

## **REPORT ON THE CAPITAL HILL RUN**

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As a special part of the first joint NAMEPA/WEPA conference, sixty nine delegates were privileged to participate in a "Capital Hill Run" arranged by Enrique Ainsworth of UCLA, Director of NAMEPA Governmental Affairs. Rick worked with staff from Myers & Associates who arranged for the individual visits.

### **PRE-VISIT BRIEFING FOR DELEGATES**

#### **The Whys and Hows of Capital Hill Visits**

Shelly Wilson-Dodd from Myers & Associates and Diane Hampton from the American Council on Education, helped delegates make the most of their visits by discussing Capital Hill Protocol and the Congressional Process for Funding Research and Education. Shelly explained that "as federal resources tighten, communication between the engineering education community and the Congress becomes increasingly important. Not only do Members of Congress need to understand the vital federal role in supporting first-class engineering research and education, but they need to see the value to the country of that spending. No one can make the case for this support better...than engineering educators from back home."

A presentation of the Clinton Administration's education budget proposals followed and then delegates were given pointers on how to make the most of their brief meetings with legislators and/or staff. Suggestions included having short, non-technical presentations about specific issues. The presenters also stressed the importance of writing summary letters afterwards to reinforce the points made during meetings.

#### **Discussion of Important Education Programs Needing Congressional Support**

Diane Hampton gave the delegates details on the programs described below and also mentioned Project Hope, which is a proposal to extend tax credits to middle income families to help fund their children's undergraduate education.

IMPACTING CHANGE THROUGH COLLABORATION

1997 WEPA/NAMEPA CONFERENCE

Both WEPAN and NAMEPA members were encouraged to focus on the importance of continued and increased funding for access and support programs for women and minorities in engineering. Legislators were asked to support increases in Pell Grant Awards (post secondary education funds for students from the neediest families); and to continue to fund TRIO Programs, which deploy outreach and support services for both disadvantaged and first generation undergraduates. The Ronald E. McNair program and the GAANN Program (Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need) are also important. They provide fellowships to outstanding under-represented groups to encourage advance study in areas of national need, such as mathematics, science and various computer disciplines.

After these descriptions, discussions and tips, delegates felt quite confident about what was for many, their first trip to Capital Hill offices.

### **SOME REPORTS ON CONGRESSIONAL VISITS**

Some specific comments from various state delegations follow.

#### Arizona

"I think the whole program was excellent! Many thanks to Enrique for putting it together. It got me into my congressmen's offices and now I know where to find them when I visit Washington again. The aides in two of the offices I visited were very cordial and interested in our efforts. One even requested additional information on the MESA Program which we are supporting for the northern half of Arizona. I believe that we made a good contact."

Mary R. Anderson-Rowland, Arizona State University

#### California

David Cantu from Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo writes, "Peggy Bockman (UC-Irvine), Rick Ainsworth (UCLA), Phyllis Brady (UC-Santa Barbara), Sergio Guerra (Cal State-Fullerton) and I met with legislative aides for Congressmen Henry Waxman and Walter Capps. We had an opportunity to educate one of the aides on the issues that concern us about the pending Higher Education Re-Authorization Act. It was a great experience - it made you feel like you can make a difference in the political process. Maybe our presence will have an effect on educational policy so that access to higher education will not be a dependent variable of family income. I was happy to be able to participate in the political process."

#### Illinois

Walter McFall (Argonne), Irma Dobbins and Norma Zagorski (Illinois Institute of Technology), Arlene Norsym (University of Illinois-Chicago) and Susan Linnemeyer (University of Illinois-Urbana) met with Jim Jepsen, senior staff member for Sen. Richard Durbin and Susan Rosenblume, assistant to Congressman Bobby Rush. Walter later visited with Lisa Esquivel from Congressman Luis Gutierrez's office.

All the staff members were well versed about the education proposals before Congress and appreciated the statistics the delegates provided concerning the importance of Pell Grants and other support programs to the students at their institutions. Susan Rosenblume asked if our institutions would be willing to serve as resources on questions of science and technology - a request to which we all enthusiastically agreed.

Arlene Norsym, UIC

#### Indiana

"I thought the entire program was well done. I appreciated the briefing and it helped me spend my time effectively in my representative's and senators' offices. Two interesting things happened. In Representative Ed Pease's office I ran into the President of Purdue University, who was also making a visit that day. Later, Deborah Jarrett in Sen. Coates office told me that they have never had anyone other than the government liaison people from Purdue stop by to talk - she seemed truly glad to hear from someone 'working in the trenches', so to speak."

Jane Z. Daniels, Purdue University

#### New York

Michael McGoff of SUNY-Binghamton reported that he, Michelle Fish and Julie Schuck met with a staff member from Rep. Maurice Hinchey's office. The staff person was most cordial and indicated that Rep. Hinchey was in agreement with all the programs endorsed by NAMEPA/WEPA.

#### Tennessee

Tony Marable of Tennessee Technical University reported, "Carolyn Williams of Vanderbilt and I met with the staff members of our two senators. The interns and assistants were very open and friendly and we left with the feeling that we had communicated our educational concerns. Then I had the opportunity to meet my Congressman personally. Even though I had no appointment, he spent twenty minutes with me during which time we discussed the Department of Education's proposals and other issues relative to our State. As I was leaving, he insisted upon taking a photograph with me. Needless to say, I enjoyed the visit to Capital Hill!"

### **CONCLUSION FROM THE EVENT COORDINATOR**

"Despite the short timeline, I must say that the Capitol Hill event went quite well. Sixty-five legislators were visited by teams and from all accounts the NAMEPA/WEPA "talking points" were well received. I want to express my appreciation to the NAMEPA government affairs committee and others who made this event possible. Particularly, Sandra Johnson of Penn State, Terri Young of Chicago State, Steve Jones of Stevens Institute, Suzanne Laurich-McIntyre of the University of Washington, and Greg Singleton of University of Alabama.

Enrique Ainsworth, UCLA

