

Disability Policy Leadership Fellow Update Final Report

**Tammie Picklesimer
Center on Disability Studies University of Hawaii at Manoa**

Aloha and mahalo for an unforgettable experience:

As my final days approach I am overwhelmed by emotional thoughts that race through my mind. I am both excited and sad as I leave AUCD and the fellowship program. It feels somewhat familiar as similar feels emerged when just a year ago I left Hawaii, my home of 10 years to embark on this incredible opportunity. The wealth of knowledge and expertise at AUCD and within the network has truly enabled me to become a leader in the disability field and learn about issues and policies important to people with disabilities. Because of this opportunity and the continual mentorship from Bob Stodden, Director of the Center on Disability Studies at the University of Hawaii, I am the new Director of Policy Development for Special Education at the District of Columbia, Office of the State Superintendents for Education (OSSE). While I am temporarily leaving the network, I hope the relationships I have built over the past year will continue and I look forward to working with the AUCD staff and the network in a new capacity.

To assist future policy fellows I have prepared a summary of events and responsibilities I have participated in over the course of the year. In addition, I have provided some lessons learned and tips that I hope are beneficial.

Legislative Affairs

While small in size, the legislative affairs staff has extraordinary stature throughout the disability community and on the hill. A special “shout out” goes to Kim Musheno and Joe Caldwell who have empowered me to find my niche and support my efforts in learning DC politics. With their support and encouragement I was able to take full advantage of all available resources. Some of my responsibilities and activities included:

- Co-authored weekly Legislative News InBrief
- Expanded InBrief to Podcasting.
- Participated on the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) workgroup and gave oral testimony to the Office of Postsecondary Education.
- Represented AUCD on the Growth Model Task Force led by the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD).
- Assisted in the development of policy recommendations to hill staff.
- Developed and distributed action alerts on issues important to our network.
- Prepared and submitted Notice of Proposed Rule Making comments to OSERS, OPE, and NIDRR.
- Assisted in developing of the Joint legislative goals for The Arc/UPC.
- Drafted press releases

- Assisted in maintaining the AUCD Public Policy webpage.
- Participated in the development of the 111th AUCD Legislative Priorities.
- Assisted in developing the 111th Legislative brochure.
- Organized and coordinated the welcome packets to new members of Congress.
- Participated on and contributed to the Disability Policy Seminar Planning Committee.
- Represented AUCD on three, Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) task forces.

Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities

Being apart of CCD was an excellent opportunity to meet individuals in the disability community who have effectively changed policy for people with disabilities and their families. I value the connections I have made and really hope I can maintain these relationships. As the policy fellow I participated on three task forces and assisted with several projects.

- **CCD Transition Document:** I assisted Kim in taking the lead on organizing the CCD Obama Transition Document.
- **Education:** This task force monitors the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and the Higher Education Act and advocate for appropriate educational needs of children with disabilities and their families.
 - Attended the FY 09 Department of Education Budget briefing, Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies Subcommittee hearing on "Department of Education Budget", and various hill briefings regarding NCLB and early education.
 - Participated and contributed to the IDEA 34 CFR Part 300 Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities workgroup.
 - Participated and contributed to the Title I – Improving The Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged.
- **Employment:** The task force has been very active with the Ticket to Work Regulations, request for input on the development of the Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA) strategic performance plan for the VR Program, and strategies for reauthorizing the Rehabilitation Act and Workforce Investment Act.
- **Rights:** This was a very exciting year for the rights task force as the ADA Amendments Act and Mental Health Parity Act passed and signed into law. During this time I worked with many individuals in disability community and civil right groups which provided an excellent "how to" platform for analyzing policy. Most exciting was attending the following:
 - Mental Health Parity Rally
 - ADA House floor vote
 - ADA Rally

ADD Technical Assistance

- COCA

Part of my responsibility as the fellow is to be the liaison between AUCD central office and the Council on Community Advocacy (COCA). I serve as a facilitator to support COCA and their efforts to strengthen consumer advisory committees across the network.

