



**MISSION COMPLETION: 2024 Higher Education Advocacy Day**  
**Crafting Your Advocacy Story for Legislators**  
**Tuesday, April 16, 2024 | Illinois State Capitol, Springfield, Ill.**

**Why is it important to meet with legislators at the state capitol?**

Visiting the state capitol allows you to engage with lawmakers and make your voice heard directly to engage with lawmakers and make your voice heard directly. It's an effective way to influence legislative decisions that can impact your cause or issue area. By advocating in person, you can build relationships, share your expertise, and demonstrate the importance of your cause.

**How do you effectively prepare for your visit to the state capitol?**

To prepare for your visit, research the legislation you wish to support or oppose or learn more about the issue area you plan to discuss. Understand the key points, potential impacts, and research the legislation you wish to support or oppose or learn more about the issue area you plan to discuss. Understand the key points, potential impacts, and legislators involved.

**Advocacy Tips**

1. **Be concise and focused:** Prepare a brief introduction and present your key points clearly. Legislators have busy schedules, so make the most of your limited time.
2. **Be respectful and professional:** Maintain a positive attitude, listen actively, and address any concerns or questions raised. Remember to thank them for their time and consideration.
3. **Follow up with a thank-you note:** After the meeting, send a personalized thank-you note expressing your appreciation and reiterating your main points.

**Know Your Audience**

- When advocating, you have two audiences: the audience you're advocating for and the audience you're advocating to.
- Identifying the audience you're *advocating for* will guide your advocacy efforts and also who you reach out to regarding individuals and groups that should join your cause.
- Identifying the audience you're *advocating to* (elected officials) helps with your strategy. We all know the best defense is a good offense. Since our goal is always to make sure we are scoring, we should take an offensive approach to our advocacy efforts. Make sure that your game plan includes all the parts necessary to get your message across. Three things to think about when planning this is and also thinking about what you're going to say:

### Crafting Your Advocacy Story for Legislators (cont.)

- **The What:** How aware are you of your experience or of the experience of the groups you're advocating for?
- **The How:** What analysis can you make?
- **The Move:** How will you share your findings to impact change?
- After you've thought through this and how you will present your message, your leave behind should be your next priority. What documents will you leave for them to take a closer look at and use when they're sharing your message with their colleagues? Less is more, so giving out more than three documents can be overwhelming as well as what you include on those documents. Make sure you are efficient in your message while also being concise; visuals are also impactful and quite frankly pretty awesome.

### Short and Sweet Allows us to Succeed

- Springfield is very fast paced, so always plan for a quick and concise meeting even if you're given the opportunity to have a formal meeting with a legislator. You will have a limited amount of time with an elected official, so plan for a quick meeting even if your meeting ends up lasting longer. Many times, elected officials and their staff are on the move or planning to be. Their minds are working a million miles per hour so you need to keep up. This is when elevator speeches come in handy. Approach it like this: if you had 60 seconds with a decisionmaker what are the three most important pieces of information you'd like them to know. *\*Hint: start with your name and organization and then go from there.*
- The biggest priority with this part is that you make room for your storytellers. It's actually why you're there, so make space for them to share why a bill/legislation matters to them and should matter to the legislator or why it shouldn't matter. If you are the storyteller, make sure you give yourself the space to share your "why" for being there.

The Coalition for Transforming Higher Education Funding has several main talking points we want to convey to legislators during Advocacy Day. Below is a high-level view of what we're advocating for during our time in Springfield. Combine these points with your own story to make an impactful presentation. A full explanation of these talking points are on the Coalition's 2024 Legislative Agenda document.

1. Invest an additional \$50 million in the Monetary Award Program (MAP) to help more students enroll and persist
2. Ensure adequate and equitable funding for Illinois' public universities in FY25
3. Invest in Mental Health Early Action on Campus Act (MHEACA)
4. Fund the Minority Teachers of Illinois (MTI) scholarship at \$8M in FY25