



SUNY Federal Relations Update Friday, April 18, 2008

2008 SUNY DAYS IN DC REDUX

Last week, more than sixty SUNY representatives gathered in the nation's capital for the annual 2008 SUNYS DAYS IN DC meeting. We were pleased to have participation by SUNY Interim Chancellor John Clark, numerous SUNY campus presidents, and representatives from all sectors of the SUNY system. Attendees had the opportunity to meet with and hear from esteemed individuals from both the legislative and executive branches, as well as from influential Washington political observers.

From the Administration, at SUNY's Capitol Hill Reception, several SUNY presidents and others met and spoke with [Dr. Ray Orbach](#), Director of the Department of Energy's [Office of Science](#); Undersecretary for Science and Technology at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), [Admiral Jay Cohen](#); and [Dr. James Turner](#), Acting Director of [NIST](#). Both DOE and NIST are key agencies in the American Competitiveness Initiative and combined with the S&T Directorate at DHS, President Bush's Budget Request for FY 2009 called for nearly \$12 billion in R&D funding to go to these three agencies, much of which supports university-based research.

[Diane Jones](#), Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education at the US Department of Education, provided the group with an update from Department. She imparted information on the Department's recently enhanced College Navigator website, shared intelligence on both progress and concerns related to the new ACG and SMART grants, commented on the state of student loans and the student loan industry, and provided insight into the Administration's position on congressional Higher Education Act (HEA) reauthorization efforts, currently underway on Capitol Hill. Assistant Secretary Jones has agreed to share with you her PowerPoint presentation and it is attached.

Also commenting on the HEA reauthorization were **David Ward**, President of ACE; **Constantine "Deno" Curris**, President, AASCU; **David Baime**, Vice President for Government Relations, AACCC; and **David Schulenburger**, Vice President for Academic Affairs, NASULGC. Each shared the top concerns of their respective associations, and also provided an honest and somewhat sober reflection on the current legislative atmosphere for higher education in Washington. These speakers

were frank in their assessment that higher ed is currently under intense scrutiny—on Capitol Hill, by the national media, and the general public— and that this environment is making it very difficult to engage in meaningful conversations on the dozens of new regulations and reporting requirements that are likely, if not certain, to be a part of the final legislation.

Focusing on the federal fiscal year 2009 budget and the future of earmarks were **Bill Paxon**, Former Congressman & Senior Advisor at Akin Gump; **Vic Fazio**, Former Congressman & Senior Advisor, Akin Gump; **David Goldston**, Former Staff Director of House Committee on Science; and **Cheryl Smith**, Clerk of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education (and Stony Brook alumna). All shared opinions on how much, or how little, progress Congress may make this year on the FY09 budget, earmark reforms, and, during these increasingly difficult budget times, the importance of advocacy for the federal research and education programs that are important to colleges and universities.

Our featured dinner speaker, **Ron Brownstein**, provided an in-depth analysis of the current Democratic primary, and commentary on what we may expect to see in the Presidential race once a Democratic nominee is determined. Brownstein, a Binghamton University graduate, is political director for Atlantic Media Company, which includes *Atlantic Monthly*, *National Journal*, and *Congress Daily*, among others.

Members of the NYS congressional delegation from across the state, and their staff, joined us at the reception on Wednesday evening where they had the opportunity to visit with meeting attendees, SUNY Brockport in Washington students, and other friends of the State University of New York. **Senator Schumer** was the featured speaker at the closing luncheon and he also shared with the group his perspective on the current earmark debate and other observations on higher education. And, while Senator Clinton was unable to attend, her Chief of Staff, **Tamera Luzzatto**, joined the group to speak about the Senator's role on the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee and involvement in the HEA reauthorization.

Overall, many friends of higher education and research, and of SUNY, in Washington, DC were able to connect with SUNY campus presidents and other representatives to learn more about our sixty-four campuses and our education, research, outreach and economic development activities. And, in return, meeting participants left with an enhanced understanding of the current federal climate for higher education, research, earmarks and the current state of affairs vis-à-vis the federal fiscal year 2009 budget.

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