

# Richard Williams

(b)(6)

## EXPERIENCE

### Pew Charitable Trusts

May 2018 – Present

#### *Officer, Project on Student Borrower Success*

##### Compensation (b)(6)

- Establish new workstreams that advance Pew's Project on Student Borrower Success, including developing a proposal to fund a four-year, \$12 million project to help borrowers achieve repayment success. Responsibilities include developing project scope, timeline, and budget, analysis of available research, draft policy interventions, and building consensus across the organization.
- Co-manage \$880,000 annual program budget, plan and monitor staffing resources, expense reports, third-party payments, and subgrants. Prepare, justify, and oversee the procurement process for contracts with outside vendors totaling \$290,000 annually and routinely supervise the performance of three or more contractors at any given time.
- Direct work of three subordinate staff and larger cross-functional teams that plan, conduct, and interpret primary research to develop policy solutions. Coach staff on goal articulation, messaging development, and written communication.
- Build diverse stakeholder coalitions consisting of college trade associations, consumer advocates, and bipartisan congressional staff to successfully advance Pew supported policy solutions, including recent passage of the FUTURE Act.
- Developed, managed, and reported Pew's qualitative focus group research utilizing 152 borrowers across eight cities. Published new policy insights through a report identifying borrower pain points in the repayment process and how borrowers interact with the student aid system.
- Present Pew research findings and advocate policy solutions through briefings, expert panels, and reports to congressional committees, the Department of Education (ED), federal and state agencies, colleges and universities, and other student aid stakeholders. Most recently, developing new and innovative policy solutions to address the impacts of COVID-19 on students, families, and the student aid system.
- Organize and recruit staff to participate in periodic workshops and meetings to promote LGBTQ visibility and equality efforts across the organization.

### Vote Blue

Oct. 2020 – Nov 2020

#### *Campaign Director*

##### Compensation - (b)(6) annualized, (b)(6) per day

- Built and directed a grassroots campaign office in Allegheny County, PA, specifically developing and executing recruitment strategies to hire more than 100 full-time staff to knock on over 160,000 doors of likely voters.
- Helped oversee a team of ten Assistant Directors, including managing daily staff meetings, conducting daily trainings for new and experienced staff, and coordinating the logistics of over 200 daily staff trips to and from campaign locations.

### Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Mar. 2015 – May 2018

#### *Policy Analyst, Office for Students and Young Consumers*

##### Compensation (b)(6)

- Led a cross-functional team to support ED rulemaking, including providing technical assistance for the Defense to Repayment, Gainful Employment, and Cash Management rules.
- Directed consumer response staff in their analysis of complaint data that identified trends for the CFPB Student Loan Ombudsman. Analysis was used to determine the potential for statutory, regulatory, and administrative improvements and reported in six semi-annual agency reports.
- Routinely mediated complaints from student borrowers against colleges and loan companies. For example, mediated a loan origination dispute between colleges and the Illinois Attorney General that resulted in the discharge of tens of millions in student loan debts from thousands of borrowers.

- Developed remediation plans and penalties for student loan servicers, debt collectors, and for-profit colleges that engaged in unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts or violations of other consumer laws.
- Responsible for managing work streams, setting priorities, and establishing project timelines for rotating subordinate financial analysts, fellows, and interns.
- Conducted analyses of risks to students and borrowers, specifically writing the federal report that identified one-in-three borrowers who exit default will default again within two years at a combined cost of \$125 million in unnecessary interest charges. Additionally, authored a report that analyzed the financial effects of student bank accounts offered by 14 financial institutions on over one million students across nearly 600 college campuses.
- Led briefings for the CFPB Director and Members of Congress and their staff. Prepared reports to Congress, drafted and edited congressional testimony and speeches. Provided technical assistance on draft state and federal legislation.
- Designed and implemented outreach strategies to diverse networks of consumers, academic institutions, and intermediaries. Facilitated the collection of over 30,000 public comments on student loan servicing related to an official CFPB Request for Information.
- Increased cultural awareness across the agency by organizing and recruiting staff to participate in monthly diversity events.

### **Committee on Education and the Workforce**

**January 2013 – March 2015**

#### ***Senior Education Policy Advisor***

- Advised the Committee Ranking Member George Miller, Committee Members, and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi's office on current and emerging issues pertaining to college affordability, including student aid, student loan servicing, and for-profit colleges.
- Developed successful public advocacy campaigns, including publishing consumer risk reports and leading public initiatives, to support the creation of ED's Cash Management rules.
- Authored and negotiated reforms to student loan counseling and college cost transparency passed through legislation and included in the Higher Education Act.
- Organized 13 Congressional hearings, including defining the democratic goals and message, selecting witnesses, preparing materials and briefing staff for over 20 Member offices, and organizing and drafting speeches and testimony for Members of Congress.
- Built and maintained diverse coalitions with congressional offices, federal agencies, private sector businesses, national education associations, and other stakeholders to build support for advancing legislation that increased investment in student aid.
- Oversaw policy outreach efforts to key constituency groups, including national, state, and local elected officials, labor unions, and issue-based interest groups. For example, routinely coordinated and communicated policy positions with the California Governor's office, State Assembly Members, and the San Francisco mayor's office.
- Prepared more than 100 reports, policy papers, and memos for the Committee and Members of Congress on college financial products regulated by the Higher Education Act, Dodd-Frank Act, and other laws.
- Delivered routine briefings and presentations on college affordability issues to Members of Congress, their staff, interest groups, academia, the private sector, media organizations, and the public, including on panels and large conferences.
- Served as lead contact for the Committee to the Administration on matters pertaining to higher education, including ED and their Office of Inspector General, the CFPB, Office of Management and Budget, Federal Trade Commission, and Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Projected federal budgetary impacts of financing federal aid programs, such as student loans and Pell grants.
- Co-led higher education communications strategies, including speeches, opinion pieces, and press releases. Notably, this work was featured on a Good Morning America investigation on campus banking products and in an opinion piece on the benefits of Income Based Repayment programs for student loan borrowers in the USA Today.

