

**Kevin M. Foster, PhD, Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin**

2009-10 S&T Policy Fellow; Health, Education & Human Services Program; National Science Foundation, Directorate for Education and Human Resources, Division of Undergraduate Education, Math and Science Partnership

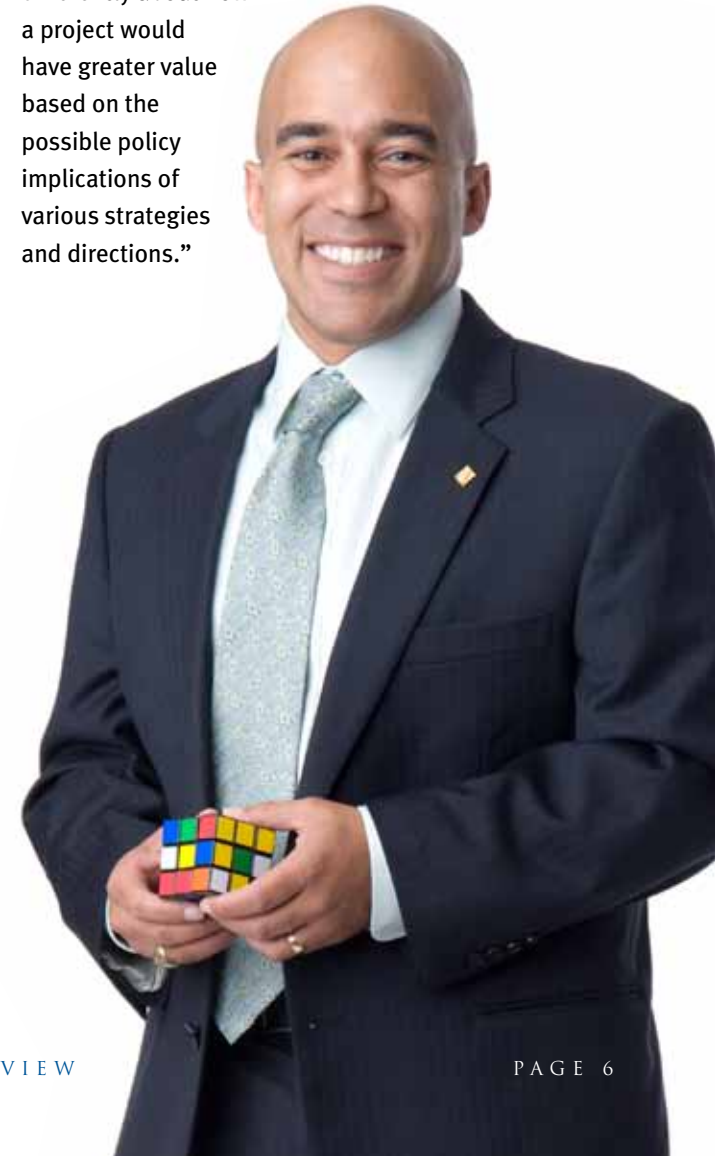
As executive director for the Institute for Community, University & School Partnerships at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), Kevin Foster felt that progress to provide resources that enhance student college readiness programs was being hindered by

innovative strategies to forge and maintain partnerships proved advantageous. He visited with university leaders to advocate for their support of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) faculty participation in K-12 development and school reform. He also provided resources for NSF program officers working with MSP grantees.

“Differences in roles, institutional structures, and day-to-day realities must be taken into account if a given partnership is to be successful. My anthropological training prepared me to address these dynamics for more effective problem solving,” Kevin explained.

summer in Washington attending a children’s theater workshop sponsored by Howard University. “Ultimately, the fellowship opportunity expanded the horizons for everyone in my family,” he noted.

Kevin is already applying lessons learned from his fellowship back at UT Austin. “I gained new understanding of effective practices within government-supported programs, and I have a whole new perspective on my own research,” he said. “I think differently about how a project would have greater value based on the possible policy implications of various strategies and directions.”



The assignment at NSF provided opportunities to learn new skills as well, including producing a video public service announcement featuring Congressman Lloyd Doggett (Texas-D), which aired for college-bound high school students in the Congressman’s districts designated as “high need” for education support. Kevin also participated in the AAAS Fellows’ STEM Education Affinity Group to convene a panel of experts from around the country to discuss methods and collaborations for greater achievements in K-12 STEM education.

While a year in Washington, D.C. resulted in significant advantages to Kevin’s career, it also placed him thousands of miles away from his wife and two children who remained at home. “I couldn’t have done this without their support,” said Kevin. He traveled back to Texas twice a month from September to May, and his two children, who were ages seven and nine, spent the

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some federal policies. He wanted to understand how federal policy decisions are made, but wasn’t convinced that an anthropologist “would make the cut” for the AAAS S&T Policy Fellowships. He did, and Kevin soon learned that his social science background and experience as an assistant professor at UT Austin were exactly what the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Math and Science Partnership (MSP) program was seeking.

Despite the mutually beneficial goal to support innovative partnerships for improving K-12 student achievement in mathematics and science, the MSP often was challenged with lack of connection between school teachers, administrators, and government officials. Kevin’s knowledge of diverse populations as well as