Watson Scott Swail, Ed.D.

Chief Executive Officer | Non-Profit CEO | Education Policy & Strategy Executive

Suffolk, VA | 757-513-8266 | wswail@educationalpolicy.org | Linkedin.com/in/wsswail

EXECUTIVE POSITIONING

Nonprofit executive, researcher, and education policy leader with more than 35 years of experience advancing student success, educational opportunity, workforce development, and institutional effectiveness. Founder and President/CEO of the Educational Policy Institute (EPI), a nonprofit providing evaluation, strategic planning, and policy analysis to government agencies, foundations, schools, colleges, and universities.

Expert in student retention, educational equity, and postsecondary success. Directed more than 100 research, evaluation, and policy initiatives, helping institutions secure and manage more than $100 million in federally funded grants and initiatives. Advisor to foundations, boards, college presidents, government agencies, and education leaders across North America. Research publications cited more than 5,000 times and a LinkedIn following of more than 96,000 reflect a broad professional reach.

CORE LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS

- Organizational Strategy & Growth
- Nonprofit Executive Leadership (CEO/C-Suite)
- Fundraising & Grant Development ($100M+ enabled)
- Board & Stakeholder Engagement
- Strategic Partnerships (Government, Philanthropy, Higher Ed)
- Operational Management & Program Execution
- Policy Analysis & Systems Reform
- Data Strategy, Predictive Analytics, & Performance Improvement

EXECUTIVE EXPERIENCE

President & CEO | Senior Research Scientist

Educational Policy Institute (EPI) — Virginia Beach, VA | 2002–Present

Founder and chief executive of a globally recognized nonprofit research and policy organization focused on education access, affordability, and student success. Founded and built a nationally-respected nonprofit organization focused on educational access, affordability, student success, evaluation, and public policy. Provide overall leadership for strategic planning, business development, research operations, partnerships, and organizational growth.

Selected Accomplishments

- Directed more than 100 research, evaluation, and policy projects for national, state, and local clients.
- Led large-scale evaluations and strategic initiatives for organizations including the U.S. Department of Education, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Lumina Foundation, Library of Congress, National Council on Disability, and multiple colleges and universities.
- Guided institutions in securing and implementing more than $100 million in funded initiatives and grant-supported programs.

- Developed and launched the International Conference on Student Success and related professional development programs.
- Built national reputation for evidence-based decision making, student success strategy, and organizational performance improvement.

Vice President & Founding Executive Director (Pell Institute)

Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) — Washington, DC | 2001–2002

- Founded and launched a national research institute (The Pell Institute) focused on access and equity in higher education
- Built research agenda, organizational structure, and national visibility from inception

SRI International | The College Board | McKenzie Group | 1993–2001

- Directed national research and policy initiatives on college affordability, access, and student success
- Produced influential national reports (*Trends in Student Aid*, *Trends in College Pricing*) used by policymakers and media
- Provided data, analysis, and briefings to Congress and national education leaders

Teacher | Teacher Educator | 1985–1993

- Taught middle and high school public schools in Manitoba and Virginia (7 years)
- Wrote state-wide curriculum and served as teacher trainer for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP & IMPACT

- Developer of the internationally recognized **Swail Geometric Framework for Student Retention**, a model widely used by colleges and universities to improve student persistence and completion.
- Author, editor, or contributor to dozens of books, monographs, policy reports, and peer-reviewed publications on student success, educational opportunity, college affordability, and organizational effectiveness.
- Frequent keynote speaker, board advisor, and conference presenter throughout North America and internationally.
- Provided policy expertise and testimony to national leaders, government agencies, and legislative stakeholders on higher education and educational opportunity.

EDUCATION

- **Ed.D., Educational Policy & Higher Education Administration**, The George Washington University
- **M.S., Technology Education**, Old Dominion University
- **B.Ed., Mathematics & Technology**, University of Manitoba / Red River College

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Swail, Watson S. (2027). *Because it Matters.* Educational Policy Institute Press.

Swail, Watson S. (Ed.) (2026). *The ROI of Higher Education.* Educational Policy Institute Press.

Swail, Watson. S., Wehmeyer, Connie, and Landis, Kimberly A. (2026). *On-time high school graduation: What educators need to know* (*Policy Perspectives*). Educational Policy Institute Press.

Swail, Watson S. (2025, November). The Massification of Higher Education. *EPICenter.* Educational Policy Institute Press.

Swail, Watson S. (2019*). From Thought to Action: Essays on Education Policy and Postsecondary Opportunity.* Virginia Beach, VA: Educational Policy Institute Press.

Swail, Watson S. (Ed.) (2012). *Finding Superman: Debating the Future of Public Education in America.* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Swail, Watson S. (2011). "In Search of a Better Mousetrap: A Look at Higher Education Ranking Systems." *College & University.* AACRAO: Washington, DC.

Swail, Watson S., Redd, Kenneth, and Perna, Laura (2003). *Retaining Minority Students In Higher Education.* An ASHE-ERIC Reader. San Francisco. CA: Jossey-Bass.

SELECTED PROJECTS

- Title V Evaluation & Strategic Planning, Harper College (2024-2026)
- Title III Evaluation, Minnesota State University Moorhead (2025-2028)
- Princeton Prize in Race Relations, Princeton University (2021-2024)
- Concerned Black Alumni of Princeton (2023-2024)
- Virginia Department of Education Data Dashboard Development and Research and Data Support, (2022-2024)
- Hawaii Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers Initiative
- East Baton Rouge Parish Schools Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP) Evaluation (2020-2022)
- Seattle Colleges Achieving System Integration (ASI) Strategic Planning (2019-2020)
- University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center College of Nursing Strategic Planning (2020-2021)
- US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Personnel Development Program Data Collection System: Scholar Data Report (SDR) and Service Obligations Tracking System (SOTS) (2012-2017)