Executive Director Message

It has been a productive and successful summer. The week after Memorial Day we hosted the American Political Science Association’s annual State Politics and Policy conference, attended by about 150 scholars of state politics from around the county. We organized 28 panels on a broad variety of topics, focused on the theme of “reform.” We also brought in several keynote speakers, including former Assembly Member Fred Keeley.

In June we co-sponsored a conference on higher education with our colleagues at the Pat Brown Institute at CSU Los Angeles. The event brought together state policy leaders, faculty, staff, students, and others to discuss the future of higher education in our state. We opened the event with a panel of three key figures who are intimately familiar with the Master Plan for Higher Education, which still serves as a foundation for our higher education system.

In June we also sponsored a symposium examining cultural and historical aspects of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta region. The project is headed by the Center’s visiting scholar, Dr. Robert Benedetti, and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. We were pleased to highlight this prime example of “California Studies” for an engaged audience from the Capitol community and beyond.

In July, we convened the annual Legislative Staff Management Institute (LSMI), in partnership with the University of Southern California’ Sol Price School. The Center and the Price School together put on this institute annually for state legislative staff from around the country. This year we had 43 participants representing 23 states and Guam. An eight-day program, LSMI is sponsored by the National Council of State Legislatures. This is the 11th year we have administered the program.

These are just some of the summer’s highlights. The Center is also in the midst of a strategic planning project to map out our vision through 2020. Your input and suggestions are always welcome.

Envisioning California Conference

California’s Liquid Gold: Brewing & Winemaking in the Golden State

Please join us Friday, October 2, 2015 for the 26th annual Envisioning California Conference at the Sacramento Tsakopoulos Library Galleria.

As a follow-up to our 2013 Food for Thought conference, this Envisioning California Conference will explore recent trends in brewing and winemaking, examine current policy implications, and consider possible future developments in the industry. It will also provide an opportunity to talk directly with California winemakers and brewers, to sample their products, and join a broader conversation about California’s liquid gold. Lunch will include a buffet lunch catered by Amador County chef, Beth Sogaard and keynote addresses by Amelia Morán Ceja, President of Ceja Vineyards and Natalie Cilurzo, Co-Owner and President of Russian River Brewing Company.

For additional information and to register by September 21st see the Center’s webpage or join the event on Facebook.
The LegiSchool Project: Fall Update

Last year LegiSchool celebrated its 20th year of bringing civic engagement opportunities to students throughout California. We continued our long-standing tradition of Town Hall Meetings, covering the elections, high-speed rail and corrections in California. Our contests received a record-breaking number of submissions that inspired critical thinking and creativity in students across the state. The summer internship once again brought six students from Sacramento area high schools into state government to gain first-hand experience with all three branches.

As we enter our third decade of service, we look forward to continuing to bring students to the State Capitol to meet with leaders and discuss important public policy issues. At this year’s Town Halls we will ask students what they think about art education in schools, the minimum wage and the regulation of sugary drinks. Our essay contest will encourage critical thinking from students about why youth participation in elections is so low. At the legislative summit, the winners of the essay contest will provide their thoughts to state leaders on how we can increase civic participation among young people. Lastly, LegiSchool will once again be selecting an educator to receive our Teacher of the Year award, recognizing an educator who engages their students in matters of public policy and state government.

For more information on the LegiSchool Project and all of our activities, please visit: csus.edu/calst/legischool_project.html
Assembly Member
James Gallagher,
Assembly Fellow 2003-04

James Gallagher was an Assembly Fellow in 2003-2004 in the office of then-Assemblyman Doug LaMalfa. Following his fellowship year, he worked as a Field Representative in LaMalfa’s office while earning a law degree from UC Davis. Gallagher went on to practice agricultural law in Yuba City while helping with his family’s rice farming business. In 2009, Gallagher took office as a Sutter County Supervisor, where he served until 2014, when he was elected to represent the 3rd Assembly District. Assemblyman Gallagher represents the counties of Glenn, Sutter, Tehama, Yuba, and portions of Butte and Colusa.

