

OCUFA 2014 Election Communication Package

**Meeting the Candidates: A Lobbying Primer
& Planning an All-Candidates Meeting**

OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

MEETING THE CANDIDATES: A LOBBYING PRIMER

Why lobby?

Lobbying is the act of educating and persuading those in positions of influence to exercise that influence in a manner that works for you.

An effective government relies on lobbying for the information it needs to make good decisions. Politicians expect to be lobbied. You are providing them with a service: the opportunity to discuss the concerns of their constituents, and your members, in a direct way. This is particularly true during an election period. Candidates want to appear open, accessible and interested in the views of the electorate.

Government, in the final analysis, is organized opinion. Where there is little or no public opinion, there is apt to be bad government.

-MacKenzie King

Once candidates are nominated, there should be plenty of opportunities to meet with them. During an election campaign, all candidates will be in their ridings.

Three Steps for an Effective Meeting

1. Set Up and Plan a Meeting with the Candidate

The easiest way to set up a meeting is to phone the candidate's campaign office and ask to speak with the scheduler. Finding candidate contact information is easy – just google their name to find their campaign website which will have all the information you need. When speaking to the scheduler or campaign manager, it is important to tell them who you represent and what you would like to discuss. If possible, be flexible when scheduling a date and confirm the meeting a day or two before. Candidates like to know who you are and who you are representing, therefore it may be helpful to include in your confirmation e-mail a note of introduction. Repeat what you will be discussing with them in a general point. Include a third point which relates your issue to their riding.

Meetings are often more effective, and less intimidating, if you go in a small group of two or three. The composition of the group should reflect the diversity and the interests of your faculty association. If you have another association in your immediate area, you might consider teaming-up with them for the meeting. Your group should have one or two main spokespersons.

It is important to plan in advance the issues you want to address. You will probably only have about 30 minutes for a meeting. Attempting to address more than three or four issues will be very difficult in this limited time. You may want to highlight specific concerns about university underfunding, faculty hiring, and educational quality, which are OCUFA's election priorities. You should note how these concerns affect your university. It is always a good idea to emphasize the beneficial impact your institution has on the wider community.

2. The Meeting

The meeting will have two primary components:

- The presentation of your position (as a representative of both your association and OCUFA; and
- The gathering of information and commitments from the candidate.

The key to a successful meeting is presenting your facts and ideas in a clear and concise manner. An effective lobby effort is essentially a good communications campaign. Don't forget, you will likely know a good deal more about the issue than the candidate.

Also, take a few moments to consider how to present your issues to candidates from different parties. While you should never misrepresent or depart from your priorities, individuals from different ideological perspective will respond better to certain types of messages (for example, for a candidate who is very interested in small business, you may wish to emphasize the economic benefits that flow from a well-funded and high-quality university). It is important to make suggestions on how they can help make the necessary changes happen.

Time management is crucial to a successful meeting. There is nothing more frustrating than running out of time before you have a chance to ask the candidate all of your key questions. Some candidates will try to steer the meeting towards the things *they* want to talk about (their friendship with the university president, their child in university, etc.). Don't be afraid to politely interject and steer the discussion back on topic.

Once you have outlined your position and concerns, ask the candidate to state their position and the position of their government if elected. Feel free to make notes during the meeting and make sure to write down their responses and comments to direct questions. If you plan to publish or make public the candidate's positions, you should disclose this prior to starting the meeting.

Consider bringing a petition related to the issue along. If elected, the candidate may present the petition in the house which will give your issue more publicity.

Leaving business cards and information behind is always a good idea. OCUFA staff can assist you in preparing material for this purpose. If the candidate asks a question you cannot answer, offer to forward the information to his/her office as soon as possible.

3. Follow Up

After the meeting, send the candidate letter thanking them for their time and reinforcing the key points you made in the meeting. Don't forget to send them a summary of the meeting, any information or background you may have promised. Also consider sending the candidate any important updates on issues – especially those they took a particular interest in.

