

# COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT

### Scheduling Meetings on the Hill

'What should the invitation to my Member of Congress say?'

- Make sure your request is specific, relevant, timely, and that it appeals to the interests of your members of Congress. It should include why your elected official should want to meet with you. If you know your Senator or Representative has a specific interest (for example, STEM), then consider tying the invitation to their priorities.

'What details should I include?'

- Congressional offices want to know basic information. We've already talked about the 'why.' Your invitation should also address the 'who,' 'what,' 'when,' and 'where.' The office will want to know what issue areas you want to speak about in order to assign the correct staffer.

'Where should I send the invitation?'

- In most instances, a request for a meeting on Capitol Hill will go through the D.C. scheduler. Simply call any office and request contact information for the individual who handles scheduling requests in Washington, D.C.
- Congressional offices receive many scheduling requests, so they prefer to receive them in writing. Save yourself a stamp. Email is your best bet when requesting a meeting unless otherwise stated by the congressional office.
- If you have previously met with other staffers in the D.C. or district office, consider including them on the request.
- Make sure you follow up. If you placed a request but haven't heard back, call or email the scheduler.

'How much advance notice do they need?'

- Probably not as much time as you may think. Congressional schedules are constantly in flux, but generally begin to shape up two or three weeks in advance. Try to request your meeting at least a month in advance. Early-January is a good time to request meetings for NLS.
- Offer a few different options for meeting times if possible.

'How long will the meeting last?'

- The standard meeting window is generally a 30-minute block. However, on a particularly busy day you may only be allotted 15 minutes.
- Allow time for overages. Even if you believe you have a 30-minute meeting, it's better to plan to be there for an hour. Meetings can start late or go long.
  - Allowing for extra time is also important to ensure you can get from one building to another. Particularly from one side of the Capitol to another or to a different building requiring another security check.

## Sample Meeting Request

To: [DC Scheduler]

CC: [Education Legislative Assistant]

RE: Scheduling Request–Community College Meeting

Dear Mr./Ms. DC Office Scheduler,

I am writing to request a meeting with the [Senator/Representative] on either February 7 or 8. Leaders from our college will be in Washington, D.C., to discuss ongoing activities on our campuses and our legislative priorities for 2023. Our group would like to apprise the Senator/Congressperson of our work on behalf of the community. The Senator/Congressperson may be particularly interested in our efforts around [insert tie-in to MOC's priorities] given his/her/their committee work.

Representatives from the college would also like to discuss our legislative and funding priorities for the upcoming fiscal year, including the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and FY 23/FY 24 appropriations.

The following individuals are slated to attend the meeting:

**Betty Smith, President**

**Bob Thomas, Board Chair**

**Jane Jones, Trustee**

**Diane Roberts, Student**

Our group is available during the following times:

February 7 – **between 10:30am and 3:30pm.**

February 8 – **between 11am and 4pm.**

I can be reached at **(555) 333-2999** or **pbsn@comcoll.edu**. Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

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### Tips for a Successful Meeting (Virtual or In Person)

*Considering the ongoing national emergency related to the Covid-19 pandemic and security and staffing concerns stemming from January 6, 2021, meetings with federal policymakers and their staff members that are scheduled in conjunction with ACCT's 2023 National Legislative Summit may be held in person or virtually, depending on each office's policy. The new Republican House Majority is expected to lift restrictions on entry to House Office Buildings, while the Senate restrictions on escorted entry may remain in place. As you prepare for your meetings, below are some helpful tips to keep in mind:*

- ★ **Take a detail-oriented approach to scheduling meetings:** We expect most meetings to take place in person, though there may be different policies in place with regards to entry into House and Senate Office Buildings. Policies may also vary according to individual offices, be sure to ask what the process is for entering the premises, will staff escort your party in, or will you meet them directly in their office? Will you need to contact anyone in the office prior to arrival? If so, be sure you have their contact information and that you share with the office a primary contact for your group. In the unlikely event of a virtual meeting, be sure to clarify which meeting platform will be used & communicate meeting information with all attendees.
- ★ **Have a plan for the structure of the meeting:** Coordinate with others before the meeting to determine who will start the meeting, lead introductions, close out the meeting, etc. You may also want to establish the topics each attendee will speak about and in what order to help keep the meeting on track and ensure every attendee to plays a role. Designating a note taker will aid in your meeting follow-up.
- ★ **Be on time, flexible, friendly, and brief:** Arrive, Log-in or call-in early and be willing to wait. **Meeting with staff can be as productive as seeing the Member personally.** *Flexibility* is important because Members' schedules get re-prioritized at a moment's notice. Stick to the issues and the facts, and don't belabor the meeting. Congressional staff are friendly and open to meeting with visitors from the state or district they represent.

