

# Advocacy Training

For Legislative Settings



# 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** Executives or fellow Councilors
- 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: Rope in as many random people as you can.**

# Engage Sub-Groups

- Meet with **student 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.**

# One-on-Ones

- Give/get information from a wide range of constituents
- Requires no special resources beyond your own energy and effort

# One-on-Ones – How to

- Ask if they're actually an undergraduate student in your faculty
- Ask if they have time to talk about the issue you're consulting on
- Have a short statement about the issue and a couple short questions prepared

**Tip: Be very respectful of their time and attention.**

# 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.**

# 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.**

# 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 - 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

# When things get hostile

- People you work with 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.

# Lobbying – 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.

# 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.

# 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.

# 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.

# Representation

You already have a seat at the table, so use it as effectively as you possibly can!



# Communication

# Helpful Communicative Techniques

- **Listen**
  - Don't hog the spotlight  $\Rightarrow$  take a breath and let someone else talk.
- **Prepare**
  - Read up on necessary materials.
- **Writing Well**
  - When in doubt, keep it formal.

# Helpful Communicative Techniques

- **Etiquette**
  - Know what is appropriate and what is not.
- **Encouragement**
  - If they're doing something well, tell them.
- **Mirror what was said**
  - Memory tricks ... keep them up your sleeve
- **Replace “Yes, but...” with “Yes, and...”**
  - Do not shut anyone down.

# 3 Different Types of Communication

1) VERBAL

2) NON-VERBAL

3) VISUAL

# VERBAL Communication

Words ... we have them to use.

## WRITTEN

Handwritten letters or  
electronic emails  
Easily tracked

## ORAL

Person to person  
Effectiveness  
dependant on clarity



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIho2S0Zahl>



# NON – VERBAL Communication

# What your **body language** says



# Body Gestures



# Posture



So we don't slump like this.

# Eye Contact



# Improving **Eye Contact**: Tips and Tricks

- **When in a group:**
  - Every sentence, rotate who you are looking at.
- **When one-on-one:**
  - Take breaks  $\Rightarrow$  look up or to the sides.
- **Listening to someone:**
  - “The Triangle” method  $\Rightarrow$  look at one eye for  $\sim 5$ sec, then the other for  $\sim 5$ sec, then at the mouth for a couple seconds.



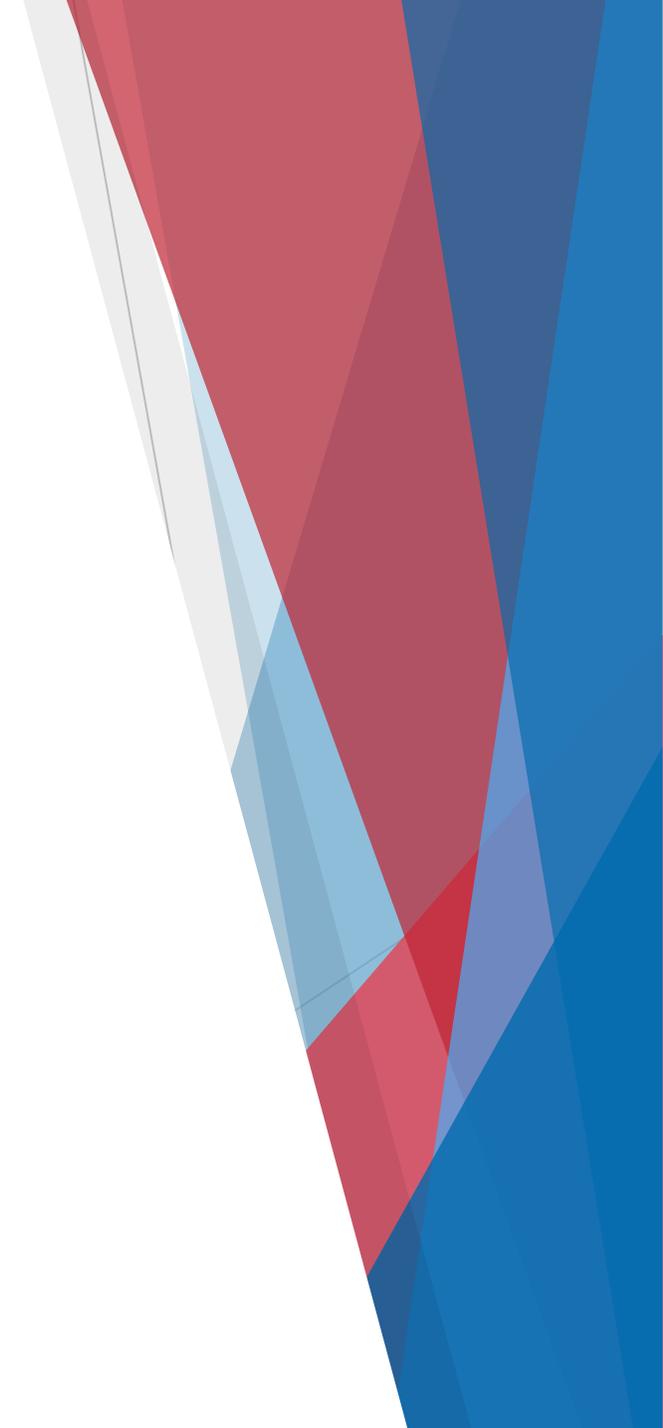
# Asking an Effective Question

## Before you ask...

- Are you sure your question hasn't been answered in the meeting materials?
- Why are you asking it?
- What kind of answer do you want?
- Would it be better to email your question?

# Strategies

- Come prepared
- Be respectful
- Listen carefully
- Practice



# Question Theory

- Open vs. Closed
- Factual, evaluative, or interpretive
- Hypothesis testing  $\leftrightarrow$  Leading question
- Convergent or divergent



# Proactive Conflict Management

# FIGHT or FLIGHT

- Get as far away *OR* fight head on
- Consciously choose your mode dependant on the situation to have a better grip of the outcome.



# Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes

