

BEN WILDAVSKY

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WRITER • STRATEGIST • SCHOLAR • EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

Veteran higher education strategist, writer, editor, speaker, convener, and podcast host. Decades of experience in journalism and education policy, including leadership roles at Strada Education Network, the College Board, and *U.S. News & World Report*. Award-winning book author (*The Great Brain Race*, Princeton University Press, 2010) with bylines in many national magazines and newspapers, including the *Atlantic*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Foreign Policy*, and the *Washington Post*.

Former think tank and foundation scholar at the Brookings Institution, the Rockefeller Institute of Government, and the Kauffman Foundation. Speaker on globalization and higher education innovation in 16 U.S. states and 10 foreign countries, including events at Google, the World Bank, the OECD in Paris, and the London School of Economics. Past blogger for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and Education Sector. Co-editor of *Reinventing Higher Education: The Promise of Innovation* (Harvard Education Press, 2011) and *Measuring Success: Testing, Grades, and the Future of College Admissions* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018). Track record of convening leading thinkers to produce memorable events and publications.

EXPERIENCE

Visiting Scholar, University of Virginia

School of Education and Human Development

December 2021-Present

Writing a book under contract with Princeton University Press about the ideal combination of broad and targeted education, skills, and social capital needed for career success.

Higher Education Writer, Speaker, Podcast Host, Consultant

2003-Present

Education writer, speaker, convener, strategic planner. Recent clients have included the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (in partnership with Guild Education), Duke Kunshan University, the College Board, Lumina Foundation, Kaplan, Inc., and the Institute for College Access and Success.

- Creator and host of a new podcast, "Higher Ed Spotlight," featuring innovative education leaders such as Paul LeBlanc, president of Southern New Hampshire University, and Mildred Garcia, president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.
- Wrote 2021 report for the Colorado Task Force on Student Success and Workforce Revitalization.
- Wrote article on working adult students during COVID and beyond for the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and Guild.
- Invited keynote speaker for 2022 annual governing council retreat, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.
- Consultant to Kaplan, Inc. on editorial thought leadership and new global initiatives.
- Delivered keynote speech on global education trends to Chinese and U.S. educators at August 2018 symposium to mark the opening of Duke Kunshan University's undergraduate program.
- Consultant to the College Board. Keynote speaker and panel organizer and moderator at College Board forum in Mumbai, October 2018.

- Consultant to Lumina Foundation on a project highlighting the influence of its grantee, Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce.
- Developed strategic plans for Florida State University, Texas Tech University, and Marymount Manhattan College (working with AKA Strategy).
- Editorial consultant for organizations including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Blackboard, Educause, and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (working with LipmanHearne, Inc.). Wrote the Spellings Commission report on the future of higher education.
- Wrote Spellings Commission U.S. Department of Education report on the future of higher education. Wrote other blue-ribbon panel reports for the Knight Commission, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Council on Education, and the Teaching Commission

Strada Education Network

Senior Vice President, National Engagement

January 2019 - April 2021

I oversaw Strada's thought leadership, working across the organization's network to bring Strada's ideas and practical insights into the national conversation to drive change in postsecondary education and employment.

- Shaped strategy as part of Strada's executive leadership.
- Spoke regularly about postsecondary education and the workforce at conferences, including SXSWedu, ASU-GSV, ACE, and P3.
- Launched and hosted "Lessons Earned," Strada podcast on improving connections between education and work. In the first 12 months, grew to attract more than 30,000 listens from all 50 states and 25 countries.
- Conceived and led Strada global expert working group on postsecondary education and the workforce, in partnership with Lumina Foundation. Published "Bridge Builders" report in December 2020, detailing best practices on the role of intermediaries to connect education-workforce partners. Covered in the *Washington Post* and other outlets.
- Led Strada's participation in partnership with Deloitte to convene higher education leaders, conduct surveys, and publish a co-sponsored paper on the future of hybrid education in January 2021.
- Represented Strada on the board of directors of the EdTech Evidence Exchange, a nonprofit dedicated to helping educators make better decisions about education technology.

Advisory Groups, Media Appearances

2008-Present

- Member, Excellence in Media Reporting on Education Research Award Committee, American Educational Research Association.
- Judge, National Awards for Education Reporting, Education Writers Association.
- Interviewed regularly by media such as CNN, CNBC, *Marketplace*, BBC Radio, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *Bloomberg-BusinessWeek*.

College Board, Senior Fellow and Executive Director, College Board Policy Center

2016-2018

Convened national higher education experts and created high-impact initiatives and publications to expand college opportunity:

- Coedited *Measuring Success: Testing, Grades, and the Future of College Admissions* (with Jack Buckley and Lynn Letukas), Johns Hopkins University Press, January 2018. Placed excerpt in the *Wall Street Journal* Weekend Review section.
- Shaped and helped organize a national conference on higher education and upward mobility with economist Raj Chetty and colleagues, held at the University of Texas, Austin. Moderated plenary panel, worked with James Kvaal to recruit and prepare influential speakers including

college presidents, policy leaders, and former U.S. secretaries of education John King and Margaret Spellings.

