



# Women's Policy Research

## Promoting Economic Security for Low-Income Women Through STEM Education at Community Colleges

By Caroline Dobuzinskis

An upcoming report from IWPR, *Opportunities for Low-Income Women and Student Parents in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math at Community Colleges*, looks at women's current standing within these fields, dubbed STEM by the federal government and highlighted by the current Administration as a key to global competitiveness.

According to IWPR's report, careers in STEM fields can be tools of advancement for low-income women, as long as the correct mechanisms are in place to support them, especially at the community college level. Unfortunately, the number of women pursuing associate's degrees and certificates in STEM education is declining, while job opportunities increase.

The upcoming IWPR report by researcher and consultant Cindy Costello (to be released this spring) brings attention to

these recent declines; points to the low number of women working in STEM careers, particularly among communities of color; and recommends policies and practices that could encourage more low-income women to pursue and complete STEM education at community colleges.

While STEM fields tend to have much higher salaries than non-STEM positions, many higher paying jobs do not require more than an associate's degree obtainable through a community college education, including jobs as engineering technicians, computer (Cont'd on p. 3)



IWPR Vice President and Executive Director Barbara Gault presented IWPR findings on child care at a panel in Washington, DC (Oct. 20, 2011). L to R: Gault; Joan Lombardi, formerly with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and David Gray, New America Foundation.

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## Improving Job Quality for the Growing Number of Care Workers in the United States

By Jane Henrici, Nina Pasha, and Mansee Khurana

The demand for nursing assistants, home health aides, and personal care aides is increasing as Baby Boomers move into retirement. Paraprofessional Healthcare Institute (PHI) estimates that these and other direct-care jobs will be among the fastest-growing occupations in the United States, with significant increases having started in 2008 and expected to continue until 2018.

Although direct-care occupations are projected to grow, researchers and workers' rights advocates are concerned about care workers' needs—particularly for those laboring in others' homes. Care

workers tend to have less education, earn lower wages than Americans workers overall, and have less access to paid sick days or health insurance.

To address these and other ongoing issues with direct-care workers, Caring Across Generations, a national campaign consisting of 200 coalition partners, has developed the "Five Fingers of the Caring Hand" as a way to reform federal policies on long-term care. One of the components is to improve labor standards for direct-care workers by supporting the rights of unionization, providing access to health insurance benefits, and establishing minimum-wage and overtime protections (Cont'd on p. 4)

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## President's Message

### Update from a Former IWPR Fellow

*This issue, I am donating my usual column space to introduce a former IWPR fellow who has gone on to complete excellent work for women and girls in her home country of Yemen. Intisar Aladhi is a former Leadership in Democracy Fellow at IWPR. Intisar assisted with IWPR's Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa (SWMENA) project in the spring of 2009, helping to prepare for a SWMENA workshop in Lebanon (see article p.4). In an e-mail interview from Yemen, Intisar shared experiences as the founder of All Girls Society for Development, an organization that aims to educate and empower girls in her home country. Amanda Lo, IWPR's Communications Intern in the fall 2011 semester, conducted the interview.*

**IWPR:** What have been your experiences and background with women's issues?

**Aladhi:** I have been working with women in particular and young people since 2003 to plan and implement development programs of interest related to Yemeni women's issues. We also advocate socially and politically for educational issues.

**IWPR:** You founded an organization in Yemen to help girls. Could you tell me why you started it, and what is the organization's goal and work?

**Aladhi:** I have a great interest and purpose in my life to be an effective leader in society and to do my best in women's development and serve as an advocate for women's issues. I had the opportunity to establish the All Girls Society for Development after receiving a diploma in Management of Non Governmental Organizations. I am able to apply what I have studied to support development on the ground.

There is also a great need for Yemeni women in development and awareness programs to contribute to the development of personality of girls and increase girls' self-confidence.

All Girls Society for Development aims to cultivate the personality of the Yemeni girl

with a desire to empower her and enable her to play her role in society in the most effective manner. This is achieved through programs and activities designed according to the inner potential of the girl. We are interested in education, community development, and youth and awareness.



*Intisar Aladhi, Secretary General of the All Girls Society for Development based in Yemen and former IWPR Democracy Fellow.*

**IWPR:** How has your experience at IWPR in Washington, DC, been relevant in helping your work in Yemen?

**Aladhi:** During my time at IWPR, I benefited from the working environment and from working with employees. It helped me identify effective communication methods in a team. I had a wonderful and useful meeting with Heidi [Hartmann, President of IWPR,] who responded to my questions with support and patience. I will not forget when she encouraged me to continue working. I liked the attention towards research and I took advantage of this kind of research that seeks to improve the lives of women. I also learned about the relationship between research organizations and the media. Lastly, I try to add the internship component in most of the projects for All Girls Society programs. I believe that internship experiences are essential in building the capacity of girls and youth.

