



Statewide community college delegations met with their members of U.S. Congress and their staffs at the event venue, on the Hill, and virtually during the 2022 Community College National Legislative Summit.

On the HILL

THERE WAS A SPECIAL ENERGY RUNNING THROUGH THE 2022 National Legislative Summit, as many returned to the nation’s capital for the first time since the start of the pandemic. That reality may have brought masks and social distancing, but also connection and information sharing. These are the hallmarks of the NLS: learning about the latest policy issues and providing policymakers context from campus as they consider their higher education policy positions for the next year.

The primary way participants achieve this goal is through meetings with their elected officials and their staff. Those seeking meetings with elected officials had a variety of experiences, from in-person meetings to group Zoom calls. Many were able to meet in person in Capitol Hill offices or meeting rooms. The delegations from Georgia, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Washington state all made visits in person and were sure to take pictures to mark the occasion.

Community college leaders from Iowa, well represented at NLS, were able to meet with their entire Congressional delegation. ACCT Board of Directors Vice Chair Jay Nardini was able to share the “greet sheet” with Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley. A long-time staple

of the NLS conference, this one-page document summarizes the top federal policy priorities for community colleges for the year.

When reflecting on the experience, Emily Shields, the executive director of Community Colleges of Iowa, said, “While we have had several video conferences with them in the last two years, it made a big difference to connect in person on our issues, including short-term Pell.”

Other states needed to be creative with meetings this year either due to scheduling logistics or COVID protocols. Some states, such as the New Jersey delegation, still took advantage of being together to jointly hold their remote meetings from a meeting room at the conference hotel. Neighboring state New York invited Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) to its breakfast, where she was able to speak to and chat with the community college leaders of her state.

Community college leaders from across the nation embraced this annual opportunity to meet with their elected officials, either in traditional or creative ways, and to share the important impact of their campuses in their communities and the ways that Congress can continue to support their mission.