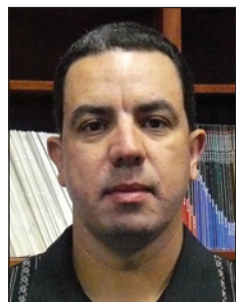


Public Policy Board

Science Policy at Work

Mehdi Kabbage, Texas A&M University, pcd@neo.tamu.edu



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The APS Public Policy Board (PPB) Early Career Internship provides a unique opportunity for early career APS members (graduate students, post-docs, or members within 10 years of receiving a degree) to gain hands-on experience in public policy at the national level that relates to agriculture in general and specifically to matters of interest to APS. Each year, PPB reconsiders “the current status of its priorities with the APS Council, evaluates comments from the membership, and adjusts its strategy to fit the most relevant needs.” Current PPB funding priorities focus on culture collection resource systems, food safety, and plant pathology education. Additional areas of interest include plant-associated microbial genomics, strong advocacy for Congressional support of the proposed budget for agricultural research, and support and provide technical expertise to the National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN).

This two-year internship allows the early career member to work with senior members on these key issues and learn how scientific societies, nongovernmental organizations, executive branch agencies (e.g., USDA, NSF, EPA), and the legislative branch interact in shaping public policy. Importantly, the intern learns to deliver clear, concise, and well-articulated messages to policy-makers and agency personnel on the issues at hand.

I joined PPB because I was interested in understanding how our nation’s research funds are allocated, who commandeers the debate on important scientific topics, how decisions are made on funding priorities, and how a society such as APS can remain relevant in the policy arena. I believed that this internship would be an excellent opportunity and a great step toward achieving this goal. This experience has provided me with the answers I was looking for and much more. My internship began at the 2010 APS

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Annual Meeting, where I participated in the PPB business meeting, and was followed by monthly conference calls conducted by board members who discussed progress on the key issues and policy news items that required prompt attention. My first few months were challenging, and I struggled to understand how our board is able to influence the decision-making process. I quickly realized that this is achieved by taking advantage of every opportunity to voice our concerns or provide feedback, maintaining the proper contacts within federal agencies, and communicating effectively on matters of interest to APS. This is demonstrated by the annual Washington, DC, spring meeting where PPB members meet with key policy-makers, including Congressional staffers and high-ranking members of federal agencies. The Washington, DC, trip was an eye-opening experience that allowed me to witness the remarkable job that PPB does in delivering the message to federal agencies.

As a new PPB member, I was keen to contribute. I was surprised to learn that climate change is likely to have a significant impact on agriculture and food production with potentially disastrous humanitarian crises around the globe. My interest in this topic has prompted me to write a PPB newsletter article highlighting the grave situation facing many areas of the world, discuss plant pest populations in these changing weather patterns, and comment on the inaction on climate legislation in Washington and around the world. During my internship, I had numerous opportunities to further address this topic. This included providing feedback on a press release from the Office of Scientific Advisor regarding the “National Strategies Proposed to Respond to Climate Change’s Impacts on Fish, Wildlife, and Plants,” and participating in an AFRI stakeholder listening session webinar on agriculture and natural resources science for climate variability and change on behalf of APS. The Washington, DC, trip also provided me with an opportunity to directly bring up this issue with relevant agency personnel.

Thanks to this internship, I am now mindful of the vital role that organizations such as APS play. The APS PPB internship has been a career-changing experience that far exceeded my expectations. I strongly encourage other early career members to take advantage of this unique opportunity. ■