IWPR, an independent, non-profit, scientific research organizations, works in affiliation with the graduate programs in public policy & women's studies at The George Washington University.



IWPR President Heidi Hartmann at a conference in November in Istanbul, Turkey, “Women Trapped between Paid and Unpaid Labour.”



Members of a national network of grassroots, women-led organizations working to achieve economic justice for low-income women and their families spoke at a congressional briefing on December 2, 2011. The event, “Building Economic Security for Families in Crisis through Education, Employment and Childcare: A Congressional Briefing on TANF Reauthorization,” was co-sponsored by IWPR and featured Senior Research Associate Kevin Miller who presented findings on student parents.

IWPR Senior Research Associate Kevin Miller presented IWPR findings on the availability of child care in the United States, particularly for student parents, on C-SPAN’s “Washington Journal” on December 23, 2011.



## STEM Education

(Cont'd from p. 1)

support specialists, or lab assistants. The report compares women’s earnings in jobs in both STEM and non-STEM fields requiring associate’s degrees, finding substantially lower pay for non-STEM jobs which tend to be dominated by women.

Currently, women tend to enter community college for fields leading to lower-paying jobs such as administrative assistants, health aides, and child care workers. Costello points out that it is important and very possible to move the tide, not only by encouraging women and girls to enter these fields, but also by putting supports in place to help low-income women complete degrees in STEM fields.

In the coming years, the number of jobs in the STEM fields is expected to increase—while other fields decline. Between 2008 and 2018, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that STEM occupations will grow by 17.0 percent, while

non-STEM occupations will see only 9.8 percent growth.

Low-income students and student parents tend to pursue education at community colleges rather than four-year institutions for financial and geographic reasons. Previous IWPR research, published in the report, *Improving Child Care Access to Promote Postsecondary Success Among Low-Income Parents* (released in March 2011), found that nearly a quarter of postsecondary students in the United States are parents and, of these, 57 percent are low-income. Overall, four in ten postsecondary students are considered low-income.

Completing their education and obtaining degrees that could lead to STEM careers can be an enormous struggle for these students because of gaps in education, financial pressure, and added work and family obligations.

“For low-income women and student parents, locating financial support and accessible, affordable child care can make the difference between staying on track

and in school—or stepping away from college to work more hours in order to make ends meet,” writes Costello in the upcoming STEM report.

“In the coming years, the number of jobs in the STEM fields is expected to increase, while other fields decline.”

The broad range of recommendations laid out in the upcoming IWPR report on STEM address funding for programs, recruitment strategies for girls and women to enter STEM education programs, and supports for low-income students at community colleges to help them complete their degrees. With these recommendations in place, low-income women would have more opportunities to advance in the STEM fields—contributing not only to the country’s economy, but also to its level of innovation.



Heidi Hartmann, IWPR President (third from left), and Susan Scanlan, President of the Women's Research and Education Institute (WREI) (third from right), with WREI Fellows (L to R) Monica Barrera, Elina Alterman, Meenal Khajuria, Karla Dhungana, and Meredith Beers.

## New Toolkit to Help NGOs Use Status of Women Reports in MENA Regions

By Jane Henrici and Jeff Hayes

IWPR's Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa (SWMENA) project, in partnership with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has wrapped up the year by creating a toolkit for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). *Using Research on the Status of Women to Improve Public Policies: Capacity-Building Toolkit for Nongovernmental Organizations*, will be released online this spring at [www.swmena.org](http://www.swmena.org). The toolkit guides NGOs in developing their own status of women reports to help effect research-based policy changes. IWPR board member Cynthia Lloyd was among those who provided valuable review and feedback on the project.

Along with partners from IFES, IWPR Senior Research Associate Jeff Hayes attended the "Regional Lessons Learned" workshops for the SWMENA project in

Marrakech, Morocco, this past November. Representatives from other organizations and country advisors from Lebanon and Morocco also attended. IWPR and IFES presented comparative results from survey data collected in Lebanon, Morocco, and Yemen, as well as the *Capacity-Building Toolkit*. Morocco's El Amane Association for Women's Development presented on an outreach project to increase women's political mobilization in villages surrounding Marrakesh. Lebanon's Committee for the Follow Up of Women's Issues described a campaign to change the law preventing Lebanese women married to foreign-born men from passing Lebanese citizenship to their children.

