

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION

PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK: Improving Low-Wage Jobs and Public Policies to Support Vulnerable Workers

FACULTY ORGANIZERS

Susan Lambert, *Associate Professor*
Julia R. Henly, *Associate Professor*

Saturday, March 7, 2009
8:30 am to 5:00 pm
with reception to follow

969 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

The cost of registration is \$55.

Six Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are available for a registration fee of \$70.

*The University of Chicago School of Social Service Administration is a licensed
State of Illinois provider of continuing education credits for social workers, marriage and family
therapists, and professional counselors.*

Please register no later than Friday, February 27, 2009

To register on-line, please go to:

<https://ssanet.uchicago.edu/rsvp/centennial/>

*Free parking for symposium guests is available at the parking lot located on
Ingleside Avenue between 60th and 61st Street.*

If you have a disability or need assistance, please contact 773.702.1250 by March 2, 2009.

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS

Sheila H. Akabas *Professor*
Columbia University School of Social Work;
Director, Center for Social Policy & Practice
in the Workplace

Evelyn Z. Brodtkin *Associate Professor*
University of Chicago School of Social Service
Administration

Aixa Cintrón-Vélez *Senior Program Officer*
Russell Sage Foundation

Mary Corbitt Clark *Executive Director*
Winning Workplaces

Kimberly A. Clum *LEO Intermittent*
Lecturer
University of Michigan Joint Program in
Social Work & Anthropology

Sandra K. Danziger *Professor*
University of Michigan School of Social Work
& University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford
School of Public Policy

Sheldon H. Danziger *Henry J. Meyer*
Distinguished Professor
University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford
School of Public Policy; Director, National
Poverty Center

Laura Dresser *Associate Director*
University of Wisconsin-Madison Center on
Wisconsin Strategy

Anna Haley-Lock *Assistant Professor*
University of Washington School of
Social Work

Heather D. Hill *Assistant Professor*
University of Chicago School of
Social Service Administration

Roberta Rehner Iversen *Associate Professor*
University of Pennsylvania School of
Social Policy & Practice

Waldo E. Johnson, Jr. *Associate Professor*
University of Chicago School of
Social Service Administration

Anne Ladky *Executive Director*
Women Employed

Laura Lein *Dean & Collegiate Professor*
University of Michigan School of
Social Work

Virginia Parks *Assistant Professor*
University of Chicago School of
Social Service Administration

David J. Pate, Jr. *Assistant Professor*
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Helen
Bader School of Social Welfare

Jennifer L. Romich *Assistant Professor*
University of Washington School of
Social Work

H. Luke Shaefer *Assistant Professor*
University of Michigan School of
Social Work

Margaret C. Simms *Senior Fellow and*
Director
Low Income Working Families Project,
Urban Institute

Jennifer E. Swanberg *Associate Professor*
University of Kentucky College of Social
Work; Executive Director, Institute for
Workplace Innovation

Carrie Thomas *Associate Director*
Chicago Jobs Council

Elaine Waxman *Doctoral Candidate*
University of Chicago School of
Social Service Administration

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March 7, 2009

CHICAGO/SSA/CENTENNIAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATION



At the turn of the last century, Edith Abbott and the “Great Ladies of Halsted Street” conducted research on job conditions in the major industrial sectors of the time. Their careful empirical analysis of the employment circumstances of low-wage workers—many of whom were low-income mothers—provided a foundation for employer reforms and legislation governing child labor, work hours, and wages. Today’s economic climate attests to the need for social work scholars, practitioners, and policy makers to continue to work at the intersection of employment, public policy, and social work, with the same goal of improving employment conditions and adopting effective legislation to protect vulnerable workers.

This symposium brings together many of the nation’s top social work and social policy scholars and practitioners to discuss the implications of the changing labor market on low-income working families. Beginning with an historical introduction to social work’s role in the employment field, this symposium will highlight the richness of its enduring contributions to knowledge about macroeconomic labor market trends, employer strategies and practices, and job conditions at the front-lines of today’s firms. The symposium is designed to engage participants in a discussion of the relative merits of different avenues for improving low-wage jobs and public policies intended to support vulnerable workers and their families.

