

Advocacy Training

For Faculty Associations



What is Advocacy?

“A broad set of tactics
used to **influence a
decision** often political in
nature.”

It can involve...

- Gaining **support** for a cause
- Raising **public awareness**
- **Lobbying** SU Executives or Councilors, or your Faculty
- Changing **attitudes** or practices
- Maintaining the **status quo**
- Putting a **new decision** on the table

Tip: **Advocacy** should always reflect goals and resources.

How to Advocate



Determine your Position

Having a **carefully thought out position** right from the beginning will make your advocacy efforts simpler and more consistent.

What is best for your constituents?

- Use your existing **knowledge** of your constituents' needs and concerns
- Conduct additional **consultation** whenever possible
- Your first job is to determine the needs of your constituents and represent them

Tip: **Make a list of needs vs. wants and prioritize.**

What is best for your organization?

- Consider your organization's reputation, legitimacy, and external relationships
- Follow the rules - this includes SU bylaw, political policy, and any relevant Standing Orders

Tip: Try not to damage relationships or reputation.

Engage Members

When your advocacy position is backed by member feedback, and your membership is involved and passionate about it, you gain legitimacy.

Education

An informed membership will be more involved, and will help you make better decisions on their behalf

- **Online:** mass e-mail and social media
- **In person:** class talks, tabling, and town halls
- **Advertising:** posters, handbills, and paid ads

Online

- Use social media like Facebook or Twitter to spread the word quickly
- Fast and easy, but not always effective

Tip: Keep information as concise as possible.

In Person

- Explain issues more thoroughly
- Get feedback while explaining issues
- Reaches fewer constituents, but in a more impactful way

Tip: Be prepared and willing to answer questions.

Advertising

- Inform constituents of upcoming events or decisions they can participate in
- A wider public audience can increase support and put pressure on decision-makers

Tip: Ads should be simple and eye-catching

Consultation

This is a crucial part of advocacy:

- **Prioritize** and direct your advocacy efforts
- **Determine** the most pressing issues
- **Accurately** represent your members
- **Legitimize** your position

Surveys

- Get **consistent, measurable** data
- Gather **feedback** from a lot of people at once
- More quantitative than qualitative
- Regular surveys can track long-term trends

Tip: **Keep questions as neutral as possible.**

Plebiscites and Referenda

- More official than a survey
- Provides a **clear mandate** from students, broken down by vote
- **Referenda are binding, plebiscites are not**
- Not always practical outside of election season

Note: **Advertise extremely well.**

Focus Groups

- More qualitative than quantitative
- Get **in-depth analysis** or feedback
- Directly represent opinions of members at large
- Make focus group participants as diverse as possible

Tip: **Discover Governance** can help you organize, advertise, and conduct focus groups.

Collaborative Projects

- More **qualitative** than quantitative
- Often more **anonymous** than focus groups
- More fun and engaging
- Provides a **visual representation** of member opinion

Tip: Engage as many random people as you can.

Engage Sub-Groups

- Meet with **department associations** and **clubs**.
- Meet with **international** students
- More **compartmentalized** feedback
- Understand sub-communities
- Take **advantage** of smaller groups' more cohesive membership

Tip: **Consult with sub-groups before making any advocacy decisions.**

Town Halls

- Disseminate information
- Get **feedback**
- Very **public** show of consultative effort
- Can be done in **collaboration** with others
- Can discourage members if handled badly

Tip: Include votes and discussions periods to engage attendees.

Change Minds

When you have a **clear outcome** to aim for, a **good long-term strategy**, and a **consistent approach** it's possible to change minds.

Lobbying

Directly reach decision-makers:

- **Articulate** your needs more thoroughly and precisely
- Get **immediate feedback** on your concerns
- Negotiate for better decisions

Protest

Raise awareness and create public pressure:

- A large number of people shows public support for your cause
- Publicizes issues and draws media attention
- Can include non-member supporters

Representation

Automatic, easy access to decision-makers:

- Ex-officio seats on Councils and committees
- Town-halls and similar events
- Show your engagement and create public pressure

Tip: **Don't underestimate the power of a good question.**

External Town Halls

- Always attend relevant town halls and participate in them
- This is an opportunity to educate members and administrators on the student side of an issue and gather feedback at the same time

Tip: Focus on giving and receiving information.

Advertise Yourself!

Advertise issues and successes via:

- E-Mail
- Social Media
- Posters
- Paid Ads
- Tabling and Class Talks

Keep Records

Well organized records will help future executives advocate better on similar issues:

- File important correspondence
- Outline the issue, who was involved, what you did, what was effective/not, and update it as you go along

Types of Advocacy

and when to use them



Lobbying

- Direct communication intended to influence decisions or put new decisions on the table.
- Can be done through:
 - Meetings
 - Phone calls
 - E-mails
 - Letters

Lobbying - Methods

- Two Main Methods of Lobbying
- 1. **Topic Expert**: build a reputation of being able to provide information and insight. This is built over time through planning, data management, and good transitions.
- 2. **Sales Pitch**: focus on demonstrating something the person is missing or should consider and sell them the solution.

