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Expanding the Scope of Your Research Through Advocacy and Public Relations

By Ashley Smith

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A new series of events filled the Wednesday itinerary at the 2022 INFORMS Annual Meeting. Part of the new schedule included a focus on advocacy and media outreach. A goal in the INFORMS Strategic Plan is to champion the profession and the brand, which was the focus of the advocacy sessions.

The events began with a panel discussion titled, “Expanding Your Reach & Impact through Advocacy and Outreach.” The panel was moderated by Advocacy Governance Committee Chair Kara Morgan. She was joined by INFORMS Chief Strategy & Innovation Officer Jeff Cohen, incoming INFORMS President Laura Albert of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, past president Ramayya Krishnan of Carnegie Mellon University, Anna Nagurney of the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Michael Johnson of the University of Massachusetts Boston.

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The panelists emphasized that O.R. and analytics are widely used in many areas in the private sector, but use in the public sector is still generally rare. They expressed the importance of educating those working in the public sector about how they can benefit from the tools and methods of O.R. and analytics as well as recognizing INFORMS as a resource for expertise.

The panelists themselves are members who have all been involved in the advocacy work in different forms.

Laura Albert played a key role in both INFORMS Government & Analytics summits that were held in Washington, D.C., as well as the initial adoption and start of the advocacy program within INFORMS.

Former INFORMS president, Ramayya Krishnan, currently serves on the White House National Artificial Intelligence Advisory Committee. Anna Nagurney is a media mogul, being interviewed by media from top-tier to trade publications. She told the audience about her experience and provided some tips and tricks for dealing with press. She has also been involved in several meetings with policymakers and served or presented in front of several legislative committees.

Michael Johnson is a member of the Advocacy Governance Committee and has a vested interest in improving nonprofit organizations and government agencies' operations and strategy design.

Following the panel discussion, Mark Mills took the stage. He is a seasoned communications expert and has worked on political campaigns in Washington, D.C. for many years. Mills presented an informal workshop on how to work with policymakers and media, and how to engage with them on their level.

He spoke about how to get your message across in 11 minutes or less and how to simplify research so that it is digestible for a nonacademic audience. He also broke down the media interview process, and how to write opinion editorials because it greatly differs from writing academic papers.

Countless tips were provided and the audience was engaged for both events with filled rooms and a lot of questions.

If you have any questions or feedback, the sessions were recorded and will be available through INFORMS. Please stand by for information on how to access this material. In the meantime, if you are interested in participating in these efforts, please reach out to Jeff Cohen (jcohen@informs.org) or Ashley Smith (asmith@informs.org).



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