



DOs and DON'Ts of LOBBYING

The Basics:

Be Prepared — Do your homework. Legislators have relatively small staffs, and they depend upon lobbyists and constituents for much of their information. Providing legislators with organized, useful, clear and concise information will assist them in making informed decisions.

Be Honest — Your word and credibility are your bond, and your integrity will be judged by your honesty. There are two key rules to remember:

- * Do not hesitate to say: “I don’t know, but I can get that information for you.”
- * Do not guess or make up an answer.

Be Brief — State your views concisely and clearly.

- * Do not waste the most valuable commodity a legislator (or anybody else) has — time. Be sensitive to time constraints; some legislators may have only a few minutes to meet with you, so be prepared and be succinct.
- * Know the basics, but don’t worry that you’re not an expert (you’re not expected to be). Present your points from the perspective of your campus and its needs.
- * Provide anecdotes and specific examples pertinent to your role as a faculty member/student on your campus regarding the effects of budget cuts and/or legislation on students and faculty.
- * Anticipate tough questions, such as “If we don’t cut schools, where do you think we should cut?” Often stating a simple “I don’t know” followed by an alternative solution (such as raising revenues) will prevent embarrassing political situations.
- * Do not overkill. Recognize when you’ve gotten what you came for, or as much as you’ll get. A legislator will avoid you in the future if you ramble, or otherwise waste his/her time. And be an active listener; be sensitive when a legislator wants to talk.

Be Respectful and Polite — Always address legislators properly (Assemblyman/woman or Senator). Keep disagreements straightforward, but don’t personalize the arguments. Focus your arguments on facts and reasons behind disagreements — not personalities. If a legislator currently does not support you on an issue, accept that fact, yet continue lobbying through district visits and letters. Always remember that the same legislator could be your ally next time.

More Tips:

Breathe — Just take a few deep breaths before meetings and during stressful situations. It will help you to relax and collect your thoughts.

Be Reliable — When you make an appointment with a legislator, keep it. Be punctual. If you need to cancel an appointment, call the legislator's office (have phone number with you) as soon as you know. When you tell a member you will send information, do so promptly.

Select a Spokesperson and Assign Roles — Appoint a member of your group to introduce everyone and begin the conversation. Plan what each member of the group will discuss, and role-play your parts prior to each meeting. If students are in your group, aim for diversity, including first generation going to college, student in EOPS, paying fees, navigating the transfer process – difficulty finding courses, etc. *Give everyone in the group an opportunity to speak*. It's also important for each person in your group to take notes for later debriefing.

Don't Be Timid or Awestruck — These are your elected representatives who also happen to be human. As a constituent, you shouldn't allow a legislator to dominate the conversation or give speeches. Courteously, but forcefully, make your points and ask your questions. Try to get the member "back on point."

End Your Visit with a Question — Ask how they'll vote on an issue (something many constituents forget to do) or ask if you can send additional information. If the member hasn't taken a position on your issue yet, offer to respond to any concerns he/she may have with follow-up information.

Leave Something Tangible With Your Legislator — A fact sheet or a copy of a bill (if applicable) — anything that visually will remind your legislator of your visit and your position on an issue.

Debrief and Follow-Up — Immediately following the meeting, members of your group should review their notes to be certain everyone knows (1) what was said; (2) what was promised by all parties; and (3) what next steps are needed to gain (or maintain) the legislator's support.

Honestly evaluate the group's performance before your next meeting to identify your collective strengths and weaknesses. Then, coordinate your efforts so that any promises made (i.e. sending more information, attending a district office meeting, etc.) are fulfilled in a timely manner. Also, be certain to provide an assessment of your meetings to FACCC and/or another organization for which you're lobbying.

Thank You Letter — Be sure to send a letter of thanks that (1) expresses your appreciation for the visit; (2) summarizes the purpose of the visit; and (3) reiterates the action you want taken by the legislator. The letter should be handwritten or typed (not photocopied form letters!) and mailed within a few days of the meeting.