Plenary Session II: Factors Affecting Student Learning

Monday, November 10, 2008
11.00 am - 12.15 pm
Salon ABC
Plenary Session II:
Factors Affecting Student Learning

Learning to Reason and Communicate in College:
Initial Report of Findings from the CLA Longitudinal Study

This report presents initial research findings on factors associated with learning in higher education institutions. Analysis is based on an original and unique longitudinal data set that includes 2,322 students at 24 colleges and universities (including residential liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, large state universities, research universities, and historically black colleges and universities). Students were given the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), a test for reasoning and communication skills, when they first entered higher education (fall 2005) and then again at the end of their sophomore year (spring 2007). In addition, information was collected on students’ backgrounds (including high schools attended, AP course-taking, and grades), as well as on their current experiences in college (including college engagement, coursework, grades, and institutional characteristics). Results presented identify a set of individual and institutional factors associated with improvement in CLA performance, patterns of inequality in the rate of learning demonstrated by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the extent to which individual and institutional factors can reduce observed gaps in learning.

Biographical Information on the Speaker

Richard Arum is the program director of educational research at the Social Science Research Council; he is also a professor of sociology and education at New York University. He received a master’s of education in teaching and curriculum from Harvard University in 1988 and a Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1996. Arum is editor of The Structure of Schooling: Readings in the Sociology of Education, as well as numerous peer-reviewed articles on education appearing in American Sociological Review, Criminology, Annual Review of Sociology, International Journal of Sociology, and Sociology of Education. His book Judging School Discipline: The Crisis of Moral Authority (Harvard University Press, 2003) analyzes variation in court decisions and how these judicial opinions have affected public school disciplinary practices across jurisdictions and over time. He is coeditor with Adam Gamoran and Yossi Shavit of a comparative study on expansion, differentiation, and access to higher education in 15 countries (Stanford University Press, 2007).