



SEED ambassador award: Become an advocacy leader

By Julie McClure

| June 21, 2021



Just like in any field, advocacy is one of those areas that takes practice to develop your skills. While many ASA, CSSA, and SSSA members take advantage of the advocacy opportunities the Societies offer like email action alerts, petitions, or even participating in Congressional Visits Day, going from a novice advocate to a trusted policy resource takes time and effort. For those Society members looking to take their advocacy endeavors to the “next level,” the Science Policy Offers a year-long advocacy leadership program: the Scientists Engaging and Educating Decision-makers (SEED) Ambassadors.

Each year, a small class of Society members are selected to receive the SEED Ambassador award. Award recipients participate in exclusive monthly webinars with the Science Policy Office staff and expert guest speakers. Each month, a new advocacy skill is introduced with topics building on previous skills in order to develop meaningful relationships with congressional offices. The small class size allows for individualized attention to every Ambassador and tailored training to their location, career stage, and interests.

An Indispensable Resource

“The workshops and trainings covered diverse and essential topics, from how Congress is structured, to the budgeting process, to how to engage with the local

media,” says Grace Minor, 2020 SEED Ambassador. “This advocacy leadership program is indispensable for members interested in learning to better navigate the intersection of science and policy.”

The 2020 class was selected last August while the world was still navigating the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the understanding that their advocacy would primarily be virtual, the 13 Ambassadors that were selected were ready to flex their advocacy muscles and learn how to most effectively influence policymakers. Many of the SEED Ambassadors participated in Virtual Congressional Visits Day in March, meeting virtually with members of Congress and their staff to advocate for USDA research funding. SEED Ambassadors were able to build on these initial relationships later in the year on other topics such as the National Science Foundation and climate change research and infrastructure.

“The SEED Ambassador program has changed the way I think about the legislative process. I now frame my scientific expertise as an important resource for policymakers,” says Sarah Brinkley, 2020 SEED Ambassador. “Additionally, I now feel empowered to be a more vocal advocate of big issues like increased funding for agricultural research. After all, our policymakers work for us—the constituents.”

Interested in learning more about advocacy?
Consider applying for the SEED Ambassador Award.



www.soils.org/science-policy/get-involved/seed-ambassadors

Application window: July 12-August 27

Just the Beginning of the Advocacy Journey

The 2020 class had a great mix of early- and late-career participants with representation from academia, industry, and consulting. Not only did the Ambassadors learn from the Science Policy Office staff, but they were able to hear from their colleagues' experiences and learn just as much from each other. As their year of advocacy training comes to an end, the Ambassadors know that this is really just the beginning of their advocacy journey and that influential relationships with policymakers take sustained effort to achieve.

"To be successful [in advocacy], you need to be savvy with the tools and be an expert with strategic focus while being open-minded and persevering with your efforts," says Cecil Dharmasri, 2020 SEED Ambassador. "Advocacy is not about winning or losing—whether you achieve your goal or not, you must keep learning and building

relationships."

Applications for the 2021 SEED Ambassador award are open now through 27 August. If you are ready to use your scientific expertise to help shape policy outcomes, consider applying today at: www.agronomy.org/science-policy/get-involved/seed-ambassadors.



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