



WISCONSIN HOPE LAB



Our Connection to President Obama's Free College Plan

After years of research and publishing on the subject of college affordability, Sara Goldrick-Rab's goal for 2015 was to hear President Obama say the words "free" and "college" in the same sentence. Happily, our founding director now must set a new goal for herself: On January 9th, the president said the two words when he announced his [proposal](#) to make two years of community college free for all students.

In 2014, Sara and faculty affiliate Nancy Kendall released a [paper](#) about making the first two years of college free. In addition Sara had advised the White House Domestic Policy Council on its proposal, and both gave follow-up interviews to local and national media on the president's

proposal. [Click](#) for a closer look at the remarkable contributions of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab to this national conversation.



Our New Managing Director

We are pleased to welcome Jed Richardson to the newly created position of Wisconsin HOPE Lab managing director. As an applied microeconomist with a focus on education policy, Jed's background supports our mission. He has led large-scale research efforts, and studied the academic impacts of student risk factors such as placement in out-of-home care; the design of school accountability systems; and early warning and response models for improving academic outcomes.

Jed holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of California, Davis. Before joining the HOPE Lab, he served as associate director and economist at the University of Wisconsin's Value-Added Research Center.

Communicating the Message

Our social media reach grows every day. Here's a snapshot of where we were at press time:



427 likes



744 views



476 followers

Impact and Influence

Research conducted at the Wisconsin HOPE Lab continues to have a significant impact on the discussion of college affordability locally and nationally—and it helps shape public policy. Here's how:

The Working Student Act

The [bill](#)'s author, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin, said:

The research conducted by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab has been a tremendous resource in helping me better understand the challenges students face in getting a fair shot at a college

PIRS Testimony

When the president of the United States proposed ranking colleges with a Post-Secondary Institution Rating System, the Wisconsin HOPE Lab weighed in.

Our founding director, Sara Goldrick-Rab, testified at a federal Department of Education hearing on who might be

The Costs of College Attendance

A gift from the Great Lakes Higher Education Corporation and Affiliates made it possible for us to conduct [an extensive research project](#) into aspects of college affordability. The findings revealed how living expenses are overlooked in determining college

education, and what steps Congress can take to address them.

affected and how.

affordability.

Recommended Reading

Our recent publications include a book published by Harvard Education Press as well as reports, papers, assessments and proposals on how to make college more affordable and accessible. Among the highlights:



Reinventing Financial Aid

Sara Goldrick-Rab co-edited [this discussion of the student loan crisis](#) and ways to address it. The book "shines a bright light on the need for wholesale reform of the federal student aid system and...empirically-based student aid solutions that can help achieve the student outcomes we desire."



The Color of Student Debt

Building on research conducted in part by the Wisconsin HOPE Lab, [this paper](#) reveals the role racial disparities play in college affordability, and it calls for policymakers to consider the impact of federal loan program reforms on students of color, as well as on Historically Black Colleges and Universities.



Single Stop Assessment

Our thanks to the Kresge Foundation for funding [this Implementation Assessment](#). This is the first of what will become a series of assessments regarding Single Stop USA's innovative, multifaceted approach to improving student retention by helping families achieve financial stability.

Up and Running

In addition to ongoing research, we recently launched several studies designed to gather data and information on specific aspects of affordability. Here is a sampling of what's currently underway at the Wisconsin HOPE Lab:

Constructing Affordability

The William T. Grant Foundation and the Lumina Foundation support our [multi-site comparative study](#) of first-year students from low-income families. Wisconsin HOPE Lab ethnographers, embedded at four public universities in the state, document how affordability is constructed at each university.

Ten-Campus STEM Study

[This study of 2,000 students](#) at 10 colleges and universities in Wisconsin is examining whether making college more affordable helps students complete degrees at higher rates, particularly in STEM fields. Funding comes from the National Science Foundation and a grant from Great Lakes Higher Education Guaranty Corporation.

Borrow\$mart Field Study

A grant from the United States Department of Treasury supports [this field examination](#) of online financial counseling. The study involves 4,000 students at DeVry University who are taking out federal student loans for the first time, and it will investigate the comparative effectiveness of online programs.

Staff Updates

Want to get to know the talented and dedicated staff of the Wisconsin HOPE Lab? Visit our website for [bios and more](#). In the meantime, join us in saying welcome and congratulations to the people below:



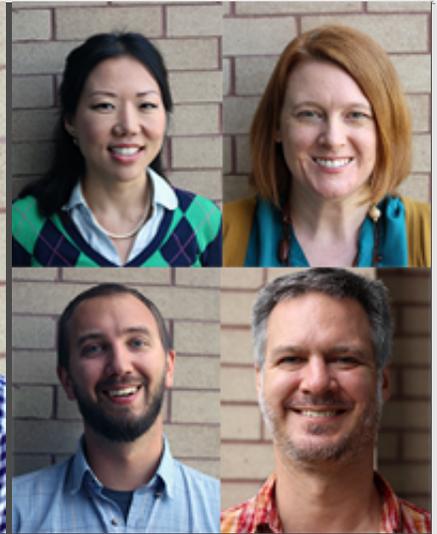
Peter Kinsley

Congratulations to **Peter M. Kinsley**, senior researcher, on earning his Ph.D. from the UW-Madison department of Educational Policy Studies. Peter's [dissertation](#), *The pull of home: Family dynamics and the initial college experiences of low-income undergraduates*, reveals new aspects of affordability.



Ellen Bruno

Welcome to **Ellen Bruno**, who joined the Wisconsin HOPE Lab last year while completing her undergraduate degree and is now a research specialist at the Wisconsin HOPE Lab. Her research interests involve examining the effects of a middle-class family background on first-generation college students.



Ethnographers

Welcome to **Esther C. Kim, Denise Goerisch, Frank Vernon** and **Matthew Wolfgram**. They are the ethnographers who are embedded at four public universities in Wisconsin for the next two years. Their research uses multiple sources and will document structural and individual challenges to affordability.



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