

Abstract

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (Academy) is the largest organization in the world consisting of food and nutrition professionals. This bipartisan organization represents 100,000 credentialed practitioners committed to advancing the profession of dietetics through education, research, and advocacy.

I searched for an internship that would provide experiences outside the Dietetic Internship, which led me to the Academy's Policy Initiative and Advocacy team in Washington, D.C. From this experience I aimed to identify effective advocacy approaches through a literature review to develop advocacy materials and be competent in advocacy approaches. I also wanted to understand how nutrition legislation advances by tracking relevant policy issues, legislation, and hearings related to food and nutrition. Being in D.C. I yearned to experience hearings by attending various Hill events. I identified appropriate resources to perform background research on key food and nutrition legislation to better understand attended events.

Prior to my internship I tracked relevant nutrition and food policy issues in a spreadsheet to which I continuously added to throughout my internship. I completed a literature review on effective advocacy dissemination and messaging, which I used to write various communication pieces, such as drafts of letters to Congress, leave-behinds, Eat Right Weekly's, and press releases. These communication pieces were used to inform Academy members on political events that pertained to the field, as well as Congress members about why nutrition legislation required their attention and action.

I was part of the Public Policy Workshop where over 350 Academy members flew in for this two-day advocacy workshop. I created the newsletters, drafted social media posts, the communication dissemination plan, and assisted in live event activities. I drafted the Academy's stance paper on flavored milk after performing an analysis highlighting the high sugar component of low-fat milk served in the National School Lunch Program; I believe child advocacy is critical for a healthier America. I was privileged to attend a myriad of events, which greatly expanded my network.

The communication and advocacy skills learned will be applied to my future career as a Registered Dietitian to best communicate nutrition messaging and advocate for the profession, as well as children's future health of America.



Figure 1: PPW sample Tweet from Academy account, EatRightPRO, I drafted and took live event photo for.

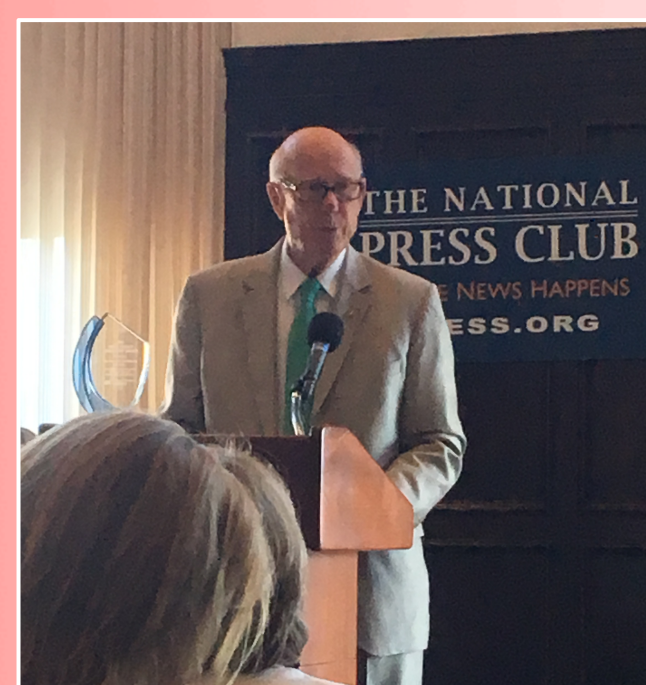


Figure 2: Nutrition champion, Senator Roberts, receiving an award at PPW.

Introduction

The Academy's Public Policy Workshop (PPW) is an annual advocacy summit where members from across the country convene in Washington, D.C. Prior to the event, attendees participate in a series of webinars where they receive training from advocacy professionals and are updated on the most current issues. Participants are further briefed on the first day of PPW with information and skills required to advocate. The following day members meet with Congress members and staff discussing policies pertinent to nutrition and public health that require their action.

Following PPW, I drafted a stance paper on flavored milk following the Secretary of Agriculture's new allowance of low-fat flavored milk to be served as part of the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). I started researching the nutritional components of flavored milk, presented my findings to my supervisor and office attorneys, which spurred into sharing my findings with a large coalition.

