



Science beyond the laboratory: Developing skills to be an effective advocate for science

Gone are the days when scientists could remain within their laboratories, conducting experiments in isolation. Science is becoming an increasingly interactive enterprise in which experts from diverse fields engage with one another to enhance discovery. These collaborations advance science, both through research activities and increased public awareness and support. An example of this is the [National Smoking and Tobacco Control Program](#) (NSTCP). This public-private partnership leveraged private organizations and local and state governments to change state and local policies, reducing the number of active smokers and thus smoking-associated health risks. Research teams and individual scientists should feel empowered and encouraged to participate in a variety of advocacy issues.

Here are some tips on how you can become an advocate for research at the local and national level.

1. **Discuss** your research with non-scientists.
 - Practice explaining the significance of your work to non-scientists. For example, if your research explores yeast lipid metabolism, you could say that your work focuses on understanding how fats are made and broken down. This is important in diseases such as diabetes and obesity.
2. **Volunteer** with a local school or science museum.
 - Offer to judge projects for the science fair or Science Olympiad, or offer to be a speaker for a career day. These opportunities allow you to share your expertise with students, teachers, and parents while providing additional experience communicating scientific concepts to broad audiences.
3. **Interact** with scientists in other departments, institutions, and fields.
 - The mix and mingle can provide a great platform for innovation and discovery, and perhaps lead to a new collaboration or funding opportunity.
4. **Exchange** information about local and national news and science policy issues.
 - Contribute your science knowledge or opinion about a science policy issue to a blog and keep it up-to-date to gain followers.
 - Use social media for professional networking and information gathering.
5. **Contact** your elected officials about issues important to research.
 - Increase awareness of issues important to your research.
 - Offer to serve as a subject matter expert and provide thoughtful commentary about specific research being conducted by constituents.
6. **Join** the National Postdoctoral Association's (NPA's) Advocacy Committee
 - Contribute to NPA's continued advocacy efforts on behalf of postdocs while developing critical transferable skills.

For more information about scientific advocacy, please visit the NPA website (www.nationalpostdoc.org) and refer to "A Postdoc's Guide to Advocacy: Advocacy Overview" (<http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/?page=advocacyguide>)

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