

Michelle Asha Cooper, Ph.D.

President



Michelle Asha Cooper, Ph.D., is president of the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP). While leading one of the world's premier research and policy centers, she oversees the organization's expansive research portfolio and innovative programmatic activities focusing on access and success, accountability, diversity, finance, and global impact. In September 2008, Cooper became the second IHEP president who is responsible for developing new ideas and strategic approaches that help low-income, minority, and other historically underrepresented student populations gain access to and achieve success in postsecondary education.

In one year and despite being in the midst of the nation's worst economic downturn, Cooper has managed to raise millions to help IHEP identify new solutions for our nation's most pressing educational concerns as well as discover new strategies that address persistent student problems to college access and success around the world. She has brought a renaissance movement to IHEP—and according to some, the higher education policy community at large—profoundly affecting the organization's global impact to ensure equal educational opportunities, particularly for historically underrepresented groups. For example, Cooper has met with higher education leaders from Europe, Asia, and South American countries as well as developed and presented recommendations for collaboration between U.S. and Russian organizations during [an event attended by President Barack Obama and Russian leaders](#).

Cooper is considered an emerging and respected education leader. With a career dedicated to and rooted in the postsecondary community, she most recently served as the deputy director for the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (Advisory Committee) at the U.S. Department of Education. The Advisory Committee is an independent, nonpartisan committee created by Congress to provide advice and counsel to Congress and the Secretary of Education on higher education and student aid policy. In this position, she interacted with policymakers, oversaw all policy research activities, and managed day-to-day operations.

Before joining the Advisory Committee, Cooper held various leadership positions at the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Council for Independent Colleges, and King's College. She is also the 2002 recipient of the National Education Association's Excellence in the Academy New Scholar Award. Cooper is also a member of the board of directors for College Bound, National College Access Network, and Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars. She is on the editorial board of the *Enrollment Management Journal: Student Access, Finance, and Success in Higher Education*. Most recently, *Diverse:*

Issues in Higher Education magazine named Cooper [“25 to Watch”](#) in its special 25th anniversary issue featuring 25 up-and-coming higher education leaders who are carrying the diversity mantle forward in an avowed commitment to progress.

A native of Charleston, S.C., Cooper received her B.A. from the College of Charleston, a M.P.S. from Cornell University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, College Park.

An expert on various higher education issues, Cooper is well versed in domestic and international issues related to higher education opportunity and access, with special focus on underserved populations, including: access and success, college readiness and preparation, diversity, federal and state higher education trends and policies, higher education financing options, and tuition and financial aid.