



Lobbying 101

NAGPS Best Practices Vol. 1, Issue 1

Editor: Kristi Kremers, University of Minnesota
Contributing Author: Jacob Chin, University of Minnesota

Lobbying 101

This guide is designed for graduate and professional student organizations who wish to amplify their lobbying efforts by infusing best practices. We hope this guide will serve as a useful tool for you. If you have any additions, questions, please email lcc@nagps.org.

The National Association of Graduate-Professional Students sponsors Legislative Action Days twice a year. For more information on dates, please visit: www.nagps.org.

Top 10 Lobbying Tips for Graduate Student Organizations

By Kristi Kremers

1. *Develop a relationship with the government affairs staff on your campus.*

Most universities have dedicated staff who track state and federal legislation. They are often invaluable resources when it comes to understanding the personalities and dynamics behind the scenes of local, state and federal politics. Get to know them, and have one of your Executive Board members schedule regular meetings to keep abreast of new developments that may impact your student body. They should be your first point of contact when planning lobbying trips to Washington, D.C. or to your state capitol.

2. *Never underestimate the power of a polished appearance, and speech.* First impressions really do matter, especially when you have a limited amount of time to make an impact. Choose student leaders who can represent your organization in a thoughtful, articulate way without sounding elitist, or uninformed.
3. *It takes time.* Be patient with the

progress you make, and institutionalize resources dedicated to your lobbying efforts so that when new leadership transition in, they can pick up where you left off.

4. *Know the key players.* At the state level, set up meetings with your Governor's office, the chairs for various higher education committees, and sympathetic allies. At the federal level, work with your government affairs liaisons to determine which committees are most important to target based on impending legislation, and for future strategic positioning.
5. *Maximize local resources.* Whether you have a public affairs Masters or PhD program, or other related academic units or offices on campus, use their expertise to provide training on effective lobbying techniques for your executive board, and student body. If your organization cannot afford to lobby in Washington, D.C. or make a trip to the state capitol, meet with your representatives locally. Contact their staff to see when they will be coming to your area, and invite them for an on-campus tour. *(continued on pg. 3)*

6. *Know yourself, know your team.* Keep in mind the strengths of each person on your lobbying team. Is Kate great at research? Is Todd a phenomenal speaker who can easily connect with people? Never take on the organization of lobbying on your own. Use the strengths of your team and you will not only be more effective and efficient, but you will help cultivate student leaders who are in the know. This helps to further infuse a culture of lobbying within your organization, and you'll have more folks who understand the importance of funding your lobbying efforts.
7. *Know the facts.* How many millions of dollars does your institution receive in federal funding? In state funding? How will tuition increases impact students at your institution? Gather this data in coordination with university officials, conducting surveys, and simply by chatting with your constituents.
8. *Have a story.* Are you a first-generation college student? Do you receive federal funding? Are you working on innovative research that will benefit the citizens of your state? Make sure that you have a story that's relatable and of interest to the person you are speaking to.
9. *Be professional.* Have folders with your university or organizations logo with business cards, and literature on the issues you are advocating on behalf of.
10. *Follow-up.* Lobbying is a continuous effort, and you should always send handwritten thank you cards to those who spent time with you. Make sure a member of your team is coordinating this effort, and following-up on the follow-up!

Congressional Meetings: Timing and the Zen of When

By Jacob Chin

Plan your meeting well in advance. You should set up your meeting at least six weeks before your planned appointment. You can find the congressional schedule by looking at the House or Senate website at www.house.gov or www.senate.gov or by calling the Member of Congress' office.

When calling to make an appointment:

- **Introduce yourself as a constituent.**
- **Explain the issue you would like to discuss.** Be clear about any sense of urgency.
- Be flexible and accommodating of your member's (or staff person's) schedule.
- Obtaining a meeting may be a long and difficult process. **Be polite but persistent.**
- Make sure you get the name, title and email address of the person who scheduled your appointment and the staffer you are scheduled to meet with.
- Immediately after you schedule a meeting, **send a confirmation letter via email and fax** that includes the date, purpose of your meeting, and a list of people attending.
- Several days before the meeting, call the member's office to confirm your appointment.
- Call again the day of your meeting. If you have only scheduled a meeting with a staffer ask again if the member might be available to join your meeting (it doesn't hurt to keep trying and schedules often change the day of).

Lobby with Class: Remember the Three C's

By Kristi Kremers

Dress as if you were applying for a professional interview at the White House. All garments should be clean and pressed. Cover up any tattoos and visible piercings. Ladies, you can keep the jewelry in your ears, but keep it toned down. No tennis shoes, jeans, short skirts, visible cleavage, or spandex. Did I really need to remind you about the spandex? Most of this is common sense, but if you want handouts to provide your staff, connect with your career services office for handouts on appropriate attire for professional interviews.

A more recent development is the right to bare arms: Ladies, you can channel your inner Michelle Obama, but keep it classy. Know when you have the right to bare arms, or if it is too distracting.

For gents, it is important to have a well-tailored suit on hand. Make the investment for your lobby trip and you'll be set for the post-graduation job search.

Remember the three Cs: Be comfortable, confident and crisp and that should help guide your wardrobe selections.



SMART TIP: BRING AN EXTRA PAIR OF COMFORTABLE SHOES FOR THE LONG WALKS IN BETWEEN VISITS TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVES AND CONCEAL THEM IN YOUR BRIEFCASE OR A PROFESSIONAL LOOKING BAG.

Programming Ideas

Advocacy Breakfast Club

This is a new initiative that we started at the University of Minnesota. More information will be posted at: www.gapsa.umn.edu/governmentaffairs/

Each session of the breakfast club will include an interactive discussion followed by group work and action planning. Sessions will cover: Democracy and Public Issues (Oct 9, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.), Power (Nov. 6, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.), Relationship Building (Dec. 4, 8:30-11am), and Advocacy / Lobbying, Group Accountability (Jan. 22, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.).

Legislative Certificate Program

In coordination with the undergraduate student body, we created a legislative certificate program that met for 6 sessions. Each meeting featured a guest speaker such as one of our Regents, the mayor of Minneapolis, former legislators, and training provided by government affairs specialists. Create your own certificate program that builds upon pre-existing resources, and collaborate with other student groups.

Helpful Links

NAGPS Legislative Action:
<http://www.nagps.org/legislative>

Chronicle of Higher Education:
www.chronicle.com
**Higher education news and data source*

Council of Graduate Schools Public Policy:
<http://www.cgsnet.org/Default.aspx?tabid=142>
**Information on public policy specifically related to graduate education*

Inside Higher Education:
<http://www.insidehighered.com/news>
**Higher education news*

Roll Call
<http://www.congress.org>
**An essential resource for any visit to D.C.*

State Higher Education Executive Officers:
<http://www.sheeo.org/>
**Great information at the state level*