

In Conversation with US Congressional Staffers

FASS organised an informal dialogue session involving 16 US Congressional Staffers and 23 FASS students on 17 April 2009. The Congressional Staffers delegation was in Singapore for a week-long visit from 11 to 19 April 2009, organised by the Singapore International Foundation, in partnership with the US-ASEAN Business Council, Inc.

The 16 visitors included legislative directors and assistants, as well as Chiefs of staff and policy advisors working in the office of different Senators and Congressmen. The staffers were from Democratic and Republican offices representing 15 different states. FASS students from various disciplines were present.

At the 90-minute dialogue, the Congressional Staffers asked many questions including: what the most popular disciplines in Singapore's tertiary institutions are, how American culture has affected Singaporeans, what students feel about the local education system, and how young people spend their weekends. FASS students spoke freely about their hobbies and praised the education system; they also expressed concerns about the lack of civil society in Singapore and the pressures in meeting parental and societal expectations. The issues of ethnic integration and Singapore's national identity were particularly interesting for the American visitors.

FASS students also found the dialogue enlightening. A Communications and New Media Masters student, Anuradha Rao, felt proud to air her opinions to an interested audience, "It was a wonderful learning experience – it's nice to know that even amongst high profile guests and NUS intellectuals that our opinion counts!"



At the end of an enlightening exchange



Meeting for the first time



A lively exchange