



ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Hope Center Announces New Director to Elevate Its National Education & Training Initiatives

October 7, 2021

Sara Abelson, an innovative higher education change agent, will join [The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice](#) in early 2022 as its first Senior Director of Education and Training Services (ETS).

Abelson will lead the newly formed ETS division which offers technical assistance, communities of practice, training, capacity-building, and a growing suite of tools to support higher education systems, institutions, leaders, and stakeholders. ETS oversees the recently announced Institutional Capacity-Building Cohort of more than two dozen colleges and universities addressing the basic needs of their #RealCollege students and collaborates with Jobs for the Future to support more than 50 community colleges associated with Student Success Centers in five states.

“I’ve long admired the Hope Center’s impactful work at the intersection of research and practice, and I’m thrilled to be joining their justice-driven team,” Abelson said. “I look forward to leading efforts to support systems change in higher education and to continuing to expand Hope’s unique offerings of cutting-edge research, training, and technical assistance with practical tools for helping college and university stakeholders better address students’ full suite of basic needs.”

Abelson has worked at the intersection of research and practice in higher education for more than 15 years to improve mental health and health equity at colleges and universities across the nation. Prior roles include serving as co-investigator and lead for diversity, equity, and inclusion projects with the [Healthy Minds Network](#) at the [University of Michigan](#) and as Vice President for Student Health and Wellness at the national nonprofit, [Active Minds](#).

A partner with The Hope Center on the first [#RealCollege survey](#) in 2015, Abelson’s expertise in mental health reflects a commitment to addressing the issue as a basic need. She is committed to promoting student leadership and making sure their voices are represented at the decision table.

“Sara’s talents will allow The Hope Center to fully demonstrate our investments in evidence-based education and training services to support #RealCollege students nationwide,” said Sara Goldrick-Rab, president and founder of The Hope Center. “She will provide leadership as we expand the set of student basic needs that Hope is helping colleges and universities address to include mental health and well-being.”

Abelson received her master's degree in public health from the University of Michigan and her bachelor's degree from Cornell University. She is now finishing her Ph.D. at Michigan, where she has served as a Rackham Merit Fellow and Center for Research on Ethnicity, Culture and Health Scholar, and received funding from the School of Public Health, Institute for Social Research, Center for the Education of Women+, Institute for Research on Women and Gender, Office of the Provost, Depression Center, Rackham Graduate School, Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Michigan, and National Institutes of Health.

Abelson is a recipient of the American Association of Colleges and Universities K. Patricia Cross Award and the American College Health Association Lewis Barbato Award. Her research and programmatic contributions have been featured in The New York Times, NBC Nightly News, NPR, The Chronicle of Higher Education, the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), and the Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, among others.