Tip: **Change methods to reflect who you're talking to.**

Lobbying - Meetings

- Know the **issue** and your **objectives**
- Be **neat**, **presentable**, polite, and **personal**
- Arrive early
- Directly ask for what you want, **listen** carefully to their response, and take notes
- Leave information and **follow up** afterwards

Tip: Send a thank-you note after the meeting.

Lobbying - Phone Calls

- Shorter and less personal
- A good way to set up meetings, gather information **quickly**, or follow up after meetings
- Less effective than in-person meetings for actual lobbying efforts

Tip: **When e-mail fails, try the phone.**

Lobbying - Letters and E-Mails

- A form of lobbying that any student can participate in
- As a representative, e-mails or letters should only be used to set up meetings, or follow up after a meeting, whenever in-person meetings are possible

Tip: Use this to compliment your lobbying efforts.

Lobbying - Preparation is key

Being prepared will increase your confidence, keep you focused, and help you communicate more clearly

- Read through the issue and understand your points thoroughly
- Try to anticipate their responses and plan accordingly
- Find someone to practice with

Lobbying – Remember...

- Lobbying isn't the same as debating
- You don't have to be argumentative to do a good job – how you lobby will depend on the situation and your larger strategy
- You may not get what you want in a single meeting so don't get discouraged too quickly
- It's always better to admit ignorance and promise to follow up than to make up an answer on the spot

Lobbying – If things get hostile

- The people you lobby can sometimes be indifferent, condescending, disrespectful, or even aggressive.
- Don't allow bad behaviour to derail or silence you.
- Keep your cool by looking back to your preparation notes to refocus your attention.
- Understand your limitations as a student, but don't let that overshadow your qualifications.
- You have unique knowledge on student experiences, and access to expert knowledge.

Supporting a Colleague

If you notice hostilities being directed at someone else, you can help!

- Explain why their opinion is important and valid.
- Reiterate or express support for their position.
- If they've been interrupted, ask them to expand on that point the next time you get a turn to speak.
- If the person(s) receiving hostility consents to it, consider approaching the hostile person later to discuss their behaviour.

Lobbying – Pros

- Explain your issue in more depth.
- Get immediate feedback on your concerns.
- Have time and space to negotiate or discuss, to sell your point, and to prove your expertise.
- Know that they have all the information, and have directly heard your concerns.

Lobbying – Cons

- Extremely difficult and time-consuming.
- Takes a lot of practice and preparation.
- Less controlled, with a higher possibility to make mistakes.
- Can be mentally and physically draining.
- Can feel like a waste of time when the people you're lobbying are checked out.
- Effort is hidden from the public and can be difficult to quantify.

Media and Advertising

Media and advertising can get the word out quickly and easily, gather support for your cause, create public pressure, and keep your members and the public informed.

Media - Types

- Social Media
- News
- Interviews
- Online Videos

Social Media

- All social media posts should reflect your strategic goals.
- Keep posts concise and appropriate for the platform in question – if someone has to click “read more” then your message may be too long.
- If your post has to be longer, ensure all key information is summarized in the first 200 characters.
- Tailor your message to the platform, don’t just copy and paste across all platforms.

Advertising

- Use for **finding participants** for consultation, or to **direct constituents** to more information about an issue.
- **Types**
 - Newsletters
 - Posters
 - Handbills
 - Tabling
 - Class talks

Advertising

- Keep adverts concise and eye-catching
- Posters are more meaningful than most people think
- Save time and resources by being smart about where and when you post advertisements
- Facebook paid ads are a cheap way to get the word out to a wide audience

Media & Advertising - Pros

- Very low time and resource commitment
- Reaches a lot of people very quickly
- Easy and relatively low-risk
- Effort is very public and easy to quantify
- Getting your story on the news can create considerable public pressure

Media & Advertising - Cons

- Considered ineffective by many
- Gets lower buy-in
- Putting up physical posters can be time-consuming
- Negative press can damage relationships

Protest

This is a high-risk, high-reward tool of advocacy that can win public support for your issue, create high pressure for decision-makers, and force changes that have been impossible to achieve through other means of advocacy.

Protest - Preparation

- Know what your **goals** are, and **communicate** them to other protesters
- Ensure **protest** demands reflect advocacy goals
- Be **smart** about when/where you hold the protest

Tip: Protests with clear goals are more effective.

Advertising a Protest

- **Social media** and **word of mouth** are the best ways to engage people in an upcoming protest
- Contact **media outlets** and let them know when you're protesting and why
- Don't forget to send out a **reminder** on the day of the protest

Tip: Ads should be simple and straightforward.

Holding a Protest

- Communicating **clear, simple** goals will help a protest stay on track
- Provide signs and other materials
- **Stay safe:** ask people behaving inappropriately to leave, and arrange for a security or police presence if necessary

Tip: Have volunteers to handle crowd control.

Activity!

Lobby Practice