An effective lobby strategy includes a long-term plan to keep in contact with the candidate. You can strengthen your relationship with the candidate by offering them information you have that is helpful for their endeavours, for example, studies or information on a subject of mutual interest. This also creates an avenue for you to include your message within the information you are giving. Candidates will view you as a helpful ally.

You may want to suggest a follow-up meeting, tour of a facility or demonstration of something of interest (e.g. new technology) within the ridings. Candidates appreciate opportunities to engage with the public and be seen in high traffic areas. Inform media, including student newspapers, of the candidate's presence. Again, this promotes a long-term relationship and will help engage the candidate with the issue.

OCUFA's success is greatly enhanced if coordinated lobbying takes place at the local and provincial level. It is crucial that OCUFA be made aware of the lobbying going on at the local level. To this end, please let the OCUFA office know as soon as you book a session with a candidate. This will allow us to structure our effort and to provide you with relevant background material on the candidate you are about to meet.

Please don't hesitate to use your resources at the OCUFA office. It is equally important that we know how your meeting went. Please send a copy of your follow-up letter and any response from the candidate to our office.

For advocacy-related questions and requests, please contact **Erica Rayment** at 416-306-6032 or erayment@ocufa.on.ca

PLANNING AN ALL-CANDIDATES MEETING

Why sponsor and all-candidates meeting?

- They are excellent opportunities to place post-secondary education issues before the public.
- They place candidates in a situation where they must make statements on our issues for which they can later be held accountable.
- All-candidates meetings provide a forum where faculty association members can make important personal contact with candidates.
- The meetings provide faculty associations with increased visibility to the candidates, the media, and the public.

10 Tips for Planning a Successful Meeting

1. Consider staging the event in cooperation with the students' association, the administration, and other campus groups and unions. If practical, work with other faculty associations in your area. This will not only allow the work of organizing the event to be shared more broadly, but will provide a larger pool of potential meeting attendees.
2. Choose a venue that is accessible to people from the university and the community. Public parking should be nearby, public transit should be available, and the venue should be equipped to accommodate people with disabilities.
3. Book a room early, and choose one that you can fill with people. You will have a much more energetic and lively meeting if the room is filled to capacity. Arrange for refreshments if possible.
4. If the room is relatively large, or has poor acoustics, make sure that you arrange for microphones, a sound system, and a technician to operate the system. You may wish to set up a podium for candidates to use.
5. When inviting candidates, offer several possible dates and try to have some flexibility.

6. Consider holding a reception, either before or after the meeting, for the candidates and the key event organizers. This provides an opportunity to informally discuss issues and meet the candidates.
7. Decide on a format. A series of short speeches by the candidates followed by questions from the floor is standard. Typically, you should use a moderator familiar with both rules of order and higher education issues.
8. Publicity:
 - a. A few days before the meeting, email a news release to all the local media outlets informing them of the details. Follow up with media on the day of the event. OCUFA staff can help you generate a list of media contacts for your association.
 - b. Approach the public access television station to see if they would be prepared to broadcast the meeting.
 - c. Contact faculty association members, as well as other campus and community groups in your area.
 - d. Provide a media table for material to be handed out to media and attendees, including OCUFA election material and candidate information.
 - e. Assign people to meet and greet media.
 - f. If you have them, you can use social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to publicize the event.
9. Have some people prepared to ask questions to get everything going. If possible, record the event.
10. Follow up:
 - a. Send thank-you letters to candidates and moderator.
 - b. Send out a follow-up media release about the meeting.

Sample Moderator Questions

- What distinguishes your party's higher education platform from those of the other parties?
- What will your party do to ensure our universities have the funding they need to provide a high-quality education to every student?
- How does your party plan to address the full-time faculty shortage in the province?
- What do you see as some key issues for labour relations in the higher education environment? How would your party ensure fair and equitable labour laws?