



Kristin Hultquist

PARTNER

Kristin Hultquist (formerly Conklin) is a nationally-renowned expert in higher education policy and strategy development at the state and federal levels. In 2008, Kristin joined Terrell Halaska and Michael Manganiello as a founding partner of HCM Strategists, a public policy and advocacy consulting firm committed to reducing disparities in health and education.

Through her work with HCM, Kristin has built and continues to lead a postsecondary practice, that has transformed the way nonpartisan expertise is provided to advance will for state policies that increase attainment and close equity gaps. This includes helping found and manage Lumina Foundation’s Strategy Labs. Kristin is routinely sought out by states, systems, colleges and non-profit organizations when they want to examine and refine their student-centered policies and practices. She has testified as an invited witness to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives during the 114th and 115th Congresses on federal financial aid reforms recommended by two initiatives she directed—the American Dream 2.0 coalition and the Doing Better for More Students technical report.

Kristin’s belief in the transformative power of higher education opportunity is a direct result of her own educational experience. A Pell Grant recipient and the first college graduate in her family, Kristin earned her bachelor’s degree in political science from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo and a master’s degree in public policy from Georgetown University.

Ever conscious of the doors that good public policy opened for her, she previously served at the U.S. Department of Education as senior advisor to the Under Secretary of Education. In that role, Kristin helped implement Secretary Margaret Spellings Commission on the Future of Higher Education. This work led to a reframing of the national postsecondary education agenda around outcomes and the largest single-year increase in Pell Grants in more than thirty years.

Kristin brought to her federal service a belief that innovative federal solutions come from state innovation – a perspective she gained while serving as the program director in the education division of the National Governors Association. She also directed the Washington, D.C. office of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, where she helped develop the first comparative 50-state report card on higher education performance. Through these roles, she cultivated a record of networking states for broad national attention and action, while bringing to light a new way of looking at high school and college graduation rates and affordability.

Kristin and her husband, Brent, share four children and a love for hiking and California wine. She is the proud supporter of Cornerstone School, a classical, Christian college preparatory school located in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, D.C. She is also active in Our Lady of Loreto in Colorado.