

## **What's not to love about Congressional Visits Day?**

By Tricia L. Freshour, ACerS Liaison to the Material Advantage Student Program

Congressional Visits Day (CVD), organized each year by the Material Advantage Student Program, was held on April 7 and 8, 2014, in Washington, DC. The CVD is an annual event that brings US-based students to Washington to raise visibility and advocate support for science, engineering, and technology.

Thirty five students and faculty from 11 universities attended this year's CVD event. CVD is a unique opportunity for materials science and engineering students to advocate for long-term funding for science, engineering and technology through meetings with Congressional decision makers.

The CVD experience began with an opening reception on Monday, April 7. The following three talks were presented to help prepare the students for the next day:

- The 2015 Budget: Science, Technology and Innovation for Opportunity and Growth  
Kei Koizumi  
Assistant Director for Federal R&D  
White House Office of Science & Technology Policy
- Effective Communication with Hill Staff  
Deborah Koolbeck
- Energy Policy and Life on the Hill  
Megan Brewster  
U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources  
2013-2014 MRS/TMS/AAAS Congressional Fellow

The reception also included an active learning session led by Dave Bahr from Purdue University and Iver Anderson from Ames National Laboratory and Iowa State University. In addition, students were able to collaborate during the reception and make arrangements to go on visits with other students from the same states.

Most of the students' appointments with legislators were scheduled for Tuesday, April 8. Students were tasked with contacting the offices of their Representatives and Senators to arrange these visits, and they proved to be very productive in setting up these important meetings. An optional event was available to the students on Tuesday evening at a local club where they had the opportunity to share their CVD experiences.

New universities were represented at CVD as well as some veterans. Here is what students said about their experience...

"With this being my first Congressional Visits Day, I didn't really know what to expect, but with the support and advice, it went great! I thought the three speakers we had on Monday provided us with great information and great tips for talking with the Congress people and their staff. I felt like the people we talked to already seemed to have support for our cause so this made talking easier and we could thank them and show our appreciation. I thought the trip was a great experience and will mostly likely be participating in the future."

David Beam

Washington State University

"This Material Advantage Congressional Visits Day provided a wonderful opportunity to visit our Nation's Capitol and speak with the offices of our Senators and Representatives. It was so exciting to share my experiences with them, and hopefully remind them why science education

and funding is so important. This was also a great way to meet students from other universities who are interested in science policy. I will definitely be back for next year's event!"

Kelly Kranjc

Washington University in St. Louis

"I had a great experience during the Congressional Visits Day. I look forward to participating in it again and bringing a bigger contingent from Georgia Tech! I think the visits went well, and I definitely have a better appreciation for how busy it is in the Congressional offices. I think it was a good idea to preface our visits with realistic expectations about the possibility of quick visits, visits in the hallway and people checking their phones. I was able to meet with the legislative staff of both Georgia Senators and two Georgia Representatives. All of the people I met with were receptive to my thoughts and proactively asked me to keep in touch if I wanted to reach out to the office again."

Brian Doyle

Georgia Tech

"CVD was such a great experience, and it's awesome that I got to do it for next to free. I talked to officials for both Indiana Senators and both were very responsive to our stories about how governmental support of research has affected us. I love the way you set up the program: a little bit of learning about the way the system works on Monday night, then having some time to sight see in between talking to Senator and Representative Offices. I can't wait to hopefully be involved next year!"

Jasmine Duvall

Purdue University

"I truly enjoyed this experience and will treasure it forever. It was a privilege to participate in CVD and I have already encouraged several of my colleagues here at UCSB to consider attending next year."

Kaylan Wessels

University of California, Santa Barbara

The partner societies in the Material Advantage Student Program are The American Ceramic Society (ACerS), the Association for Iron & Steel Technology (AIST), ASM International (ASM), and The Minerals, Metals and Materials Society (TMS). Material Advantage would like to extend a special thank you to Dave Bahr of Purdue University and Iver Anderson of Iowa State University and Ames National Laboratory for their continued support and dedication to Congressional Visits Day.