

As someone who has always been a little intimidated by the idea of advocacy (to the point of going to the Capitol!), I would have never thought Advocacy Day would be something I did, let alone enjoyed. The opportunity to participate in Advocacy Day came about through my involvement with WAIE. Through this work, I learned that Wisconsin had been highlighted as a key state and further to that, my congressional district was seen as one where big impacts could be made. Because of this, and a growing interest in learning how to be a more intentional advocate, I applied for a grant through WAIE to fund my participation.

I was relieved to find that I was not alone in my trepidation and that while there were plenty of people in attendance who were comfortable and confident in this arena, there were still many, many more, who were just like me. NAFSA did a great job of not just educating us on the issues and the world we would be stepping into, but also providing us with guidance on how we could make the most meaningful impact on the day. They also helped us to think about how we could continue our advocacy beyond our upcoming day on Capitol Hill which is honestly, something that I'd hardly considered up to that point.

What I enjoyed most, though, was the opportunity to work so closely with other international educators from around Wisconsin. We worked together to develop a plan for approaching our congressional members, sifting through stories to illustrate the myriad ways that our students had been affected by policy; the ways that we've impacted our students and been impacted by our students and the social and economic impacts of our work to our regions. We all know that the work we do is valuable but sharing our stories really helped me to remember that we are all advocates every day and that the work we do on a small scale is exactly the sort of thing that can make a big difference to the right audience.

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