The workshops provided an opportunity to review the knowledge gained from the SWMENA project and opened possible directions for future collaborations. Visit [www.iwpr.org/initiatives/swmena](http://www.iwpr.org/initiatives/swmena) for more information about our work in this area.

## Care Workers in the U.S.

(Cont'd from p. 1) for home health aides. With support from the Ms. Foundation, IWPR is working with working with the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA).

As PHI reports, over half (55 percent) of all direct-care workers—from nursing assistants or aides to personal care aides—have only a high school diploma or less. Approximately 23 percent of all direct-care workers are foreign-born. Roughly 45 percent of direct-care workers live in households with earnings below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

All of these concerns fall heavily on women. The intersection of immigration and care work is a feminist issue, as Ai-jen Poo, Director of the NDWA told IWPR. The vast majority (89 percent) of direct-care workers across the United States are women. The majority of individuals 65 years old and over in the United States are also women, as are the majority of those who are unpaid family caregivers to the elderly or disabled. In a recent Gallup poll, 20 percent of women working part- or full-time in the United States reported they also help with the caregiving for family members and friends.

"[T]here are still home care workers that provide quality [care], but have no access to affordable health care for themselves or their families, and there are still home care workers who cannot afford to get sick because it means they will not get paid," said Dr. L. Toni Lewis, Health Care Chair of the Service Employees International Union at the July 2011 launch of the Caring Across Generations campaign.

On December 15, 2011, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) announced that it is proposing a new regulation for the wages of home care workers. As Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis pointed out in a DOL blog post on December 15, 2011, women make up more than 92 percent of those who would be covered under this proposed revision to the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Policymakers are beginning to take note of the issue of protections for caregivers, which is of special concern to women and to a growing number of American workers and families. IWPR will continue to research the status of care workers and to shed light on their needs.

### Become a Member of IWPR

Support accurate, timely research on women by becoming a member of IWPR today! The Institute's membership program provides crucial support for IWPR's work and builds links among policymakers, advocates, researchers, and others concerned with policy issues that affect women. Members are part of the IWPR information network and stay up-to-date on news and research findings from IWPR. Benefits vary by membership level and include IWPR's newsletter, free research reports and other publications, access to IWPR's "Research News Reporter" online, and more! Your contribution is important to us.

#### Membership benefits:

- Support an organization with 25 years of experience highlighting policy issues that impact women, families, and communities.
- Help link policymakers, advocates, and concerned citizens with IWPR's important research.
- Stay informed on policy issues that affect women.
- Receive regular updates through e-newsletters, our quarterly newsletter, free access to research reports and publications.



# Guiding Future Union Leaders: New Handbook Shares Best Practices in Mentoring

By Caroline Dobuzinskis

Mentoring is an essential tool for moving organizations forward: young members learn new leadership skills and are given a lay of the land when it comes to their working environment. A new handbook by IWPR, produced with funding and support from the Berger-Marks Foundation, gives valuable advice for developing and implementing mentoring programs for union members and staff.

The handbook, *Elevating the Next Generation: A Handbook for Mentoring Future Union Leaders*, defines and describes various types of mentoring, outlines strategies for addressing potential obstacles or roadblocks in the mentoring process, and includes methods for making mentoring programs sustainable. It also includes worksheets to help mentors and mentees get the most out of their mentoring relationship, and to enable union leaders to identify the strengths of their mentoring programs and possible areas for improvement.

Mentoring can especially help women and people of color, who face specific challenges in advancing their careers, by providing opportunities for women to build professional networks and make connections. And mentoring programs can help unions cultivate more diverse leadership. Testimonials from respondents who participated in union mentorship programs attest to the benefits that mentoring had for themselves and their unions.

“[As a result of the mentoring,] I ended up being very successful...the program that I was running ended up being held up as a model,” said one former union mentee. “And our international union has really recognized the work that I was doing. And that, I’m sure, would not have happened if I hadn’t gotten the help that I needed to be really successful.”

This important tool is the result of a series of interviews with close to a dozen union members who were participants in mentoring programs. Carolyn Jacobson, Director of Cervical Cancer Prevention Works, Coalition of Labor Union Women and Secretary-Treasurer of the Berger-Marks Foundation, and Yvette Herrera, Senior Director of Education and Communications at the Communications Workers of America and Trustee of the Berger-Marks Foundation, provided feedback on the handbook and guidance at various project phases. Pat Greenfield, Professor at the National Labor College, and Elizabeth Gres, Program Director of the Organizational Equity Initiative at the Service Employees International Union, also reviewed the handbook in its final stages and offered helpful suggestions. Jamie Lumm, Direction of Education at the National Association of Letter Carriers, provided important input on the handbook’s final chapter.

