

Benjamin L Miller

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HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY EXPERIENCE

Vice President, Postsecondary Education, Center for American Progress

May 2015 – Present

(Senior Director from May 2015 to Dec. 2018)

- Led, constructed, and managed a diverse eight-person team of higher education policy experts up from a staff of three.
- Established strategic direction for the team, set and tracked key priorities around research and advocacy.
- Managed a budget of more than \$1 million a year, including setting project budget, salaries, and tracking spending.
- Set overall CAP direction on higher education policy as a senior staff member of the organization.
- Secured more than \$2 million additional new money by increasing core support grants and obtaining funding from three additional foundations, which support the race and equity and youth focused teams.
- Provided expert testimony multiple times before House and Senate committees on accountability, accreditation, the Federal Student Aid Office and Coronavirus relief.
- Served as a nationally recognized expert on federal higher education policy, which included regularly being quoted or cited in national outlets such as The New York Times, Washington Post, ProPublica, NPR, and others.
- Regularly appeared on panels or provided keynote speeches at a range of conferences and events, including keynote speeches at an accreditation agency's annual meeting.
- Published analyses that influenced the Department of Education's decision to set policy that derecognized one of the largest college accrediting agencies.
- Kept morale and work productivity high as we had to shift our entire workplan following the 2016 election and during more than nine months of remote work due to the ongoing pandemic.
- Managed a coalition of other organizations to push for improvements to federal higher education accountability that led to the introduction of multiple new bills in 2018 and 2019.
- Used clear writing ability, strong data analysis skills, and produce high quality work under pressure to publish numerous reports, columns, and op-eds on top of managerial duties.
- Conducted rapid analyses of CARES Act distribution formulas that helped change legislation before passage to exclude of fully online students from initial formulas. My suggested changes moved tens of millions of dollars toward public colleges and away from private for-profit ones. I also made the case for a more equitable funding distribution that was used in the FY21 omnibus to increase the share of funds going to public colleges of two-years or less by 20 percent.
- Co-authored reports, including one that collaborated with an outside organization, to conduct thorough reviews of the structure of the Office of Federal Student Aid, as well as its processes for audits and program reviews.
- Drew national attention to concerns about long-term loan performance for Black student loan borrowers, cohort default rate manipulation, and poor implementation of CARES Act funds through published work.
- Established an inclusive and transparent hiring process that improved team diversity and regularly receives praise from candidates and team members.
- Selected as one of 10 people for an inaugural leadership development program run by the Postsecondary National Policy Institute.

Agency Review Team Member, Biden-Harris Presidential Transition

November 2020-Present

- Served as the point of contact between the transition and the Office of Federal Student Aid, identifying key pressing issues for the incoming administration related to student loan servicing, debt cancellation, college oversight, and a range of other Department of Education topics.
- Conducted more than a dozen interviews with key staff in FSA and the Office of Postsecondary Education to preserve institutional knowledge for the incoming administration.
- Identified creative opportunities for early executive actions related to student loan forgiveness, accountability, increasing access to public benefits, and coronavirus relief.
- Produced clear memos under pressure on a range of topics related to the President Elect's priorities on tight timelines, including scoring student loan forgiveness proposals with three hours' notice and a detailed briefing deck with five hours' notice.

- Represented the transition in public stakeholder engagement before college presidents, trade association leadership, and other high-level members of the higher education community.
- Organized a listening session with students who are struggling to repay their loans to expose problems with the current accountability and lending system.
- Worked with ART members from the IRS, Treasury, and USDA on issues related to higher education.

Higher Education Research Director, New America

May 2013 – May 2015

(Senior Policy Analyst from May 2013 to December 2014)

- Conducted research and analysis on a variety of higher education issues, including accreditation, college ratings, quality, gainful employment, student debt, and the earnings of postsecondary programs.
- Published op-eds in outlets such as the New York Times room for debate section, Los Angeles Times, the Chronicle of Higher Education and elsewhere on topics such as borrower defense debt relief, more equitably treating students in default, and making it easier to apply for aid.
- Conducted analyses around the gainful employment regulation, the current state of student borrowing, and improving federal grant aid for non-traditional students, among other topics.

Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development

Feb. 2011 – May 2013

(Confidential assistant Feb. 2011 to Dec. 2012)

- Developed creative policy and budget proposals related to higher education completion, student debt and affordability, and college accountability. This included leading multiple meetings with congressional staff around a proposal for a Race to the Top for College Affordability and Completion.
- Led efforts to construct a new vision for federal financial aid, including regular briefings for senior leadership on the structure of existing programs and how to make them work better.
- Drafted Congressional testimony and provided other forms of research and policy support for the Secretary and senior leadership on college affordability, student debt, the DREAM Act, and other postsecondary issues.
- Served as a key liaison for ED with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau on a joint report around private student loans.
- Helped construct the initial vision for the second attempt at the gainful employment rule, including presenting the idea before a White House principals meeting with leaders from the National Economic Council and Domestic Policy Council.
- Assisted the Department of Education response to unexpected increases in Parent PLUS loan denials, including multi-team collaboration with budget services and Federal Student Aid, regular briefings with the chief of staff, and staffing the Secretary at a West Wing principals meeting with senior White House advisors.
- Regularly worked with the Office of Management and Budget around annual budget requests and associated State of the Union policy proposals, which also entailed collaboration with the Department of Labor on ideas for joint education and training funds.
- Guided policy development and competition design for a broad portfolio that covered college completion, STEM, education technology, community colleges, and higher education programs (such as Upward Bound). This included identifying previously unused flexibilities to direct more funds toward serving higher-need schools.
- Balanced multiple competing deadlines, ongoing work streams, and unexpected needs from senior leadership in a fast-paced environment.

OTHER POSITIONS HELD

Higher Education Policy Analyst, Education Sector

June 2009 – Feb. 2011

Program Associate, New America

June 2007 – June 2009

(Research Associate June 2007 to December 2007)

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Op-eds and short pieces

- “The Looming Student Loan Servicing Crisis,” Center for American Progress (October 2020)
- “The Student Debt Problem is Worse Than We Imagined,” New York Times (August 2018)
- “The Continued Student Debt Crisis for Black Borrowers,” Center for American Progress (December 2019)

A Better Formula for Higher Education's Federal Coronavirus Funding Center for American Progress (May 2020)

- Modeled Department of Education formulas for college relief from the CARES Act to suggest improvements.

Ensuring Accountability and Effectiveness at the Office of Federal Student Aid Center for American Progress (May 2019)

- Co-authored piece reviewing the history of the Federal Student Aid office and how to address management challenges

ACICS Must Go Center for American Progress (June 2016)

- Documented repeated failures of a large accreditor that led to billions in taxpayer funds going to schools that faced legal trouble
- Cited in the Washington Post, BuzzFeed, and ProPublica, among other outlets. Also cited by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and by Department of Education reviews of the accreditor.

EDUCATION

Brown University – Providence, RI (Bachelor's Degree with concentrations in economics and history)