

Report from Congressional Visit and APS Unit Convocation

February 1, 2002 - Congressional Visit

Agenda Items

1. Briefing with Mike Lubell (Public Relations Director), Susan Ginsberg (Science Policy Fellow), Stephen Pierson (Science Policy Fellow) in the APS office in Washington DC.
2. Visits to house and Senate offices on Capitol Hill.
3. De-briefing with APS office staff in the afternoon.

Summary

Found it to be a very valuable experience. It was an opportunity to find out about APS science policy work in Washington DC. Overall, 18 APS members participated in the lobbying effort. The briefing with the APS Office of Public Affairs was very informative and helpful. They provided several flyers for use in the congressional visits. The requests we were lobbying for were:

1. Increase the NSF and DOE budgets
2. Support for the Homeland Security Act which aims to promote science education by providing student loan interest forgiveness for students studying critical areas of science, and foreign languages)
3. Create a position of Under-Secretary for Science and Energy within the DOE (to give science a higher profile within the DOE)

The APS office encouraged more individuals to participate in the lobbying effort and to meet with congressmen/women both in DC and at home on a regular basis. The APS office offered help in preparing meetings.

February 2, 2002 - APS Unit Convocation

Agenda

1. Welcome by APS President (William Brinkman)
2. APS structure and activities (Judy Franz)
3. APS finances (Tom McIlrath)
4. APS journals (Martin Blume)
5. Meetings (Donna Baudra)
6. Information Services (Tracy Alinger)
7. Membership (Trish Lettieri)
8. Reports by all APS units
9. Workshops on:
 - Information services for units' use
 - Improving units' meetings
 - Improving units' newsletters
 - Increasing units' membership
 - Units' accounting and financial reporting.
10. Discussion of counter terrorism: What can the physics community do? (William Brinkman)
11. Working together to fund all areas of physics (Mike Lubell)

Summary

In her report on the APS membership Trish Lettieri mentioned that 5,500 APS students members (out of 6,800) are currently not affiliated with any forum. We should point out to students that it is free to join up to 2 forums. Furthermore, we should emphasize that FGSA is open to subscription by not only grad students but also anyone who is interested in working with graduate student issues, this includes but is not limited to undergraduates, post-doctoral researchers, faculty and scientific staff.

As of January 2002, the APS FGSA membership count is 435. (This includes students who are members through the Society of Physics Students. Typically these are undergraduates.) It was suggested that Heeger reported for the FGSA on the unit's activities. He gave an overview of the mission of the FGSA, described FGSA's accomplishments since last year and outlined FGSA's activities for the upcoming year.

In conversations with other APS officers we received strong support for the ideas and work of the FGSA. Specifically, FIAP, FEP, and FPS are interested in active collaboration. FIAP suggested to co-sponsor sessions at the March meeting 2003. They offered help in finding students jobs in industry, expert advise in resume writing, and financial support for students to travel to the March meeting. The primary FIAP contacts for the March meeting 2003 are Stefan Zollner and Snezana Bogdanovich. The activities of the FPS include a broad range of outreach work and activities that might be of interest to the FGSA. The representative for FPS was Andrew Post-Zwicker. Our primary contact at the FED is Ken Krane. In addition, several Section representatives (SCAL, SFour, and SNENG) approached us to discuss how we can work together. For example, SFOUR (four corners section, contacts: Craig Taylor and Eric Jones) has a graduate student position on its executive committee which will be up for election this year. We have been asked to solicit and submit names for nominations. We were also asked to represent the FGSA at several section meetings

During the session on newsletters the decision to use paper or electronic newsletters was discussed. It was generally agreed that newsletters that are mostly informational (election and meeting announcements etc) are just as good in electronic format although newsletters with a large amount of content in the form of long articles appear to work best in paper format.

Judy Franz informed us that APS plans to solicit nominations from us for several committees. FGSA will have to decide how to invite the general "student body" to volunteer their names.

Some comments, suggestions, and advice from individuals:

Prof. Jim McGuire: He hopes to see FGSA promote the unity of physics. He considers it important for graduate students to be exposed to all areas of physics. He notes that department standing and ranking is usually correlated with "big physics projects".

Andrew Post-Zwicker (FPS): Offered to help us set up a web-based voting system for our elections and for possible membership surveys.

February 2, 2002 - FGSA Officer Meeting

After the APS Unit Convocation the FGSA officers Parson, Tierney, and Heeger met to discuss issues of interest to the FGSA. The following topics were discussed:

Future FGSA Activities

- *Membership coordinator:* APS recommended having a designated membership coordinator who oversees the membership drive and is responsible for membership relations. It was also recommended that we send out a personal “thank you” note to new members.
- *Graduate student stipend for congressional visits:* This would help promote the interest in science policy and lobbying and allow students to experience science policy before applying for a full one-year science policy fellowship.
- *FGSA activities at units meeting:* We will need ideas, contacts, and volunteers for FGSA activities at unit meetings in the second half of 2002 (DAMOP, DNP, etc.).
- *FGSA presentation to FIAP and FED executive committees:* We will have the chance to make presentations to the FED and FIAP executive committees at the March and April Meeting. Will have to think about our priorities and what activities FGSA wants to undertake with FIAP and FED.
- *Graduate student conference:* It was suggested to organize a “graduate student conference” with invited speakers from academia, industry, and national labs. It might be possible to get DOE and/or NSF funding for such an event. Also, national laboratories might be interested in supporting such an event. One idea is to have graduate students discuss their vision of physics for the next 20-30 years. In the member survey we will poll to determine interest and feasibility of such an activity. Location would be based upon accessibility for students with emphasis on minimizing travel costs. Timing would be selected such that it would have minimal impact on academics.
- *Graduate student reception at APS meetings:* Discussed possible activities at the student reception. Ideas included physics quiz with prizes, forum sign-up forms, and membership advertising. In addition to FGSA sign-up forms, sign-up forms for APS (with free first year for students) would be helpful to have on hand at the meeting.

Sources of Income for FGSA Budget

- Membership increase
- Soliciting support from universities, department chairs?
- tax-deductable donations?

Note: Other APS units profit from meeting tutorials, registration fees etc.

A Few Goals

- Double our membership.
- Increase our budget by 50%.
- Investigate/plan for a FGSA meeting by the start of the new academic year.

Communication amongst FGSA Officers

- Distribute FGSA plan of activities to officers
- Regular reports from FGSA officers?

FGSA Representatives:	Louise Parsons Secretary	Tom Tierney Treasurer	Karsten Heeger Chair-Elect
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