

American Mathematical Society
Committee on Science Policy Meeting
March 14-16, 2013
Washington, DC

Summary

The Committee on Science Policy (CSP) met over the course of three days with a primary focus on Capitol Hill meetings between Congressional representatives and meeting attendees to promote science and the importance of mathematics within science. The first day of the meeting was devoted to preparation for Hill meetings. Friday was spent making Hill visits and committee business and further discussion occurred on Saturday morning.

Sastry Pantula

Director, Division of Mathematical Sciences

Directorate of Mathematical & Physical Sciences, National Science Foundation

Sastry Pantula began his presentation with some guidance for those attending on his own experience making visits to Capitol Hill. In particular, he spoke about the importance of anecdotal evidence to enhance the message brought to Members of Congress. He then spoke about the organization of NSF's Division of Mathematical Sciences (DMS) and encouraged the group to help their recruiting efforts for program officers.

Pantula presented information on recent budgets for the divisions within the Directorate for Mathematical & Physical Sciences (MPS). He highlighted the decline in funding for DMS and spoke about anticipated funding levels for the coming year. He said that although there will be losses throughout NSF's budgets, the agency is determined to honor its commitments to continuing grants.

He went on to discuss the many grant opportunities within DMS and highlighted new programs that were instituted in FY2012, as well as some new and enlarged activities planned for FY2013. He encouraged those attending to take advantage of the programs available, particularly the institutes.

Kei Koizumi

Assistant Director for Federal Research and Development

White House Office of Science & Technology Policy

Kei Koizumi began his presentation by describing the work of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the federal investment in research generally. He continued with a synopsis of the current budget climate taking into consideration the enormous pressures on federal dollars, including the Sequester. He reminded the group that the FY2013 budget has still not been settled and the country is operating on a Continuing Resolution (CR), which means programs are being funded at last year's levels. The President is due to release his FY2014 budget in the next few weeks.

Koizumi explained about the inflexibility of sequestration and described its impact. He looked forward to the anticipated FY2014 budget and the likelihood that there would be a small increase for the National Science Foundation, which would allow the agency to transition its portfolio to include some new Presidential programs. However, between the sequester and the political climate on Capitol Hill that will impact any compromise on the President's budget, it is extremely difficult to know what the ultimate outcome will be.

Nadine Lymn
Director of Public Affairs
Ecological Society of America

Nadine Lymn presented an orientation for Congressional meetings. She offered some basic information about the makeup of Congress and how it operates, about the structure of a Congressional office and about the culture on Capitol Hill.

Lymn provided information on preparing for Congressional office visits, including developing the “Ask,” which is a clear and concise statement of the request of the Member. This year’s “Ask” was developed by the AMS Washington Office and takes into consideration the most current funding constraints and climate. It emphasized that ‘mathematics is a foundational discipline upon which future progress in science, engineering and many other areas depend’ and it requested the Member’s support of ‘adequate and sustained investments in science, engineering and mathematics research and education.’

Richard Yamada
Former AMS Congressional Fellow
U. S. House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space & Technology

Richard Yamada spoke about the importance of the Hill visits the group is to embark on during this meeting and about the value of the personal relationships that can be forged by continued dialogue between Member and constituent.

He talked about the current climate on Capitol Hill and the many pressures on the federal budget. His outlook for increased funding for the NSF was guarded.

Constituent Meetings

Friday, March 15 was devoted to Capitol Hill visits. The AMS Washington Office scheduled meetings for all participants with their respective Congressional representatives. These constituent meetings were conducted in small groups and prepared materials about the importance of mathematics research were left with each office. In total, the group met with 27 offices. A wrap-up session was held at the end of the day to share experiences and discuss the value of the meetings. The group then met informally with Tom Culligan, Legislative Director for Rep. Frank Wolfe (R-VA-10). Rep. Wolfe is chair of the House Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee. This committee appropriates the NSF budget.

Other Discussion

Several ideas were discussed regarding work that the committee could undertake including: writing opinion pieces; looking for opportunities and making suggestions for mathematicians to serve in places of influence (i.e. NSF program officers, National Science Board, award selection committees, etc.); writing and/or soliciting articles for the *Notices*; and strengthening international involvement by the AMS.

Date of Next Meeting

The 2014 Committee on Science Policy meeting will be held on March 13-15, 2014 in Washington, DC.

Submitted by Anita Benjamin
American Mathematical Society
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