- ★ **Have college specific information on hand to share:** Institution specific information, including student demographics, enrollment trends, and examples of existing partnerships with outside stakeholders will help inform policy decisions made by Members of Congress and their staff. To further familiarize your representative or senator with your college, you can offer to facilitate a virtual tour of your campus (if feasible).
- ★ **Ask about your Member's priorities:** As with any good relationship, it is important to have give and take. Ask your Member what his or her priorities are—doing so presents an excellent opportunity to find out more about his or her interests and agenda. This discussion may also yield other opportunities to work together on additional issues.
- ★ **Ask for support:** Your representative, your senator, or their staff should be able to give you an indication of the member's level of support for community college priorities. It is appropriate for you to ask their position.
- ★ **ACCT and AACC:** Remind Members and their staff that ACCT and AACC are two national associations that represent community college trustees and CEOs, respectively, and are headquartered in Washington, D.C. They are available and always willing to provide information on community college issues.
- ★ **Photo Op:** Be sure to ask for a photo opportunity with the Member of Congress or their staff before you leave the meeting. You can use the photo to thank the Member and their staff on social media or to accompany a news release for your local newspaper. This will help communicate that you are working on behalf of your community and yield positive publicity for your college.
- ★ **Exchange Follow Up Information and Share Leave Behind Materials:** Towards the end of the meeting, ask the staffer for their email address and let them know to expect a follow up email shortly after the meeting concludes. The email should include contact information for all meeting attendees as well as any leave behinds you would like to share (especially a one-sheet overview of your college). Remember to start the email with a thank you!

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### Appointment Information

Your Representative/Senator: \_\_\_\_\_

Congressional District: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_

D.C. Office Address/Meeting Platform: \_\_\_\_\_

D.C. Phone Number: (202) \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

D.C. Scheduler Name and E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Legislative Staffer for Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Legislative Staffer for Job Training: \_\_\_\_\_

Legislative Staffer for Appropriations: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes

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### NLS PRE-DEPARTURE CHECK LIST

- Appointment information – date, time, platform, and names, e-mail addresses, and numbers of staff with whom you have spoken.
- Know your community – be able to explain briefly and clearly the needs of the community, how your community is changing, and how the college is responding to these changes.
- One-page profile/summary of your community college.
- Legislator background information.
- Completed federal funds worksheet that shows the impact federal dollars have at your college and for your students.
- Record of issues on which you have previously contacted the legislator.

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### Keep the Momentum Going After the Meeting is Over

#### Send Thank-You Notes or Emails

- ★ A thank-you note is not only polite, but also provides an opportunity to follow up on key topics discussed during the meeting. Send a note to both the member of Congress and to participating staff. It can be a useful reminder for your congressional offices to follow up on further conversations, research, or commitments made during your meeting.

#### Promoting the Visit

- ★ Utilize social media or a press release to publicize information and photos from the visit. When quoting members of Congress, work with their press offices to first gain approval.

#### Coordinating with ACCT

- ★ The conversations you have with your legislators can shed light on what is on the minds of Members of Congress. Informing ACCT about the topics discussed, questions asked, or commitments the lawmakers may have done can help our government relations team do follow ups with them to strengthen their overall support for community colleges. We encourage you to fill out the [Congressional Contact Form](#) after your visits.

#### Maintaining Contact

- ★ Often the communication ends when the meeting is over. Keep the relationships going by engaging with staff regarding campus activities. This could include forwarding a campus newsletter or newspaper article to a relevant staff member.
- ★ Consider offering space on campus for events. Members of Congress often hold public forums or events, but cannot pay for an expensive venue. A town hall meeting at your campus would be a great opportunity for your college, your members of Congress, and your mutually beneficial relationship.
- ★ Make sure they know you are an informational resource. You now have a staff contact in that office. Make good use of it!