

From Washington Partners

Why is *Posters on the Hill* Important?

Advocacy can take a variety of forms—pleading your case to a professor or dean, asking for more resources for a project, asking your mayor to do something about local crime, or writing your U.S. Senators or member of Congress about a policy issue that you feel is important. For CUR, advocacy means talking to elected lawmakers and their staff about federal policies that support the endeavor of undergraduate research and the faculty and students who pursue it. Year in and year out, CUR, Washington Partners, and undergraduate researchers and institutions debate how federal policies might be changed to better support undergraduate research. And, year in and year out, we have all come to rely on the centerpiece event that has become crucial to those efforts—*Posters on the Hill*.

Every day across the nation, undergraduate students engage in research that is reshaping their educational plans and strengthening the research enterprise. Yet many of the 535 members of the Senate and the House remain largely unaware of what those experiences mean to undergraduates and their long-term positive effects on the students, the institutions, industry, and science. *Posters on the Hill* provides the opportunity for accomplished undergraduate researchers to travel to Washington, D.C., to present their research, engage in some advocacy, and learn a bit about the policy-making process. Many students meet with the three people who represent them on Capitol Hill and share the details of their research and how this experience fits into their career plans.

The experience includes attending an evening reception on Capitol Hill that features the researchers, their research, and their advisors. Members of Congress, Congressional staff members, federal-government officials, and other stakeholders attend the recep-

tion and are always eager to meet the undergraduate researchers. The event highlights the importance of providing federal support for undergraduate research opportunities, given their clear benefits and outcomes. It also provides what is important to any effective advocacy effort—faces and stories from real people and familiar institutions.

The event has played an important role in positive policy changes. In recent years, several members of Congress have proposed new policies that recognize the benefits of undergraduate research. There have been multiple reports from the White House that point to undergraduate research as an important strategy for encouraging interest in certain fields and helping students finish their courses of study. This year marks the 18th annual *Posters on the Hill*, and the event will once again celebrate undergraduate research and the work of CUR and its members and give supporters a chance to better explain and define undergraduate research for lawmakers, academics, and the public. By raising Representatives' and Senators' awareness of undergraduate research and leading Congressional staff members to become strong supporters of federally supported undergraduate opportunities, this event plays a crucial role in CUR's national advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C. CUR members should either try to attend or look for reports from CUR and Washington Partners on the event and its results.

Washington Partners, LLC

Washington Partners is a full-service, government-relations firm in Washington, D.C., that works with CUR to promote the interests of undergraduate research with legislators and other key policy leaders.