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SOCIAL WORK 'LOBBY DAY'

CAPTAINS HEAD TO VIRGINIA CAPITOL FOR LEARNING AND ADVOCACY.

by [Kelley McGee](#) | May 3, 2022*Above: Social work majors in front of the Virginia Capitol in Richmond**Read time: about 1 min*

Students hustled out of the rain into the bustling Virginia Capitol, advocacy papers in hand and personal pitches top of mind. They dispersed to various parts of the building with the goal of connecting with legislators to express their thoughts on specific bills. Advocacy work is important for these students, and a skill best learned by doing. Christopher Newport's [nationally accredited social work major](#) provides students with the opportunity to develop these skills by visiting the state capital, while the General Assembly is in session, to lobby lawmakers and learn about the legislative process.

"Legislative offices are crowded and chaotic, but also uplifting when you consider that the lawmaking process is meant to be inclusive," said Diane Griffiths, social work program director. "Politics and law making involves a lot of power playing, but students quickly learn that they can and should have a seat at the table to advocate for those who cannot easily speak for themselves."

It's a responsibility all of the social work students take seriously.

Avery Pfeiffer '23 met with her hometown representative, Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn, along with Senator Monty Mason to lobby for a bill that would create an advisory board to diagnose early psychosis and mood disorders and create effective interventions. "We had a good conversation about the importance of mental health resources and advocacy. They both showed a genuine interest in the content and effect of the bill."

“This experience taught me how important it is to be engaged with your government and representatives. It can be intimidating, but your voice matters,” said Elaina Pigue ‘23. “And it’s their job to listen.”

Anna Jane Johnson ‘23 enjoyed the opportunity to sharpen her advocacy skills, but didn’t sense the meetings she had were especially productive.

“I met with two representatives to advocate for a House bill that would provide free communication systems for all individuals in Virginia correctional facilities,” said Johnson. “Although both legislators engaged politely with me, only one of them seemed sincerely open to hearing my thoughts and purpose for being there that day.”

In the following weeks, students followed the bills they attached themselves to during their day at the Virginia Capitol. Casey Yenyo ‘23 was happy to see the bill pass that she advocated for, which prevents schools from excluding students from extracurricular activities because of lunch debt.

Whatever the outcome, most students found meaning in the process.

“I learned quite a bit from my lobby day experience. Watching and participating in the legislative process was intriguing. I’m interested in becoming involved with government or politics one day, so this experience was really valuable,” said Darcy McLane ‘23.

“As a nationally accredited social work program, we believe it’s important to provide students with opportunities like this,” Griffiths said. “These experiences enhance the core values and competencies of the social work profession, namely, social policy and social justice.”
