

Partnering for Prosperity



Advancing the Institutional and State Agenda Through
an Effective Collegiate State Relations Program

AASCU Task Force

on Making Public Higher Education a State Priority

The *AASCU Task Force on Making Higher Education a State Priority* consists of public higher education leaders, many who have held elected office, and all who have deep experience in fostering effective state relations. The task force helps guide the work of the *AASCU Political Perceptions and Policy Priorities Project*, which serves as a resource for research, advocacy and thought leadership on strategies for strengthening the relationship between public higher education and state government.

- William A. Sederburg (Chair), Retired Commissioner, Utah System of Higher Education, and AASCU Senior Scholar
- Judy A. Bense, President, University of West Florida
- Linda M. Bleicken, President, Armstrong Atlantic State University (Ga.)
- Frank T. Brogan, Chancellor, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education
- John C. Cavanaugh, President, Consortium of Universities of the Washington Metropolitan Area
- Susan A. Cole, President, Montclair State University (N.J.)
- Joseph Garcia, Lt. Governor of Colorado and Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Higher Education
- Darryl G. Greer, Senior Fellow, Higher Education Strategic Information and Governance, William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy, Richard Stockton University of New Jersey
- Glen D. Johnson, Chancellor, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
- William E. “Brit” Kirwan, Chancellor, University System of Maryland
- Teresa S. Lubbers, Commissioner, Indiana Commission for Higher Education
- Brian Noland, President, East Tennessee State University
- Richard Novak, Fellow, Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
- Eduardo M. Ochoa, President, California State University, Monterey Bay
- John D. Welty, President Emeritus, California State University, Fresno

AASCU Staff

- Daniel J. Hurley, Associate Vice President for Government Relations and State Policy
- Thomas L. Harnisch, Assistant Director, State Relations and Policy Analysis

Contributing Reviewers

This publication was further informed by the insights of several experienced higher education state relations officers, each whom provided an in-depth review and offered substantive enhancements to the final written product.

- Rochelle Black, Vice President for Government Relations, Oakland University (Mich.)
- Andy Clark, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Government Relations, University System of Maryland
- Daniel Holsenbeck, Vice President for Government Relations, University of Central Florida
- Mark Kinders, Vice President, Government Relations, University of Central Oklahoma
- Susan Peterson, Director of Government Relations, Kansas State University
- Karen Zamarripa, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Advocacy and State Relations, The California State University

Additional Consultative Sources

This publication was also informed by members of two committees comprised of public higher education leaders who possess extensive experience in strengthening the capacity for colleges and universities to meet state objectives while advancing higher education as a state policy priority.

The *Task Force on Higher Education Government Relations* consists of government relations professionals from public two- and four-year institutions, systems and governing boards from throughout the U.S. Members of the task force help develop and execute the annual national *Higher Education Government Relations Conference*, sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, American Association of Community Colleges, Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

The *AASCU Committee on Policies and Purposes* is comprised of presidents and chancellors of AASCU-member institutions and systems. The committee serves as a think tank in deliberating federal, state and campus issues that play a critical role in enabling these institutions to fully deliver on their public-purpose missions.

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Contents

AASCU Task Force on Making Public Higher Education a State Priority	ii
Partnering for Prosperity: Building and Sustaining a Collaborative Relationship with State Government	4
The “What” and “Why” of State Relations	5
State Relations in the Contemporary Environment	7
New Economic and Demographic Realities	7
A Tipping Point in the Privatization of Public Higher Education	7
A State Political Environment Marked by Increased Legislative Turnover, Political Polarization and Partisanship	8
Greater Scrutiny of Higher Education Cost Management.....	9
System and Campus Leadership in Advancing a State Relations Agenda.....	10
Facilitating State Relations Within the Parameters of System and State Governance Structures.....	10
At the System Level: Centralized Coordination and Engagement of All Member Institutions	10
At the Campus Level: A Presidential Leadership Imperative	11
Fostering a Campus-wide Culture of State Relations and Advocacy	11
Collegiate State Relations: Building Networks to Link and Mobilize Key Constituencies.....	12
Constituencies of a Collegiate State Relations Program	13
Mobilizing Internal and External Constituencies	19
Elements to Consider in Creating a Collegiate State Relations Program	21
Accounting for the Collegiate State Relations Function	21
Year-Around Nature of State Relations.....	22
Synchronizing State and Federal Relations	22
Six Critical Functions of an Effective Collegiate State Relations Program.....	24
1. Create Supportive Networks Through Relationship Building	24
2. Lead a Unified State Relations Team	26
3. Serve as a State Legislative Liaison and Resource	27
4. Facilitate Communications with State Government Constituencies.....	29
5. Build External Institutional Support	33
6. Foster Partnerships to Advance State and Institutional Interests	33
Four Steps to Institutionalizing a Collegiate State Relations Program.....	35
1. Conduct an Assessment of the Current State Relations Program.....	35
2. Set Measurable and Achievable Objectives	37
3. Design and Execute Strategies for Accomplishing Objectives.....	37
4. Evaluate and Refine the State Relations Program	39
Conclusion	42

Executive Summary

Collegiate state relations is the continual, collaborative process of engaging state policymakers to maximize support needed to achieve institutional and state objectives. Building and sustaining a state relations program helps the college focus on achieving its mission and promoting its value to individuals and society. A number of dynamics—economic, fiscal, political and demographic—are among many forces that beckon institutions to renew their strategy for engendering mutually beneficial relations with state government. A state relations program should be orchestrated in a manner that reflects the history, culture, values and governance structures that are unique to each state.

Campus and higher education system leadership remains paramount to a successful state relations program. Higher education system leaders should oversee a coordinated and inclusive state relations program. They should actively engage leaders at member campuses to fully leverage the system's collective voice in building and executing a unified agenda for advancing state policy objectives. Likewise, college presidents must develop a strong working relationship between the institution and state government, and fulfill a leadership role in serving as an institutional voice and liaison with state government. College presidents must employ an array of campus stakeholders in state relations and advocacy, leading to a culture of engagement between colleges and state government.

A collegiate state relations program fundamentally involves building relationships among and between an institution's internal and external

constituencies and mobilizing these stakeholders to strengthen the institution's relationship with state government. These constituencies include both those whom are public target audiences and groups that serve as advocates on behalf of the institution.

Adhering to organizing principles can help ensure the sustainability and success of a state relations program. The program should be staffed and funded, with accountability for outcomes clearly delineated. State relations should be viewed as a year-round endeavor in which relationship building is incessant and agenda setting with state officials takes place well in advance of the legislative session. A campus' state and federal relations activities should be synchronized; the interplay among the two levels of government involving policy and funding developments—and their ramifications on the institution—should be well understood and appropriately communicated to affected stakeholders.

Six functions are integral to an effective collegiate state relations program:

- **Create supportive networks through relationship building.** It is through these relationships that state governmental actions affecting public colleges and universities are informed, shaped and codified through legislation.
- **Lead a unified state relations team.** The campus president should assemble a team charged with executing the state relations



agenda and designate staff to oversee day-to-day state relations activities. Campus leaders should leverage resources, staff and feedback mechanisms throughout campus. Well-defined protocols should be implemented to ensure strategic, accurate communications with state officials.

■ **Serve as a state legislative liaison and resource.** The state relations team should monitor all consequential legislative, budgetary and regulatory activity and clearly articulate concerns involving legislative proposals. A college's legislative orientation should be proactive and focused on addressing state goals and objectives. Institutions should build a reputation for being responsive resources for information and serve as liaisons for connecting university expertise to state needs.

■ **Facilitate communications with state government constituencies.** Communication with the college's many constituencies is a vital function of a robust state relations program. The offices of the president, government relations and communications should have processes and protocols in place to ensure that the audiences receive timely, accurate and high-quality content. Feedback mechanisms should be included with all communications.

■ **Build external institutional support.** Generating support for the college's goals that span the legislative, regulatory, funding or programmatic spectrum of state government is a crucial function of a state relations program. In building support for university positions on these matters, the institution's mission and commitment to serving the state should be consistently reaffirmed. The benefits, outcomes,

and return on investment for a given state government action should always be conveyed.

■ **Foster partnerships to advance state and institutional interests.** The college's state relations program should be vigilant in identifying how the institution can join forces with other entities to serve as a force multiplier in generating positive outcomes for communities and the states.

State relations programs must be a priority of the campus president with adequate staff resources committed to achieve desired outcomes. Four steps are essential to institutionalizing a collegiate state relations program:

■ **Conduct an audit of the current state relations program.** Assessing the institution's current state relations capacity and effectiveness will provide insight for how to strengthen the program. Questions to consider range from organizational leadership of the state relations function to the college's success with constituency engagement.

■ **Set measurable and achievable objectives.** Informed by the audit's findings, program objectives should be established. They should be clearly defined, measurable and realistic, and take into consideration the six functions of a state relations program discussed above. Time frames for achieving objectives should also be established.

■ **Design and execute strategies for accomplishing objectives:** Every objective should come with a set of explicit strategies for how it can be achieved. Campus leaders should consider the resources required to achieve their objectives.

■ Evaluate and refine the state relations

program: Program evaluation is essential to ensure accountability and to inform corrective measures needed to maximize campus effectiveness in serving the state. Among the elements to evaluate are whether program objectives have been met; if staffing and resources are sufficiently and appropriately allocated and utilized; and the robustness of the college's state relations constituency networks and level of engagement with each of them.

America's public colleges and universities are inextricably intertwined with state government. The ability of these vital public institutions to fully deliver on their missions is foundational to the economic vitality and social vibrancy of their states. Higher education leaders must renew their commitment to ensuring that a program is in place to foster a "partnership for prosperity" with state government.

Partnering for Prosperity: Building and Sustaining a Collaborative Relationship with State Government

Through their focus on teaching, service and research, public colleges and universities are tremendous assets that contribute to states' economic, social and civic vitality. In an era of economic uncertainty, intensified global competition, and increasingly complex, place-specific challenges confronting state political leaders, the “public purpose” mission of state colleges and universities has never been more relevant and essential. It is therefore incumbent upon college and university leaders, particularly presidents and board members, to build strong, mutually-beneficial partnerships with officials in state government in order to maximize the capacity of higher education institutions to successfully serve students and employers and address state needs and goals. Effective collaboration between institutional leaders and state officials reflects a partnership for prosperity; a bond in which both act in unison to address the evolving demands of the 21st century.

