

February 21-22, 2008 NAM Education Fellowship
Covering Education For Your Community
At the University of California Sacramento Center

INTRODUCTION

New America Media brought together ten ethnic media from across California for a two-day training fellowship program in Sacramento, February 21-22, 2008. Housed at the University of California Center Sacramento – one block from the State Capitol - and hosted by the Center's Public Affairs Journalism program, the fellowship introduced ethnic media reporters to policy makers, researchers, seasoned mainstream journalists, and advocates working in the education field to learn how to develop and frame local education stories within a larger political context. During the two-day program, fellows learned about current education policy, how to navigate education data, and also received an overview of California government, including a tour of the State Capitol. Each fellow also received one-on-one editorial support on stories they will publish as a result of the fellowships, and became first time members of the Education Writers Association.

New America Media Fellows:

Erika Cebrero
El Mensajero
San Francisco, CA

Krishna Kumar
The Indian Am. Magazine
San Jose, CA

Zhuo (Jennifer) Liu
Sing Tao Daily News
City of Industry, CA

Irantzu Pujadas
EGP News
Hermosa Beach, CA

Ketaki Gokhale
India West
San Leandro, CA

Titi Mary Tran
Nguoi-Viet Daily News
Garden Grove, CA

Joseph Pimentel
Asian Journal
Los Angeles, CA

Sheri Stuart
Inland Valley News, Inc.
Los Angeles, CA

Nguyen Stanton
Nha Magazine
Austin, TX

Clifford Williams
The Globe Newspaper
Oakland, CA



Back Row left to right; Sheri Stuart, Irantzu Pujadas, Titi Mary Tran, Carolyn Gossen, Nguyen Stanton, Amanda Martinez, Zhuo Liu, Joseph Pimentel, Front bottom- Erika Cebrero, Clifford Williams



SEMINAR REPORT: DAY ONE

Sacramento Overview

AG Block, veteran political journalist and Program Director for Public Affairs Journalism at the Center Sacramento, led the first workshop, an overview of Sacramento and California government.

He stressed the importance of media in helping “all facets of society” understand and access public policy and policy makers, and explained the day-to-day working of Capitol Hill.

Education Policy 101

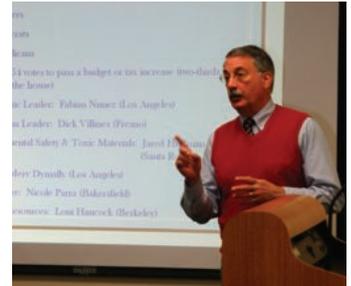
Block explained the education Governance System, how education policy moves through the legislature, and helped fellows understand the differences between the multiple education bodies in the state. For example, Block noted that the Superintendent of Public Instruction, currently Jack O’Connell, is the only statewide elected education official and yet he has extremely limited power to make education policy, compared to the Secretary of Education, appointed by the Governor who, “has more say so” in education.

Key Issues in Education--Getting Down to Facts

Rick Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Speaker of the California State Assembly, Fabian Núñez has spent more than 29 years working in and around the State Capitol primarily on issues of public education.

He led a workshop on the key issues in education and explained why the Governor has labeled 2008, “The Year of Education.” “Sacramento does not use research enough”, he stressed. “Much of today’s policy is based on anecdotes and personal experiences but, “from who?” he asked.

As the Assembly’s lead negotiator on the annual budget for public education Simpson helped reporters understand the recent budget cut, scheduled to remove 4 billion dollars from California’s education system. He also gave an overview of the 2007 research studies, collectively labeled, “Getting Down To Facts.”



AG Block, UC Center.



Rick Simpson, answers questions from fellows



Rick Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff for Speaker Fabian Nunez

SEMINAR REPORT: DAY ONE

Ethnic Media's Role in Shaping Sacramento Politics

The next session was led by Regina Brown Wilson, Public Information Officer for the Secretary of Education. Wilson, who originally comes out of ethnic media, discussed the potential for the ethnic media to "strengthen its legislative arm" and encouraged reporters to come and testify for bills that their constituency would support.

Wilson noted, "As mainstream media loses readers and credibility, ethnic media is gaining momentum in Sacramento." She stressed the importance of ethnic media becoming proactive in becoming "change agents in the capitol."

