

On the Fence About Advocacy? Why You Should Become a Part of a Powerful Movement

Hey fellow SPTs and SPTAs! I debated writing an essay that narrated my experience at the 2019 Federal Advocacy Forum, but I decided that a bulleted list is most likely as effective, if not more, since we're all required to do so much reading for school anyway. The list below explains some of the things that you will experience (just like I did) if you decide to attend the FAF. So, if you're interested, read on!

- You will receive a mentor prior to attending the FAF – this was a huge comfort for me knowing that I had a colleague who was more than happy to answer any questions I had, along with providing his own experiences and insight in order to make my first FAF as smooth as possible.
- You will be educated on all the current issues and legislation the APTA wants everyone to mention in their Senate and House of Representatives meetings – aka, you are not going in blind! I was very nervous about not knowing what to say in my meetings, but all of Monday is dedicated to informing everyone at the FAF about the current issues, and then Tuesday is spent on the Hill going to meetings.
- You will gain a deeper understanding of the importance of your APTA membership – if you're like me, then you know that being an APTA member is important, but maybe you aren't 100% certain why or how your membership dues are possibly utilized. I never realized this piece of information, but the APTA has staff members that continue to lobby for our profession the other 364 days of the year that we are not on the Hill. They are brilliant individuals that are willing to fight for our profession and deserve to be recognized.
- Networking! You will have the opportunity to connect with some of the most passionate and driven individuals in our profession, so take advantage of being in the same conference room as all of them. You definitely have something to learn from each and every one of them. Also, you never know where these connections may lead you.
- You will have a chance to meet other SPTs and SPTAs that are driven to forward our profession, just like yourself. It is a very cool feeling when you connect with a fellow student from a different area of the country, or even a neighboring state. Especially now with social media and Twitter, it is easy to stay in touch and see what everyone is up to throughout the rest of the year.
 - Additional note: many members of the Student Assembly Board of Directors (SABoD) attend the FAF each year. This group of students is especially passionate about representing all SPTs and SPTAs in the US and improving our student experience, so if you get to meet any of the SABoD members, say thanks!
- The other Minnesota students you travel to D.C. with will most likely become fast friends, making a three-day friendship feel like you have known them for years.
- Location – D.C. is an amazing city. So much to see, so little time.

Too long, didn't read:

If you are on the fence about applying to attend the FAF, do it. This experience has been transformative for me in so many different ways. I know that my career trajectory has been significantly altered and will now include advocating for our profession at a community, state, and federal level. I full-heartedly believe that physical therapy is one of the most rewarding professions to exist because we have the ability to literally change the lives of our patients. Our

profession has evolved drastically from its original form due to the unwavering efforts from so many individuals, but more needs to be done. We aren't advocating for ourselves, but rather for the wellbeing of our patients. Please do not sit back and take the hard work of the PTs and PTAs before you for granted. Join them.

I am humbled and honored to have had this opportunity to represent the University of Minnesota at the 2019 FAF and wish to thank Eva Norman, the MNPTA, the APTA, and all the other individuals that assisted me along the way. Thank you!

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