The extent to which public colleges and universities utilize comprehensive and strategic state relations programs varies greatly. Some campus state relations programs are far-reaching in scope and effectiveness, whereas others are limited or ad-hoc. In contrast, when it comes to reaching out and accommodating private donors, most colleges and universities have a comprehensive operation staffed by a team

of advancement professionals. Indications by donors of their desire to collaborate with an institution toward a shared goal are typically met with an immediate and tailored response from campus officials. Yet often when it comes to these institutions' largest single donor—state government—the outreach and response mechanisms are often understaffed, unresponsive and unprepared to be a proactive partner. Without effective state relations strategies, the value of public colleges and universities is under-realized by policymakers and the public, communications channels remain unopened, relationships are not cultivated, and collaborative opportunities are missed. Failure to create a meaningful state relations program can ultimately leave campus resources underutilized, state needs unaddressed, and the “public purpose” mission of state colleges and universities falling short of their full promise.

The AASCU report, *Creating a New Compact Between States and Public Higher Education*, calls on higher education leaders and state policymakers to work collaboratively in crafting a shared public agenda grounded in mutual understanding, trust and accountability.¹ The report examines higher education funding and

¹To view the full report, *Creating a New Compact Between States and Public Higher Education*, visit <http://www.aascu.org/policy/P5/newcompact>.

policy support in the state political context, outlines a series of commitments higher education leaders can make toward a new compact, and offers strategies for elevating public higher education as a state funding and policy priority.

One of the strategies included in the *New Compact* report is for public college and university leaders to build and execute a comprehensive state relations program. The purpose of this follow-up publication is to highlight the importance of having a comprehensive collegiate state relations program and to provide a framework for building an effective program fully integrated into the institutional mission. The *New Compact* report and this publication are both products of the AASCU *Task Force on Making Public Higher Education a State Priority*, created by and for public higher education leaders with guidance from AASCU government relations staff and experienced higher education state government relations professionals. Both publications' intended audiences include college and university presidents and chancellors, system heads, and the senior officers who comprise system and campus external relations.

The “What” and “Why” of State Relations

A collegiate state relations program is the perpetual process utilized by a system or institution to engage policymakers and state government, in collaboration with internal and external partners, to maximize support and investment needed to achieve system (if one exists), institutional and state objectives. It involves building and sustaining strong working relationships with state officials and a broad range of stakeholders who can collectively inform influencers and decision-makers. A state relations program is externally-oriented, always seeking

ways to engage elected officials, opinion leaders and citizens in understanding the value of the institution and in generating state support for it.

Every public institution of higher education engages state government and therefore should have a robust state relations program. It should be as interwoven into the institution's fabric as a campus' academic, budget, enrollment management or facilities plan. Effective state relations actively demonstrate that public colleges and universities are invaluable resources embedded in not only the fabric of the state, but that remain economic and cultural centerpieces of regions and communities within states. Colleges that have a history of being responsive to the needs of state government and whose advocates are omnipresent in the state capitol elevate their standing with both policymakers and the public, and boost their likelihood of strengthening their ability to serve the state through policy, funding and programs. In sum, an institution's presence in the state governmental sphere matters greatly.

The extent to which an institution is responsive to state needs can help or hinder its ability to advance its mission. Yet campus officials often neglect state relations or fail to make it a priority. A state relations program is often not a priority when it is needed most. Many campuses, for example, pulled back on state relations during the Great Recession in response to state funding reductions—a time when institutional representation in the state capitol was even more crucial. Failure to engage in state relations activities can be construed as a tacit endorsement of state decision-makers who may seek to disregard the voice of public higher education. A state relations program must be strategic, not ad hoc, and begin with an internal assessment of the institution's relationship with the state, including

mutual priorities. Campus leaders must integrate state relations into campus operations; fund, staff and support its objectives; and make it a key function of the institution. Failure to engage in state relations is to relinquish higher education's

responsibility for ensuring adequate consultation with state officials on matters related to the campus mission and in addressing the needs of the state and society.

State Relations in the Contemporary Environment

New economic and workforce realities, demographic shifts, and the trend toward the privatization of public higher education are among a handful of factors that have collectively placed a premium on effective state relations. These and other trends have created an impetus for institutions to collaborate with state governments to strategically leverage resources in order to meet state needs. Muted communications, mistrust, and occasional conflict between campus and state leaders must give way to dialogue and cooperation if states are to remain competitive and effectively navigate the contours of the knowledge-based global economy.

New Economic and Demographic Realities

Greater synergy between college campuses and state government is imperative to state economic success. The need for individuals with advanced education and skills will increase in the years ahead as the global economy places a higher premium on innovative ideas, products and processes. Public colleges and universities, with state government support, can collaborate with business and industry to provide talent and research leading to solutions that drive business growth, create new and strengthen existing industry clusters, and build partnerships that generate economic activity.

Unfortunately, there are indications that the U.S. is not meeting the demand for knowledge and

skills in the 21st century economy, and effective collegiate state relations programs are crucial for addressing this challenge. Populations that have historically attended and graduated college at higher rates are levelling off or declining, while the percentage of students from underserved populations is burgeoning.² A new demographic landscape will confront state policymakers in the years ahead, as the number of high school graduates decline in the Northeast and Midwest while populations in the South and West grow rapidly. This will require new strategies and greater collaboration between officials on campuses and the capitols to achieve and maintain state prosperity.

A Tipping Point in the Privatization of Public Higher Education

Despite overwhelming evidence of the need to increase the number of individuals with postsecondary degrees and credentials to meet global economic challenges—especially among populations that have traditionally been underrepresented in higher education—access to a high quality, affordable public college education has eroded for the last three decades and remains on an unsustainable path. This is primarily attributable to state disinvestment

²State-by-state projections of high school graduates and demographic shifts, see *Knocking at the College Door: Projections of High School Graduates*, 8th ed., by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

in public colleges and universities. As a result, students and families are paying for a larger share of college costs through higher tuition prices. While state appropriations paid for the large majority of college costs a generation ago, states now are collectively providing about one-half of public higher education funding, close to a symbolic threshold indicating that a public college education is more of a personal investment rather than a publicly-financed social and economic good.³

While most states are reinvesting in higher education as the economy improves, it may take years before states restore per-student public higher education funding to pre-Great Recession levels; some analysts suggest states will never restore funding to those levels. Strong anti-tax sentiment and the need to fix structural state budget imbalances have compounded the political and fiscal difficulty of reinvesting in public higher education. The state funding environment remains competitive, with calls for states to direct funding to other areas, such as health and human services, K-12 education, corrections and pensions.

The state-to-student cost shift in paying for a public college education has drawn increasing attention and criticism from policymakers at all levels of government, who remain alarmed about rising student debt levels and its economic repercussions. If the cost shift continues, it may discourage students from pursuing higher education and hinder efforts to create an educated citizenry that fuels the economy, empowers individuals and renews communities. Certainly, decreasing state investment and, in turn, college affordability, will not help the U.S. reclaim its

status of having the highest proportion of citizens with a college degree.

Abandoning their responsibility for funding public colleges and universities is a choice made by elected representatives. It is incumbent upon higher education leaders to fully engage state officials to articulate the value that affordable, accessible and high quality public higher education brings to the state. Effective state relations will be a determining factor of whether public colleges and universities will or can remain public for future generations.

A State Political Environment Marked by Increased Legislative Turnover, Political Polarization and Partisanship

High turnover in state legislative bodies and one-party control of state government has made state relations a more challenging yet important responsibility for state colleges and universities. In recent years, term limits and “wave” elections have reduced legislators’ collective experience in elected office to historic lows. This inexperience in state legislative chambers has resulted in a large share of state lawmakers who are unfamiliar with the diverse, often complicated array of policy, funding and regulatory issues affecting public colleges and universities. Therefore, college leaders must redouble state relations activities as a priority to build relationships, educate lawmakers, and cultivate new cohorts of champions committed to making higher education funding a top priority. For their part, campus and system government relations professionals can fulfill a vital role in providing continuity in legislative memory on matters involving state higher education policy and budgetary issues.

³See *State Higher Education Finance Report, Fiscal Year 2014* by the State Higher Education Executive Officers, for a complete analysis of state and net tuition revenues and trends.

Greater political polarization has made one-party control of state government a reality in many states. One-party control of state government—in which the same party holds majority power in both legislative chambers as well as the governorship—has led in many cases to reduced bipartisanship and diminished open debate of policy issues. This allows legislation to swiftly pass through the legislative process and into state law, with fewer dissenting voices and limited opportunities to change the legislation. This has also placed fewer “checks” on some governors and made them considerably more influential in the state budget process.

Greater Scrutiny of Higher Education Cost Management

Greater attention to soaring tuition prices as an offset to state higher education funding cuts has led to increased calls for institutions to lend greater energy toward cost reductions in all facets of campus operations. Public higher education leaders have gone to great lengths to cut costs while protecting the academic core of their institutions. Trend data on institutional revenues

and expenditures suggests that public colleges and universities have done a commendable job of simply not “passing the buck” on to students in terms of raising tuition rates as an impulsive response to state funding cuts.

In the precursor to this publication, *Creating a New Compact Between States and Public Higher Education*, accountability for taxpayer-provided monies and students’ tuition dollars was listed as the foundational commitment higher education leaders should make toward a new compact with state government. A proactive orientation in cost containment and strategic reallocation of resources should serve as a mainstay, consistently sought after, with achievements conveyed to stakeholders.

The ability of campus leaders to understand and effectively navigate new political dynamics will become even more important in the years ahead. This is essential if we are to ensure that higher education is not overlooked in state budgets and that policy measures affecting public colleges and universities are thoroughly vetted during the legislative process.

System and Campus Leadership in Advancing a State Relations Agenda

Facilitating State Relations Within the Parameters of System and State Governance Structures

Each state has its own unique higher education governance structure. A college's state relations program should be designed and executed to work well within the state's public higher education governance context, in particular, to work in synchronicity with the governing body that holds primary authority over the institution. The establishment of protocols, assigned responsibilities, and a clear division of labor among system offices, institutions and governing/coordinating boards are imperative to an effective public higher education statewide advocacy and policy strategy. System and campus officials should have common priorities and unified messaging. They should work in unison to convey policy priorities, promote passage of favorable legislation, or, as appropriate, oppose legislative proposals deemed to be ill-conceived or detrimental to the state's higher education interests. Campus-based government relations officers should also be aware of, and well-versed in, any statutes, regulations or by-laws that limit their interactions with state governmental entities and abide by those parameters.

At the System Level: Centralized Coordination and Engagement of All Member Institutions

System leaders should oversee a coordinated—*and inclusive*—state relations program. The system president or chancellor should assume responsibility for building and executing a comprehensive and unified agenda, and advancing state advocacy and policy objectives, including strategic engagement of system board members and leaders at member campuses. Leveraging the voice of institutional leaders in order to speak with “one voice” will greatly expand the reach and effectiveness of a system's state relations program.

System officials should embrace the network, talents and resources of campus leaders in steering a coordinated state relations program. They should understand the missions and policy priorities of each of the system's constituent institutions, synchronize system and institutional policy objectives, and ensure transparency in the process. System leaders should also align relationship-building and messaging activities with the member campuses. This is especially important regarding the system's operational funding, capital outlay and deferred maintenance needs and funding requests. In sum, system leaders should work with each campus in a highly-coordinated manner to maximize state support for higher education.

