



AERC And AIBS Public Policy Office Sponsored Hands-On Workshop On:

“How To Communicate Research Findings With The Media And Congressional Members And Staffers”



AERC’s annual events in Washington DC kicked off on the morning of October 23, 2013 with a very successful workshop conducted by Rob Gropp and Julie Palakovich Carr of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) Public Policy Office, and held at AIBS’ offices in Washington. Rob’s presentation and hands-on exercises focused on how to communicate with the media and

included mock interviews where workshop participants (mainly graduate students) attempted to use the methods Rob described, together with prepared statements, to respond to questions from a reporter (Rob) about each person’s own ecosystem research and what its importance was. During the second half of the morning, Julie described how to communicate face to face with a congressional staff person and what methods and techniques can be used to enhance that communication. For this section of the workshop on how to effectively communicate with decision makers, participants broke into groups and practiced giving their 2 min “pitches” to each other under the watchful eyes of former-congressional staffers, Julie and Rob, and those of AERC-member faculty representatives who have first-hand experience communicating with congressional office staff on Capitol Hill.

There were 22 participants in the workshop (mostly graduate students), who were primarily from AERC member institutions, but several were from other institutions, which we hope to attract to membership in the future. More than half of those participating in the workshop applied the coaching they received during visits to their respective congressional offices the next day.

Workshop Feedback From Survey (Was It Helpful? - 94% Said "Yes", And In What Way?):

“The workshop was well prepared. It was a challenge to prepare the policy one-pager.”

Meeting Links

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Workshop

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[Business Meeting](#)

[Congressional Office Visits](#)

[Survey and Feedback](#)

[Meeting Home Page](#)

“I felt that Rob and Julie really focused their presentations on very practical, how-to sorts of skills.”

“The simple approach using 3 talking points with 3 transitions between each of them [was very helpful].”

“I learned how to package my pitch in an explicit and concise manner.”

“Getting personal feedback about how to improve my presentation so it had maximum impact [was helpful].”

“Learning what to expect in conversations with Congress people [was helpful].”

“There were a lot of gems of information for communicating with the media and with Congress.”

“The workshop was extremely helpful in my Hill meetings. In particular, I liked preparing what I was going to say based on the communication triangle, and being told that repeating myself would be helpful. It was also helpful that we were told that the conversation could stray and that we’d have to steer the attention back to our main message.”

“The way we delivered our message and tried to keep the conversation focused on our message was learned in the workshop. The workshop also prepared us for what to expect in the Hill meetings which was helpful and made me feel more at ease about the meetings.”

Also see:

- [The president's December 2013 letter \(PDF\)](#)
- [Evaluation Survey Results \(PDF\)](#)
- [Speaker Bios \(PDF\)](#)