



Advocacy Tips for Wisconsin's Technical Colleges

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Real Citizens are Powerful Lobbyists – A well-chosen personal story, a student whose life is changed, or a business thriving with your help, is the most powerful type of advocacy contact. Ask yourself why you chose to devote your time and effort to a technical college, and tell that story.

Relationships Matter – The best advocacy starts by building and sustaining relationships before you need them. Attend legislative events, invite legislators to yours, and make regular contacts. A close relationship means the legislator seeks your input at crucial moments. You become a link between the legislator and her constituents.

There's No Substitute for Eating with Legislators in Your Cafeteria – Every legislative visit to campus is a powerful opportunity. Campus events, classroom tours, conversations with students and staff keep legislators connected and part of your campus community.

Who is Your Senator? – Among other things, legislators are also parents, students, taxpayers, employers, and community members. Get to know your legislators' backgrounds and interests.

You Need Not Know Everything – Be clear, concise, and above all, accurate. If you don't know, offer to track down information and follow up—it is an opportunity to make a reinforcing contact later.

Rapid Change Hurts Advocacy – The faster an organization evolves, the harder it is for even well-informed officials to know that organization. Someone who knew you 5-10 years ago does not understand what you do today. Educating legislators is a continuous process.

Education Fuels Economic Development (Don't Be Afraid to Invest in It) – In difficult fiscal times, it's easy for policymakers to see education as a cost, instead of an investment. Remind them that technical colleges provide a documented return on investment for students, communities, and employers, changing lives locally while supporting the state's overall economy.

Make a Strong Ask –If you want support for a specific proposal, ask for their vote. Ask them to be champion for you with their colleagues. Ask what you could do in order to earn their support.

Speak with One Voice – Prepare for legislative meetings and ask questions, to ensure you are on the same page as System, your board and your college president. When speaking on behalf of your college, avoid weighing in on tangential issues. Focused and unified messaging is our most powerful tool for winning over the Legislature.

Resources

Layla Merrifield, Executive Director

lmerrifield@districtboards.org

Twitter: @lmerrifi @districtboards

www.districtboards.org

Mobile-friendly, bills of interest, legislative updates, and resources. Legislators by technical college district. Sign up for state advocacy alerts under the Advocacy tab.

www.wtcsystem.edu

Official website of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board. Find news and events, state board governance information, and system-wide publications.

legis.wisconsin.gov

Find your legislators. Contacts, calendars, committees, hearings, bills, laws, and research.

www.wiseye.org

Video live streams and archived video of legislative floor sessions, selected hearings, and interviews/press conferences.

lobbying.wi.gov

Wisconsin Ethics Commission, which regulates lobbyists in Wisconsin. Includes lobbyist registries: who is lobbying; lobbying topics, lobbying efforts, ethics rules, and filings.

www.wispolitics.com

www.thewheelerreport.com

Public versions of subscription services that provide access to Capitol news and media coverage, press releases, editorial coverage, blogs, and links to newspapers from around the state.

now.acct.org

Dedicated advocacy site for the national Association of Community College Trustees. Sign up for alerts on news out of Congress and federal agencies affecting two-year colleges.

www.acteonline.org/issues.aspx

National CTE advocacy organization, the Association of Career and Technical Education. Good link to federal issues and federal advocacy resources.