At the Campus Level: A Presidential Leadership Imperative

Campus presidential leadership is the most important element to an effective state relations program. College presidents must understand and appreciate the interdependent relationship between public higher education and state government, and the implications of this relationship on the well being of their campus, community and state. College presidents must prioritize the development of a mutually beneficial relationship between the institution, system officials (if operating within a system), and state government leaders, and fulfill a leadership role in serving as an institutional voice and liaison with state government. The extent to which a college succeeds in building a strong alliance with system and state officials is paramount to both institutional advancement and to its president's leadership effectiveness (and, ultimately, his or her legacy).

College presidents should oversee the state relations functions, but delegate most day-to-day responsibilities to a government relations officer. The president, however, should directly interact with the governor, top administration officials, legislative leaders, and committee members overseeing higher education and state appropriations. Direct interaction with the institution's local legislative delegation and with alumni of the institution who work in the legislative and executive branches of state government is also good practice. Presidents should strive to ensure that the priorities of the institution track closely with those of the state. The college president must also be the voice and symbol of the institution and be the lead ambassador at the state capitol. A president's utility is in his or her ability to frame lawmakers'

concerns in a way that is understandable and that does not require highly specialized knowledge. The government relations officer can, in turn, serve as the purveyor of additional information should a legislator or group of lawmakers seek additional background on a given issue. The president's office should be accessible to state lawmakers and encourage their visits to campus. College presidents should stay abreast of salient state issues and use their platform to educate the public on matters pertaining to higher education.

Fostering a Campus-wide Culture of State Relations and Advocacy

In order for state relations to be successful, college leaders must build a culture of campus-wide engagement with state officials. An institutional state relations program is as much an *orientation* as it is a *set of activities*. Institutional outreach to state government should not be a niche or siloed activity. Rather, working through and in tandem with the designated office on campus, all key campus stakeholder groups should be encouraged to be active members of the institution's state relations program. For example, if an institutional board of trustees exists—whether it is free standing or a local board within a system—its members can be valuable assets for advocacy. Senior campus administrators, such as divisional vice presidents and college deans, as well as faculty and student leaders, should coordinate their engagement in the college's state relations activities. In the process of encouraging various members of the internal campus community to engage with state officials, college representatives should be formally versed on conveying messages that clearly articulate the institution's mission, its vision for the future, and how both the mission and vision relate to the college's top state policy and funding priorities.

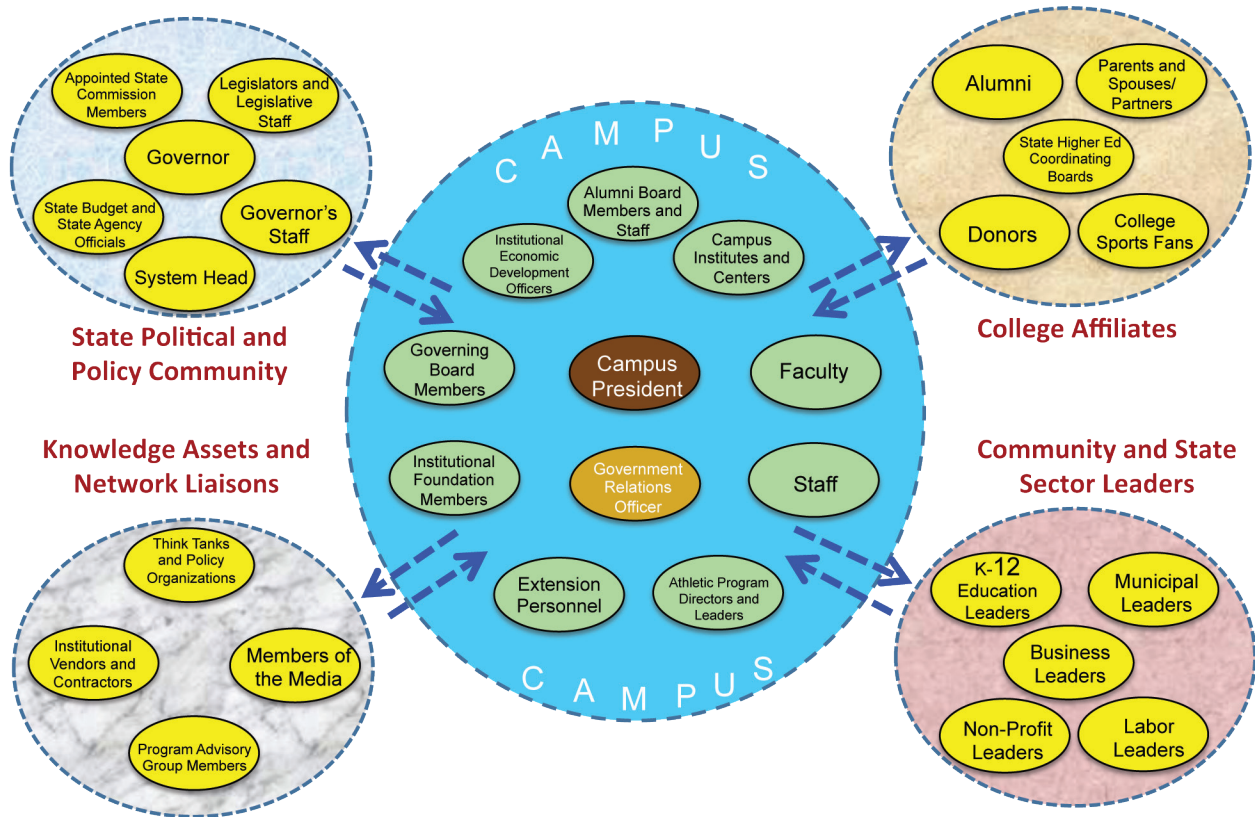
Collegiate State Relations: Building Networks to Link and Mobilize Key Constituencies

At its core, collegiate state relations involves building relationships among and between the institution's various constituencies and thinking of these relationships as an interlocking network of advocates who can help strengthen the

institution's relations with state government. The college president should serve as the leader of this network and should consider the importance of developing the network to be on par with other key functions of the institution.

Collegiate State Relations: Building Networks to Mobilize Key Constituencies

An effective state relations program includes active institutional engagement of multiple internal and external groups, led by the campus president and carried out by the government relations officer and other members of the senior leadership team, in coordination with system leaders.



Constituencies of a Collegiate State Relations Program

Every college has a number of internal and external constituencies that should be included as critical actors comprising its state relations program. These constituencies include both those whom are public target audiences, as well as groups that serve as advocates on behalf of the institution. Some of these individuals and groups are obvious, such as the governor and his or her staff, state legislators and local government officials. Other groups, such as business and community leaders, may seem indirectly linked to the college-state government interface, however, they can often be the most influential liaisons in helping foster effective relations between the institution and state government. A successful collegiate state relations program harnesses the full array of constituencies that encompass the institution's vast network.

Internal Constituencies

Building a strong and comprehensive network of advocates begins within the college. Internal constituents are those that directly serve or are served by the institution. The college president or chancellor, working with the campus' state government relations professional, should strive to actively encourage various campus stakeholders to serve as formal and informal ambassadors to state government. As will be discussed later, coordination and messaging among these various groups should be controlled to ensure unity of the institution's state relations efforts.

The most common constituent groups considered "internal" to the campus include the following:

- **Senior Leadership Team:** Senior team members include the president's/chancellor's cabinet and those responsible for overseeing

key institutional functions. Positions include those that oversee academic affairs, finance, student affairs, enrollment, research, advancement and diversity/inclusion. Other positions that should be included are academic deans, the chief communications officer, the chief of staff, general counsel, director of federal relations and, of course, the senior state government relations officer.

- **System Head:** In a majority of states, institutions operate as part of a multi-campus university system. The head of the system should be considered an internal constituent, along with appropriate system administration officials. They have an integral and vested interest in assisting all of the campuses in the system serve as full partners with the state. It is critically important that institutional advocacy efforts are coordinated with the state system executive and system state relations staff, and equally important that institutions agree to the system's unified operating and capital budget requests and on any other common priorities and unified messages.
- **Governing Board Members and Governing Board Staff:** Typically appointed by the governor (on fewer occasions, elected by voters or the legislature), these individuals are well-placed to serve as champions on behalf of the institution. These individuals from diverse public, private and non-profit backgrounds are typically well-networked within the state's political sphere and can be especially helpful advocates and liaisons for the college or system.
- **Faculty:** As the group most central to the college's mission, college faculty can be helpful allies in advancing the campus' state relations agenda. However, as discussed previously,

there is wide variation among the states, as it involves history, traditions, and culture around institutional engagement with state officials, and as such, the inclusion of the faculty voice in state relations will vary. It should be noted that strict collective-bargaining agreements involving campus faculty and staff that are negotiated at the state, board or campus level can affect the relationship between administrators and faculty. Also, it should be noted that on occasion, the interests of unionized faculty and staff may not align with those of the institution. As with all internal constituencies, any formal legislative interaction conducted on the institution's behalf should be coordinated with the campus' state government relations officer.

■ **Staff:** All members of the college's staff—across all divisions, departments and units—can serve as conduits to the broader network of campus constituencies and to state government officials. These individuals' collective contributions to the state and community, executed through their various campus-based and external roles, position them to be helpful intermediaries with the more expansive network of college advocates. Each individual brings a level of expertise, and accordingly, a unique perspective of how the institution is advancing state interests through the students and communities served by the institution.

■ **Students:** As the core beneficiary of the college's teaching and learning mission, students can be powerful institutional advocates. Leaders of student government and student-led civic and discipline-based organizations can be especially effective. State policymakers are particularly receptive to the compelling personal anecdotes of students whose lives have been transformed through their collegiate educational experiences,

especially from students and other constituents who live in their district.

■ **Institutional Foundation Members:** Those who comprise the college's foundation board are both enthusiasts of and benefactors to the institution. These individuals hail from diverse backgrounds and bring with them their own influential networks. Foundation staff members, too, are well-placed within the college's network of relations.

■ **Alumni Board Members and Alumni Staff:** While most institutions have thousands of alumni, those who serve on the university's alumni board have a special dedication to the campus, and often are quite willing to serve as liaisons and advocates on behalf of the college. The directors and staff of institutional alumni offices are well networked with their alumni base and are innate champions of the university, and thus can be integral to state relations efforts.

■ **Institutional Economic Development Officers:** Individuals who oversee the campus' economic development activities, such as workforce development, research and development/technology transfer, or small business consultation and start-ups, are well-placed to serve as liaisons to many stakeholders within state government.

