Introduction to Science Advocacy and Policy

Dates: October 15-16 and October 22-23
Times: 9am – 2pm Saturday and Sunday (includes "working lunch," during which time instructors will be available to provide students with guidance on transition memo assignment and one-on-one guidance regarding pathways to careers in science policy)

Faculty

- Jennifer Zeitzer, Director of Legislative Relations, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
- Yvette Seger, PhD, Director of Science Policy, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
- Anne Deschamps, PhD, Senior Science Policy Analyst, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

Description

This course will introduce students to the disciplines of science funding, science advocacy, and science policy. Instructors will provide students with a brief overview of United States Government structure, legislative and regulatory processes, and how government agencies determine funding levels and oversee federally supported research activities. The course will explore who makes policy/legislation affecting scientists and how it proceeds through the development process. Also covered will be how scientists can participate in both advocacy and policy making efforts. Students will demonstrate comprehension of the materials by developing a short transition memo to the incoming administration that outlines key opportunities and challenges for federal agencies supporting research activities (e.g., NIH, NSF, USDA, etc.) in the administration's first year.

Syllabus

October 15:

Morning: Introduction to the United States Government (Jennifer Zeitzer)

This session will provide an overview of the three branches of government. Participants will gain a better understanding of the roles of the executive and legislative branches of the government and their relationship to science policy. The class will also discuss the federal science and research agencies and the legislative process.

Afternoon: Introduction to the Budget and Appropriations Process (Jennifer Zeitzer)

This session will cover the basics of the federal budget and appropriations process. Key topics that will be covered include the development and submission of the President's budget, the difference between discretionary and mandatory spending, and the role of the Appropriations Committees. Participants will learn how stakeholders can influence decisions about federal funding for research and science.

October 16:

Morning: Introduction to the Policy Development Process (Yvette Seger and Anne Deschamps)

This session will provide an overview of the policy development process. Participants will gain an understanding of the roles of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches in developing and/or enforcing science policy decisions. Students will learn how science can inform the policy making process and alternatively how policy can influence the conduct of science.

Afternoon: Introduction to the Regulatory Process (Yvette Seger and Anne Deschamps)

This session will provide participants with an overview of the informal rulemaking process. Students will learn the steps required by the Administrative Procedures Act in developing rules (i.e., regulations) and how scientists can influence their outcomes via requests for information, submission of public comments, and testimony during public advisory meetings.

October 22:

Morning: Overview of Science Policy Topics (Yvette Seger and Anne Deschamps)

In this session, students will learn about some of the main policy topics currently affecting biomedical and biological researchers. Topics will include training of the biomedical workforce, use of animals in research, regulatory oversight of research, and distribution of funds across a research portfolio.

Afternoon: Science Policy Case Studies (Yvette Seger and Anne Deschamps)

This session will delve deeper into actual science policy case studies. Participants will use the information gleaned from the previous sessions to learn how the different branches of government, federal advisory committees, non-governmental organizations, and the public can inform science policy decisions and outline potential response strategies. This will include a discussion of how best to frame policy issues for scientists, policy makers, and the public.

October 23:

Morning: Learn How to be a Science Advocate (Jennifer Zeitzer, Yvette Seger, and Anne Deschamps)

This session will provide an overview of basic skills that individuals can learn to successfully engage in advocacy. Topics that will be covered include advocacy tactics, effective communication, and the application of scientific research skills to advocacy activities. Students will also learn about ways that they can participate in policy/advocacy during their training as well as review opportunities that could help one prepare for a full-time career in science policy.

Afternoon: Interactive activity (Jennifer Zeitzer, Yvette Seger, and Anne Deschamps)

During this final session, participants will demonstrate comprehension of the materials covered by presenting key points from their transition memos. In groups, students will present two to three key science-related challenges the incoming administration may face in 2017 and make recommendations of steps the administration could take to address these challenges. Faculty and participants will engage in a discussion of strategy regarding how best to implement proposed changes, including potential partners, opposition, and challenges associated with communicating changes to the public.

Final Briefing Memorandum (not to exceed 2,500 words) due October 28 (Feedback returned by November 11)

Readings:

Course readings will be selected to reflect current policy issues and will be distributed during the October 15-16 session. These references will be used to facilitate discussion. Prior to the course, we recommend students familiarize themselves with current science policy news by reading the *ScienceInsider* blog and *Nature* blog, as well as NIH communications such as Francis Collins' NIH Director's blog and Open Mike, blog of the NIH Office of Extramural Research Director, Dr. Michael Lauer, PhD.

We also recommend that participants subscribe to FASEB's Washington Update newsletter, which covers both science policy and advocacy items of interest to biological researchers.