

WHAT A STUDENT CAN EXPECT AT ADVOCACY DAYS

- Learn about FNA and legislative topics that relate specifically to nursing
 - Get experience with meeting and lobbying their legislators
 - Take an active role in the process that will change the landscape of their profession
 - Network with other students, professionals, FNA leaders and legislators
 - Have fun!
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You can get a better feel for what to expect by

- Taking a look at the 2014 Lobby Days Agenda found on the FNSA Legislative Committee page at <http://www.fnsa.net/legislation-committee.html>.
- Read one student's take on her experience at last year's event below. Although there are many different experiences and even perspectives, this can give you a good idea of what to expect.

DAY 1

There were seven other students and one professor from their school that carpooled together. After arriving at the conference hotel by 8am, they were greeted by a large gathering of nursing students and professions from all over the state. At the registration table in the lobby, they got their name tag and a folder with FNA information, the agenda, and legislative resources.

Everyone was moved into a main conference room where there were speakers on various topics for the rest of the morning. These included more information about FNA, the sponsor of the event, legislative issues, and lobbying tips and tricks.

After lunch was provided, everyone was split into groups, some to go to the House and others to the Senate. All the students from her school were groups with two other schools and a few professionals and FNA lobbyists. After an hour of organizing groups, they were shuttled to the legislators.

The building had halls with doors after doors. The students weren't sure who they would talk to, but they followed the group leaders and knock on doors. After entering, they would see a legislator sitting at their desk, stopping their work to greet them. Some were friendlier than others. Some were more knowledgeable on nursing topics than others. Some kept it short and others would relate more personally.

Initially, because the students weren't prepared prior to coming, it was intimidating, particularly when the legislators would ask for their students perspectives specifically! Although it was primarily the FNA lobbyists and professional nurses that were doing the talking, and although they started to feel a bit more confident after reviewing the material given to them and hearing what the professionals said, all the students wished they had been more prepared before coming!

After being shuttled back to the conference hotel, they returned to their own hotel to change and get ready for the FNA social that evening. It was at the Governor's Club and was high class. There were free drinks including wine and beer, free food, and a lot of people having a great time. No politics were allowed, and that was additional incentive for the legislators who showed up to mingle with the nurses. After two to three hours, the group headed back to the hotel. Some hung out at the hotel while others went out for a Tallahassee night on the town. Although there was no supervision for this school sponsored travel, they knew to be professional and eventually got some sleep. Their school allocated a set amount for students to go to the event, so to maximize the number that could attend, they slept four to a room.

DAY 2

After a good, free breakfast at their hotel, they returned to the convention and all gathered in the large conference room. There was plenty of water, juice and coffee to listen to one last speaker before getting shuttled to the Capitol!

Here they were able to attend a session where prescription rights of nurse practitioners was being debated. People lined up at the speaker to state their case for or against it to the committee members. The main groups that spoke were the President of FNA and someone from the AMA. Obviously the physicians were against it. The committee members would sometimes ask questions, and other times state their case in apparent attempts to convince others. At times, it was hotly debated with some obvious passion by one of the committee members in opposition. After the chair asked for each committee member to vote, the final tally was in support of the bill! Unfortunately, although the students didn't know it at the time, that was only one step in the process and it ultimately failed, by one vote!

After the session, everyone filed out and some of the group got a boxed lunch (they ran out). They then went to the old Capitol building for a wrap up session where an FNA leader talked about how amazing the event went and how great it was they were able to participate in shaping the future of nursing.

To this student, it was hard to see that perspective while going through it. After all, she and the rest of her group felt lost for a large majority of the time. It wasn't until later that she realized that her very presence, the fact that so many students, so many professional nurses, so many VOTERS, cared enough about these issues to show up in support of their cause, was the real driving force behind making changes that impact the future of nursing and all the patients they will see over the course of their career.

While talking to her, one theme did come up multiple times. She wished she had been more prepared. Well if you're reading this right now, congratulations, you're one step closer.

Keep checking the FNSA Legislative Committee page at <http://www.fnsa.net/legislation-committee.html> to be ready to talk confidently to your legislator!