TA Activities

- *Webinar*: I facilitated the, Establishing a Research Identity. This was an interactive format that explores a variety of issues germane to establishing a UCEDDDs research identity on campus. The panelists addressed the following topics; getting staff on dissertation committees, identifying incentives for research among staff, identifying incentives for researchers in the university to align with the UCEDDD, achieving recognition of UCEDDD research by the university, and anchoring the Center's research in the university's mission.
- *Orientation Menu*, with the assistance from the orientation work group I helped develop a resource for new directors to use as they navigate the system. In addition, I presented it along with Michael Benz at the ADD TA Institute on June 12 and 13. The menu includes resources and activities identified by ADD and AUCD as being helpful when complying with the ADD requirements, leveraging funds, and building positive relationships within the university.
- *Coordination and Collaboration for UCEDDD activities in States with more than one UCEDDD*. The purpose of this activity is to explore meaningful ways to support coordination and collaboration of UCEDDD activities in states with more than one UCEDDD. To gain a better understanding of what UCEDDDs are currently doing, an online survey was emailed to all UCEDDD Directors with more than one UCEDDD in their State. I worked with Jennifer Johnson to develop the survey. The results were then used to develop five questions for the focus group. A summary of findings document was submitted to ADD and the UCEDDD Directors.

AAIDD/AUCD Young Professionals Collaborative Agreement

In a cooperative agreement between AAIDD and AUCD I assisted our policy analysis in promoting involvement of students and young professionals in the field of intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- *Webinars*: I helped organize teleconferences and webinars focusing on key issues for students and young professionals, distribute relevant materials created by each organization to the other organization's membership, and co-presenting at the AUCD Annual Meeting.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was one of my favorite events this year. Interacting with individuals in the network reinforces why I want to make my way back and work at a UCEDDD. I am awe

struck by the capacity in which the network services people with disabilities and their families throughout the United States and around the world.

Conferences

Over the course of the year I attended numerous free summits, seminars, and roundtable discussions. Many experts in the field were at these meetings and being able to listen and participate in the discussion added depth and breadth to my knowledge of education and disability policy. Below is a list of some of my favorites and I encourage all policy fellows to attend as many free meetings as possible.

- Advancing Employment and Economic Self-Sufficiency: A Roundtable on Employment for People with Intellectual and Other Developmental Disabilities;
- Youth Violence Summit: Empowering Communities to Combat Gang Crime;
- Center for American Progress: Addressing the Teacher Quality Gap;
- National Disability Institute Asset Summit for Individuals with Disabilities;
- Education Policy forum: Innovative Measures of Education Achievement;
- National Journal: Power Breakfast;
- The States' Impact on Federal Education Policy: New Perspectives on Research and the Historical Record conference;
- The Evolving Federal Role in Education: Past, Present, and Future (TP), Education Sector;
- The National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) RTI Goes to Pre-K: A Comprehensive System for Early Intervention to Promote School Readiness.

Presentations

Partners in Policy Making: South Carolina

- Advancing Legislation for Persons With Disabilities - *Presenter*

PAC RIM

- Information you need to know: Advancing Legislation for persons with disabilities - *Presenter*

AUCD Annual Meeting

- Changing Demography of the Disability Field and Leadership Development of Students and Early Career Professionals - *Moderator*

Final Thoughts

When reviewing this document it is important to note that for the most part I took responsibility in shaping my experiences. I did not wait for Kim or Joe to ask me to attend a meeting but instead took the initiative to ask if I could participate. I continually asked questions, did a lot of research, and followed up with more questions. It was very important early on to minimize the learning curve so I could maximize my productivity.

Finally, read ... read and read. I would suggest reading the Washington Post, Congressional Daily, CQ, and other journals, list serves, books, and magazines everyday.

Being able to engage in conversation and provide relevant, thought provoking comments and ideas will open doors and establish a sense of credibility. You may also find yourself feeling more confident and comfortable engaging in dinner conversation and impromptu hallway meetings.