HOW CAN FEDERAL POLICYMAKERS ENCOURAGE THE USE OF EVIDENCE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

Speaker Biographies

WELCOME

Sarah Rosen Wartell became president of the Urban Institute in 2012 and is the third president since Urban was founded in 1968. During her tenure, Urban has articulated its strategy to “elevate the debate” by bringing more of its research insights to federal, state, and local government and practice; becoming a leader in research communications and data visualization; and undertaking an ambitious program of business systems and technology modernization. Previously, Wartell was deputy assistant to the president for economic policy and deputy director of the National Economic Council. At the US Department of Housing and Urban Development from 1993 to 1998, she advised the federal housing commissioner on housing finance, mortgage markets, and consumer protection. After government service, Wartell was the founding chief operating officer and then executive vice president of the Center for American Progress. Her work focused on the economy and housing markets, and she directed the Mortgage Finance Working Group and “Doing What Works” government performance program. Before her tenure in government, she practiced law with the Washington, DC, firm Arnold & Porter. Wartell has an AB degree with honors in urban affairs from Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. She has a JD degree from Yale Law School.

The Use of Research Evidence in Programs: Philanthropic Foundation Perspectives on Researchers, Programs, and Communities

Ilene Berman is a senior associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, where she helps public systems, schools, and communities partner to improve child well-being. Her career in education spans more than 20 years, during which time she has focused on improving education policy and expanding the availability and use of evidence-based programs and practices. Before joining the Casey Foundation, Berman was program director at the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices Education Division and a director at the Council for Basic Education. She taught high school English for eight years in Washington, DC, and graduate courses at the George Washington University. Berman holds BA and MSEd degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, an MA degree from St. John’s College, and an EdD in education policy and administration from the George Washington University.

John Scianimanico is the policy lab manager for the Laura and John Arnold Foundation’s Results-Driven Government team. Before joining the Arnold Foundation, he taught high school math and statistics with Teach for America in Huntsville, Alabama. Scianimanico’s professional experience also includes working with various mayors’ offices, focusing on public finance and education. He earned his master’s degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School, where he taught undergraduate courses in economics and published an article on the challenges and benefits of greater globalization in the United States. He also spent a summer at the White House Council of Economic Advisers, where he assisted in researching and writing the education chapter of the 2017 Economic Report of the President. Scianimanico graduated magna cum laude from American University with a bachelor’s degree in political science.
Vivian Tseng is senior vice president for programs at the William T. Grant Foundation. She leads the foundation’s grantmaking programs and its initiatives to connect research, policy, and practice to improve child and youth outcomes. In 2009, she launched the foundation’s initiative on the use of research evidence in policy and practice. She also designed the foundation’s support for research-practice partnerships, including field-defining resources and a learning community of research-practice partnerships, now sustained through the National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships supported by five private foundations. Tseng has long-standing interests in strengthening the career pipeline for scholars of color. Under her leadership, the foundation has deepened its support for scholars of color, including increased grantmaking and capacity support to underrepresented researchers and a grants program to promote stronger mentoring for students of color. She regularly writes and speaks to international and domestic audiences on evidence-informed policy and research-practice partnerships. Her studies of racial, cultural, and immigration influences on child development have been published in *Child Development*, and her research on improving social settings and promoting social change have appeared in the *American Journal of Community Psychology*. She received her BA from the University of California, Los Angeles, and her PhD from New York University. She serves on the boards of the Forum for Youth Investment, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, and the international journal *Evidence and Policy*. She was previously on the faculty in psychology and Asian American studies at California State University, Northridge.

Thaddeus Ferber is vice president for the Forum for Youth Investment. He previously drafted policy recommendations that were adopted by the White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth in the George W. Bush administration and by the White House Council for Community Solutions in the Obama administration. He helped orchestrate National Youth Summits for those two administrations; craft the Federal Youth Coordination Act, which created an interagency council to align federal efforts for children and youth; and build legislation to create Performance Partnership Pilots, which enable communities to blend fragmented federal programs in innovative ways to help disconnected youth. In partnership with the Aspen Forum for Community Solutions and Gap Inc., Ferber launched the Opportunity Youth Network, bringing together the nation’s leading corporations, foundations, nonprofits, and young people to reconnect young people who are not in school and not employed. He also started the Youth Policy Action Center website to build a constituency that contacts elected officials about youth issues, and he managed the Connect for Kids website to inform the public about child and youth issues. He merged these sites along with two others to form SparkAction, an interactive online network that mobilizes action for and by young people. Before joining the forum, Ferber worked at the President’s Crime Prevention Council during the Clinton administration, the Stanford Center on Adolescence, the John Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, the HOME Afterschool Project in Alameda, and ELEM, a nonprofit for runaway, homeless and neglected Israeli and Arab youth.

**Bridging the Gap between Research, Policy, and Practice: Practitioner Perspectives**

Matthew Billings is deputy director at the Providence Children and Youth Cabinet (CYC). He was previously the program director at Inspiring Minds, a Rhode Island–based nonprofit organization that recruits, screens, trains, and manages volunteers to be no-cost mentors and tutors for Providence Public School students. Before that, Billings was program director at Rhode Islanders Sponsoring Education, supporting the needs of children with an incarcerated parent. He also spent two years as program director for City Year Rhode Island and served one-year stints at AmeriCorps Habitat for Humanity in Durham, North Carolina, and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps in Washington, DC. Billings has been an active member of the CYC since 2012, serving on five committees and representing the organization at the Center for Creative Leadership—
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Fellowship Project, a leadership capacity-building program focused on “boundary-spanning leadership,” or the capability to create direction, alignment, and commitment across sectors to achieve a higher vision or goal.

Lili Elkins has been Roca’s chief strategy officer since 2011 and before that was a consultant to Roca for five years. Elkins assists with resource development; strategic planning and financial forecasting; program design, development, operations, and replication; program evaluation, including work with third-party evaluators; and operation of special projects. In addition to her work at Roca, Elkins is an adjunct professor at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, where she teaches public health finance and accounting. She has more than 25 years of fundraising, program design, and program management experience working with nonprofits. She earned a BA from Barnard College, an MA in public policy and administration from Columbia University, and a JD from Rutgers University. She is a member of the New Jersey bar.

Lauren Eyster is a senior fellow in the Income and Benefits Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where her research focuses on innovative workforce development programs and how to best evaluate and learn from them. Most recently, Eyster has examined industry-focused job training and career pathway initiatives implemented through the workforce investment system and at community colleges. She studies how these programs can best provide education and training to different groups such as laid-off workers, youths, low-income people, and older workers. She also researches how systems and various stakeholders can collaborate to help these people find and retain jobs. Eyster holds an MPP from Johns Hopkins University and a PhD in public policy and administration from the George Washington University.

Ruth Curran Neild’s interests are in bridging education research and practice for the benefit and advancement of both. She is director of the Philadelphia Education Research Consortium (PERC), a research-practice partnership that works alongside Philadelphia’s public education sector to conduct practical, rigorous, and independent research on locally prioritized education questions. PERC makes its home at Research for Action, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit education research organization. From 2011 to 2017, Neild served in senior leadership positions at the US Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences, where she championed research of practical and scholarly value, clear and creative communication of research findings, and tools and strategies for supporting educators to access research and consider its implications for practice and policy. Neild earned a PhD in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania.