



ACNP 2019 Travel Awardees Attend Capitol Hill Day

Hill Day is an opportunity for scientists to meet face-to-face with lawmakers to share their expertise and put a human face to decisions about research funding. These meetings lay the groundwork for getting lawmakers into the lab, meeting with them when they return to their districts, and becoming a resource to their staff when they make important policy decisions. Meeting face-to-face provides a personal opportunity for the neuroscience community to increase policymakers understanding of the brain and nervous system, the societal benefit and recent developments in neuroscience research as well as advocate for biomedical research funding.

This year, the Liaison Committee and Education and Training Committees were tasked to develop a program that provided funds to a select number of past ACNP travel awardees to attend SfN Hill Day. In early January, the committees agreed to offer the Hill Day program opportunity to the 2019 Travel Award class. The travel awardees were asked to submit information on their congressional district and Senate representatives, provide a current curriculum vitae, a statement on interest and experience in public service or advocacy and finally to provide a statement on their experience volunteering in government education efforts, advocacy outreach or elections.



Ethan Anderson, Ph.D., Medical University of South Carolina (pictured left), Hilary Marusak, Ph.D., Wayne State University (pictured center) and Jonathan Power, M.D., Ph.D., Weill-Cornell Medical Center (pictured right) were selected to join forces with SfN members during the 14th Annual Capitol Hill Day on Thursday, March 5th as advocacy ambassadors to help deliver the message about the importance of brain science research to policymakers in Washington, D.C. Drs. Anderson, Marusak and Power accompanied more than 48 SfN advocates to promote increased

investment in scientific research which included SfN members of the Government and Public Affairs Committee, Global Membership Committee, Career Policy Ambassadors as well as other coalition partners from the Coalition for Life Sciences (CLS), the American Neurological Association (ANA), and the Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN). Prior to the event, they were provided with a full day of training on legislative procedure and organization. On Hill Day, they visited policymakers in groups consisting of two or three established investigators who have received federal funding along with two or three young investigators. The meetings with Senate and Congressional offices focused on budgetary planning for scientific research, strategies for oversight of scientific proposals as well as the opportunity to network with like-minded junior and senior brain scientists, and also to connect on a personal level with senior staffers and their representatives. The advocacy ambassadors agreed many Congress member and staffers expressed a high level of knowledge about their constituents' scientific capabilities, and enthusiastically supported outreach efforts both at the Hill and at more local level events like Brain Awareness week.



Dr. Ethan Anderson visited eight congressional offices. He met with the offices of Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Tim Scott (R-SC), Ted Cruz (R-TX), John Cornyn (R-TX), Richard Burr (R-NC), and Thom Tillis (R-NC). He also met with the offices of representatives James Clyburn (D-SC, the 6th District) and Al Green (D-TX, the 9th District). Dr. Anderson stated overall, there was good bi-partisan support of the increases in research funding investment.

Dr. Hilary Marusak met with the office of lawmakers from both Michigan and California. Her team met with the office of Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), and Gary Peters (D-MI) as well as some representatives including Hayley Stevens (D-MI, 11th Congressional District) and Andy Levin (D-MI, 9th Congressional District).





Dr. Jonathan Power met with Congressman Thomas R. Suozzi (D-NY) who kept his team in his office at length to discuss his hopes for scientific networking on Long Island and his intent to establish a "Science Fest" highlighting the strong research capabilities in his district with scientists from institutions such as Stony Brook and Cold Springs. Dr. Power also met with staffers from the offices of Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY), Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Congressman Adriano Espaillat (D-NY) and Congressman Hank Johnson (D-GA).



The College is proud to support this advocacy event and knows that scientific progress cannot continue without public funding. The opportunity to educate lawmakers is invaluable to furthering the mission of the College.