



## ***Meeting With a Member of Congress*** ***An Overview***

The relationship between lawmakers and advocates is symbiotic – lawmakers depend on constituent advocates to provide information and opinions on policy, and advocates depend on lawmakers to turn their policy suggestions into law. Constituent advocates provide information and data, stories of community impact, professional expertise, and, most importantly, your vote! Cultivating a relationship and level of trust with your elected official(s) builds a good foundation for your efforts and increases your ability to achieve results. The best way to convey your concerns to a Member of Congress is by personally meeting with her or him or an aide.

Below is an overview of the basics.

### **Plan the Meeting**

- Call the Member's office and ask to speak to their scheduler. Contact information can be found on the websites dedicated to U.S. [House](#) and [Senate](#) members.
- Identify yourself as a constituent of the Member of Congress and your position at the University/College. Mention that you also are a member of the Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities (TECSCU). Be flexible in arranging a date and time for the meeting.
- Ensure that your entire group knows what is specifically being asked of the Member and anticipate any questions in return.
- Confirm the appointment the day before.
- Report the meeting time and place to [Jonathan Dilley](#) of TECSCU's Washington, DC, office.

### **Deliver the Message**

- Thank the Member and/or staff for making time for the meeting.
- Provide the Member and/or staff with a brief overview of your College of Education (e.g., number of students, highlight innovative programs, discuss engagement with local school districts), and the Teacher Education Council of State Colleges and Universities.



- Tell your story. Discuss the impact of your College of Education and the critical role that effective Colleges of Education play in educating the future.
- Be brief, clear, and polite when asking the Member to support an Elementary and Secondary Education reauthorization bill that advances valid and reliable metrics for evaluating your institution's graduates, and a bill that ensures a level playing field for all well-qualified teachers.
- Carefully and politely listen to what the Member's views are on the topic no matter how it affects you.

### **Maximize the Impact**

- Leave your information packet with the Member or his or her assistant along with your contact information so the office can respond to the meeting. *(We have attached supplemental materials for you to leave-behind – these are in the document titled **TECSCU – Public Policy and Advocacy – Leave Behind Materials**).*
- Provide feedback on your meeting to TECSCU by sending the completed survey (page 6) to [Jonathan Dilley](#) of TECSCU's Washington, DC, office.
- Send a thank you note via email to the Member and/or staff for spending time with you and continue to foster a good relationship with the office.



## TECSCU 2012 Policy & Advocacy Messages

Below are key messages that can help guide your conversation. If you have additional information that would support our advocacy agenda, feel free to include them in your message.

### Breaking the Stereotypes

You have likely experienced or heard first-hand a negative stereotype about Colleges of Education. These are prevalent on Capitol Hill. TECSCU is focused on breaking three of the most widespread stereotypes – 1) it is easy to get into our Colleges of Education; 2) our professors are out of touch; and 3) our curriculum does not meet current local school district needs.

When you meet with a Member of Congress or staff, use your own experiences to highlight that:

- Standards for entering and completing our education programs are rigorous.
- Our faculty and students are actively engaged in PK-12 schools.
- What we teach and how we teach it is dynamic and responsive to the needs of our PK-12 partners.

### Advocacy Themes

When you discuss the below advocacy themes, please be sure to tell your own experiences that align with these messages.

- TECSCU Institutions are in the schools and make a difference for students.
- TECSCU Institutions bring innovation to practice.
- TECSCU Institutions are committed to preparing highly-effective teachers.