Wilson also walked through the extensive resources available at the Governor's office and directed reporters on how to reach representatives for comment in their stories.

Wilson suggested that ethnic media start a network for sharing information because, "Most often we [ethnic communities] are facing the same concerns. We should begin reaching outside of our individual ethnic groups to those who are our neighbors," she said.

Writing Compelling Education Stories

The fellows shared their story ideas and education interests with Peter Schrag, lifelong journalist, writer, and op-ed writer for the Sacramento Bee. Schrag offered a number of tips. A few include:

- focus on the kids
- individualize the stories
- be a mix of a theatre critic and a reporter
- watch out for data that can be misleading
- "trust your eyes" - don't trust administrators



*Regina Wilson Brown, Public Information Officer
for the Secretary of Education*



Peter Schrag, Sacramento Bee



*Fellows listen to Regina Brown talk
about the Governor*



*Krishna Kumar shares his story idea
with Peter Schrag*

SEMINAR REPORT: DAY TWO

Diving Into Hot Topics: Pre-K and Early Education

Jill Cannon, Research Fellow for the Public Policy Institute of California gave a power point presentation highlighting recent relevant research on preschool that shows favorable outcomes for ethnic communities. Cannon also described research that is currently being conducted on preschool from the RAND Corporation. The Q&A following her presentation focused on how to cover the “readiness gap” in the context of the achievement gap.

Early Education, Making the Legislative Agenda

Preschool California’s Senior Policy Advisor Kevin McCarthy talked about his work with senior staff and policy makers at the State Capitol to expand quality universal preschool, and set the context around the rising movement for preschool for all children. In doing so McCarthy explained past policy initiative such as Proposition 82, and gave the fellows an overview of how pre-K fits into the K-12 system.

Navigating Education Data

Mary Perry, Deputy Director of EdSource, led that day’s final workshop at the UC Center’s computer lab. Each of the journalists got the chance to get some hands-on experience about how to locate credible education data online. Perry took the journalists through a list of useful websites including Ed-Data.org. Finally, Perry registered each of the reporters to the Ed Source media listserve.



Jill Cannon explains preschool research



Kevin McCarthy describes preschool coverage in the press



Mary Perry explains the different levels of education data

SEMINAR REPORT: DAY TWO

Capitol Building Tour

The second day began with a tour of the state capitol building, where fellows visited the Governor's office, as well as the legislature.

Working Lunch: Narrowing Down Education Story Ideas

Over lunch, fellows were given the opportunity to articulate their education story ideas with one another and offer feedback to each other. Before the fellowship program began, fellows submitted story proposals on education issues ranging from the role of faith based institutions in schooling African American males to the unique challenges facing Latino immigrant students who work. During these two days, fellows were able to narrow and develop their story ideas further.

Each fellow will produce at least one education story which will be featured on New America Media's website, and also run in the fellow's home media outlet. All stories will be published by May 2008.

Individual Meetings - working with writing coach Rich Ehsen

The seminar closed with final one-on-one meetings with one of the editors from The Capitol Journal, Rich Ehsen. Ehsen was instrumental in helping the fellows get down to the specifics of constructing their news angle and identifying resources which will ultimately guide their story development.



Fellows walking up to the Capitol building



Fellows give feedback and comments on each others story ideas



Zhou Liu shares her story idea about unbalanced social maturity among Chinese students

SEMINAR REPORT:

Evaluation by Fellows

The seminar closed with a wrap-up and evaluations by fellows on the workshops and presentations. The fellows overwhelmingly reported that the seminar gave them the resources they need to do education reporting that would benefit their communities.

"I found out about a variety of education issues in other ethnic communities just by listening to the other fellows"

"I found speaker Mary Perry, deputy director of Ed Source to be particularly valuable. The resources that her organization offer are crucial for every reporter working in California"

"This fellowship provided me with the knowledge necessary to establish an education beat or column for my newspaper."

"I learned a great deal about covering and reporting on education issues. I need to share this information with my colleagues."



Nguyen Stanton and Clifford Williams compare story ideas



Fellows Sheri Staurt, Titi Mary Tran, Krishna Kumar, and Nguyen Stanton working in computer lab

*This fellowship was made possible with the support of:
The James Irvine Foundation
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
The Evelyn and Walter Haas Fund
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*