



Bridging Early Career Scientists and Policymakers: Lessons Learned

Caitlyn Hall (1), Cassandra Barrett (2), Ethan Howley (3), and Jean Larson (4)

(1) School for Sustainable Engineering and the Built Environment, Environmental Engineering, Arizona State University, Tempe, United States (caitlyn.hall@asu.edu), (2) Biological Design, Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering, Arizona State University, Tempe, United States (cmbarre6@asu.edu), (3) School for Sustainable Engineering and the Built Environment, Environmental Engineering, Arizona State University, Tempe, United States (ehowley@asu.edu), (4) Center for Biomediated and Bioinspired Geotechnics, Arizona State University, Tempe, United States (jean.larson@asu.edu)

Early career scientists are in the ideal position to pioneer a culture of innovation in communication and policy alongside their technical pursuits. Early career scientists in the United States were exposed to their vulnerability to policymaker's decisions during tumultuous budget discussions in 2017 and 2018, giving them the drive to engage in science policy. However, they lack obvious avenues to develop and practice the skills necessary to be effective. Arizona state-level legislators have also expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of comprehensive science advising available to them. As early career scientists, we have developed an interactive course to facilitate a cohesive relationship between early career scientists at Arizona State University and policymakers. We have developed a curriculum for early career scientists to better understand the culture of science policy, such that they became better equipped to communicate with policy-makers and were actively involved in discussion during the formation of policy. The students used concepts learned in class and applied them in real situations, including attending and speaking at town halls and at public hearings. Our pivotal event was a water issues-focused science day at the Arizona State Capitol that took place as legislators were drafting policies to promote water sustainability and overhaul previous water legislation. This was done through workshops lead by early career scientists and policymakers. At this event, engineers and scientists shared their cutting-edge water quality, availability, and accessibility research and analysis framed particularly for policymakers to make informed science-based decisions. Policymakers lead a workshop to express their needs from scientists and identified current gaps in science advising. This was a unique experience that greatly benefitted early career scientists and policymakers, establishing potential long-term collaborations between both groups. This presentation will reflect on the lessons learned in our experience developing curricula and events for engaging early career scientists in science policy.