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 ⇒ 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
NON – VERBAL Communication
What your **body language** says
Body Gestures
Posture

So we don’t shlump 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 ⇒ look up or to the sides.

- **Listening to someone:**
  - “The Triangle” method ⇒ look at one eye for ~5sec, then the other for ~ 5sec, 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 ↔ 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

- Competing
- Collaborating
- Compromising
- Avoiding
- Accommodating

Assertiveness
Focus on MY needs, desired outcomes and agenda

Cooperativeness
Focus on OTHER’S needs and mutual respect