As you discuss the overarching advocacy themes identified above, you should also work into the conversation several of the key TECSCU Commitments that follow:



- TECSCU commits itself to the simultaneous and continuous renewal of public schools and the education of teachers and other educators.
- As TECSCU institutions, we are deeply committed to the highest quality educational preparation – only those who are fully prepared are licensed from our programs.
- As TECSCU, we strive always to be institutions that provide the opportunity for diverse populations of students to access higher education and to enter the teaching profession as outstanding professionals committed to PreK – 12 learning.
- We assure the application of high standards and multiple criteria for student success for eligible students within our regions no matter their backgrounds or needs.
- We are committed to PreK – 16 learning based in the belief that “good enough is not enough.” We are committed to excellence in our candidates and in the learning achievement of their students; mediocrity is not acceptable.
- We are dedicated to continuing services to our graduates via professional development and excellent graduate programs as defined by districts, schools, teachers and our research based expertise.
- Underlying TECSCU’s commitment and guiding its actions is the belief that educators impact our nation’s future by addressing the needs of a diverse and democratic society.

<sup>1</sup>

**Policy  
Priorities**

**1. Evaluation of Our Institutions and Our Graduates**

*TECSCU supports monitoring the performance of graduates, the development of valid and reliable performance metrics to effectively evaluate teachers and principals, and the use of the resulting data to inform the improvement of teacher preparation.*

We recognize the importance of evaluating the students we graduate.

We also recognize the critical importance of using valid and reliable metrics to evaluate those graduates.

---

<sup>1</sup> Current as of April 2012



While we do not support federally-mandated evaluation metrics, we do support the development of national guidelines that identify model evaluation metrics that state and local education agencies could use to evaluate the performance of teachers.

In an effort to provide states and local education agencies with valuable guidance on the development of valid and reliable metrics, TECSCU requests that the following Report Language be included within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) reauthorization bill.

The Committee recognizes the importance of providing school districts with the flexibility necessary to develop valid and reliable performance metrics that meet the specific needs of their teachers and students. Teacher evaluation systems must: use multiple measures of evaluation in assessing teacher performance; make student achievement data a significant part of the evaluation; have more than two rating categories for the performance of teachers, and recommends the development of national guidelines of model evaluation metrics to be used at the local level for the design and implementation of evaluation systems; make personnel decisions based on the evaluations, as determined by the school district; seek input from parents, teachers, school leaders, other school staff, and institutions of higher education with a degree-granting teacher preparation program in the development of the evaluation system.

## **2. Level Playing Field for Our Graduates**

*TECSCU supports a level playing field in the hiring and rewarding of teachers, whereby access is afforded to well-qualified teachers regardless of the teacher's preparation program.*

We are concerned that the playing field between comprehensive teacher preparation programs and alternative teacher pathways is not level.

Regardless of the teacher's preparation program, TECSCU believes that access (i.e., to jobs, grants, federal education programs, etc.) should be afforded to any well-qualified teacher.



## The Ask

- As the House and Senate work toward comprehensive education reform, we respectfully request that the Member of Congress speak with the leadership of the House Education and the Workforce Committee (Chairman John Kline of Minnesota, Ranking Member George Miller of California) or the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (Chairman Tom Harkin of Iowa, Ranking Member Mike Enzi of Wyoming) to seek the inclusion of our above-detailed Report Language and also to ensure the equal treatment of all teachers regardless of their preparation program.



## Congressional Meeting Debrief Form

Congratulations! You have completed your Congressional meetings in support of TECSCU's 2012 advocacy priorities. This information is critical for following-up with the offices you visited. Thank you for taking a few minutes to describe your meetings. Please complete one per visit.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Member Congress: \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you met with the Member of Congress personally:

Name of staffer you met with or was in your meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

### TECSCU Legislative Priorities

When you asked for assistance with the TECSCU legislative priorities, was the response:

- Yes, the Member will work to include national guidelines for model metrics and also work to ensure equal treatment of teachers regardless of their preparation program
- No, we would like to help, but can/will not
- Non-committal- We'll consider your requests further

Did the Member and/or Staff make any noteworthy comments in your meeting?

Did the Member and/or staff raise specific concerns with any of the materials you presented or requests you made?

Were there specific requests for information or concerns you were unable to answer which we should follow-up on?

*Please return to Jonathan Dilley via fax (202.312.7441) or e-mail (Jonathan.Dilley@FaegreBD.com)*