

WV-INBRE's Emily Rainey Takes Her IDeA Science to Capitol Hill



WV-INBRE student, Emily Rainey, was one of ten students in the nation selected to represent the EPSCoR/IDeA Foundation (EIF) on Capitol Hill this May.

Sponsored by NAIPI-VSA-EIF, Rainey traveled to Washington, D.C. to advocate for continued biomedical research funding through the INBRE and IDeA programs. Meeting with key staffers from the congressional offices of senators Shelly Moore Capito (WV), Joe Manchin (WV), John Kennedy (LA), Bill Cassidy (LA), Tim Scott (SC), and Lindsay Graham (SC), Rainey was in the unique position to advocate for the more underfunded states in the way of biomedical research, such as West Virginia.

Rainey shared with these staffers her experience with the WV-INBRE program and the impact biomedical research can have on states like her home state of West Virginia. “The WV-INBRE program gave me the opportunity to do important research in an academic setting that I wouldn’t have otherwise been able to do, attending a smaller, private university in a more rural area of the state,” Rainey explains. Mentored by Dr. Stan Hileman, Rainey also discussed how these professional relationships and connections can have a huge impact for students interested in biomedical research. “Prior to my internship last

summer, I truly didn’t understand the vastness of biomedical research, even in just my small area of neuroendocrinology. The research that I was able to conduct has so many implications for the health of our communities and even economic growth,” Rainey continues. Rainey’s research was titled *The Influence of Estrogen and Age on NK3R Expression in POMC Neurons*, in which she took a closer look at how the brain controls the timing of puberty onset and its regulation by nutrition. Rainey explained that such research investigates why girls in the U.S. and other developed countries are starting puberty at much earlier ages than they were a century ago. As early puberty onset has been linked to a number of negative health effects, such as obesity, metabolic syndrome, psychosocial distress, and eating disorders, Rainey explained to these congressional offices the importance that such research can have in a state like West Virginia where public health is impacted by many of these same factors.

Rainey reports, “I’m incredibly grateful to Dr. Hileman and WV-INBRE for the opportunity to represent my home state and other students interested in research and academia.” Rainey continued to say that she enjoyed the experience and appreciated the staffers, who she reports seemed to be in great support of IDeA and INBRE efforts.

We at WV-INBRE are appreciative to NAIPI, Van Scoyoc Associates (VSA), and the EPSCoR/IDeA Foundation (EIF) for sponsoring such an event. We appreciate this opportunity for Ms. Rainey, and we appreciate the chance for our students in West Virginia to share their stories and experiences with their representatives.