

ADVOCACY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

I loved the opportunity to meet with so many leaders in our field and listen to their opinions and experiences. So often in residency we focus only on clinic/OR/OKAPS. The L.E.A.P. Forward program and Congressional Advocacy Day visits helped broaden my perspective about the field and encouraged me to think outside the residency box. (2016 Advocacy Ambassador Program participant)

Program Goals:

- a) Engage and educate members in training (residents and those undergoing fellowship training) early on as to the importance of advocating for their profession (training future advocates for patients and for the profession);
- b) Help members in training understand the importance of membership and *active* involvement in their respective state ophthalmology and subspecialty societies; and
- c) Expose members in training to some of the critical issues in medicine being discussed by leaders in ophthalmology during the Mid-Year Forum and Council sessions. (Note: The Council is the policy advisory body to the Academy's Board of Trustees)

Program Elements

- Congressional Advocacy Day (CAD) Dinner Briefing - April 26
- Briefing/Reception for Advocacy Ambassador Program Participants – April 26
- CAD Visits (scheduled by the Academy's Washington DC office) – April 27
- Policy, Practice and Politics Sessions – April 27-28
- *L.E.A.P. Forward* session for Advocacy Ambassadors
(Leadership, Engagement, Advocacy, Practice Management) – April 28
- Post Hill Visits Debrief Session for Advocacy Ambassadors – April 28
- Council Meeting – April 28-29

Program Partners:

American Academy of Ophthalmology

- Waives Mid-Year Forum registration fee (\$200) for Advocacy Ambassadors
- Provides a special onsite briefing/reception for Advocacy Ambassadors with Academy, state and subspecialty society leaders
- Provides mentors for Advocacy Ambassadors' visits with members of Congress
- Formally recognizes Advocacy Ambassadors during the Mid-Year Forum Opening Session and Welcome Reception and Dinner

Program Partners: American Academy of Ophthalmology (cont.)

Offers a dedicated session for Advocacy Ambassadors, *L.E.A.P. Forward* (Leadership, Engagement, Advocacy, Practice Management)

- Provides a dedicated *Post Hill Visits Debrief* session for Advocacy Ambassadors to share Congressional Advocacy Day experiences and ask questions of Academy and society leaders
- Extends a special invitation to Advocacy Ambassadors to attend both the Surgical Scope Fund and OPHTHPAC receptions for significantly reduced contributions
- Provides a template PowerPoint presentation following the Mid-Year Forum for Advocacy Ambassadors to personalize and present to their colleagues

Participating State, Subspecialty and Specialized Interest Societies

- Sponsors the travel expenses to the Mid-Year Forum for Advocacy Ambassadors selected to attend. (State, subspecialty and specialized interest societies each determine: a) their willingness to participate; and, b) their level of financial support)
- Provides society leader “mentors” for visits by Advocacy Ambassadors to members of Congress as part of Congressional Advocacy Day
- Ensures society leader(s) attendance at required follow-up presentation by Advocacy Ambassador to their training program peers

Participating Training Programs

- Allows time in the Advocacy Ambassador's work schedule to attend the Mid-Year Forum without vacation penalty
- Where possible, helps the ophthalmology society fund the Advocacy Ambassador's travel (transportation/housing)
- Allows the Advocacy Ambassador "podium time" to relay to fellow ophthalmologists-in-training what he/she has learned at the Mid-Year Forum

Testimonials from Advocacy Ambassador Program Participants:

The L.E.A.P. Forward session was outstanding. I walked away feeling incredibly inspired and with a new sense of purpose as I returned to my residency training program. (2016 Advocacy Ambassador Program participant)

Special thanks to the American Academy of Ophthalmology for allowing residents like myself to act as ambassadors; to the individual state ophthalmology societies that generously sponsored numerous residents so they could participate in Congressional Advocacy Day; to the home institutions who made it possible for residents and fellows to take time away from their hectic schedules; and finally to my ophthalmology program -- particularly our program director, and our chair, who made it possible for all of our residents to attend. (2015 Advocacy Ambassador Program participant)