Connecting Research to Policy at the Nexus of Health and Education

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The Science & Technology Policy Fellowship

“Outstanding scientists and engineers learn first-hand about federal policymaking while using their knowledge and skills to address today’s most pressing societal challenges.”
WHAT DID I DO?

HELPED CRAFT POLICY

Learned how to read, understand and communicate policy.

Learned and participated in the legislative process.

Acquired a better appreciation of policy-making challenges.

DROPPED A BILL

Aim Higher Act (H.R.6543) “designed to give every student the opportunity to earn a debt-free degree or credential that leads to a rewarding career.”

GREW INTO NETWORKS

Worked with an inspiring and tireless team.

Networked and conversed with so many different people.

Became a fellow AAAS fellow.

LIVED IN DC

Who gets to go the African American museum when no one else is there?

Who gets to see your child gawking in awe as he shakes Barack Obama’s hand?
LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON 1

Your audience is very often a 20-something year-old with two cell phones and a time limit

An initial introduction: a “day on the Hill” with an AERA delegation.

A new vantage point emerges from the inside.

You are boring and irrelevant if you don’t know what’s on the docket

• Things happen fast--it might be over by tomorrow.
• Information travels within networks.
• Note carefully how stakeholders frame and discuss research.

LESSON 2
LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON 3

The best communications are clear and concise

No PowerPoint presentations EVER (unless they are Hill briefings by useless PhDs)!

The “ask” and one-page handout.

LESSON 4

If you on the minority side, you legislate for the future, NOT for the present

Committees adopt a long view.

You have to consider conditions that may not presently exit.
LESSONS LEARNED

LESSON 5

Our voices as research scientists are really, really important

• We should all learn how to use our voice and use it well—it could change the course of people’s lives.

• If you decide not to, someone else will, and you can’t control what they put forward.
Connecting research to policy rests on “evidence”

Foundations for evidence-based policymaking (Act of 2019)

Timing is everything; there exists a misalignment in the generation of evidence

Accepting that researchers as “experts” and our work as “evidence” will be cherry-picked

...in policymaking, research will rarely be the driving force, but it is often the fuel
THE OPPORTUNITY
The process model of policy-making involves several stages:

1. **Identify and define the problem**: Input from the public, media, policymakers, advocacy groups, special interest groups, and research experts.
2. **Set an agenda**: Policymakers' input leads to advocacy groups, special interest groups, and research experts.
3. **Formulate a policy**: Feedback from policymakers, advocacy groups, special interest groups, and research experts.
4. **Legitimize the policy**: The media and policymakers influence advocacy groups, special interest groups, and research experts.
5. **Implement the policy**: The media's input affects policymakers, advocacy groups, special interest groups, and research experts.
6. **Evaluate the policy**: The media's input further influences policymakers, advocacy groups, special interest groups, and research experts.

The shorter the arrow, the more proximal the stakeholder and more they drive the process. The process is iterative, with continuous feedback and refinement.
STAGE 1

Enter as a constituent

Serve as a knowledge broker

“Show and Tell” your work
STAGE 2

Awareness of political landscape is key

Bring evidence to support or bolster a preexisting set of beliefs

Select the right venue for engagement
STAGE 3

Step to the table and lean in

Attend hearings/testify/write for the public

Stay aware and ready
STAGE 4

Onset of “official” law-making processes

Focus on “moving” bills” but also look for opportunities to inform “messaging bills”

Connect with committee staff and “outside groups”
A good place to start
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT’S ON THE DOCKET?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY21 Budget Reconciliation Bill (funding for Biden’s American Rescue Plan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biden plan for education beyond high school</td>
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<th>Early childhood</th>
<th>Affordable childcare</th>
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<td>Food insecurity (Pandemic-EBT, WIC CCV, Child and Adult care food program)</td>
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<th>K-12</th>
<th>School return safety measures</th>
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<td>Health and wellbeing (staff)</td>
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<td>Learning loss (20% of schools’ budget)</td>
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<th>Higher Education</th>
<th>Revenue loss (must spend 50% on financial aid grants to prevent hardship)</th>
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<td>Roll-back of Trump era legislation (e.g. borrower’s defense, loan forgiveness)</td>
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<td>Strong focus on role of community colleges, HBCUs and MSIs</td>
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<th>Vulnerable populations</th>
<th>Health and well-being of poor children and families</th>
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<td>older Americans, survivors of domestic and gender-based violence</td>
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“Learn the lingo, and identify the key players. Realize that the path of evidence is winding, and the destination often distant. It’s not unusual for it to take decades for the weight of evidence to leave its mark on policy. But when it does, the results can often be extraordinary ...”

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