

**MELINDA LEWIS**  
**Curriculum Vitae**  
November 16, 2017

**Biography**

Melinda Lewis, LMSW, received her Master of Social Work degree from Washington University in St. Louis, MO. She worked as a nonprofit policy advocate, grassroots organizer, and community researcher for several years and is now an Associate Professor of Practice in the School of Social Welfare, teaching social policy and community practice courses at the University of Kansas. She is the Assistant Director for the Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI), advancing policy based on research into the role of assets in addressing educational inequities and catalyzing upward mobility. At AEDI, Ms. Lewis contributes to reports on student debt, Children's Savings Accounts, and asset policy; assists with research around the country on CSAs; and translates AEDI's research into strategic communications with policymakers and other stakeholders. She recently coauthored (with KU's Dr. William Elliott) the book, *The Real College Debt Crisis: How Student Borrowing Threatens Financial Well-Being and Erodes the American Dream*. She can be found on Twitter @melindaklewis.

**Personal Information**

Associate Professor of the Practice  
Social Welfare  
University of Kansas  
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**Education**

M.S.W., May 2001  
Washington University, St. Louis

B.S.W., 1999  
University of Kansas, St. Louis  
With honors

**Employment History**

Academic

University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare, Lawrence, KS  
Associate Professor of the Practice, August 2013 - Present  
Policy Director, Assets and Education Initiative, October 2012 - Present  
Create policy and communications materials to convey AEDI's research in the area of educational equity to a broader audience of potential stakeholders. Produce for publication policy briefs, op-eds, fact sheets, and executive summaries of original statistical analysis

regarding the relationship between asset accumulation and educational attainment, especially for disadvantaged students in the United States. Provide support to AEDI's faculty researchers regarding navigation of the policy landscape at the state and federal levels.

Adjunct Instructor, August 2003 - August 2013

Teach courses in policy analysis, U.S. social policy, organization/community theory, advocacy and organizing practice, social work ethics, and global poverty to Master and Bachelor of Social Work students. Taught courses in the School's BSW and MSW programs, primarily related to macro practice (community organizing, organizational development) and policy (analysis and advocacy). Provide continuing education on advocacy and policy practice to field instructors. Serve as an advisor to social work students pursuing macro practice.

## Professional

### Nonprofit Advocacy

Organizational Development, and Evaluation Consultant, independent practice, November 2009 - Present

Advise nonprofit organizations and foundations on policy advocacy, community-based research, advocacy evaluation, strategic communications, and organizational development. Provide capacity-building for agency staff and Board members, prepare tools and policy documents, conduct analyses, and organize events to build nonprofits' understanding of the communities they serve, the skills and resources needed to influence the policy environment, and the organizational structures that facilitate social change. Speak publicly on topics such as immigration policy, poverty, advocacy integration, and social change strategies. Serve as public policy consultant to engage organizational leadership around relevant advocacy opportunities. Clients include the Sunflower Foundation, Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City, United Community Services, United Way Association of Kansas, Harvesters, Cornerstones of Care, Child Abuse Prevention Association, Kansas Association of Community Action Programs, El Centro, Inc., Rawlins County Dental Clinic, Kansas Action for Children, and other nonprofit direct service providers. Client references are available on request.

### El Centro Inc., Kansas City, KS

Director of Policy Advocacy and Research, August 2002 - June 2007

Conducted policy advocacy on issues including access to higher education, predatory lending, affordable housing, workers' rights, civil liberties, immigration reform, and health care. Cultivated allies in Kansas to work on legislative, media, and organizing campaigns. Conducted qualitative and quantitative research with immigrant families to inform policy decisions and give voice to immigrants' struggles. Directed voter registration and education efforts in Latino communities. Trained other nonprofit organizations on civic participation. Facilitated leadership development for youth and adult immigrant leaders. Represented the region in regional and national coalitions focused on immigrant rights. Led successful campaigns to pass instate tuition for undocumented immigrant students, more than \$800,000 per year in asset-based anti-poverty initiatives, and enhanced consumer protections as well as opposition to several anti-immigrant legislative attacks. Wrote grants and conducted grassroots fundraisers to sustain annual budget for the department.