Content of Work

Prior to my internship starting I created a spreadsheet of nutrition legislations, hearings, and policy issues using a variety of different sources, such as: Trust for America's Health, Politico Morning Ag, CNN, Fox News, Science Blogs, and the Washington Post. I continued adding to this table throughout my internship; my supervisor explained the importance of being up to date on the most current issues because politics encompasses making the right move at the right time.

Table 1: Sample of 22-page news research table

Topic	Who	What	Note	Source	Date
President's budget	John Auerbach, president and CEO of TFAH	Cuts to federal funds... -Proposed FY 2018 budget: -18% cut to US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) -requires reduction rate of increase in federal spending -these cuts will hamper public health agencies to protect and improve the nation's health→impeding the response to pressing health concerns and rising costs of treating preventable illness and injuries	-CDC core budget decreased by more than \$580 million since 2010; in 2016 budgets was \$22.26 per person) -State public health spending has remained level since 2010 (\$11.5 billion total in 2015-2016, median spending \$31.26 per capita) Recommendations: -increase funding for public health at the federal, state, and local level -modernize public health system to address gaps in critical infrastructure and update outdated systems -create a standing Public Health Emergency Fund -expand use of evidence-based, high-impact strategies to improve health in every community -allow flexibility in communities to focus on their highest concerns, develop private-public partnerships to leverage resources and ensure accountability	Trust for America's Health (http://healthymamericans.org/report/136)	April 2017
USDA programs		21% cut in USDA programs and farm state lawmaker are sure to push back on the proposal	Farmers and ranchers struggling amid a 4-year drop in commodity prices and profits, any budget proposal that makes developing the 2018 Farm Bill more difficult could threaten a top priority of Chairman Mike Conaway and other negotiators of law	Politico Morning Ag	May 17
NIH Funding		The trump administration budget is unlikely to be followed, which is good for NIG advocates since NIH would suffer severe costs	Rep. Tom Cole, leader of the subcommittee with jurisdiction over the NIH, doesn't seem well-disposed to cutting medical research funding, called the idea "penny wise and pound foolish"	Politico Morning eHealth	May 18

PPW Today

A Daily Update for
Public Policy Workshop
Sunday, June 25, 2017

Tweet of the Day:
Ready to change the Hill tomorrow? #PPW2017

D.C. WEATHER: Mostly sunny; 84 degrees F

SUNDAY'S RECAP:
Power to the PAC:
The goal of ANPDAC is to support pro-nutrition candidates. It ranks among the top health professional political action committees in the country. See what the PAC is doing today by following the link below or visit the ANPDAC booth at PPW and learn how you can help!
<http://www.eatrightpro.org/resources/advocacy/political-action-committee/donate-to-and/or>
Let's Hear It for the Award Winners!
Two awards were distributed at the first day of PPW. The first being the Award for Grassroots Advocacy. Grassroots advocacy is the intersection of members, staff, and political action at the right time, in the right place, to deliver relevant fact-based messages. This strategic concept requires hard work and effort. This award was given to Penny Kwan. Read about how to successfully advocate:
<http://www.eatrightpro.org/resources/advocacy/cdn-center/getting-started/tips-for-success-in-advocacy>
Sens. Gary Peters (Mich.) and Fred Roberts (Kan.) were recognized today for receiving the Public Policy Leadership Award. This award recognizes members of Congress who have demonstrated outstanding service and support for nutrition and health issues deemed important by the Academy and the public. Find where public policy leaders find resources by going to:
<http://www.eatrightpro.org/resources/advocacy/cdn-center/getting-started/health-policy-link-for-public-policy-leaders>
We applaud them for their efforts and look forward to finding their future endeavors.

Connections are the Key to Success
Today, PPW attendees learned how relationships with decision makers can help advance pieces of legislation. This does not just refer to networking in the workplace, but also personally. It is key to have existing relationships with elected officials so when an appointment is needed they will be more inclined to meet. Such connections are also important to establish nutrition professionals as a resource to congressmen and staff when deciding what position to take on a bill or when drafting a bill, themselves.

A way to help build relationships is to invite congressmen to your place of work, and inform the media they will be in attendance that day. This allows for relationships to grow, as well as getting publicity for the congressman and the visited program.

It is crucial to know what positions your congressman stand on regarding the issues being discussed. Once this is understood, you can then tailor your rational for the importance of registered dietitian nutritionists and nutrition professionals in a way that your decision maker will positively respond to.