- Crafted partnership with Ithaca S+R to boost enrollment of military veterans at selective colleges. Planned strategy and background materials for a national conference that led to subsequent initiative and publication.
- Organized and led 18-member College Credit in High School Working Group of experts on Advanced Placement and dual enrollment. Produced a widely disseminated final report.

Rockefeller Institute of Government, State University of New York

2013-2016

Director of Higher Education Studies

Policy Professor, School of Education, SUNY-Albany

Wrote, researched, spoke, convened panels and conferences, and taught, with emphasis on innovation and globalization. Dual appointments in the Rockefeller Institute of Government, SUNY's public policy think tank, and SUNY-Albany's school of education (with a continued affiliation as Policy Professor).

- Published widely on higher education topics (see Addendum for details).
- Organized and moderated a series of New York City forums on higher education topics, including ideas for integrating study and work and the future of affirmative action. Speakers included Nicholas Lemann of the *New Yorker* and Randall Kennedy of Harvard Law School.
- Team-taught a graduate seminar, "Innovation in Higher Education," in the fall of 2014 in the School of Education at the University at Albany. Took the lead role in constructing the syllabus.

Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Senior scholar, Research and Policy

2006-2013

Writer, researcher, and speaker on education policy for a large philanthropic foundation.

- Author, *The Great Brain Race: How Global Universities Are Reshaping the World* (Princeton University Press, 2010; paperback edition with new preface, August 2012). Translations in Vietnamese and Korean.
 - Received Frandson Award. Coverage and reviews in *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *Economist*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Science*, and other publications.
 - Wrote adaptations for *The Wall Street Journal*, *U.S. News & World Report*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and global publications in 11 languages.
- Co-editor (with Andrew Kelly and Kevin Carey), *Reinventing Higher Education: The Promise of Innovation* (Harvard Education Press, 2011).
 - Commissioned chapters from leading education policy analysts and co-hosted June 2010 conference featuring national education leaders.
- Organized Kauffman Foundation retreat on innovation in higher education, December 2011. Commissioned and edited 25 essays by participants and co-authored introduction for a collection released in June 2012. Introduction excerpted as an op-ed for the *Huffington Post*.
- Oversaw \$2.5 million portfolio of innovation-oriented grants in K-12 and higher education policy. Grantees included the Collegiate Learning Assessment and *Education Week*.

The Brookings Institution, Guest scholar, Governance Studies

2007-2013

Researcher and writer at leading think tank.

Brookings served as principal office for writing, speaking, and consulting activities. Presented *The Great Brain Race* at Brookings book launch and panel discussion with the president of Georgetown University and representatives of the World Bank and the Council on Foreign Relations.

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U.S. News & World Report, Assistant managing editor, Education and Ideas. Education editor. Deputy assistant managing editor. National education correspondent. 1998-2006

- Editor, *America's Best Colleges* and *America's Best Graduate Schools*. Planned and directed editorial content, ensured on-time production of best-selling college guides. Ran annual meetings of advisory group of college admissions and financial aid deans. Managed four-member staff and worked collaboratively with photo editors, designers, copy editors, and fact-checkers.
- Supervised coverage of education, books, and other subjects for two-million circulation weekly newsmagazine and web site. Helped plan and edit award-winning articles on the 50th anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education, the new SAT, and economic diversity on college campuses.
- Represented *U.S. News* in the education community and the media, including TV, radio, print interviews, and appearances before groups such as the Association of American Universities.
- As national education correspondent, covered K-12 and higher education, reporting on topics such as school vouchers, online learning, standardized testing, and bilingual education.
- Lead author of *U.S. News Ultimate Guide to Becoming a Teacher* (Sourcebooks, August 2004) and co-editor of *Paying for College*, a 2003 *U.S. News* guide.

National Journal, Staff correspondent April 1995-November 1998

Beats: Budget and tax policy, Social Security, international trade, and transportation.

The San Francisco Chronicle, Staff writer January 1993-April 1995

Beats: Higher education, transportation, and general assignment.

The Public Interest, Executive editor, managing editor, assistant managing editor 1990-1992

Worked with authors, supervised editorial staff, and wrote for domestic policy quarterly.

The American Enterprise Institute, Research assistant – social policy 1989-1990

Policy Review, Assistant editor (writing and editing internship) 1988-1989

Lycée Emile Zola and Lycée Maurice Genevoix; Institute of Political Studies, University of Provence; High school and college English instructor 1986-1988

EDUCATION

Yale University, B.A. with distinction in comparative literature. Summa cum laude; Phi Beta Kappa.