“The Capital Fellows Programs provided me with an unparalleled opportunity to gain experience in the legislative process, hone my analytical and communication skills, and network with some of the most prolific policy and political minds in California. I was able to work on a wide array of issues ranging from increasing timber harvesting to improving the community college system. The knowledge and expertise I acquired during the fellowship helped prepare me for a future in law, politics, and governance -- and ultimately led me back to the State Assembly.”

Assembly Member
Patrick O’Donnell,
Assembly Fellow 1998-99

I was born and raised in Long Beach, and graduated from California State University, Long Beach with a degree in History and Master’s Degree in Public Administration. I still live in Long Beach with my wife and our two daughters. Prior to being elected to the California State Assembly, I was a classroom teacher for over 20 years and served on the Long Beach City Council for over 10 years.

I sought the Assembly Fellowship because I saw it as an extension of the work I did in my classroom. The State Capitol is the place where we move California forward and the fellowship is where one learns how to move the Capitol forward. I wanted to learn the inner workings of the Capitol and what happens when policy meets politics. I can assure you the fellowship did not let me down.

Fellowship Program Mentor Profile: Brian Weinberger

The California Senate Fellows are celebrating their 43rd year as a key service learning opportunity for future legislative staff and leaders in public service. As part of the Capital Fellows Program, the success of the Senate Fellows can be directly attributed to a cadre of key mentors in their placement offices. One such mentor who has contributed greatly to the program is Brian Weinberger.

As Principal Consultant to the Senate Governance and Finance Committee, Brian has mentored 8 fellows in his 9 years with the committee. Characterized by his fellows as being extremely patient, encouraging, and positive, Brian sees value for himself in the time he gives to the program. According to Brian, “Mentoring a Senate Fellow provides benefits that extend far beyond the reliably good work that they perform during their placement with the Governance & Finance Committee. Introducing bright and hard-working Fellows to policy committee work and the general legislative process allows me continually to deepen my understanding of my job and sharpen my professional skills,” he concluded.

Brian doesn’t limit himself to helping just the fellow assigned to the his office; Brian is a key instructor during the five week “boot-camp” orientation that the Senate Fellows go through each year. He leads workshops on the Legislative Process, How to Write a Bill Analysis, and our capstone Mock Hearing exercise. Additionally, Brian makes himself available throughout the year to all the Senate Fellows on their bill issues and provides sound advice. If ever there was an ideal model of mentoring, Brian Weinberger is the real deal.
Hodson Assistance Fund

Three years after the Timothy A. Hodson Capital Fellows Assistance Fund was established, the Fund continues to support each class of incoming Capital Fellows with its needs-based awards. This summer, awards totaling $10,000 were granted to 18 incoming 2015-16 Capital Fellows – providing the critical financial bridge needed to start the fellowship, covering costs ranging from housing deposits to professional wardrobe. We are gratified by the continued support of Center friends, the Hodson family, and a new partnership with Southern California Edison. For more information contact Pam Chueh at 916-278-6906.

Thank you...

A $3,000 grant from Southern California Edison allowed for an increase in both the number and size of awards granted this year. “Edison has the great fortune of having eight former Fellows that currently work for the company and we understand first-hand the positive contributions to state service that fellowship participants can make, as well as their impact in the private sector,” said Gaddi Vasquez, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for Edison International and Southern California Edison. “We are pleased to be working with the Tim Hodson Assistance Fund to provide financial support and assist future Fellows make their transition into the Fellowship Program.”

Recipient Profile: Bethany Renfree (2014-15 Senate Fellow)

“Opening the email last spring and reading that I had been selected to the Senate Fellows Program was the most exciting news I’ve ever received, and this year has truly been the most fulfilling experience of my life, both professionally and personally. However, as excited as I was to fully immerse myself in this unique opportunity, I was equally concerned about the logistics of transitioning from being a single mother receiving public assistance and earning income as a graduate assistant to a full-time position at the Capitol. One of my primary limitations was transportation. In order to raise my children in a community where I have lots of much needed support, I commute over sixty miles each day to Sacramento. The Hodson Assistance Fund assisted me with transportation. This has made all the difference in enabling me to participate in the fellowship.”

Please consider supporting future Capital Fellows by donating to the Timothy A. Hodson Capital Fellows Assistance Fund at the link below: https://secure.www.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/CSN/onlinegiving/showGivingForm.jsp?form_id=1562

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