The day’s sessions will:

- Consider the realities of low-wage jobs under changing labor market conditions
- Engage in solution-focused discussions about promising public policy and employer-based interventions
- Identify strategies for translating knowledge into public policy and employer practice
- Highlight social work’s longstanding commitment to addressing work-family issues among disadvantaged populations.

SCHEDULE

8:00–8:30 am Registration and Continental Breakfast

8:30–9:15 am Welcome and Introduction
Julia R. Henly, *Associate Professor*
Susan Lambert, *Associate Professor*

FIRST SESSION
9:15–10:45 am The Realities of Low-Wage Jobs in Today’s Economy

What does it mean to work a “low-wage job?” This session will look inside the workplace with the goal of elucidating the everyday realities of jobs at the front-lines of today’s firms. With speakers presenting highlights from their research in nursing homes, retail establishments, and restaurants, the session will underscore variation in job conditions and employer practices that shape employment for vulnerable workers.

Speakers include **Jennifer E. Swanberg**, *University of Kentucky*; **Elaine Waxman**, *University of Chicago*; **Kimberly A. Clum**, *University of Michigan*, and **Anna Haley-Lock**, *University of Washington*.

Discussion leader: **Aixa Cintrón-Vélez**, *Russell Sage Foundation*

SECOND SESSION
11:00 am–12:30 pm Promising Interventions to Improve Low-Wage Work

How can we improve the employment experiences of workers in low-wage jobs? This session will consider a range of intervention approaches including efforts to improve conditions of work, build community-employer partnerships, and provide employment supports to workers. Speakers will present research findings related to specific interventions, offering critical analysis of the benefits and challenges that different approaches present.

Speakers include **Susan J. Lambert**, *University of Chicago*; **Roberta Iversen**, *University of Pennsylvania*; **Virginia Parks**, *University of Chicago*, and **Heather D. Hill**, *University of Chicago*.

Discussion leader: **Laura Dresser**, *University of Wisconsin, Center on Wisconsin Strategy*

12:30–2:00 pm Lunch Hour Keynote Address
Sheldon H. Danziger, *University of Michigan*
Margaret C. Simms, *Urban Institute*
Introduction by **Waldo E. Johnson, Jr.**, *University of Chicago*

Our lunchtime speakers will provide an overview of macroeconomic and public policy changes affecting the economic well-being of disadvantaged workers and provide two perspectives on key social welfare policy challenges facing the Obama Administration.

THIRD SESSION
2:15–3:45 pm Low-Wage Employment and Public Policy

How well do our social welfare policies meet the needs of workers in low-wage jobs? How might policies be revamped to better serve vulnerable workers and their families? The speakers in this panel will address these questions as they consider key policy areas including unemployment insurance, child care, child support, and the effective marginal tax rates imposed by different policy packages.

Speakers include **H. Luke Shaefer**, *University of Michigan*; **Julia R. Henly**, *University of Chicago*; **Jennifer L. Romich**, *University of Washington*, and **David J. Pate, Jr.**, *University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee*.

Discussion leader: **Evelyn Z. Brodtkin**, *University of Chicago*

FOURTH SESSION
3:45–5:00 pm Putting Research to Work: Transforming Knowledge into Effective Public Policy and Employer Practice

The final session of the day brings together a panel of leading social work scholars and top administrators to consider strategies for moving forward. From the perspective of the speakers, what are the central take-away points from the day? How can we best translate knowledge into effective policy and practice? What role can schools of social work and social welfare play in moving this agenda forward?

Speakers include **Sandra K. Danziger**, *University of Michigan*; **Laura Lein**, *University of Michigan*; **Sheila H. Akabus**, *Columbia University*; **Anne Ladky**, *Women Employed*; **Carrie Thomas**, *Chicago Jobs Council*; **Mary Corbitt Clark**, *Winning Workplaces*.

5:00–6:00 pm Reception