Special Projects Coordinator, May 2001 - August 2002

Developed new initiatives for Latino immigrant community, including Asset Development Department to enhance economic justice for low-income families, a mortgage loan product for undocumented immigrants, and a leadership/policy analysis institute. Directly supervised four staff.

Life Crisis Services, St. Louis, MO

Spanish Hotline Founder/Director, March 2000 - May 2001

Secured over \$80,000 in grants to support Spanish crisis line. Met with community leaders, developed promotional materials, conducted training, created and administered evaluations, worked with Latino immigrants in crisis, and supervised operation of hotline.

Center for Social Development, Washington University, St. Louis, MO

Research Assistant and Social Work Intern, January 2000 - May 2001

Researched strategies to make higher education more accessible for low-income individuals. Assisted in planning national symposium on asset development policy. Developed working document on providing state tax credits for corporate contribution to IDA matching funds.

## Research

Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI)

Policy Director, then Assistant Director (beginning August 2013)

Support the work of AEDI, including in research in Children's Savings Account programs, analysis of student debt's effects on economic mobility and educational equity, and communication with policymakers and other stakeholders in pursuit of universal asset-building opportunities to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children

## Research Interests (Statement)

As Assistant Director of the Center on Assets, Education, and Inclusion (AEDI), Lewis studies asset-based strategies for improving educational outcomes and restoring higher education as an arbiter of equity and social mobility. She communicates AEDI research to policymakers and practitioners, with a goal of leveraging a public commitment to asset empowerment and equitable opportunities for upward mobility, through the mechanism of educational attainment, for a generation of American children.

## Research Key Words

Asset-based strategies for restoring higher education as a catalyst for economic mobility; financial aid reform; economic inequality; strategies for effective policy advocacy by nonprofit organizations; advocacy evaluation; and advocacy capacity-building for individuals and social service organizations.

## Research/Scholarly Work

### Publications

#### Reviewed/Refereed

#### Journal Articles

1. Elliott, W., & Lewis, M. (2015). Student debt effects on financial wellbeing: Research and policy implications. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 29(4). doi:10.1111/joes.12124
2. Lewis, M., Elliott, W., Cramer, R., & Sprague, A. (2014). Policies to Promote Economic Stability, Asset Building, and Child Development. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 36, 15-21. doi:10.1016/j.chilyouth.2013.10.012

3. Lewis, M. (2008). Families in the Heartland: Exploration of the Social, Economic, and Cultural Realities of Latino Immigrants. *Families in Society*, 89(2), 193-201.

#### Papers

1. Cramer, R., Elliott, W., & Sprague, A. (2013). Policies to promote economic stability, asset building, and child development. In *Children and Youth Services Review* (Vol. 36, pp. 15-21).

#### Research Reports

1. Elliott, W., & Lewis, M. (2013, November). *Student Loans are Widening the Wealth Gap: Time to Focus on Equity*. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative.

#### **Non-Reviewed/Refereed**

#### Books

1. Elliott, W., & Lewis, M. (2015). *The real college debt crisis: How student borrowing threatens financial well-being and erodes the American dream*. Broomfield, CO: Praeger.

#### Conference Proceedings

1. Elliott, W., Lewis, M., et al. (2015). Does parents' college savings reduce college debt? In *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Review*. (Invited)

#### Instructional Materials

1. Lewis, M. (in press). *Instructor Resources*. Social Policy for Effective Practice: A Strengths Approach: New Directions in Social Work: Routledge.
2. Lewis, M. (2010). *Instructor Resources*. Social Policy for Effective Practice: A Strengths Approach: New Directions in Social Work: Routledge.

