, and a number of local outlets and podcasts. Dr. Goger's work has challenged the dominant "skills gap" narrative, arguing that building stronger education and labor market institutions and making long-term investments in talent development are the key to unleashing regional innovation and addressing racial and gender inequities in the labor market.



RACHEL LIPSON

**Co-Founder, Former Director,
The Project on Workforce at Harvard
Co-Author, America's Hidden Economic Engines**

Rachel Lipson is the Co-Founder of Harvard University's Project on Workforce and served as the Project's Inaugural Director. In 2019, Rachel joined Harvard's Kennedy School to help launch and lead a interdisciplinary and cross-sector hub on the U.S. education, training, and employment ecosystem, partnering with faculty co-directors from Harvard's policy, business, and education schools. As Director, Lipson led policy-relevant research on topics ranging from community colleges to apprenticeship to the landscape of workforce development providers.

As of Spring 2023, Rachel is serving as a Senior Policy Advisor in the CHIPS Program Office at the U.S. Department of Commerce, where she focuses on securing robust commitments to workforce development to support the growth of the U.S. semiconductor industry. Rachel's past work has been featured in publications including the Boston Globe, Newsweek, The Hill, C-SPAN, Bloomberg, NPR, the Economist, and CNBC. She has served on the Steering Committee of the Project on Workforce's research collaboration with the American Enterprise Initiative and the Brookings Institution, as well as a National Academies of Sciences Committee on STEM workforce. Rachel holds an A.B., MBA, and MPP from Harvard and is a recipient of the Harvard Certificate of Distinction and Excellence in Teaching and the Kennedy School's Frederick Fischer Prize for outstanding social policy research. In June, she and Project on Workforce Senior Advisor Bob Schwartz will release a co-edited Harvard Education Press volume *America's Hidden Economic Engines: How Community Colleges Can Drive Shared Prosperity*.

SPEAKERS (CONTINUED)



IRIS PALMER

**Deputy Director of Community Colleges,
New America**

Iris Palmer is deputy director for Community Colleges with the Education Policy program at New America.

Palmer is a member of the higher education team and also works closely with the Center on Education & Labor. She provides research and analysis on Community Colleges, adults enrolled in higher education, apprenticeship, and the ethical use of predictive analytics in higher education.

Palmer previously worked at the National Governors Association on postsecondary issues, where she helped states strengthen the connection between higher education and the workforce, support competency-based systems, use data from effectiveness and efficiency metrics, and improve licensure for veterans.

Prior to joining NGA, Palmer worked at HCM Strategists on the Lumina Foundation's initiative to develop innovative higher education models, including new technologies and competency-based approaches. Before joining HCM Strategists, Palmer worked at the U.S. Department of Education in all of the offices related to higher education: the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education; the Office of Postsecondary Education; the Policy Office; and the Office of the Undersecretary.

Palmer received her master's of public policy from George Mason University and her undergraduate degree in political science from Goucher College.



DR. HOLLY ZANVILLE

Co-Lead, Credentials As You Go

**Research Professor and Co-Director,
Program on Skills, Credentials & Workforce Policy,
George Washington University**

Dr. Holly Zanville joined the George Washington Institute of Public Policy in January 2021 as a research professor and co-director of the Program on Skills, Credentials & Workforce Policy. She is also co-lead of the national initiative, Credential As You Go; and lead of the Learn & Work Ecosystem Library Initiative. Zanville is a former strategy director at Lumina Foundation, where she focused on adult students and

non-degree, workforce-relevant credentials, leading national initiatives such as Connecting Credentials, Credential Engine, and Credit When It's Due.

She also led research on how industry certifications are embedded in college programs, and was the architect of the Learn-and-Work Ecosystem Guide. She held prior administrative positions in the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, Oregon University System, and Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Holly has a substantial history of speaking and writing about the meaning and value of credentials beyond high school.

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MICHAEL MCDONOUGH
President,
Raritan Valley Community College



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GET INVOLVED



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