■ **Campus Institutes and Centers:** Discipline-based, occupational, and other issue-based centers and institutes, with their in-house expertise, can serve as a rich consultative source to public officials. The subjects and causes attended to by these typically privately-funded, on-campus entities are vast, transcending educational, economic, environmental, health care, transportation and social matters, among

others. The staff of these entities can be called upon to help inform state policy discussions. College leaders should be cautioned, however, that the research and advocacy work conducted by these centers can, on occasion, displease state policymakers whose views may not align to those reflected in the institutes' research, policy and advocacy agendas. When confronted by policymakers who wish to silence the work of these centers, institutional leaders' first and foremost priority should be to protect the academic freedom, which is occasionally exercised through the auspices of these centers.

■ **Extension Personnel:** Individuals who work at the extension offices of land-grant institutions can serve as vital liaisons at these regional locations, especially in serving as a feedback channel to institutional leaders regarding concerns and opportunities expressed at the grassroots level. Thought should be given to other employees who conduct outreach activity on behalf of the university in efforts to advance its teaching, research and service missions, and how these individuals can best be equipped to serve as supportive links in the institution's state relations network.

■ **Athletic Program Directors and Leaders:** College athletic directors and coaches can be among the most visible individuals on campus and thus can serve as excellent advocates for the college or university.

External Constituencies

The array of external constituencies is vital to ensuring a strong state relations network. Some are high-impact actors, such as the governor, his/her staff, and state legislative leaders. It is helpful to remember that elected state lawmakers, starting

with the governor, are both *constituencies* of the institution, as well as the primary intended *audience* of the college's state relations program. Their role as constituent and audience may vacillate depending on the issue. Other external constituencies involve vast networks of individuals who are on the receiving end of the institution's mission, with a vested interest in the campus' ability to generate key educational, workforce, research- and civic-related outcomes, and which involve a more diffused set of grassroots communications and mobilization efforts. These networks of external stakeholders collectively generate much of the energy and support for the institution in its ability to advance state objectives.

It is worth noting that governors and legislators expect that college and university leaders, most noticeably the president and members of the government relations staff, will lay out a compelling argument for support of their institution. These state officials, however, perceive that institutional representatives will always speak to their own best interests. Therefore, external constituents are often the most valuable spokespersons—their validation of positions held by institutional representatives is often received as an independent analysis by a third-party whose assessment merits consideration and acceptance. The following is an inventory of external constituent groups that should comprise an institution's state relations network.

■ **Governor:** There is no individual who has more control over public higher education state funding and policy than the governor. The priorities put forth by the governor largely set the state agenda, thus campus and system officials should give considerable time and attention to proactively working with the

governor and his or her staff throughout the year. Institutional leaders should strive to assist the governor in creating mutual policy priorities and crafting a plan for how public colleges and universities can help execute the governor's agenda, rather than merely being passive recipients to the agenda. Given the breadth of intellectual, educational, workforce and research capacity on college campuses, these institutions should be well-equipped to address state needs.

■ **Governor's Staff:** As the gatekeepers to the CEO of state government, and professional public officials in their own right, college leaders should work collaboratively with all members of the governor's staff. In garnering the attention of the governor, these individuals have tremendous sway. The governor's chief of staff, deputy chief of staff, education advisor and scheduler can serve as especially helpful resources and liaisons to the state CEO.

■ **State Legislators and Legislative Staff:** Next to the governor, legislative leaders and committee chairs hold the most influence over a public college's ability to advance state goals. The nature and composition of state legislatures varies greatly, defined in part by their full-time or part-time status, number of legislators, the existence and thresholds of legislative term limits, the size and competency of office staff who provide policy analysis, and the voting requirements involving state budget passage, tax policy, and other policy legislation affecting public institutions. The extent to which individual legislators control policy and funding decisions concerning colleges varies as well. Majority and minority party leaders, legislative committee leaders—especially those who serve on appropriations, capital outlay and education

committees—should command the attention of college officials. Legislative staff members, too, are critical to the state relations network. They can serve as proactive facilitators—or unaccommodating obstacles—to advancing institutional priorities, and should never be given short-shrift by those advocating on behalf of the college. It should be noted that partisan staff (those whom report to a specific legislator or whose legislative committee work seeks to advance the policy priorities of one of the two major parties) and non-partisan staff are both equally important, but that non-partisan staff are more likely to serve in their positions longer and thus have a more extensive legislative memory.

■ **State Budget and State Agency Officials:** Numerous state agencies play an integral role in fostering the institution's ability to collaborate on state-facilitated and state-funded programs; chief among them is the entity that oversees state budget development. The collective services of these agencies contribute greatly to guiding the state regulatory and programmatic agenda. College officials should maintain ongoing communication with all agencies that touch and are touched by the institution's mission, and should strike a proactive stance in terms of identifying collaborative opportunities with these entities. These include, but are not limited to, the state superintendent of schools and heads of departments related to economic and workforce development, health and social services, agriculture, and transportation.

■ **Appointed State Commission Members:** All states have various commissions comprised of governor-appointed representatives with specialized experience and knowledge around

a given issue or industry. Examples include technology councils, travel/tourism councils, workforce development boards, environmental commissions, and energy or public utility commissions. The individuals appointed to these state commissions can serve as helpful sources on topic-specific issues.

- **Alumni:** Representing the primary “outcome” or “product” of colleges—high-knowledge and high-skill participants in the state’s economy—who often number in the tens of thousands for a typical public college, graduates of the institution serve as a vast and vital part of the school’s state relations network. As a group, a college’s alumni base can be a formidable force when mobilized to advocate on behalf of the institution on matters of state interest.
- **Donors:** Individuals who have contributed personal resources to the college, as well as corporate leaders who have provided in-kind or monetary support, are often among the institution’s most ardent supporters. Whether in support of the college’s multiple missions and activities—involving student access and success, teaching, research, intercollegiate athletics, among many others—small donors and large philanthropists alike collectively represent a mosaic of collegiate allies, many whom may be affiliated with the university’s foundation. Wealthy donors often contribute to political campaigns and therefore often have a pre-established relationship with elected lawmakers.
- **State Higher Education Coordinating Boards:** Most states utilize some type of coordinating board that assists member institutions with a coordinated policy and advocacy agenda. These entities should be

fully leveraged to harness the collective voice of the higher education sector they represent in furthering the institutions’ policy priorities. They can be especially helpful in coordinating a policy agenda, responding to policy proposals, serving as a convener, and as a buffer on contentious issues.

- **K-12 Education Leaders:** Increasingly, states’ secondary and postsecondary education systems are not viewed as separate and distinct systems, but as an integrated “Pre-K-20” network that spans the full educational continuum, from preschool through graduate and professional education. Given the vast intersect between K-12 and postsecondary education, K-12 and higher education leaders have a vested interest in collaborating to achieve mutually-held goals, such as improving high school graduation rates, college readiness, and the quality of teacher education. When working in unison, the two sectors will be better positioned to strengthen legislative relations, advance policy and funding priorities, and address state objectives. This demonstration that all Pre-K-20 partners collaborate in a “seamless” pipeline to move students through to college and the workforce is a powerful testament to legislators and governors that the partners are effective and efficient in advancing the state’s economy.
- **Business Leaders:** As the recipients of college graduates, university research-related outputs (technology transfer), and partners in an array of public-private endeavors, employers have a stake in public higher education policy. Business-affiliated networks vary in terms of their regional orientation, size and scope of activities. State-based, city-based and regional chambers of commerce, tourism bureaus,

and economic development entities can be particularly helpful allies. Statewide, business-led professional and trade associations are coalitions that often include higher education as a cause to champion and can be especially helpful advocates.

■ **Members of the Media:** Members of the press from all sources—newspapers, radio, television and online—have an outsized impact on how the institution is portrayed to their respective audiences, and to policymakers and the public at-large. Campus leaders can no doubt attest to the immense and immediate role press outlets can have in helping—or hindering—efforts by the institution to advance its state policy and funding priorities. As such, special attention should be given to integrate members of the press, including reporters, editors and other commentators, into campus state relations efforts. Careful attention should be given to communicate with members of the media so that they understand the institution’s contributions to the state and its citizens, as well as its state policy goals and objectives.

■ **Labor Leaders:** The voice of organized labor can serve as a helpful link in a college’s statewide network, especially in states with a significant union presence.

■ **Municipal Leaders:** Mayors and city council officials can serve as well-positioned advocates, especially when advocacy involves the myriad and mutually beneficial ways in which colleges collaborate with cities and counties to build community capacity in economic development, stewardship of resources, and quality of life.

■ **Non-Profit Leaders:** As with municipal officials, leaders from non-profit organizations can also lend an affirming third-party voice to the enormous role that the college fulfills in the community and region, and which speaks to the institution’s broader “regional stewardship” mission. Faith-based leaders and officials from local philanthropic organizations are vital members of this constituency.

■ **Parents and Spouses/Partners:** When it comes to issues of college affordability and the quality of undergraduate education, parents of college students have a clear stake in policy outcomes. Parents can speak to the importance they have placed on their children’s college education and the sacrifices they have made to realize this aspiration. As a sizable voter bloc, they can also personally attest to the financial impact that reduced state funding is having on their ability to finance their children’s college education. With ever-increasing enrollments in college of working adults and other non-traditional students, spouses/partners are also an important voice that can promote sound higher education policies supportive of place-, job- and family-bound students.

■ **Think Tanks and Policy Organizations:** Every state is home to one or more think tanks that conduct research and advocate on critical issues and opportunities facing the state. These citizen- and foundation-backed groups address a range of issues, from the environment to the economy. Some have a clear right- or left-leaning agenda, whereas others strive to strike a non-ideological orientation. Higher education leaders should utilize, as appropriate, the research, expertise and advocacy capacity of these entities and consider them prospective allies in the institution’s constituent network.

■ **Program Advisory Group Members:**

Academic programs that have a direct occupational orientation or accreditation often utilize program advisory committees or boards to ensure a cutting-edge curriculum and to maintain networks with business and industry. Individuals who serve on these boards can speak to the importance the college's programs play in providing a pipeline of skilled workers and are well-placed conduits within the institution's broader network.

■ **Institutional Vendors and Contractors:**

Colleges and universities are significant consumers of goods and services and have a substantial economic impact in their communities and regions through their purchase of goods and services directly, as well as an indirect impact on businesses whose clientele consists primarily of faculty, staff and students. These vendors have a stake in the fiscal health of the institution. Their close association with the campus often makes them active advocates to governmental decision-makers. The same can be said for those involved in facilities construction, such as contractors and architects. These firms and trade groups can be supportive, in particular, on issues of state capital construction.

■ **College Sports Fans:** While college sports fans may seem like an unconventional constituency, they can be advocates on issues that affect college athletic programs, especially at larger institutions. Large athletic programs can have a huge following of fans and supporters who can help carry the institution's message to state lawmakers. They have proven helpful in fostering legislative support for capital

improvements involving athletic facilities, irrespective of whether state funding is involved. As with all constituency groups, formal engagement with this community on a specific policy issue should be done in a coordinated manner, especially given the diffuse nature of inter-collegiate athletics fan bases.