Healthcare: Nutrition Services Are the #1 Prevention Program
The Affordable Care Act established the Prevention and Public Health fund to provide expanded and sustained national investments in prevention. Many nutrition programs are funded by this, including the National Early Child Care Collaborative, which supports efforts to improve nutrition and physical activity environments in early child education settings. Learn more about the Prevention and Public Health fund: <http://www.eatrightpro.org/resources/advocacy/disease-prevention-and-treatment/cardiovascular/risk-and-prevention-strategies-investments-for-long-term-health-cost-savings>

Investment in prevention is important to reduce the risk of chronic diseases among Americans. According to the CDC, chronic diseases are among the most common, costly, and preventable of all health problems. The most affordable and feasible prevention strategy is improving diets and empowering community members to make nutritious decisions for themselves and their families.

The Academy urges Congress to maintain bipartisan investment in the Prevention fund to ensure inclusion of nutrition serves as prevention and treatment. Doing so will improve access for health communities, decrease chronic disease prevalence, and address health equity, all of which are agreed upon issues.

@EatRightPRO #PPW2017 Facebook.com/eatrightPRO

Figure 3: Newsletter I created that was sent to all participating Academy members of PPW.



Figure 4: My NJ constituents and I outside the Capitol building.

During PPW I coordinated my live-event pictures to be attached to corresponding social media posts sent from the Academy's account. The second day of the workshop, Hill day, I accompanied my New Jersey constituents around the Hill advocating for nutrition services in the Prevention Fund and nutrition education in the Farm Bill. During PPW I was fortunate enough to interact with Academy President Donna S. Martin, who is a champion for children's nutrition.



Figure 5: My NJ constituents and I meeting with staff outside NJ Senator Booker's office.



Figure 6: Fellow classmates and I with current Academy President, Donna S. Martin.

Results/Conclusion

Towards the end of my internship I drafted a stance paper the Academy could use after analyzing the nutritional composition of flavored milks. In "good practice" 8 oz. of flavored milk contains up to 22 grams of sugar. However some food service management companies are serving flavored milk with 30 grams of sugar. Concluding the new guidelines for the NSLP allowing non-fat flavored milk to be served fails to recognize the high-sugar content in such milks. The stance and research drafted will be used in a larger coalition, the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity.

Table 2: Results of flavored milk analysis

Type Milk	Source	Calories	Fat	Sugar	Teaspoons (4 g sugar = 1 tsp)
TruMoo Nonfat chocolate milk	Small, rural independent school district	120 kcals	0 g total fat	18 g sugar	4.5
TruMoo 1% chocolate milk	TruMoo website	140 kcals	2.5 g total fat	18 g sugar	4.5
TruMoo Nonfat Strawberry milk	Small, rural independent school district	110 kcals	0 g total fat	18 g sugar	4.5
Strawberry milk, 1% fat	Food service management company	180 kcals	2.5 g total fat	30 g sugar	7.5

Discussion

During my eight-week internship at the Academy I acquired a myriad of communication skills, both verbal and written, and experienced a host of Hill events pertaining to nutrition and public health policies; some are seen below. I greatly expanded my network in the field with professionals from a variety of organizations.



Figure 7: The Bipartisan Policy Center's Unseen Enemy movie screening and expert panel discussion at Carnegie Library.



Figure 8: A hearing on senior nutrition food programs with Sen. Warren and Collins.



Figure 9: A meeting at the Capitol about how to make healthcare more efficient and cost less.

Funding Sources

Although this was an unpaid internship it was an amazing experience I could not turn away. I sought out other financial opportunities and received two scholarships.

1. An Academy Foundation scholarship called the Frederick Green Memorial Internship in Nutrition Communications Award of \$2,000. This is awarded annually to a nutrition/dietetic student who has secured an unpaid, full-time, 6-8 week internship focused on nutrition communications with an Academy member Registered Dietitian.
2. The David A. Winston Health Policy Scholarship of \$10,000, which is awarded to master's students who are dedicated to health policy and have secured an unpaid internship. It included a dinner and public health symposium in D.C. with current and former Winston scholars, fellows, and the nation's experts in health policy.

Future Directions

I have learned the vitality of advocating for my passions. I look forward to using my advocacy and communication skills to continue advocating for the dietetics profession and the future generation of America: children.



Figure 10: Me outside the Capitol after attending a meeting there.