

## Congressional Visits

This document provides helpful information to consider when meeting with members of Congress or their staff. In order to conduct the most effective meeting, please come prepared and use these steps to develop your “elevator pitch.”

To help you get the most out of your meetings, your campus federal relations office has prepared this “How To” brief to help. The federal relations team is happy to meet with you prior to your first meeting to do a run through and answer any questions you may have.

ONE IMPORTANT CAVEAT: To maximize our effectiveness advocating for the University of Florida’s federal agenda, and to ensure we are complying with federal lobby restrictions, it is important that you clearly state that, unless you have been authorized to speak on behalf of UF, you are seeking this meeting as a private citizen, representative of your professional society or an organization, and not on behalf of the University of Florida. Please remember while participating in meetings with members of Congress to be courteous at all times, especially with those with whom you may disagree.

### Meeting Structure:

#### 1. **INTRODUCTIONS** of all present

- Briefly give your name, title, and where you work
- Distribute business cards; collect staff business cards
- Distribute written materials, packets, and other “leave behind” information

#### 2. **STATEMENT** of issues

- Identify the overall issue you wish to discuss (e.g., education, healthcare, infrastructure, defense)
- Identify why it is important to you (e.g., what kind of work you do, the types of individuals you work with, and the situation as you see it)
- Identify why it is important to the Senator or Representative (e.g., the impact it has on the state and/or nation)

#### 3. **HIGHLIGHT** particular issues

- Detail two or three critical issues you believe the member may be interested in or in which you have expertise or experience
- Make your argument with personal stories, which help members and staff understand the people side of problems
- Avoid technical jargon or specialized language

4. **ASK** the member's position on the issue

- Ascertain the member's views
- Ask if he or she supports your position
- Determine why or why not

5. **THANK** the member/staff for their time

- Express your appreciation for their time and attention to this issue
- Express a desire to provide any additional information they may need on the issue(s)
- Alert the UF Federal Relations office if the member/staff request UF-specific information.

To ensure a successful, productive meeting and to deliver a powerful, unified message, please follow these basic guidelines:

**DO**

- Greet them with a handshake and formally introduce yourself
- Thank them for taking the meeting as you know their schedule is busy and hectic
- Obtain information about their depth of knowledge and understanding of the topic
- Limit your meeting agenda to no more than three topics/issues
- Present your information in a direct, organized, and timely manner
- Cite specific bills, titles, and issues to ensure clarity
- Use personal stories related to the topic, which helps translate issues into tangible, realistic problems
- Demonstrate why the issue is important to you, the member, and the Florida congressional delegation
- Be attentive to the member's positions, comments, and feedback
- Prepare a packet to leave with the office, including information on specific topics
- Offer to provide additional information regarding any questions they may have
- Let the UF Federal Relations office know how your meeting went

**DO NOT**

- Arrive late to your meeting
- Attempt to elongate meetings; plan on a 20 minute meeting with a hard stop 30 minutes from the start time
- Get discouraged if the member is late to the meeting or does not attend the meeting; member schedules are unpredictable and staff create and drive members' agendas
- Assume the member knows about your field of expertise
- Assume the member is familiar with your issues; thousands of bills are introduced in each Congress, members and staff will not recall them all
- Discuss numerous bills or address unrelated issues
- Maintain a narrow-minded perspective; instead be attentive and open to feedback
- Demonstrate angry, threatening, or confrontational behavior
- Treat the meeting as a one-time event; instead project that your meeting is part of a working relationship with the member and staff