

Swem Library Engages William & Mary Faculty, Staff on Trip to D.C.

by Tami C. Back

Before sunrise on February 28, nearly 30 William & Mary faculty, staff, and librarians boarded a bus for Washington, D.C. The destination of the bus was the Library of Congress, where participants had the opportunity to tour the library, obtain library cards, conduct research, and meet with librarians with knowledge in their disciplines. Swem Library and the W&M Washington Office partnered to offer the trip to the campus community.

"Part of our mission at Swem Library is to support and enhance teaching and research at the College. This trip was designed to do just that," said Carrie Cooper, Dean of University Libraries. "It provided faculty with an opportunity to explore collections at the Library of Congress, and gave our librarians a chance to build relationships and learn specifically about the research interests of our faculty and how we can be supportive."

The idea for the trip arose last semester following a campus survey in which faculty and staff ranked the Library of Congress as the most important resource in Washington, D.C. Adam Anthony, director of the W&M Washington Office, shared this finding with Dean Cooper, and the idea of a field trip to D.C. was born.

"We immediately knew a trip of this kind could have amazing

potential," said Anthony. "Attendees would be able to connect with colleagues, and we would have the opportunity to inform faculty and staff about the Washington Office and how we can work with them."

Knowing that there was inter-

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est in a visit to the Library of Congress didn't prepare the staff for the overwhelming response they received. In less than 24 hours, all 30 seats on the bus were filled, and more than 20 people placed their names on the waiting list.

"The energy on the bus that morning was great," said Don Welsh, Swem's interim associate dean of Research and Public Services. "Everyone was looking forward to our journey to D.C. We were excited to have an entire bus of faculty as a captive audience for several hours!"

Swem librarians and staff took advantage of their captive

audience by asking faculty about their research interests and current projects and bringing attention to W&M's library resources.

"When librarians are informed about faculty research interests, we can do a much better job making decisions about our collections," said Martha Higgins, head of the Swem's Research Department. "We can also point out resources at Swem and other campus libraries that may be useful to faculty in their research, as well as in curriculum design."

A tour of the Library of Congress was not the only activity on the day's itinerary. Attendees were able to obtain a Library Reader Card to access the library's collection, and Abby Yochelson of the Library of Congress set up appointments for faculty to meet with librarians and archivists in their fields of study.

"This trip was a great opportunity to meet and interact with colleagues from the W&M community and staff from the Library of Congress," said trip participant Tiffany Beker, W&M's social media coordinator. "My meeting with Andrew Weber from the Law Library of Congress was very helpful in providing insight on how

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a similarly-sized social media organization was run and offered great tidbits for me to take back to W&M.”

Following lunch at the Library of Congress cafeteria, some members of the group traveled to the National Archives for a behind-the-scenes tour with John Powers, a National Archives analyst and W&M alumnus. Other trip participants chose to stay at the library to do further research. Several W&M alumni residing in D.C. were able to join the group for the tour.

“We were happy to welcome W&M faculty and staff to the National Archives, and to showcase some of our rarest and most treasured documents,” said Powers. “It

was exciting to have visitors see documents that helped make our nation great, and it was special for me to be able to share this experience with faculty and staff from my alma mater.”

The trip concluded with a reception and dinner at the newly renovated Hawk-N-Dove, where attendees were able to chat with one another and reflect on the day’s activities, followed by the trip back to Williamsburg.

Based on feedback from participants, the trip was a resounding success! Fifteen out of 16 survey respondents said they would recommend the trip to their colleagues. Half of all respondents reported that the trip increased

their knowledge of Swem Library resources, and almost all respondents said it improved their knowledge of the W&M Washington Office.

“Our trek to D.C. was smartly coordinated, relaxed and truly productive, especially getting to know new faculty friends and W&M professional staff,” said trip participant George Greenia, professor of Hispanic Studies.

Swem Library and the Washington Office are using the feedback from the survey to plan next year’s trip, and are looking forward to once again engaging with faculty and staff from throughout the campus community. **VI**