

Advocacy Tip Sheet

Prepare and Coordinate

Emory's Office of Government and Community Affairs (OGCA) welcomes our faculty, staff, physicians, and students to partner with us. Our goal is to broaden Emory's influence with policy makers in order to advance Emory's academic and healthcare missions. We seek to accomplish this by forming relationships with elected officials in their districts, conducting educational tours for decision-makers, facilitating events bringing Emory leaders together with influencers, and generally serving as a trusted resource.

The OGCA team can best serve the institution if we know of legislative issues of concern and interest of our community members. If the issue is mission-critical, we can advocate alongside of you. Even if it is not, it is helpful for us to know about your planned interactions with legislators. The OGCA team knows many of the folks with whom you are seeking to meet; we can provide you with helpful background information.

Be sure to thank legislators

Perhaps the legislator you are meeting with voted a certain way on a bill or gave a speech on a topic of interest to you. Be sure to thank the legislator for those actions! Whether you agree or disagree politically, public servants work hard with little compensation. A thank you goes a long way to set the tone for a productive meeting. You are there to ask for their help, so acknowledge their time and service. Likewise, a thank you follow-up after your meeting will show Emory's appreciation for all they do.

Make it personal (professionally speaking)

One of the most valuable messages you can convey to a legislator is the work you are doing. Conveying your passion and commitment to the work you are doing is important to engaging your listener. In advocacy, it can be easy to focus on the forest at the expense of the trees. Your personal story and professional work can help transmit a broader perspective about the policies you seek to influence.

Talk about the impact of government on your work

Communicating the impact of regulation on your work and professional life is an important step in connecting your work with the work of the legislator. Does a certain regulation impact your daily routine in a certain way? How much of your day goes to required regulatory administrative tasks? How important is government funding to your work? How would certain policies make your work reach more people? Always try to start and end on positive notes. Take cues from the person you are lobbying to see how "in the weeds" you can get; be ready to pull back if you see that glazed expression or see the fidgeting start. Most legislators and their staffers are generalists. You will need to stay at a higher level to maintain their attention.

Allocate your time

Emory's Office of Government and Community Affairs is happy to provide you with institutional talking points on our highest priorities at the time of your meeting. We recommend spending 20% of your time on Emory's talking points and 80% of your time on your work. Using one of Emory's talking points as a jumping off point can help you frame your story.

Things to know before you go

If you are traveling to Washington, DC for a meeting, know that meeting with a staffer is to be expected. While in their DC offices, legislators are booked down to the minute. If possible, try to meet with a legislator in his district office, where schedules allow legislators more time to meet with constituents. Likewise, meeting with state legislators in their home districts is always a better way to form a relationship. Please note that unlike congressmen, state lawmakers do not have full time staff and you will be meeting directly with the lawmaker. Also, state legislators also maintain full time jobs outside of their work in the legislature. Be mindful that short meetings can be just impactful, if not more so, than longer ones. Read the social cues to know where you can push and pull the conversation.

Follow up with the OGCA Team

Did you hear an interesting tidbit during your meeting? Perhaps you heard what they liked and disliked from their latest tour at Emory. Or perhaps you heard the Speaker appreciated the President's recent letter on X topic to the Georgia delegation. Please consider a quick de-brief note or phone call to the OGCA team. We always appreciate the feedback!

In addition to coordination, federal law dictates that we capture expenses for any Emory employee interacting with federally elected officials, if Emory resources will be used in any way (flight, hotel, meal, work day salary). An easy form captures these expenses and keeps Emory compliant with federal law. You can reach out to Abby Meadors (Abby.Meadors@emory.edu) for the form.