Addendum: Selected Publications and Speeches

Selected articles

Articles and reviews on education topics for *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic*, *Foreign Policy*, *The New Republic*, *Forbes*, *The Wilson Quarterly*, *Times Higher Education*, and other publications. Examples:

- “As we eye post-pandemic life, it’s time to unclog the pipeline between education and work,” *Hechinger Report*, April 15, 2021
- “The Rise of Liberal Arts in Hong Kong,” *The Atlantic*, March 20, 2016
- “The Open University at 45: What can we learn from Britain’s distance education pioneer?” Brookings Institution, Brown Center Chalkboard blog, February 1, 2016
- “Can a Dear Cal letter get you into Berkeley?” *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 2015
- “The Learning Evolution: How Technology is Transforming the Classroom of Tomorrow” (with Jeffrey J. Selingo), *Echo360*, March 2015
- “How Much Are College Students Learning?” *CNN.com*, April 21, 2014
- “New world pecking order,” on the history of college rankings, *Times Higher Education*, October 3, 2013
- “Nudge Nation: A New Way to Prod Students Into and Through College,” *Education Sector*, September 10, 2013.
- “Think Again: Education. Relax, America. Chinese math whizzes and Indian engineers aren’t stealing your kids’ future,” *Foreign Policy*, March-April 2011. Won a 2011 National Award for Education Reporting from the Education Writers Association.
- “Number One – Benefiting from Amazon’s very specific bestseller lists,” *Publishers Weekly*, July 5, 2010.
- “International Studies: How America’s Mania for College Rankings Went Global,” *Washington Monthly*, August 20, 2009.
- “No Barriers to Free Trade in Minds,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 14, 2010 (op-ed drawn from my book *The Great Brain Race*).
- “Education’s Tea Partier,” *The New Republic*, March 15, 2010. Debate with Diane Ravitch.
- “When Learning Has a Limit,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 22, 2008. Review of Charles Murray’s *Real Education*.

Blogging

- Blogger on global higher education for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2010-2012.
- Blogger for Education Sector’s group blog, *The Quick and the Ed*, which won a National Award for Education Reporting from the Education Writers Association in 2013.

Books

- Coeditor, (with Jack Buckley and Lynn Letukas), *Measuring Success: Testing, Grades, and the Future of College Admissions*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018.
- Coeditor (with Andrew Kelly and Kevin Carey), *Reinventing Higher Education: The Promise of Innovation*, Harvard Education Press, 2011.
- Author, *The Great Brain Race: How Global Universities Are Reshaping the World*, Princeton University Press, 2010. Paperback edition with new preface, August 2012.

Book chapters published by academic presses

- “Nudge Nation: A New Way to Prod Students Into and Through College,” in *Building a Smarter University* (Jason E. Lane, editor), SUNY Press, October 2014. Reprinted Education Sector paper.
- “Classes for the Masses,” a chapter on how to deliver high quality, low cost online college classes at scale. Published in *Stretching the Higher Education Dollar* (Andrew P. Kelly and Kevin Carey, Eds.), Harvard Education Press, September 2013.
- “Crossing to the Dark Side?” an analysis of what for-profit higher education can teach traditional institutions. Excerpted as an op-ed for Inside Higher Ed. Published in *Private Enterprise and Public Education* (Frederick M. Hess and Michael Horn, Eds.), Teachers College Press, August 2013
- “How College Rankings Are Going Global (and Why Their Spread Will Be Good for Higher Education).” Published in *Accountability in American Higher Education* (Kevin Carey and Mark Schneider, Eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Reprinted from *The Great Brain Race*.
- “Why Should We Care About Global Higher Education?” in *Higher Education in the Global Age: Policy, Practice and Promise in Emerging Societies* (Daniel Araya and Peter Marber, Eds.), Routledge, 2014. Reprinted from *The Great Brain Race*.

Education policy reports:

- “Bridge Builders: How Intermediaries Can Connect Education and Work in a Postpandemic World,” Strada Education Network and Lumina Foundation, December 2020.
- “College Credit in High School Working Group Report,” College Board Policy Center, November 2017.
- “Strengthening the Transfer Pathway: From Community to Four-Year Private Colleges,” Edvance Foundation, November 2015.
- “An Open Letter to College and University Leaders,” National Commission on Higher Education Attainment, January 2013.
- “College 2.0: An Entrepreneurial Approach to Reforming Higher Education,” edited essay collection and co-authored introduction with Robert Litan, Kauffman Foundation, July 2012.
- “Restoring the Balance,” Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, June 2010.
- “Leaders and Laggards,” U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the Center for American Progress, 2007, 2009, and 2012. Three biannual state-by-state reports on K-12 and higher education
- “A Test of Leadership,” Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education, September 2006.
- “Teaching at Risk,” The Teaching Commission, January 2004.

Selected speaking

Delivered more than 60 book lectures on *The Great Brain Race* in the United States and abroad, including at Google, Harvard, the World Bank, the London School of Economics, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the *Economist’s* Human Potential conference, Dartmouth College, Duke University, Laureate, Inc., the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the European University Institute. Addressed trustees of Stanford University and Georgetown University.

Examples:

- Public lecture, University of Hong Kong, April 2015, “The future of education technology: Failure + Resilience = Opportunity?”
- Lunch keynote, University of California summit on educational technology, San Francisco, CA, October 24, 2014.
- Keynote on the globalization of higher education, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, March 19, 2014

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- Keynote on rethinking higher education at the British Council's annual "Going Global" conference for international higher education leaders, London, March 2012
- Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Higher Education, Stockholm, September 2011
- Columbia University School of Engineering, June 2011
- University of Melbourne and University of New South Wales, May 2011
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris, May 2011