

2018 ELECTION ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Meeting the candidates: A lobbying primer & how to plan an all-candidates event

OCUFA

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

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 search for their name online 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 and why it is an important issue in 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 a main spokesperson who starts the meeting and sets the tone.

In advance, it is important to plan 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 the need for increased university funding, faculty renewal, and fairness for contract faculty, 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, so start with the basics.

Make sure to personalize your key messages by showing the candidate how your concerns are reflected in the riding and at your institution. What difference would more public funding make at your university? What working conditions do contract faculty face at your institution? Has your department or institution had sufficient full-time faculty hiring in recent years?

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. Try to avoid getting sidetracked by arguments or conversations about other topics that don't serve your priorities. Firmly and politely state your case and the logic behind it – then move on. Do not be afraid to politely interject and steer the conversation back to your key messages.

If a candidate has a question you cannot answer or an objection to which you do not feel you can respond, do not feel that you have to come up with a response in the meeting. Tell the candidate you are not sure what the answer is, but that you can follow up with a response. Make a note of their question and pass the information along to OCUFA. We can help provide you with an answer.

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.

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 their office as soon as possible.

3. Follow up

After the meeting, send the candidate a 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 in which they took a particular interest.

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 that is helpful for their endeavours (e.g. 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 riding. 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.

We're here to help

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 provide you with relevant background material on the candidate you are about to meet. 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.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to the OCUFA staff for resources and support. For advocacy-related questions and requests, please contact **Mina Rajabi Paak** at (416) 306 6032 or mrajabi@ocufa.on.ca. For campaign coordination assistance please contact **Alexandra Pinosa** at 416-306-6036 or apinosa@ocufa.on.ca.

The day after the election

On election day, each riding will elect an MPP. The day after that vote, faculty associations should start to prepare a local lobbying strategy to meet with MPPs in their area on a regular basis. These contacts will provide an opportunity to educate MPPs on the importance of government support for universities in order to ensure they continue to provide a highly educated workforce and the innovative researchers essential Ontario's economic health and well-being.

Contact with the newly elected or re-elected MPPs should take place as soon as possible. If the current

member is re-elected, the letter should be delivered to the constituency office. If a new member is elected, contact that local campaign office and get the personal address of the new member and forward the letter immediately. Follow up the letter with a phone call to the member the following week.

Adapted from the OSSTF/FEESO Election Kit.

Sample Letter to New MPP

[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

Dear [Name];

On behalf of the [Name of association], I want to congratulate you on your election to the Ontario Legislature as a Member of Provincial Parliament. This success reflects your commitment to both the people of our community and the Province of Ontario.

The [Name of Association] is eager to work with you to ensure that our universities offer the best possible educational experience to our students and continue to be the sources of insight and innovation that power our economy. As you know, the social vitality and economic success of our province depends on higher education, and I hope you will be a powerful advocate for our universities at Queen's Park.

As the President of [Name of association], I welcome any opportunity to meet with you to discuss the future of higher education in Ontario. In the meantime, if I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me at:

[Name]

[Address of association]

[Phone number]

[Email]

Once again, congratulations. I wish you all the best as you assume your very important public service responsibilities.

Sincerely,

[Name]

President, [Name of association]

Planning an all-candidates event

Why sponsor an all-candidates event?

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

Types of all-candidate events

All-candidate events can take several forms.

1. All-candidate debates (these can only be hosted during the election period):
 - a. Invite the candidates to participate in a debate on campus about postsecondary issues and other matters of concern to the university community.
 - b. Decide on a format. A series of short 5–7 minute speeches by the candidates, followed by questions from the floor is standard. It is also good to give candidates 2–3 minutes at the end for to make closing remarks. Typically, you should use a moderator familiar with both the rules of order and higher education issues.
 - c. Have some people prepared to ask questions to get things going. If possible, record the event.
 - d. Consider holding a reception, either before or after the event, for the candidates and the key event organizers. This provides an opportunity to informally discuss issues and meet the candidates.
2. All-candidate meet and greets:
 - a. Organize a social event on campus and invite the candidates and your members.
 - b. Let the candidates know that your members want to hear specifically about postsecondary issues so they are able to prepare properly.
 - c. Give each candidate 5–7 minutes to speak.
 - d. Provide time for your members and the candidates to mingle.
3. If you institution or faculty association is already hosting an event, consider inviting the candidates.

Tips for planning a successful event

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 allow the work of organizing the event to be shared more broadly, and provide a larger pool of potential event 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. Choose a space that you can fill with people. You will have a much more energetic and lively event 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. Have the faculty association president welcome everyone with opening remarks.
6. When inviting candidates, offer several possible dates and try to have some flexibility.
7. Publicity:
 - a. A few days before the event, 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 event.
 - c. Contact faculty association members and 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. Post the event to your website, include it in faculty email newsletters, and use social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) to publicize the event.
8. Follow up:
 - a. Send "Thank you" letters to the candidates and moderator.
 - b. Send out a follow-up media release about the event.

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 and the need for faculty renewal?
- ▶ Will you commit to improving Ontario labour law to ensure contract faculty have job security, predictable scheduling, and fair pay?
- ▶ How will you commit to making sure postsecondary institutions are the model employers Ontarians believe they should be?