Mobilizing Internal and External Constituencies

It is helpful to assess the extent to which each internal and external constituent group is mobilized to promote the college's agenda, serve as informal liaisons with state government officials, and identify ways in which the institution may address state-level needs and opportunities.

After campus officials identify the institution's constituencies, it is helpful to determine specific actions that each stakeholder group can take to foster the college's state relations agenda. Some actions may be broad—such as employers' affirming the need for more workers with postsecondary degrees and credentials. Others may be specific—such as business leaders' lending support for specific legislative matters and persuading decision-makers to allocate resources to the state's public college and universities toward these goals. Campus officials can engage other stakeholder groups related to specific institutional initiatives.

Once campus leaders identify constituencies and their respective roles in advancing the state relations agenda, they should plan a communication strategy for each group. Ongoing communications allows the college to inform each constituent group of important institutional

milestones, developments and opportunities that may exist for the institution to contribute further to state goals and objectives. As important, these communications should consistently send a message that the college welcomes feedback and ideas, and to learn of opportunities in which the various constituencies can help build support for the institution in its relations with the state.

The type of communications medium will vary based on the audience. For example, communications will be exceptionally “high touch,” consisting of one-on-one communications led by the college president as it involves the governor or industry CEOs. At the other, given the size of large audiences, communications may take the form of a tailored email with specific intentions, such as those aimed at the college’s alumni or the state’s employer community.

Elements to Consider in Creating a Collegiate State Relations Program

In creating a new state relations program or refining an existing one, it is helpful to consider some essential aspects that will help guide program development. These organizing principles will help ensure that the state relations program is framed and executed to contribute maximally in meeting institutional objectives.

Accounting for the Collegiate State Relations Function

At the outset, it is essential that the college president/chancellor clearly articulate the importance of operationalizing the state relations function. Key elements include assigning staff to oversee the state relations program and determining how they will be held accountable for specified outcomes, setting administrative reporting lines of the state relations staff, and ascertaining the program's funding sources. As important, the campus CEO should make it clear that the state relations function is an institution-wide endeavor, involving roles fulfilled not just by government relations staff, but staff throughout the institution.

It is important for the campus administration to identify the activities that will be carried out in the state relations program and the individuals authorized and accountable for carrying them out. The institution's president should provide

oversight of the entire program, with responsibility for executing the state relations program given to an assigned senior administrator. Furthermore, government relations personnel must know the parameters of decision-making delegated to them during the legislative process. The position of the campus' senior government relations professional is typically at the director, associate vice president or vice president level. Common job titles include director of government relations, director of external relations, director of university relations or director of public affairs. Generically, the position is often referred to as the government relations officer.

Administrative structure, staff size, and the use of contract lobbyists will vary depending on the size and type of institution and the state's culture of legislative advocacy. Many community colleges and some regional state colleges do not have a full-time dedicated government relations officer; instead, responsibility for the state relations function is assigned to administrators who also oversee such areas as finance, public relations or institutional advancement (fundraising). The government relations officer position, if not a direct report to the campus CEO, should at least have a "dotted line" to the campus president/chancellor. Given the importance and often time-sensitive nature of the state policymaking process, the government relations officer must have unrestricted access to the campus president.

Year-Around Nature of State Relations

Actions taken by a college to interface with state government should not be limited to the state's annual or biennial legislative session. The state relations function is important not just when the legislature is in session. To be sure, it is when the legislature is in session that institutional outreach and engagement should be at its highest, often reaching a fever pitch near the closing of the session as legislative debate on policy and appropriations bills hits a crescendo. But communications and engagement with legislators and other state officials should take place year-round, as should building and mobilizing the college's broad state relations network. In fact, when the legislature is out of session, relationship building can often be kindled most effectively, given a less immediate and distractive policy and political agenda confronting lawmakers. Communications with legislative staff who remain in the state capital and even meeting with legislators in their districts can heighten rapport and ultimately, policy supportive of the institution's priorities. The more distant the institution is from the state capitol, the more important these in-district communication opportunities become in building meaningful relationships with legislators. The same is true as it relates to engagement with the governor and his/her staff. The institution's president and government relations staff are advised to work with the governor's office well in advance of the legislative session to contribute to the development of the governor's executive budget recommendation and overall policy agenda, not merely being a passive responder to the governor's priorities after they have been presented via the State of the State Address.

It is also important to remember in state relations that remaining silent as public policy is developed and debated by state lawmakers will be interpreted as indifference or acceptance of their proposals. Finally, interfacing with local government officials and business leaders during the legislature's off-season is a good time to facilitate important town-gown relations. It may also be an ideal time in which to provide assistance to candidates for office, serving them as an information resource and liaison—an apt measure in building early grassroots support for future lawmakers.

Synchronizing State and Federal Relations

Federal and state governments fulfill fundamentally different roles in higher education policy. Each plays a part in higher education financing, student access, governance and applied and basic research, among other dimensions. Despite these separate functions, there exists an important interplay among federal and state policy. Institutions should understand this interconnectedness and be proactive in communicating the ramifications of a proposed or enacted policy action put forth by one level of government on the other. In particular, the consequences of reductions in any type of fiscal support to the institution by either the federal or state government should be communicated to officials from the other level of government. Cuts in support by one level of government will magnify the negative consequences of any reductions made by the other. Likewise, federal and state officials should be made aware of the multiplier effect that joint federal-state support

can have in boosting the outcomes of a given institutional program or initiative, for example, as it may involve a federal matching program. At many small and mid-sized public colleges and universities, the same individual is often held accountable for overseeing both state and federal government relations. At larger institutions, these

functions are often divided among two or more staff members. In such environments, it is essential that government relations staff is well aware of both the institution's priorities state and federal policy priorities and to work collaboratively in synchronizing the college's efforts to advance them.

Six Critical Functions of an Effective Collegiate State Relations Program

In creating and refining a state relations program, it is important to articulate the program's primary purposes. The campus president should communicate these roles, which need to be understood by other campus senior administrators, especially the government relations staff.

Depending on the size of the institution, its organizational structure, and the preferences of the campus CEO, specific tasks associated with these various functions may be shared or entirely assigned to other units within the institution.

While the roles of a campus' state relations efforts may be tailored to meet institutional needs, six functions foundational to ensuring an effective program are discussed below.

1. Create Supportive Networks Through Relationship Building

Relationships are the foundation of a highly effective collegiate state relations program. It is through these relationships that virtually all state government actions affecting public colleges and universities are informed, molded and eventually codified, typically through legislation and adoption of state budgets. The ability to mobilize supporters borne out of these relationships drives an effective state relations program. The motives for cultivating and maintaining relationships should be mutually beneficial to both the college and the vast array of individuals whose relationships with it represent

the interface through which the institution serves the state. The unique and expansive teaching, research and service missions of public colleges and universities enable them to respond to a diverse range of stakeholders' interests, whether they are economic, educational, environmental, social or other in nature. Virtually every individual has a cause or calling he or she champions, and which the institution in some way supports either directly or indirectly.

The avenues for networking with state government are numerous and all of which eventually lead to the offices of state legislators, the governor and state agencies, where the decisions of state government affecting higher education are ultimately made. Key members of each on-campus constituency—faculty, staff, administrators and students among them—have the potential to serve as valuable partners in the institution's network with state government. In keeping with the quest to build a culture of state advocacy, all of these stakeholder groups, both on and off campus, should be encouraged to serve as informal liaisons with state government. The culture should be one in which students, faculty and staff feel a level of comfort, confidence and collegiality with the office of government relations and that it encourages them to share their interactions with elected or appointed officials. They can communicate to the government relations office what was said in their

interactions with state officials, who was present, and whether the institution needs to conduct any follow-up.

Networks of institutional advocates do not form on their own. They must be encouraged, fostered and sustained. Campus officials should employ network-building strategies consisting of intentional actions aimed at encouraging individuals to become engaged with the college's state advocacy efforts. Strategies can be both formal and informal, high-touch and low-touch. Targeted and tailored electronic communications (email and social media), printed communications, event-based gatherings, phone calls, and in-person meetings are among the network-building strategies that can be used. Campus sporting events can also serve as effective forums for building relationships.

Building networks of college advocates should include intentionality; a specific set of proactive considerations to maximize the ability of constituencies to advocate effectively on behalf of the institution. Each potential advocate—whether an individual or group—should be equipped with four essential elements. These include:

- **Familiarity with the institution and its priorities.** Whenever possible, the defining characteristics, values, programs, outcomes and achievements of the college should be conveyed to members of the institution's state advocacy network. The specific priorities of the college—limited in number, and which require the support of state government—should also be communicated. It is helpful to provide talking points and key information to advocates. Campus officials are also encouraged to convey to members of the network other issues that

may affect the institution, its students and/or the state.

- **Messaging.** Campus leaders should share messages to be conveyed to members of the network and to state government officials. These messages should be clear, concise, limited in number, and unify institutional and state goals. Institutions should consider drafting background documents and position papers that briefly outline a given state policy issue or initiative, clearly articulating the salient points regarding the college's positions. Campus officials should share these resources with constituent groups, which can serve as talking points when communicating with state officials, as well as for recruiting other potential advocates.

- **Call to action.** Each member of the college's network should be given a call to action; equipped with an understanding of how they can specifically serve as helpful links in advancing the institution's state agenda. Depending on the type of stakeholder, some actions might be passive or informal, such as being vigilant for opportunities to share the institution's message with those affiliated with state government. Other actions may be much more active, such as communicating directly with lawmakers to encourage support for specific legislation. When necessary, members of the institution's advocacy network should be provided with specific timelines for when they should communicate with legislators or other state officials, as it may involve a specific issue or piece of legislation. Advocates and liaisons to the state should have a clear understanding of how to make contacts with state officials and have the resources they need to communicate accurately and succinctly. Providing formal

training opportunities for advocates can be beneficial.

■ **Feedback channel.** All members of the network should have a clearly identified channel for providing feedback that may inform and facilitate the institution's priorities and objectives. Institutional advocates should have an understanding of the importance of providing feedback and should be given a timeline to provide feedback as it pertains to a specific issue or bill. Feedback may be that of their own or that of other stakeholders in the network who they have interfaced with, including state legislators or other state officials. The type of feedback can be broad, such as how the institution might better deliver on its mission, how its programs might be improved, or how it can better meet state and regional needs. Alternatively, it may involve observations or requests about a specific institutional activity, program, or approach to promoting or averting the passage of a piece of legislation. There are many conduits for providing feedback, including the college's office of government relations, the office of the president/chancellor, alumni relations, or through the dean's offices in individual colleges or other academic units. It is imperative that protocols are in place to ensure that feedback reaches the requisite level of institutional leadership, up to, if necessary, the president of the college.

