



# THE BASICS OF ADVOCACY

AS A  
GRADUATE DEAN,

*you know that advocacy is essential to advancing policies that promote graduate education and research. CGS encourages member deans to work with their institution's government affairs department to advocate for issues impacting graduate education.*

IDENTIFY  
**WHO, WHAT,  
& WHEN,  
WHERE,  
HOW.**

## LET US HELP.

### WHO?

#### WHO INFLUENCES POLICY AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING DECISIONS?

*Policymakers (local, state, federal) and public stakeholders. Engaging with public officials helps to center the graduate education community's goals in local, state, and federal conversations.*

#### WHO ARE YOUR INSTITUTIONAL STAKEHOLDERS?

*Provost/Chancellor, faculty, campus offices such as financial aid, student groups, and alumni. Informing and collaborating with institutional stakeholders can underscore the importance of graduate education and bring graduate education into the larger conversation on your campus. In some cases, activating these groups can increase who advocates alongside you.*

### QUESTIONS

FOR CGS  
ADVOCACY?



Amy Scott  
Associate VP, Government  
Relations and Public Policy  
[amscott@cgs.nche.edu](mailto:amscott@cgs.nche.edu)



Eriech Tapia  
Government Relations and  
Public Policy Officer  
[etapia@cgs.nche.edu](mailto:etapia@cgs.nche.edu)



# WHAT?



## WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?

Define what you aim to achieve. Determine the issues impacting your graduate programs and the changes you hope to see. This will serve as the foundation for crafting your advocacy plan of action.



## WHAT FACTS CAN YOU PRESENT?

Shape your story. Facts and figures that present the importance of the issue make for effective advocacy. Include information on the distinctiveness and quality of your graduate programs, alumni contributions to their fields, and recognition that your students and faculty receive through publications, citations, grant awards, and conference presentations.



## WHAT IS THE "ASK"?

Outline the result. Knowing what you want to accomplish during your meeting will shape your request. Be concise and clear in what you ask. Policymakers (and their staff) want to be helpful. Asking them to support a specific solution is mutually beneficial.

SCHEDULING MEETINGS WITH HOUSE AND SENATE OFFICES DURING SCHEDULED **RECESS PERIODS** MAY LEAD TO LONGER MEETINGS AND MORE TIME TO PRESENT YOUR ARGUMENT.

# WHEN

**APPROPRIATE,** RESPECTFULLY "UP THE ASK." IF A MEMBER OF CONGRESS AGREES TO COSPONSOR A PIECE OF LEGISLATION, ASK IF THEY WILL MAKE A FLOOR SPEECH OR CALL THE CORRESPONDING SENATOR REGARDING THE BILL.

# WHEN?



## WHEN ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE TIMES TO ADVOCATE?

All year round. Provide current information on the issue and outline upcoming events that might impact the issue. Communicate again when the events are taking place or when circumstances have changed.



## WHEN IS THERE AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADVOCATE?

When you recognize it and seize it. An opportunity for advocacy may be during a conversation with the Chancellor or Provost or in a formal meeting with a public official. When you have the chance to discuss an issue and make a case for the cause, take it.

IF ATTENDING A VIRTUAL  
**TOWN HALL,**  
ARRIVE EARLY AND  
IMMEDIATELY INDICATE  
THAT YOU HAVE A  
QUESTION OR  
COMMENT,  
INCREASING THE  
LIKELIHOOD THAT  
YOU GET TO SPEAK.

## WHERE?

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings with legislative staff have become more normal. However, direct interactions with constituents most strongly influence legislators and staff.



**IN-  
PERSON  
MEETINGS**



**VIRTUAL  
MEETINGS**



**OVER  
THE  
PHONE**



**LETTERS**



**SOCIAL  
MEDIA**

## WHY?

### **WHY SHOULD YOU ADVOCATE FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION?**

Advocacy is essential to effecting positive change. Policymakers hear from stakeholders representing all facets of higher education, research, and the workforce. Graduate education's voice is stronger when it is unified.



### **A FEW ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

- **What are your institution's protocols for meeting with policymakers?**
  - Is there a liaison on campus or in DC who must be consulted? Accompany you? Make the appointments? Provide talking points and materials? Are they the only people on campus outside of the top administration who can have such meetings?
- **How many issues are you discussing?**
  - Your audience is more likely to be receptive and attentive to your points if you only present 2-3 talking points and no more than 2-3 pieces of legislation.
- **How many people are attending?**
  - Generally speaking, Senate offices can accommodate larger groups (more than 4-5 people) than House offices.
  - It's always a good idea to ask if there is a limit to the number of participants, and provide names and titles of attendees in advance so staff are not surprised by a large group.

# HOW?

AIM FOR  
**SIMPLE  
MESSAGING**  
AND A  
**GOOD STORY.**



## HOW WILL YOU GET YOUR POINT ACROSS?

*State the importance. Make clear why your issue matters. Narrate the contributions your graduate programs make to the workforce, the larger community, or to research. Describe what makes your programs and community unique.*

*In addition, present a succinct narrative. Anecdotal storytelling leaves a lasting impact. Put a face to an issue or bill.*



## HOW WILL YOU PERSONALIZE YOUR MESSAGE?

*Know your audience. When speaking with policymakers, get to know their story and their staff; visit their website; learn their alma mater and discipline; familiarize yourself with their common legislative issues; and know their committee membership.*



## HOW WILL YOU LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION?

*Compile materials to bring with you and leave behind (or send digital versions). Before the meeting, prepare key legislative and political context for the issue. Collate briefs, data, infographics, and talking points that identify the impact on the district and the direct relationship with constituents.*



*Legislative staff will appreciate you preparing materials. Keep them unbiased and between 1-2 pages.*

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT  
ISSUES CGS PRIORITIZES, CHECK  
OUT CGS' 2023-24

**FEDERAL POLICY AGENDA.**