



Source: Claire Wulf Winiarek

CAREERS AND RESEARCH

Claire Wulf Winiarek, MA, Director of Collaborative Policy Engagement

Claire Wulf Winiarek didn't set her sights on research methods as an undergraduate in political science and international relations at Baldwin College, nor as a masters student at Old Dominion University; her goal was to make a difference in public affairs. It still is. She is currently Director of Collaborative Policy Engagement at WellPoint, a Fortune 50 health insurance company based in Indianapolis, Indiana. Her previous positions include working for a Virginia member of the U.S. House of Representatives, coordinating grassroots international human rights advocacy for Amnesty International's North Africa Regional Action Network, and working as director of Public Policy and Research at Amerigroup's Office of Health Reform Integration.

Early in her career, Winiarek was surprised by the frequency with which she found herself leveraging research methods. Whether she is analyzing draft legislation and proposed regulations, determining next year's department budget, or estimating potential growth while making the case for a new program, Winiarek has found that a strong foundation in research methods shapes her success. The increasing reliance of government and its private sector partners on data and evidence-based decision making continues to increase the importance of methodological expertise.

Policy work informed by research has made for a very rewarding career:

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Winiarek's advice for students seeking a career like hers is clear:

The information revolution is impacting all industries and sectors, as well as government and our communities. With this ever-growing and ever-rich set of information, today's professionals must have the know-how to understand and apply this data in a meaningful way. Research methods will create the critical and analytical foundation to meet the challenge, but internships or special research projects in your career field will inform that foundation with practical experience. Always look for that connection between research and reality.