The handbook will be available through the IWPR and Berger-Marks websites this spring.

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**Paid Sick Days**

*The Nation* cited IWPR’s contribution to informing policy decisions on paid sick days in 2011 (January 5, 2012).

*The Denver Post* cited IWPR research and quoted IWPR Senior Research Associate Kevin Miller in several articles during the month of October, 2011, in the lead-up to a ballot initiative on paid sick days.

*AlterNet* cited IWPR research in an article highlighting paid sick days legislation gaining momentum in cities and states across the country (October 16, 2011).

*The Las Vegas Review-Journal* quoted IWPR President Heidi Hartmann on the detrimental effect of state and local government job cuts on women (October 2, 2011).

**Women’s Employment and Wage Gap**

*The New York Times*, *MSNBC.com*, and *The Washington Post* cited IWPR research on the job gap between women and men, and the finding that women and men both gained 206,000 jobs in the last quarter of 2011 (January 2012).

*Forbes.com*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Huffington Post*, *The Boston Herald*, the *Baltimore Business Journal*, and the popular feminist blog *Jezebel* cited IWPR research on the job gap (December 2011).

*The Economist* cited IWPR research on the gender wage gap in a special section on women’s employment published both in print and online (November 26, 2011).

*Crain’s New York Business* quoted IWPR Study Director Ariane Hegewisch on how women are affected by job losses in the public sector (October 17, 2011).

**Social Security**

*The Kansas City Star* cited IWPR research on increasing reliance on Social Security among older Americans (January 27, 2011).

*Politico* cited IWPR research on Social Security and the loss of assets suffered by many Americans during the recession, quoting Heidi Hartmann (October 24, 2011).

*CNN.com* cited research from the IWPR/Rockefeller Survey of Economic Security in an article on increasing Social Security benefits (October 20, 2011).

*The California Progress Report* quoted IWPR President Heidi Hartmann on the findings of the recession’s impact on Americans’ retirement savings from the IWPR/Rockefeller Survey of Economic Security (October 20, 2011).

**Poverty**

*The Kansas City Star* quoted IWPR Senior Research Associate Jeff Hayes on the release of a supplemental measure of poverty by the U.S. Census Bureau (November 7, 2011).

*The Huffington Post* cited IWPR research on the after-effects of Hurricane Katrina on women in the region (November 11, 2011).

*PBS NewsHour* featured IWPR President Heidi Hartmann to comment on the release of the new supplemental poverty measure (November 12, 2011).

**Reports**

*Using Research on the Status of Women in the Middle East and North Africa to Improve Public Policy*  
(a joint report by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and IWPR, with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency)  
March 2012, 100 pages

*Tipped Over the Edge: Gender Inequity in the Restaurant Industry*  
(a joint report by the Restaurant Opportunities United with IWPR and other nonprofit women’s and labor organizations)  
February 2012, 34 pages

*Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits*  
November 2011, IWPR #B301, 41 pages

**Briefing Papers**

*Denver Paid Sick Days Would Promote Children’s School Success*  
November 2011, IWPR #B300

*Paid Sick Days in Denver Would Improve Health Outcomes, Reduce Racial/Ethnic Health Disparities, and Help Control Health Care Costs*  
November 2011, IWPR #B299

*Valuing Good Health in Denver: The Costs and Benefits of Paid Sick Days*  
November 2011, IWPR #B298

**Testimony**

*The Gender Wage Gap in New York State and Its Solutions*  
December 2011, IWPR #C390

*The Impact of the Great Recession on Older Women and Men*  
November 2011, IWPR #C307

**Fact Sheets**

*Low Literacy Means Lower Earnings, Especially for Women*  
February 2012, IWPR #C392

*Talking Points on Retirement and Social Security*  
January 2012, IWPR #D501

**Quick Figures**

*Improved Job Growth in January for Both Women and Men: Women Re-Entering the Labor Force, But Men Leaving*  
February update, IWPR #Q008

**In Honor/Memorial**

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## Mariam K. Chamberlain Fellow Profile: Rhiana Gunn-Wright

By Caroline Dobuzinskis

Since joining staff in September as the Mariam K. Chamberlain fellow, Rhiana Gunn-Wright has brought great energy to IWPR's offices. She is passionate about helping women through policy and education, demonstrated in her accomplishments at IWPR and in previous roles.