#### Monographs

1. Elliott, W., & Lewis, M. (2015). *Transforming 529s into Children's Savings Accounts: The Promise Indiana Model*.
2. Lewis, M., & Elliott, W. (2015). *A Regional Approach to Children's Savings Accounts: The Case of New England*.
3. Elliott, W. (2014). *Unequal outcomes: Student loan effects on young adults' net worth accumulation*. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative.
4. Elliott, W. (2014). *Examining the Canadian Education Savings System and its Implications for U.S. Children's Savings Account (CSA) Policy*. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative.
5. Elliott, W. (2014). *The student debt problem in America: It is not enough to say, "students*

*will eventually recover*”. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative.

6. Elliott, W. (2014). *Harnessing assets to build an economic mobility system: Reimagining the American welfare system*. Lawrence, KS: Assets and Education Initiative.

#### Newsletter Articles

1. Lewis, M. (2013, July). Saving for Education Improves Outcomes, Evidence Shows. *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
2. Lewis, M., & Weatherford, H. (2012, February). Circus in Topeka. *Kansas City Star*.

#### Policy Briefs

1. Lewis, M., Elliott, E., Cramer, R., & Black, R. (2013). Policy Discussion. In *The Biannual Report on the Assets and Education Field*.
2. Carden, M. (2001). *Service learning and older adults*. St. Louis, MO: Washington University, Center for Social Development.

### **Works Submitted or Ready for Submission**

#### **Reviewed/Refereed**

#### Dictionary/Encyclopedia Articles

1. Elliott, W., & Lewis, M. (in review). Child Development Accounts. In *Encyclopedia of Social Work Online*.

#### Papers

1. Elliott, W. (in review). Is student debt compromising homeownership as a wealth-building tool? In *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning*

### **Invited Presentations/Lectures**

#### **International**

1. Lewis, M., Clancy, M., & Shanks, T. (2014, September 17). *The Canadian Education Savings Program and its Implications for U.S. CSA Policy*. Panel Presentation at the CFED Assets Learning Conference, Washington, DC.

#### **National**

1. Lewis, M. (2015, August 6). *The Real College Debt Crisis: How Student Borrowing Threatens Financial Well-Being and Erodes the American Dream*. State Assets Learning Cluster, St. Louis, MO.
2. Lewis, M. (2014, October 1). *Student Loans and Financial Security*. Panel moderation for Pew Charitable Trusts/Senate Economic Mobility Caucus, Washington, DC.

3. Lewis, M. (2014, May 8). *Does Parents' College Savings Reduce College Debt?* St Louis Federal Reserve Bank Research Symposium, The Balance Sheets of Younger Americans: Is the American Dream at Risk?, St. Louis, MO.

### **Regional**

1. Lewis, M. (2014, October 28). *Asset Building for Parents and the Next Generation. Region V Fatherhood Initiative. National Institutes of Health and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Region V Fatherhood Initiative.
2. Lewis, M. (2014, September 9). *Saving for Prosperity: Building Wealth and Educational Achievement through Asset Building.* Presentation at the Alliance for Economic Inclusion conference, Kansas City, MO: Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

### **State**

1. Lewis, M. (2015, April 9). *Integrating Advocacy into your Nonprofit Organization.* Kansas Health Foundation, Wichita, KS.
2. Lewis, M. (2015, March 4). *Asset Building and Child Well-Being.* California Child Support Policy Symposium, Sacramento, CA.

### **Local**

1. Lewis, M. (2014, September 11). *Integrating Advocacy into your Communications.* Presentation for the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the REACH Healthcare Foundation, Kansas City, MO.

### **Presentations – Other Levels**

1. Lewis, M. (2014, August 12). *Asset Building for Parents and the Next Generation.* National Child Support Enforcement Association conference, Portland, OR.

### **Presentations/Lectures**

#### **National**

1. Elliott, W., & Lewis, M. (2015, July 15). *The Real College Debt Crisis: How Student Borrowing Threatens financial Well-Being and Erodes the American Dream.* New America, Washington, DC.
2. Lewis, M. (2013, July). *Policy Agenda for the Assets and Education Field.* Address presented at the release of the Biannual Report on the Assets and Education Field, New America Foundation, Washington, DC.

#### **State**

1. Lewis, M. (2015, July 17). *Assets for Mobility: Agenda for Prosperity in the New Economy.* Kansas Conference on Poverty, Topeka, KS.

