Plenary Session IV: The Nexus Policy Research Center

Monday, May 16, 2011
3:00 - 5:00 pm
Stanford East
The Nexus Policy Research Center, established in 2009 with offices in Phoenix and San Francisco, is an independent, nonprofit research organization that grew out of the University of Phoenix’s National Research Center on Teaching and Learning. Nexus seeks to advance knowledge about issues of student achievement, retention, accountability, affordability, access, and inclusion. Besides its policy-related studies on behalf of underserved students and the institutions that educate them, Nexus works with a bevy of computer scientists, hired by the Apollo Group – many from other technology-oriented companies in the San Francisco Bay area, such as Google, Amazon, and Oracle – as well as with cognitive scientists from Carnegie Mellon University, the University of California, and elsewhere on a number of projects, including the mining of the rich databases available from the University of Phoenix on its students and faculty to find better ways to improve student learning. Putting teams of scientists together who know both how to examine “usage” data and manage it in ways that enhance the desired outcomes, as well as how cognition is tied to instruction to cause learning, will help Nexus learn more about how best to assure that students learn what they need to know and stick around long enough to learn it.

The leader of Nexus’s Institute for Teaching and Learning and others will meet with the commission to discuss the ways the institute is pursuing its scientific inquiry, the likely consequences for application at the University of Phoenix and elsewhere, and the possibilities for sharing this knowledge more broadly with the higher education community.

Speakers: Jorgé Klor de Alva, president, Nexus Policy Research Center; Satish Menon, vice president, Apollo Group; Norma Ming, senior research scientist and director, Nexus Institute for Teaching and Learning; Mark Schneider, visiting scholar, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, and board member, Nexus Policy Research Center; Michael White, chief technology officer, Apollo Group.

Biographical Information on the Speakers

Jorgé Klor de Alva is president of the Nexus Policy Research Center and a former president of the University of Phoenix. He previously served in a series of leadership roles with University of Phoenix and its parent company, Apollo Group, including as a member of the Apollo Board of Directors. From 1994 to 1996, de Alva held the Class of 1940 Endowed Chair at the University of California, Berkeley and before that he served as a professor of anthropology at Princeton University. He has been named a Fulbright Scholar, Getty Scholar, and
Guggenheim Fellow, among other honors, including grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation. He has published more than 80 scholarly articles and 15 books on social science subjects and has coauthored 10 social studies text books, including, most recently, *The Americans*, a widely used high school survey of U.S. history. He received his B.A. in philosophy and J.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, and his Ph.D. in history/anthropology from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

**Satish Menon** is a vice president at Apollo Group. He has a quarter century of experience in the high tech industry, including stints at Yahoo! and other firms.

**Norma Ming** is a senior research scientist and director of the Institute of Teaching and Learning at Nexus, where she conducts research on learning and instruction at proprietary and traditional institutions of higher education. Previously, she was a lecturer in education in math, science, and technology at U.C. Berkeley’s Graduate School of Education, where she is now a visiting scholar. She earned an B.A. with honors in chemistry at Harvard University and a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology in the Program for Interdisciplinary Educational Research at Carnegie Mellon University.

**Mark Schneider** is vice president for new education initiatives at the American Institutes for Research, as well as a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) and a board member of the Nexus Policy Research Center. His research at AEI focuses on higher education, in particular the issue of accountability in postsecondary education. A former commissioner of the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, the primary federal office that collects and analyzes data relating to education, Schneider writes about a broad range of education issues: charter schools, consumer choice in education, the relationship between school facilities and academic outcomes, and higher education policy. He also studies and writes about urban politics and public policy. He is the author and coauthor of numerous scholarly books and articles, including the award-winning *Choosing Schools: Consumer Choice and the Quality of American Schools* (Princeton University Press, 2000). From 2000 to 2001, he served as vice president of the American Political Science Association (APSA) and simultaneously as president of APSA’s public policy section.

**Michael White** joined Apollo Group in 2009 as the vice president of product strategy and development and was promoted to chief technology officer. He leads the development of consumer products, software, and data insights. Before joining Apollo White was at Yahoo!, where he held various high-level positions in product
development, engineering, and global operations during his 10 years at the world’s largest website. Prior to Yahoo! Michael was at GeoCities, the Internet’s first social community. He earned his B.A. in psychology from The Ohio State University.