Originally from Chicago's South Side, Gunn-Wright graduated from Yale University *magna cum laude* with a double major in African American studies and Women's, Gender and Sexuality studies. During her time at Yale, she embraced women's issues completely—from the focus of her thesis to her extracurricular volunteer work both on and off campus. Gunn-Wright's thesis looked at welfare policy and its impact on poor black women by analyzing methods for managing teen pregnancy in the city of New Haven, CT. In her spare time, Gunn-Wright volunteered to mentor and teach sexual education to girls in eighth grade at local public school. "Low-income girls of color often get lost in education because people assume they will be fine when, in fact, they need a lot of attention and assistance," said Gunn-Wright.

Gunn-Wright also served on the board of the on-campus women's center at Yale for two years, managing staff and resident groups. In this role, she conducted outreach to other groups at her university in order to make the center more inclusive. "When I came in [as board member], the women's center was almost exclusively upper-class white students so I did outreach to communities of color and LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] groups," said Gunn-Wright. "We also started doing activism around sexuality on campus."

As part of this activism, Gunn-Wright helped start a pioneering student forum to talk openly about establishing sexual respect on campus and building a healthy sexual culture. These talks involved a diverse range of students, including student faith groups. Some participating groups took the baton by hosting their own talks, and the entire initiative eventually grew into a larger program now called Sex @ Yale.

When Gunn-Wright came across the description of the Mariam K. Chamberlain fellowship with IWPR at her campus, she immediately thought it would be a good fit for her. One of the aspects that Gunn-Wright enjoys about her fellowship is being able to answer queries and point people to relevant research on women's issues. She is also appreciative of the opportunity to work on issues that she is most passionate about, particularly education, by assisting with the Student Parent Success Initiative (SPSI).

"I enjoy the work we do on student parents and looking at the intersection between welfare, race, class gender, and education—especially for a population that isn't usually recognized," said Gunn-Wright. "It's nice to build a community especially when people are as invested in it as they are in SPSI. They are invested in seeing student parents do well."

Following her fellowship, Gunn-Wright will be continuing to pursue her passion for education with Teach for America. She also has plans for graduate school.

Gunn-Wright's biggest tip for incoming fellows? "Be mindful of remembering that you really are working to better the status of women," she said. "It's easy to get caught up in work tasks, but you are working on a daily basis to make things better, more tolerant, and more loving."

## Sharing IWPR's Methods and Analysis with International Delegates

By Ariane Hegewisch

This past fall, IWPR staff had two opportunities to meet with representatives from Europe who visited IWPR to learn more about our research work. In August, IWPR received visitors from Poland who were in the country under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. The Polish women who visited were two members of the Polish Parliament, the Deputy Voivode—or lieutenant governor—of Lower Silesia, and the president of a women's rights foundation. They were eager to hear about the experience of being part of a women's policy organization in the United States and sought information on how to fund and sustain such an organization, how to communicate policy messages, and how not to become frustrated by gender blindness in politics. The second visit came from an all-female delegation of shop stewards and union officials from 3F, the largest Danish trade union which represents mainly low-skilled workers, accompanied by Britta Thomsen, a member of the European Parliament and coordinator of the Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. This group focused on the issue of female perspectives in workplace and business leadership. They are hoping that Denmark can follow Norway's model of requiring that all publicly traded and public limited corporations have 40 percent female directors on their boards, but are unsure about levels of support for such a quota in Denmark. The women commented that this rule was controversial when first adopted in Norway, but quickly seemed to be accepted as simply the way business was done. They see change at the top as being important to help women at all levels. The delegation was in the United States to investigate the impact of the country's affirmative action programs on increasing women's share of non-traditional jobs for women, including leadership in unions and top tier positions in business.

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- Paid Sick Days and Health: Cost Savings from Reduced Emergency Department Visits*  
B301, November 2011, 41 pages \$10.00, Quantity: \_\_\_\_
- Women and Men Living on the Edge: Economic Insecurity After the Great Recession*  
C386, September 2011, 94 pages \$15.00, Quantity: \_\_\_\_
- Retirement on the Edge: Women, Men, and Economic Insecurity After the Great Recession*  
D500, September 2011, 56 pages \$10.00, Quantity: \_\_\_\_
- Pension Crediting for Caregivers*  
D497, June 2011, 38 pages \$15.00, Quantity: \_\_\_\_
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