■ **Clarity in understanding the feedback.** Advocates should understand what they are being told by state elected officials. Legislators can, on occasion, convey a message of enthusiastic understanding, yet fall short of committing to take any definable action in support or opposition to an institutional

priority. A sound advocacy program must ensure that those who are delivering messages to lawmakers on behalf of the institution can correctly interpret what they are being told, as well as the ground rules for respectful conversations that elicit a meaningful response from elected officials.

One way of building these networks in a manner that includes all four elements above is for the campus government relations officer to hold a weekly conference call during the legislative session. Ideally, during the call, the campus' various internal and external advocates are provided with information that has been vetted and prepared by the government relations officer. These weekly calls can include updates on specific issues (i.e., budget deliberations, analysis of certain bills, timing and legislative schedule) and how the campus can work with various internal and external constituent groups in reaching out to legislative leadership and relevant committee members.

2. Lead a Unified State Relations Team

In building or refining a collegiate state relations program, the campus president should create a unified campus-wide team charged with executing the plan. The team is often led by an individual assigned with overseeing the program (the government relations officer). At many small and mid-sized colleges, this individual may be the sole person charged with coordinating state government relations, and he/she may even be held responsible for directing local/municipal and federal relations, or more broadly, all "external relations." Larger universities may have multiple staff members who manage the

institution's governmental affairs, including one or more individuals explicitly assigned to state governmental relations. The responsibilities of each member of a state relations team should be included in their position descriptions. All members of the college's state relations staff should have an intuitive sense of his or her function. More important, flexibility and the ability to improvise are crucial elements to a good state relations program.

While the campus president is chiefly responsible for its implementation and outcomes, the state relations program should involve inputs, actors and feedback mechanisms from throughout campus. Senior administrators, selected faculty, and individuals who coordinate functions that are particularly integral to effective state relations should be explicitly assigned by the campus president/chancellor to serve on the team. Members of the college's communications or public information offices often work hand-in-hand as part of the state relations function. Other individuals on campus, such as those who by the nature of their position work with state entities on a regular basis, are good candidates to fulfill specific roles as part of the campus' state relations team. This can be helpful to utilize a committee consisting of an array of campus-based stakeholders who can inform legislative issues of interest to the college, and which meets on a regular basis during the legislative session.

Also of importance are well-defined and understood communications protocols that each member of the team should follow to ensure good communications and responsiveness with government officials. While some campus employees who provide formal assistance to the campus' state relations efforts may have their own

state policy, programmatic or funding priorities—reflective of divisional, college or departmental-level needs and opportunities—it is important that all members of the campus have a clear understanding of, and willingness to advocate for, the institution's top state policy and funding priorities. Likewise, senior campus administrators should have an understanding of the college's position on key state policy issues and pending legislation. The college president and government relations officer should communicate and reinforce this message.

On occasion, the institution's solution to a legislative priority may differ substantially from that of an internal constituent group, such as students or faculty. Legislative advocates must be clear with those constituent groups on the institution's or system's administrative position to ensure that there is no misunderstanding later on whether the university acted in good faith in its representation when common ground could not be achieved.

3. Serve as a State Legislative Liaison and Resource

Communicating with legislators, legislative staff and other officials on state government matters affecting the college is an essential function of a collegiate state relations program. This requires the vigilant monitoring of all state government-related regulatory, budgetary and programmatic activities of potential consequence to the institution. Constant interaction with state lawmakers concerning pending or proposed legislation is critical. Government relations officers must thoroughly analyze each bill to assess its viability in addressing a particular opportunity or challenge, and in particular, implications

for the state's public colleges and universities. Questions and concerns on legislative proposals must be conveyed in a timely manner, and potential negative ramifications of the legislation should be clearly articulated. It is best if such communications are conducted in unison with other institutions and systems affected by the legislation. It is vital for individuals assigned with overseeing the campus' state relations program to have a thorough understanding of the state budget and legislation development processes, including legislative committee structures, the legislative calendar, and other protocols integral to the passage of state legislation. The college's government relations officer typically serves as the first point of contact on all state relations and state policy issues, although he/she should not necessarily be held accountable for decision-making on all legislative and state policy matters. Depending on the issue, that task may be the responsibility of the campus president and may require consultation with the institution's system head and/or governing board.

In executing a college's state relations program, it is beneficial to build a reputation for having a legislative orientation that is proactive, creative and innovative when it comes to working with lawmakers on state policy or funding matters. An orientation that is constantly over-reactive, negative and/or institutionally self-centered will be noted by lawmakers. State relations officers must also be sure not to disparage other institutions. It may be more helpful to communicate possible adjustments or amendments to legislative proposals rather than to wholly dismiss them. Further, institutions, in collaboration with other colleges or systems within the state, can serve as a resource for original state policy or programmatic ideas; i.e., to help identify and seed solutions

in which the college(s) can help address state needs and objectives. Assertive institutional responsiveness to legislative inquiries is essential. An institution's approachability and receptiveness to state officials' requests, assuming they are well-intentioned, reasonable and rational, helps brand the college as a collaborative partner with state government.

It behooves college officials to serve as a resource to state officials, and in particular, state legislators. Great value can be derived from serving as an informed, responsive resource for information and as an honest broker of university expertise. The government relations officer can serve as a state liaison to an array of faculty and research resources on campus. The convening power of the institution should always be kept in mind. Hosting legislators for campus visits and sponsoring events in collaboration with state officials are good ways to facilitate interaction, display resourcefulness and demonstrate competency in successfully executing special events. When requested by the president and the governing board leadership, the college's government relations officer should seek opportunities to convey to the appropriate state officials the talents needed on the institution's governing board when vacancies occur. Under appropriate circumstances or upon special request, they can provide names of potential board appointments.

Campuses should have processes and protocols in place for responding to inquiries and requests for information from legislators and other state officials. Campus officials should consistently channel such requests to the government relations office. Criteria to consider in responding to these requests include their level of importance and whether the request needs an immediate response,

whether it will be necessary to safeguard the institution, and whether other institutions received the same request, and if so, how they are responding.

All institutions occasionally receive legislative (and media) inquiries on controversial issues. Examples include college athletics, presidential residences, student misbehavior, controversial speakers, or remarks made by faculty and staff that have sparked concern among legislators. In such circumstances the government relations officer can serve as a liaison between concerned lawmakers and the institution's president. The institution's response to an event or stance on an issue should be articulated in terms of general principles. While dealing with controversial issues may not be enjoyable, it is important for the institution to not avoid prompt and direct engagement with individual legislators who are directing the given inquiry. It is best to keep communication lines open and to continue the conversation; not to do so will convey an impression of stonewalling. Government relations and communications staff should collaborate in resolving controversies. In the end, the legislator may not believe the issue has been adequately addressed, but the institution needs to put forth an earnest effort to be transparent and responsive.

4. Facilitate Communications with State Government Constituencies

Communications with the college's many constituencies is a vital function of a robust state relations program. College administrators should consider what, when and how to communicate to the college's internal and external stakeholder

groups. Timely and informed communications are essential, as are a clear set of protocols for facilitating various types of communications. The institution's office of government relations should work hand-in-hand with the office of the campus president/chancellor and the communications office to ensure that the appropriate audiences receive timely, accurate and high quality content. All forms of communications, whether email or a more formal published newsletter, should include a clear means by which recipients can share information with college officials. Similarly, all communications should have a clear intent (i.e., it should be discernable as to whether it is an informational update or intended to precipitate action on the part of recipients, such as an email to alumni encouraging them to contact legislators to voice support for or against a given bill). Additionally, thought should be given to how each and every communication can serve as a vehicle to promote the college's messaging, especially that which is aimed at conveying the college's efforts in advancing its priorities.

It is important to understand what is permissible under state law regarding the use of state resources to convey advocacy messages to policymakers directly, as well as to constituent groups. Arms-length alumni associations with sufficient resources to operate independently of the institution can be more direct in asking advocates to contact legislators to support or defeat a legislative initiative. Many states restrict the manner in which this can be done by state employees, including public college and university government relations officers. Such restrictions can include not using institutional time or resources, such as computers and email service, for state government advocacy purposes.

Internally

Communicate State Policy and Budgetary Developments

The government relations officer must keep the president, senior administrative staff, governing board members, and campus stakeholder groups apprised of developments regarding state legislative, budgetary and regulatory activity that may affect the college. He or she can play a key role in providing political context around current issues and those that should be anticipated, framing them in a manner that will assist the institution in achieving mutually beneficial outcomes.

The campus president, often along with governing board members, must be kept informed of the latest developments in the state capitol. A crucial role for the government relations officer is to assist the president in interpreting new state policy information and synthesizing the implications of the shifting legislative landscape so a timely assessment can be made of what, if any, appropriate course of action should be pursued. As it involves keeping the various institutional constituent groups up-to-date on state policy activity of interest, specific actions to consider during the legislative session include a weekly in-person meeting or teleconference with key campus officials, a daily or weekly electronic newsletter, and regular legislative updates posted to the college's website.

Externally

Convey Institutional Contributions in Meeting State Needs

Fundamental to institutional communications that support a state relations program is the ongoing communication how the college is meeting—and can further meet—state needs and objectives. A central premise is that public colleges and

universities exist largely to serve state needs.

It is important not to have the institution come across as a one-way receiver of state monies and other forms of state-provided support, but rather as a strong partner in identifying and responding to state needs and opportunities. Communications with state government officials should be transactional, affirming a partnership in advancing the state's agenda. Institutional contributions to the state that should be promoted are diverse and include such areas as workforce development, economic development, research and development (technology transfer and business start-ups), pre-K-12 education, teacher education, health care, transportation, agriculture, the environment and sustainability issues, social issues, and quality of life contributions that will attract and retain a qualified workforce. In promoting these institutional efforts, collaboration with other stakeholders should be emphasized, such as with local governmental entities, school districts, business and industry, and non-profit organizations.

Campus officials should communicate the institution's contributions to the state in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It will be helpful to use simple techniques to illustrate data, supported by compelling stories that vividly convey the college's impact. It can be especially effective when communicating institutional contributions to key lawmakers, such as those who lead budget/appropriations committees or jurisdictional committees, to do so in-person, in their communities.

Tailor Institutional Achievements to Legislators' Districts

Campus government relations officers can also coordinate an inventory of campus resources that demonstrate the value and impact of their

institution on legislators' districts. These can be communicated in customized documents and draw on institutional data such as student enrollment, number of alumni, and assistance provided in such areas as faculty consulting, service-learning projects, community engagement, customized education offerings to businesses or employees, internships, job placements, and assistance in economic development. Not every legislative district has a campus, but many districts are affected by the presence of the institution in some way. Busy legislators may not have a quantifiable appreciation for the contribution of the institution to their constituents. It is up to campus officials to demonstrate this.

