



## NOW WHAT DO YOU DO?

The paperwork is completed, the officers selected, and you are starting to gain members. Now the fun begins. In order to have an active group with lots of members, you will need to do two things: have regular, formal meetings and have policy-related events.

a) **Regular general meetings** – the timing of these meetings should be outlined in the group’s constitution but make sure you hold them as required. It is advisable to have at least one general membership meeting each semester. Use these meetings to attract new members, inform current members about the group’s ongoing activities, and plan future events. Make sure to advertise the meeting in advance.

b) **Policy-related events** – The policy activities are really the bread and butter activities of your group. They should be focused around teaching your members how to be good science policy advocates and then sponsoring science policy activities. Don’t try to make the events too amazing. It’s okay to start small.

- **Your Science in Two Minutes** – in order to be an effective science policy advocate, scientists need to be able to explain their work concisely and in way non-scientists can understand. An interactive session that allows members to practice their two minute speech would be an invaluable session to hold.
- **Sponsor Letter / E-mail campaigns** – a vital part of science policy and advocacy is letting your elected officials know how you feel about critical science-related issues. Your group can serve as a catalyst for all members of your institution to speak out on a science policy issue. While citizens should feel free to communicate with their elected officials on a wide range of issues, it is advisable that letter / email campaigns sponsored by your group be limited to topics of direct concern to science. In 2014, the Emory Science Advocacy Network (EScAN) at Emory University sponsored just such an event and it was a huge success. (To read more about their efforts, go to <http://www.ascb.org/write-with-a-pen-in-the-fight-for-science-funding/>)
- **Host a Speaker** – Senators, Members of Congress, Congressional staff, or other policy professionals make great guest speakers. You should also invite them to tour labs and see research firsthand and hear how science funding is used from students and postdoc. Make sure to always coordinate with your institution’s public information and government relations offices.
- **Attend national Capitol Hill Days** – The ASCB and many other professional scientific societies sponsor trips to Capitol Hill for meetings with your Congressional representatives. You

can inform your membership about how to apply and may want to consider providing small travel awards. To sign up for Coalition for the Life Sciences-sponsored Capitol Hill Days, go to <http://www.coalitionforlifesciences.org/be-an-advocate/capitol-hill-days>.

- Understanding Federal Government -- It may be useful to hold a few informational sessions to inform members about how the federal government operates. Topics can include how the federal appropriations process works, how a bill becomes a law, etc. Being knowledgeable about these topics will help members understand policy and speak and/or write about policy issues more effectively.
- Involvement in elections – Involvement in science policy can easily lead to involvement in politics and elections.

**While important, you should think carefully before taking this step. Keep these facts in mind as you decide:**

- **Support for science is not a partisan issue. For example, support for the NIH has historically increased under Republican leadership.**
- **Not all scientists, and members of your group, are of the same political party.**
- **Your institution's policies, especially if you receive funding, may place limitations on involvement in partisan activities.**

One solution may be to communicate with all candidates, sharing your views and offering speaking opportunities equally.

c) **Stay Informed** - Keeping up to date on the latest policy activities in Washington will be important to the long-term success of the group. Some of the best ways to monitor what Washington is up to when it comes to science policy are:

- The Public Policy Briefing section of the monthly ASCB Newsletter
- The Coalition for the Life Sciences (CLS), a group the ASCB co-founded and still belongs to, operates a free grassroots advocacy program called the Congressional Liaison Committee (CLS). You can join the CLS at <http://www.coalitionforlifesciences.org/be-an-advocate/cls-grassroots-advocacy>.



### **CONTINUITY OF LEADERSHIP**

The selection of future leaders of the group is probably the biggest challenge you will face. Since the long-term future of the group depends on future “generations” of leaders, don’t wait until the end of one term to find the next set of leaders. Succession should always be on your “to-do” list.

- a) Identify potential future leaders early and groom them. Get them involved in activities from the very beginning. They need to develop a stake in the future success of the group.
- b) Use the various leadership positions as the starting points for future senior leadership positions.
- c) Highlight to new members the importance of holding leadership positions and let them know that serving in the group’s leadership is not a significant time commitment.
- d) Encourage future leaders to attend a Capitol Hill Day.

