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CAPTAINS IN THE CAPITAL

STUDENTS MEET WITH VIRGINIA POLICYMAKERS FOR AN ANNUAL DAY OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING

by [Kelley McGee](#) | February 28, 2024*Read time: about 2 min*

Stepping beyond the classroom and into the heart of Virginia's government, students traded textbook theories for real-world insight of legislative process at the annual Captains in the Capital Day. Led by the [Wason Center for Civic Leadership](#), the day is designed to deepen students' understanding of government, and provide the opportunity to witness firsthand the complexities of policy making and strategy. Nearly 30 students participated, including delegations from the Wason Center, the President's Leadership Program and Community Captains.

"Captains in the Capital underscores CNU's commitment to developing engaged citizens and the next generation of civic leaders who will make a positive impact on their communities and beyond," said Camille Castleberry, Wason Center Associate Director. "This event aligns seamlessly with the Wason Center's mission of inspiring the next generation of civic leaders by offering them unbiased, nonpartisan insight into the policy issues that will shape the future of the Commonwealth."

A highlight of the day was an extended welcome from Gov. Glenn Youngkin, Lt. Gov. Winsome Earle-Sears, **Secretary of Education Aimee Guidera**, and Attorney General Jason Miyares, who all engaged with students and highlighted the importance of their role in understanding the legislative process. Throughout the day, students



had meaningful discussions with a wide range of lawmakers and state officials, gaining valuable insights into the complex policy landscape in Virginia. Students also learned about the importance of building relationships and working across party lines to achieve common goals, lessons that will serve them well for whatever career paths they choose.

Ian Holloman, '24 [Accounting](#), doesn't plan to enter politics, but was impacted by a conversation with state Sen. Danny Diggs (R-District 24). "Senator Diggs shared that one of the most challenging aspects of his job is balancing his own opinions and instincts on how to address issues with the preferences of his constituents. It's a careful balancing act that requires a lot of thoughtful consideration."

Riley Spring, '27, a [pre-med](#) student, emphasized the importance of understanding the political process, and the impact individuals can and should have on shaping public policy. She wanted to attend to gain a deeper understanding of the legislative process, which she believes will be important so she can advocate for women's health in her career goal of becoming an obstetrician and gynecologist.

"It's essential for future doctors to stay informed about state and national affairs and be willing to serve on committees," said Riley, who is majoring in [Molecular Biology and Chemistry](#). "When it comes to legislation affecting women's health, having frontline providers involved is essential. As a pre-med student, I want to be aware of current political developments and will continue to stay informed as an OB-GYN because I firmly believe that frontline providers should have a seat at the table when decisions about women's health are being made."

Christopher Newport students, along with President William Kelly, were welcomed to the legislative session by state Del. Jeion A. Ward '95 (Hampton D-District 87).

"I am so pleased to welcome students from my alma mater, Christopher Newport University. Today is their annual Captains in the Capital Day, an important annual event where students are brought to Richmond to learn about lawmaking in the Commonwealth. Please join me in giving the CNU Captains a very warm, House welcome."

The students had plenty of opportunities throughout the day to make connections and network with key policymakers, such as Christopher Newport alum Nicole Ogburn, '14 [Political Science](#), who currently serves as the Director of Legislative Affairs in the Governor's Office. At the end of the day, students like Sanithia Tucker were most impressed by the willingness of legislators and policymakers to collaborate – a surprise based on what she typically sees portrayed in the media.

"I am incredibly impressed by the legislators' commitment to public service. It was inspiring to discover that those who represent us in Richmond genuinely care about the people they serve," said Tucker, '26 [Interdisciplinary Studies](#). "They are not only willing but eager to work tirelessly to ensure that the government functions effectively for the benefit of all."