Promote Institutional Accountability and Fiscal Stewardship

In an era of constrained state budgets, concerns over rising tuition prices and student debt levels, and the combined subsequent effects on state educational, workforce and economic development goals, public colleges and universities should speak to their efforts at demonstrating accountability and fiscal integrity in all of their communications with state officials. The drumbeat of accountability has grown louder in recent years, and as such, institutional communications directed at state government entities should be predicated on accountability and fiscal integrity. An important component of this messaging is to demonstrate how the institution has redeployed resources gained through efficiencies or created enterprising new revenue streams to achieve institutional objectives of importance to state decision-makers.

Top line institutional outcomes should be conveyed, promoted and publicly accessible. Metrics and trend data on student enrollment (including key sub-populations such as Pell Grant

recipients); degree completions (especially in high demand fields); graduation rate; job placement after graduation; average student debt and the percentage who graduate debt free; published- and net-price tuition rates; and research expenditures (if relevant to the institution's mission) should be accessible and transparent. Public four-year colleges and universities can promote much of this data in a standardized manner by participating in the *Voluntary System of Accountability* (see www.voluntarysystem.org). All postsecondary institutions should utilize the *Student Achievement Measure* (SAM), a reporting tool that provides a more comprehensive overview of student outcomes and includes a greater number of students. For policymakers and the public, SAM provides a more complete picture of student progress on the path to a degree or certificate (see www.achievementmeasure.org).

Utilize all Channels to Communicate to the Public and Policymakers

All communications channels should be considered in efforts to advance the institution's state relations agenda. The college's government relations and communications staff should work in unison to identify conduits that can facilitate the institution's public affairs objectives. Thought should be given to all possible outlets, including those that are "free" and those which are paid for through advertising fees. The former category includes newspaper guest editorials, guest columns in regional magazines, and appearances by institutional leaders on television and radio talk shows. Alumni magazines provide a nicely packaged compilation of institutional achievements and contributions, often which imbue narratives of positive personal impacts the college has had on individuals and communities. Distribution of these magazines should not be confined to alumni, but extended to include state

policymakers and other influential voices and decision-makers from throughout the state. While less common, institutions may bolster their public affairs messaging by placing advertisements in selected outlets, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio and billboards. If doing so, it is best to use privately-raised dollars in financing such campaigns.

Use Social Media to Inform and Engage Constituent Groups

While personal relationships matter greatly in fostering a strong state relations program, so too does the extent to which the institution utilizes the Internet and social media technologies to inform stakeholders of state matters and to solicit their support in advancing the college's state relations agenda. Colleges' online state relations presence is often too latent, consisting of little more than a website with contact information for the government relations staff. Given the omnipresent utility of the Internet, it is important for colleges to include on their websites a simple-to-navigate, well-organized, well-resourced, and up-to-date institutional government relations presence. The site should include pending legislation that is consequential to the college, as well as methods by which individuals can voice support for or against the bill, including the names and contact information of key legislators. Several online legislative tracking and grassroots advocacy tools and services are available and can be used to generate considerable support for pending legislation. Here again, however, the extent and methods by which institutions utilize their online advocacy tools should fit appropriately within the state's culture and expectations involving advocacy and lobbying processes.

There is also great value that can come from the use of social media communications. The

utilization of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube can serve as a powerful means of generating visibility for the college's accomplishments and to promote its policy, programmatic and funding priorities. These communications channels can also be used to generate visibility for positive actions and accomplishments of state officials and agencies. It is important to keep content fresh (i.e., post comments, pictures, videos or links to online stories often), but the maintenance required in doing so is well worth the effort given the breadth of impact social media can have. The technology should match the personnel available to build and refresh content, drive traffic to the website, and respond to any inquiries that may come as a result.

Assist with Crisis and Controversy Communications

The campus government relations office should also play a role in institutional crisis communications. Crises may involve events or, more common, controversies that play out on college campuses. Government relations staff should collaborate with those from the campus communications office in working with the president to formulate a response to such events and controversies. These issues often break through the media first, and so the first response by the college is often made through the release of a public statement. The campus' government relations staff can help shape the message, as they may identify implications not apparent to the media relations team, such as helping to interpret how the college's response will be received by state lawmakers. A president has a difficult job in balancing the expectations of the academy on academic freedom and freedom of speech that others may not appreciate. College government relations professionals must be equally informed on a given position taken by the institution,

particularly when a president/chancellor intends to take a controversial position. The government relations officer should not be surprised by the campus CEO's position, nor should he or she be offering a position privately that is at odds with that of the president/chancellor.

5. Build External Institutional Support

Another core function of a comprehensive state relations program involves generating external support for the college's state government priorities—goals that span the legislative, regulatory, funding and programmatic spectrum of state government activities. The publication *Creating a New Compact Between States and Public Higher Education* discusses seven strategies to elevate public higher education as a state priority. These same strategies are fully applicable in building external college support, one of which includes the topic of this publication: utilizing a strategic state relations program. Other approaches include aligning messaging with the state agenda, communicating the public good of higher education, encouraging others to speak for higher education, creating a public engagement master plan, and emphasizing collaboration and cooperation among education sectors, both to include pre-K-12 education, as well as the different sectors within higher education (two-year, four-year, public and not-for-profit).

A consistent theme in building a college support network is to reaffirm the institution's mission and commitment to serving the state. When soliciting external support for a specific state government action, clearly convey the benefits and outcomes of the particular piece of legislation. Government relations staff should clearly articulate the return

on state investment if it involves an outlay of state expenditures for operational/programmatic needs or for capital/infrastructure needs.

The college's government relations staff must serve as a liaison between the institution and a broad array of vested stakeholders in order to build a strong network of external support. A college's many external constituencies, discussed previously, can play varying roles depending on the specific state action for which the institution is seeking support. The voice of the business community can be particularly helpful, especially if the support comes from a broader platform, such as through a statewide, business-led advocacy coalition aimed at promoting higher education goals. Given increasing emphasis on a state's P-20 educational pipelines, support from K-12 education leaders can also be especially helpful.

Support for a college's state agenda from external constituencies can take many forms and can be both passive and proactive. Common active methods of demonstrating support include making a phone call or sending a letter or email to a state lawmaker. Providing legislative testimony is another. But even the more passive receipt of institutional outreach, such as newsletters or as a follower on the college's various social media platforms, can signal tacit support for the institution's legislative priorities, and in so doing, provide a means for building support for the institution's state agenda.

6. Foster Partnerships to Advance State and Institutional Interests

Public colleges and universities are unique entities comprised of an array of educational, intellectual and research expertise—as well as

instructional, laboratory, athletic and convening facilities—and as such are well-positioned to contribute directly and indirectly to advancing state goals and objectives. These collaborative activities often involve partnerships between the institution and entities in the not-for-profit, private or public sector. A final core function of a college's state relations program involves perpetual vigilance in identifying and crafting mutually beneficial partnerships that serve the institution, other collaborating organizations and the state. Partnerships between local or regional K-12 school districts and community colleges are common. Thought should be given to how the college can join forces with other entities, including those that are perhaps not so obvious, in a manner that can

serve as a force multiplier in generating positive outcomes on a community, regional or statewide basis. Embarking on partnerships that address state needs and opportunities should not necessitate that the college is always the lead partner. Roles played or contributions made by the college can be of critical importance even if they are tangential to the core activities of a given collaborative endeavor. Further, potential partnerships should not be viewed as a charitable arm of the institution. Indeed, in an era of constrained state funding, partnerships with private or not-for-profit entities that provide revenue-generating opportunities can help diversify institutional revenues.

Four Steps to Institutionalizing a Collegiate State Relations Program

Creating a comprehensive and productive institutional state relations program requires intentional effort on the part of the campus president. He or she must first make state relations a priority and commit sufficient staff resources to ensure long-term program vitality. The campus CEO must also be active in modeling the way on legislative affairs. He or she must demonstrate a deep knowledge of the implications of state public policy decisions on the institution, its students and the state. Further, he or she must continuously provide updates and discuss policy broadly across the institution so that the campus community becomes attuned to the fact that state policy and state legislative affairs is a year-around endeavor, not to be ignored or confined to just when the legislature is in session.

The extent to which colleges currently have an effective and responsive state relations program in place varies greatly. Some may have a robust and finely tuned state relations plan, whereas others may be falling well short in maximizing their ability to collaborate with state governmental entities. In setting about the process of creating or refining a college's state relations program, institutional leaders can take the four steps discussed below. The steps will help amplify the college's ability to strengthen its relationship with state officials and its ability to serve the state.

1. Conduct an Assessment of the Current State Relations Program

A first step in building or enhancing a collegiate state relations program is to conduct an assessment of the college's existing capacity and effectiveness in building networks, mobilizing key constituencies, and working with governmental officials and entities to advance both state and institutional priorities. It will be helpful to approach the assessment with an organizational perspective that the state relations function is part of an integrated system, with the campus president/chancellor serving as the leader. While one or more campus staff members may be assigned with coordinating the campus' day-to-day state relations activities, the president must assume overall oversight and lend assurance that the campus' state relations program is fully accounted for and is high-functioning. Questions to consider when conducting an institutional assessment of the campus' state relations program include the following:

Organizational Leadership of the State Relations Function

- Has the campus president clearly signaled to all internal and external constituencies that public policy advocacy is an important priority as it pertains to the institution's mission and long-term sustainability?

- What is the campus president's current comfort level as it involves the quality and effectiveness of the institution's state relations program?
- Is the campus president providing adequate attention to the institution's state relations program and to the person who has primary day-to-day responsibility for carrying it out?
- Is the institution's state relations program recognized and executed as one that involves a campus-wide and unified team approach? Are key administrators and other internal stakeholders sufficiently involved in the state relations function? How well is the state relations program integrated systemically at the campus level (and, if relevant, at the system level)?
- Is there sufficient staffing in place to ensure the execution of a fully functioning state relations program? Has sufficient office space been allocated for staff members?
- Have all of the state relations program functions been accounted for? Has responsibility for the various functions been assigned to designated staff? Are professional development opportunities available for assigned staff?

Current Effectiveness of Institutional State Relations

- Have campus leaders identified, in advance of the legislative session, the institution's legislative priorities, and have they followed sound public policy practices in mapping out a course of action to achieve them, i.e., framing the issues, identifying critical stakeholders, selecting an optimal solution, and drawing out a plan to sell the position to lawmakers?

- Has the institution conducted periodic environmental scans, or SWOT analyses (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats) to identify opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of its state relations program?
- How effective has the institution been in positively influencing state policy and funding decisions of consequence to the campus?
- How effective is the institution in proactively identifying collaborative opportunities with state government and which serve state priorities? In retrospect, have significant opportunities been missed?
- How effective is the institution in responding to requests from state governmental entities?
- Does the institution conduct a post-legislative session wrap-up to clearly analyze what policies advanced or failed, and the technocratic or political influences that affected the outcomes? This ex-post-facto analysis should also identify those issues that are likely to return in subsequent sessions that require the development of a strategy to influence the policy structure both before and during the session.

