

DC Days: May 9-11, 2016



Photo: L-R: Farnaz Maleky, Shauna Brummet, Annie Specht, Ann Lichens-Park (USDA), David Benfield, Pam Schlegel, and Ye Xia

Four faculty members from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES), representing Food Science and Technology (FST); BioHio; Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership (ACEL); and Plant Pathology recently traveled to Washington, DC as part of the DC Days program. Created by the OARDC Director's Office and the Grant Development Support Unit, the program was designed to increase the competitiveness of grants submitted by emerging faculty researchers by providing them an opportunity to visit with a variety of federal agencies and program officers.

During these meetings, program officers and administrators were asked to give an overview of the agency's mission, their approach to funding research, and the submission process and peer review. Anticipated outcomes were that participants would learn more about structuring a research proposal to fit within the agency's requirements, the importance of tailoring a basic research idea to meet the needs and priorities of the funding agency, and to form professional connections.

Participants began at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Through its Innovation labs, institutions are on the cutting edge of efforts to research, develop and take to scale safe and effective technologies that address current and future challenges posed by a changing climate and the need to feed a growing global population. The afternoon included a visit to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) with presentations by Program Officers who discussed the fundamentals of the grant process within NIH, navigating a career with the agency through different funding opportunities, and learning more about the peer review process. A tour of the NIH Clinical Research Center completed the visit in Bethesda, Maryland.

While visiting the United States Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) on day two, faculty members were fortunate to be able to spend some one-on-one time with program officers in their area of research to help focus and refine future proposals. Also, at the National Science Foundation, we received a full program centered around an overview of NSF and

specific programs the faculty were most interested in learning more about such as the Division of Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS), Division of Environmental Biology (DEB), Grants for Rapid Response Research (RAPID), and an overview of Faculty Early CAREER Program.

This year, a third day was added to the agenda. The morning visit was to The Ohio State University Office of Governmental Affairs. Bill Couch shared the importance of developing strong partnerships between our public officials and the university in order to build a better university and a more prosperous Ohio. The Foundation for Food Agriculture Research (FFAR) was our afternoon stop, and we learned this newly created foundation (from the 2014 Farm Bill) is designed to complement the USDA, authorizing \$200 million in mandatory funding as match to solicit private donations for additional research on plant health; animal health; food safety and nutrition; renewable energy, natural resources and environment; agricultural and food security; technology; and agricultural economics and rural communities. It is the hope of the agency to fill the research gaps that may not be addressed through traditional funding mechanisms.

Our faculty had the chance to tour many of the national monuments while in D.C. They returned feeling empowered to make use of the contacts they made and with a better sense of what might be successful at the individual agencies. It was also a chance to form professional relationships with other OSU faculty members and staff.

The faculty members chosen to participate in this program were selected from a pool of applicants. If you are interested in being part of the next trip, please watch your email for more information about the selection process. Contact the Grant Development Support Unit for more information.