

WHY SOCIAL SCIENCE?

Because People Should be at the Center of Policymaking: Reflections from COSSA's 2022 Social Science Advocacy Day

April 19, 2022

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On March 29, 2022, nearly 70 social and behavioral science researchers, students, university administrators, and other stakeholders participated in [Social Science Advocacy Day](#). This annual event, organized by the Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA), brings together advocates from across the country to engage with Members of Congress and their staff to explain *why social science* needs to be supported and how these sciences are putting people back at the center of policymaking. This year, advocates from 22 states met virtually with 88 Congressional offices in the House of Representatives and Senate. Below are reflections from three of them: a department chair, a doctoral student, and an undergraduate student.

Tell us about your experience as part of COSSA's Social Science Advocacy Day.

"COSSA's Advocacy Day was a new one for me. The two webinars I attended helped to orient me to expectations and provided basic materials and key points to make during conversations with Congressional leaders. The conversations were easy to have and the representatives I met with were eager to hear about the social and behavioral sciences."



— Kami Silk, Ph.D.
Rosenberg Professor and Chair,
Department of Communication,
University of Delaware

"During COSSA's Advocacy Day, I worked with my Texan peers to advocate for the importance of social science in government and society. Throughout the day we met with several Congressional offices to determine their priorities and perspectives on social science. Through conversations with the office's staff, we were able to advocate for the importance and value of social science while creating connections between the office and social science professionals."



— Sofi Cavenaile
Undergraduate Student,
University of Texas, San Antonio

"My experience during Advocacy Day was great from start to finish. The trainings held ahead of the day itself allowed me to reflect on the work that I've done as a PhD social work student and how I would communicate those experiences and findings with a broader goal of advocating for social science research to legislators. Ultimately, it was an opportunity to thoughtfully reflect on my own research and communicate its importance to a broader need for social science, while also being able to engage with fellow social scientists doing critical work."



— Adrianna Spindle-Jackson
Doctoral Student,
School of Social Work, Boston University

"I would absolutely encourage other students to engage in advocacy on behalf of the social sciences. I believe that this experience is beneficial to all students and gives them the opportunity to do things they wouldn't traditionally do, like meet with Congressional offices and meet social science experts from a wide variety of fields."

— Sofi Cavenaile

Why is advocacy for social science so important?

“I think this kind of advocacy for our discipline increases awareness that we do relevant work that often informs policy, but also relies on their support for appropriations that fund communication research. Making the case for the communication discipline to those outside of it is fundamental to our growth as a discipline.” — *Kami Silk*

“This was a fantastic opportunity to articulate the findings of my research while simultaneously describing its importance to social science. As a graduate student, any opportunity to describe and discuss my work is important to my growth as a student, scholar, and social science researcher. Doing so alongside established social scientists, and advocating for its applicability and importance for policy, was empowering and left me feeling energized to continue my work. As some of the newest members of our fields, I think graduate students who participate in Advocacy Day will not only benefit from the ability to communicate research and its broader relevance to social science and policy but will also bring a particular energy and lens that is critical to have at the policymaking table.” — *Adrianna Spindle-Jackson*

“I believe that advocacy work is crucial for students to engage in because this is our future. By advocating for the things we are passionate about, we are able to encourage the people in power to support our endeavors and create the change in society we want to see.”

— *Sofi Cavenaile*

“Each of us brought something unique to the table but were coming from similar foundations.” — *Adrianna Spindle-Jackson*

What did you find most beneficial about your participation in Advocacy Day?

“I found the most beneficial part of participating in this event to be the networking opportunities. As a college student, it was amazing to hear about the experiences of my Texas group peers and to learn more about their work in their fields.”

— *Sofi Cavenaile*

“What I found most beneficial was the new and direct connection to real people working on issues at the state and federal levels that are important to me personally and as a researcher. I could see the unmet potential for communication expertise to help identify barriers, develop and implement solutions, and evaluate them. I also think this advocacy work obviously serves to increase the visibility of our discipline, which I generally think is an important goal for us.” — *Kami Silk*

“One of the most beneficial aspects was being able to articulate my research alongside other social science researchers. One of the most exciting aspects of being a scholar and researcher is engaging with others and being pushed and challenged. I was excited to engage policymakers and staff with my own research but was equally excited to hear about the work everyone else was doing, and how they chose to communicate about and advocate for it.”

— *Adrianna Spindle-Jackson*

Did you learn anything new, helpful, or exciting from your participation?

“What was really interesting to hear was the focus of [policymakers’] portfolios. I learned about their specific interests in educator burnout, energy resilience, and youth mental health and their hunger for anything that might inform their policymaking on these issues. It was helpful to see that we need to better communicate any implications our work has for policymakers because it is probably naïve of us to think they will simply find it on their own.”

— *Kami Silk*

“The experience of meeting with so many congresspeople’s offices was one of the most exciting aspects of Advocacy Day because I had never gotten to do that before! I got to learn how constituent meetings happen and learned more about the individual offices we met with.” — *Sofi Cavenaile*

“It was really exciting to hear about the research of the other social scientists in my group and the multiple ways each person’s work can and should inform policy. This reinforced how important interdisciplinary collaboration is, especially when advocating for the utility of social science on the federal policymaking level. Each of us brought something unique to the table but were coming from similar foundations.”

— *Adrianna Spindle-Jackson*