- Created and oversaw educational content and consumer guides for in-district and caucus events to educate constituents on college affordability and consumer protection, including an ‘event-in-a-box’ for student loan refinancing that contained talking points, opinion editorials, event ideas, and releases for Members of Congress that was used in over 60 events.
- Directly supervised multiple Congressional Fellow and interns.

### Higher Education Advocate

#### U.S. Public Interest Research Group

August 2008 - December 2012

- Served as lead higher education advocate and spokesperson to U.S. Congress, the Obama Administration, academia, and media organizations.
- Represented students as a negotiator on two ED Negotiated Rulemaking teams that wrote federal regulations on student loans and for-profit colleges, including the Gainful Employment rules.
- Built and directed two grassroots campaign offices, recruited and oversaw three Assistant Directors, employed up to 50 full-time staff, and managed a monthly budget of \$100,000.
- Collected and analyzed hundreds of original source documents to produce reports, such as the Campus Debit Card Trap, which examined how push marketing of campus banking products can increase the costs of college and drive students deeper into debt.
- Designed and implemented successful advocacy campaigns for legislation and regulations, including the passage of the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act and additional federal regulations to rein in marketing and fees on campus banking products.
- Created a coalition with more than 50 organizations, including colleges, consumer advocates, and labor unions representing cross-generational groups to reduce interest rates on federal student loans. Organized and negotiated over a dozen coalition sign-on letters to policymakers.
- Coordinated with the CFPB to develop educational content on student loans, credit cards, and campus banking products for more than 200 student governments.
- Authored hundreds of written communications for media organizations and the public, including news releases, guest opinion columns, blog entries, and social media posts.
- Developed training materials and ran educational sessions for thousands of students, staff, and community members on topics including coalition building, media and messaging, lobbying, organizing, and leadership development.
- Trained, managed, and motivated hundreds of staff and volunteers to raise money and build support for public interest campaigns, including campaigns to stop predatory credit card marketing.

### EDUCATION

Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ  
Bachelor of Arts, History

Spring 2008

### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

[Borrowers Discuss the Challenges of Student Loan Repayment: Focus group participants express gratitude for their education, frustration over unaffordable payments and rising balances](#)

Co-Author, Pew Charitable Trusts, May 20, 2020

Pew’s qualitative focus group research utilizing 152 borrowers across eight cities, identifying borrower pain points in the repayment process and how borrowers interact with their student loan servicer, guarantee agency, and debt collector. Identifies policy recommendations to policymakers and industry participants.

[Student Loan System Presents Repayment Challenges: Borrowers at risk of default and delinquency need flexibility and targeted, timely support](#)

Co-author, Pew Charitable Trusts, November 6, 2019

Quantitative analysis of 400,000 student loan borrower accounts over 5 years of repayment. Contains recommendations to policymakers and industry participants on ways to streamline repayment for struggling borrowers.

### [Innovation highlights: Emerging Student Loan Repayment Assistance Programs](#)

Lead author, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, August 2017

Analysis of consumer complaints and interviews with student loan market participants spotlighting the growing number of employer-based student loan repayment programs. Report documents and provides recommendations to improve where student loan servicing errors and student loan program design create barriers to innovation.

### [Student data & Student Debt: How Student Enrollment Status Problems Can Make Student Loans More Expensive](#)

Lead author, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, February 2017

Analysis of consumer complaints documenting how incorrect information about borrowers' enrollment status can have serious financial consequences, including costing consumers hundreds in additional interest charges, and lead to unexpected loan bills, and lost eligibility for other student loan benefits.

### [Student Banking, Annual Report to Congress](#)

Co-author, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, December 2016

Analysis of marketing agreements between financial institutions and colleges to promote and sell college-sponsored prepaid and deposit accounts, finding these deals can mean costly fees and risks for student.

### [Annual Report of the CFPB Student Loan Ombudsman: Transitioning from Default to an Income-Driven Repayment Plan](#)

Co-author, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, October 2016

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of available data on the performance of defaulted and previously defaulted borrowers, projecting one-in-three rehabilitated student loan borrowers will re-default within two years. The report contains recommendations to student loan market participants and policymakers.

### [The Campus Debit Card Trap](#)

Lead author, U.S. Public Interest Research Group, May 2012

Analysis documenting how banks increase the cost of college for hundreds of thousands of students by skimming millions in fees from federal student aid programs using debit cards linked student-IDs. The report triggered an investigation by Congressional leaders, federal bank regulators, and resulted in new regulations promulgated by the Department of Education.