Constituency Engagement

- How well defined are the institution's various constituencies that comprise (or at least should comprise) the campus' broader state government relations network?
- What specific engagement strategies are utilized to mobilize key constituencies (key legislators/ legislative staff, governor/governor's staff, state and/or system governing/ coordinating board

members and staff, institutional governing board members, alumni, business leaders, K-12 leaders, etc.)

- How robust is the college's online state government relations presence? Does the website include interactive features that foster network-building and grassroots advocacy? How expansive and well utilized is the campus' use of social media as it involves advancing its state relations and state policy agenda?
- Does the campus have a clearly defined set of communications protocols for interacting with state officials? Are they routinely analyzed for their effectiveness in influencing public policy decisions?

2. Set Measurable and Achievable Objectives

Based on findings of the audit of the campus' state relations activities and with an eye toward both the state's upcoming legislative session, as well as the institution's and state's longer-term priorities, a second step is to set program objectives.

The objectives should align with the campus president's long-term vision for the institution.

The six functional areas, discussed previously, should be taken into consideration in determining program objectives. They should be clearly defined, measurable and achievable, and include a correlating time frame for achieving them.

Objectives may be grouped into short-, mid- and long-term timeframes. An example of a short-term objective could include advocating for or against a pending piece of legislation. A mid-term objective might involve achieving an appropriations increase for higher education or passage of a capital outlay package in the upcoming legislative session. A

long-range objective could include increasing the number, size and institutionally-directed activities of the campus' constituency networks.

Objectives associated with a state relations plan often align with state's upcoming legislative session. Developing a legislative session strategic plan well in advance of the session can help provide a roadmap from which to direct the campus' state relations activities. However, care should be given to not place too much focus on short-term goals at the expense of longer-term goals that benefit higher education at the campus, system and/or state level in the long run.

In setting objectives, campus officials should identify the measures or outcomes by which that can be assessed. Utilizing concrete, quantifiable objectives will better enable the state relations program to be evaluated, held accountable and refined. Objectives that are qualitative in nature, however, can also be included in a state relations program. Indeed, given the extent to which the quality of relations between campus leaders and the institution's many constituencies matter, the condition and overall perceived climate of these interactions should also be taken into account in establishing objectives.

3. Design and Execute Strategies for Accomplishing Objectives

The third step in implementing a state relations program involves designing and executing specific activities associated with the program objectives that have been set. Every objective should come with explicit strategies and tactics for how it can be achieved. In addition to ascertaining how a given objective can be accomplished, thought should also be given as to when it should be

accomplished and by whom (specific staff responsibility). Further, it should be clear as to how successful achievement of the objective can be measured. In some cases this will be obvious, such as the passage or prevention of passage of a piece of legislation. In others, the measure of success may be more nuanced, such as anecdotal evidence that speaks to the enhancement of relations among key constituencies. Conversely, it may involve a more precise measurement, such as hosting a defined number of state legislators on campus, or adding specific enhancements to the campus' online state relations presence.

In determining the strategies that will be carried out to achieve the state relations program objectives, thought should be given to assure that the necessary campus staff and resources are in place. Which individuals—across all campus departments and units—must be involved in the actions required to achieve program objectives? Are they aware of their required involvement and understand the rationale and value in the objective, and their role in pursuing it? Do they have the resources, both staffing and budget related, sufficient to perform the given activities? Can they be relied upon to accurately convey the institutional messages that conform to the expected outcomes? Have they been sufficiently trained so they appreciate the dynamics of interacting with legislators and other policy decision-makers in the heat of the legislative session?

Resources for Strategies to Advance State Relations

An in-depth discussion of specific strategies and tactics that can be utilized as part of a collegiate state relations program is outside the purview of this publication. Discussed here are three resources. Additional and ongoing discussion of

higher education state relations and state policy advancement can be found at www.aascu.org/policy.

Annual Higher Education Government Relations Conference

While no single occupational-oriented association or “society” exists that solely represents the interests and professional development of higher education government relations professionals, the annual Higher Education Government Relations Conference—which typically takes place in late November or early December—serves as a valuable venue for those who work in the profession. Originally established in 1993 as the “state relations conference,” the annual convening serves as the premier gathering of state government relations professionals from primarily public sector colleges, universities, systems and governing/coordinating boards. Its program is focused on state-level policy development and advocacy execution. The conference reflects a unique partnership among four national higher education associations: the American Association of Community Colleges, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. The conference is coordinated by government relations staff from these associations and the Task Force on Higher Education Government Relations, comprised of state government affairs professionals representing the entire spectrum of American public postsecondary education. For more information, visit www.aascu.org/meetings.

AASCU Innovations Exchange

The *AASCU Innovations Exchange* is an open-access online resource featuring successful and replicable programs and practices at AASCU

institutions. It covers a broad range of important topics, with concise and uniform case illustrations. State funding and regulatory reform, accountability and advocacy are among the topics under which the short case studies are presented. Among the items included in each case study is a brief description of the program, its objectives and outcomes, challenges encountered, how the program is evaluated, helpful resources, and contact information for the appropriate campus representative. To view case illustrations on the AASCU Innovations Exchange, visit www.aascu.org/innovations.

Circle of Excellence Awards Program— Council for Advancement and Support for Education (CASE)

The CASE Circle of Excellence Awards program recognizes top projects and publications of CASE members worldwide. The advocacy campaigns category spotlights exceptional legislative advocacy initiatives that successfully reach and motivate federal, state or local lawmakers. Learn more about the Circle of Excellence Awards and the advocacy campaigns category at www.case.org/circle.

4. Evaluate and Refine the State Relations Program

The process of strengthening the campus' relationship with state government and service to the state is perpetual. The same view should also hold for the institution's state relations program. An evaluation of the program should take place routinely and on a pre-determined basis—perhaps annually or biennially, in sync with the state's legislative calendar. Program evaluation is essential to ensure accountability and to inform corrective

measures to maximize the effectiveness of the campus' engagement with state government and its ability to serve the state.

Evaluation of a campus state relations program should include the following elements:

Program Objectives:

- Have the program's objectives (discussed in step 2, above) been fully met?
- If one or more of them have not been achieved, do they still have merit, and if so, what actions are needed to see them realized?

Legislative Agenda:

- How well did the campus' state relations program perform in the context of the state's legislative session?
- Was the campus a responsive actor and participant in informing pertinent policy debates?
- Recognizing the many factors that influence the policymaking process, did the institution play an adequately instrumental role in facilitating the passage of helpful legislation or the prevention of poorly-developed legislation?
- It should be noted that while an institution may set objectives related to the receipt of state appropriations, measuring the success of an institution's state relations program should never be tied to specific dollars amounts, as too many other political, economic and other external variables factor into these allocations. It should also be recognized that the achievement of some goals can take a long time—sometimes multiple legislative sessions.

Structure:

- Is the current configuration of the college's state relations program aligned in a manner that invites participation by key institutional stakeholders?
- Is a method in place to count the number of advocates who assisted the institution in its state relations efforts? If yes, are these results shared?
- Are all of the key internal campus units fulfilling their expected roles as part of an institution-wide, integrated state relations program?

Staffing:

- Is the program sufficiently staffed?
- Is the staff sufficiently equipped with the knowledge and abilities to coordinate the program's functions and achieve its objectives?
- Do adequate opportunities exist for the professional development of program staff (information resources, events, mentoring, etc.)?

Resource Allocation:

- Are sufficient budgetary resources in place to support the program?
- Are fiscal resources adequate to maximize the utility of the program's staff, communications, network development, constituency mobilization, and convening functions?

Resource Utilization:

- How effectively are institutional resources being utilized in carrying out the campus' state relations program?

- Are all of the expenditures in pursuit of the program's goals generating a productive return on investment?
- Could certain costs and activities be discontinued and reallocated toward more productive uses to advance program goals?

On-Campus Stakeholder Linkages:

- How strong are the connections between the college's state government relations staff with key on-campus stakeholder groups, such as administrators, staff, faculty and students?
- Are these groups communicated with on a regular basis?
- Are there open lines of communication with each group?

Constituency Networks:

- What is the status of the college's many constituencies that are integral to fostering a robust state relations program, from both a quantitative and qualitative standpoint?
- Are all key stakeholder groups accounted for?
- Are each of these groups comprised of key individuals and actors? How can they be improved upon?

Engagement:

- Is the extent of interaction between campus officials and various constituencies and state government officials satisfactory?



- Are there quality relationships between the college and vital stakeholders?
- Are there sufficient mechanisms and opportunities for individuals among the campus' various constituencies to interact with, provide feedback to, and advocate on behalf of the institution?

Communications:

- How extensive are communications with constituencies that comprise the campus' state relations network?
- Are the lines of internal campus communications and protocols sufficiently clear?
- Is the campus maximizing its use of social media to advance its state relations agenda?



Conclusion

The relationship between America's public colleges and universities and state government is inextricably intertwined. As engines of economic growth and social mobility, the ability of these vital public institutions to fully deliver on their educational, service and research missions factors indispensably in the overall economic

vitality and social vibrancy of their states. Public higher education leaders—campus and system presidents and senior executives, with the support of their appointed and elected governing board members—must renew their commitment to ensuring that a program is in place to foster a “partnership for prosperity” with state government.

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American Association of State Colleges and Universities
1307 New York Avenue, NW ■ Washington, DC 20005-4701
ph 202.293.7070 ■ fax 202.296.5819 ■ aascu.org

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Delivering America's Promise

AASCU's membership of more than 400 public colleges and universities is found throughout the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. We range in size from 1,000 students to 44,000. We are found in the inner city, in suburbs, towns and cities, and in remote rural America. We include campuses with extensive offerings in law, medicine and doctoral education—as well as campuses offering associate degrees to complement baccalaureate studies. We are both residential and commuter, and offer on-line degrees as well. Yet common to virtually every member institution are three qualities that define its work and characterize our common commitments.

- We are institutions of access and opportunity. We believe that the American promise should be real for all Americans, and that belief shapes our commitment to access, affordability and educational opportunity, and in the process strengthens American democracy for all citizens.
- We are student-centered institutions. We place the student at the heart of our enterprise, enhancing the learning environment and student achievement not only through teaching and advising, but also through our research and public service activities.
- We are “stewards of place.” We engage faculty, staff and students with the communities and regions we serve—helping to advance public education, economic development and the quality of life for all with whom we live and who support our work. We affirm that America's promise extends not only to those who come to the campus but to all our neighbors.

We believe that through this stewardship and through our commitments to access and opportunity and to our students, public colleges and universities effectively and accountably deliver America's promise. In so doing we honor and fulfill the public trust.

