Effective Communication with Legislators

Constance Brooks, Ph.D.
NSHE Vice Chancellor for Government and Community Affairs
Role within NSHE

- Vice Chancellor for Government and Community Affairs
  - Chief Legislative Liaison
  - Diversity Initiatives
  - Communications
  - Community Outreach
Effective Methods of Legislative Communication

- Attend community events / forums
- Attend legislative hearings
- Emails
- Position papers
- Handwritten letters
The Elevator Speech

- Elements of the 60–90 second “elevator speech”
  - Name
  - District
    - If not your legislator, mention who represents you
  - A little about yourself
  - Issue
  - Why is this important to you?
  - Why should this be important to them?
  - Position – how should they vote and why?
  - How can they contact you for more info.
Emails

- Timely
  - Can be sent during a legislative hearing

- Easy
  - Legislators can find your info. with ease
  - Easy to coordinate an email campaign – strength in numbers

- Should contain

- Name
  - Your district
  - Issue
  - Why it’s important to you?
  - Why should it be important to them?
  - How can they contact you?
Compelling research
Connect to national trends and best practices
Demonstrate you are a resource
  ◦ Offer follow up research
Brevity is key
Handwritten Letter?

- **Benefits**
  - Nice touch, thoughtful
  - Appeals to a specific demographic

- **Risks**
  - Legibility
  - Doesn’t appeal to all demographics
  - Relies on legislator’s comfort and frequency with checking mail
  - Not timely
  - Can’t receive info. during a committee meeting like an email
Testimony

- Formal “elevator speech”
- State name and district
- Who you represent and your role within the organization
- Name the bill
- Position – support, opposition, neutral
- Why?
- Impact
- Offer to assist in development of amendments
- Always end with “thank you”
- Brevity is key
GPSA Lobby Day?

- Plan early
- Activities
  - Meeting with legislators
  - Testimony in committee hearings (public comment, bills)
  - Sitting on the “floor” with a legislator
  - Luncheon / reception
- Consider collaborating with other student groups
- Coordinate with legislators, i.e. Education Committee
- NSHE Education Day
Practice

- Elevator Speech
- Testimony

Issue:
- *More Parking at UNLV*
Useful Websites

- What district do I live in?
- Who are my representatives?
  - “Who is my legislator?” “What is my district?”
  - [http://mapserve1.leg.state.nv.us/whoRU/](http://mapserve1.leg.state.nv.us/whoRU/)

- How do I learn about legislators?
- How can I watch committees?
  - [www.leg.state.nv.us](http://www.leg.state.nv.us)