2. Lewis, M. (2013, July). *Giving Students a Stake*. Presentation at the Kansas Poverty Conference., Topeka, KS.

### **Presentations – Other Levels**

1. Lewis, M. (2013, September). *An inequitable welfare system for the poor*. Address presented at the University Forum, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.
2. Lewis, M. (2013, April). *Working with what you've got: integrating advocacy into direct-service organizations*. For the School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.
3. Lewis, M. (2012). *Case studies in integrating advocacy into direct-service organizations*. For the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and the REACH Foundation.

### **Honors/Awards/Honor Societies**

#### Honor Societies

Phi Beta Kappa. (1999)

#### Individual Honor/Award

ROCCO Award, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas. (Spring 2015 - Present)  
Award given to 2 employees of the School of Social Welfare each year, in recognition of extraordinary contributions to the School's mission

El Centro, Inc. Employee of the Year. (2006)

Outstanding Alumna, 2005, University of Kansas School of Social Welfare. (April 2005)  
Alumna of the year

Equal Educational Opportunity Award, Kansas Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. (2004)

Truman Scholar. (1999)

### **Teaching Interests (Statement)**

Melinda Lewis teaches primarily social policy, community organization, and advocacy practice courses, mainly in the MSW program (Foundation and SWWAP concentration) within the School of Social Welfare

### **Teaching Key Words**

Policy Analysis; Advocacy; Poverty and Economic Justice; Community Organizing; Social Change; Higher Education and Economic Mobility

### **KU Courses Taught**

Fall 2017

SW 720-18176, Social Policy&Program Analysis  
SW 841-13948, Advanced Policy and Programs

Spring 2017

SW 713-61142, Community&Organizational Pract  
SW 846-53963, Adv Communty&Advocacy Practice

Fall 2016

SW 720-19015, Social Policy&Program Analysis  
SW 841-14318, Advanced Policy and Programs

Spring 2016

SW 713-62258, Community&Organizational Pract  
SW 846-54267, Adv Communty&Advocacy Practice

Fall 2015

SW 720-19847, Social Policy&Program Analysis  
SW 841-14714, Advanced Policy and Programs

Spring 2015

SW 713-64183, Community&Organizational Pract  
SW 846-54739, Adv Communty&Advocacy Practice

Fall 2014

SW 720-20826, Social Policy&Program Analysis  
SW 841-15188, Advanced Policy and Programs

**Professional Service**

Advisory Boards and Committees

Board Member

Kansas Families for Education (2007 - 2012)

Other Professional Service

Legislative Liaison

Prairie Elementary School PTA (2011 - Present)

Shawnee Mission School District Parents as Teachers PTA (2010 - 2011)

Member

REACH Foundation Community Advisory Committee (2010 - 2012)

Peer Reviewer

*Families in Society* (2008 - 2010)

Steering Committee Member

United We DREAM Campaign (2003 - 2007)

Strategy Council Member

Campaign for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (2005 - 2007)



Vice-President of the Board of Directors  
Cross Border Network for Justice and Solidarity (2003 - 2006)

**Service Interests (Statement)**

As a Truman Scholar, Ms. Lewis serves on the University of Kansas' Truman Scholar selection committee, mentoring applicant Scholars on their career plans and policy proposals. Ms. Lewis also mentors adjunct faculty and GTAs in the School of Social Welfare's policy courses. Off campus, Ms. Lewis advises nonprofit organizations on policy advocacy, advocacy strategy evaluation, and coalition-building for successful social change.

**Service Presentations**

Local

Educational

(2014, October 3). *Immigration Policy and its Effects on Social Work Practice*. Presentation for School of Social Welfare Gordon Lecture, University of Kansas., Lawrence, KS. (Invited)

(2014, August 22). *Foundation Students and the Organizational Context*. Presentation for Field Education Office, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas., Lawrence, KS. (Invited)

Service-Other Levels

Educational

(2014, August 8). *Field Instructors and Policy Practice*. Presentation for the Field Education Office, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas., Overland Park, KS.