

## **Nurse in Washington Internship 2019**

Currently the President-elect for the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), I will assume the President's role in June 2019. NASN's has placed an intense focus over the past two years on changing the narrative surrounding school nursing, helping stakeholders understand the full scope of the specialty nursing practice. Having practiced as a direct care school nurse for 12 years and a Health Services Coordinator for a major Texas school district for 13 years, I now work as an Independent Consultant for School Nursing & School Health Services. In this role, I provide professional development for school nurse leaders, direct care school nurses, unlicensed assistive personnel providing support for student health, and school administrators seeking to expand their understanding of the school nurse role in student success. All of these roles require advocacy skills on my part as well as the knowledge necessary to train others in the art of effective advocacy. It is for these reasons that I pursued attendance at NIWI 2019.



The biggest takeaway for me during NIWI 2019 was the realization that school nursing is not alone in its need to change the public narrative about its practice. I was

reassured by recognition that nursing as a whole has identified that stakeholders lack knowledge about the full role the nursing profession has in quality patient outcomes, and that school nurses are not alone. Another “ah ha moment” was knowledge that the average bill takes 5-10 years to pass, requiring continued advocacy, campaign contribution, meeting in district and voting. Patience is the order of the day and building long-term relationships with Congressional representatives and their staff is essential.

I was able to expand my professional network across nursing specialties to gain better understanding of the resources available to students. The ability to meet and plan with Texas nurses attending NIWI served to increase our voice as we met with Senator Cornyn’s legislative aide, Patrick Michaels. These Texas connections will result in better in-state advocacy collaborations as we gather in August and work together to shape the legislative landscape for healthcare in our state.



NIWI training improved my skills in designing dialogue with legislators and customizing the conversation to leverage each Senator’s or Representative’s unique role, expertise, and life experience. The guidance provided allowed me to be confident in offering to send requested data at a later date. For the future, I will work to anticipate questions posed by legislators; thereby enhancing the face-to-face advocacy conversation. I am cultivating relationships with the local offices of elected officials and am more intentional in my use of Twitter and Facebook to extend my advocacy efforts to local, state and national elected officials.



I recommend the Nurses in Washington Internship to any nurse who identifies the need to enhance advocacy communication skills. I am grateful to the Nursing Organizations Alliance for making this scholarship available to me.

With Gratitude,

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