

Tips for a Successful Congressional Meeting

Scheduling the Meeting

- Use the HECSE draft letter to schedule your meeting. Put it on your university's letterhead, or you can use your personal letterhead. Email the letter.
- Check the website of the Member of Congress you seek to visit to get additional information on requesting a meeting.
- Ask to meet with the legislative assistant who covers education (or with the Member of Congress if you know them or have reason to believe they will meet with you.)
- Follow up with a phone call if you do not hear back from the email request.
- Schedule the meeting in advance – at least two weeks, preferably 4.

Preparing for the Meeting

- Research the legislator. Go to their website. Learn what committees they are on, what their legislative priorities are, what political party they are affiliated with, how long they have been in Congress etc.
- Develop information about your special education programs at your university – information that demonstrates your productivity and importance, highlighting your leadership program. (Use HECSE template.)
- Review the HECSE legislative agenda and talking points (these will be available in January).
- Choose no more than three key issues to focus on.
- Plan what you will say. If going with a group, decide on a spokesperson and who will say what. Role play the meeting.
- Know what the arguments might be against your position. Be prepared to respond to them.
- Bring materials to the meeting that will showcase the work of your program and HECSE priorities. Have a local story to tell that makes your point.

Conducting a Successful Visit

- Be on time. Have sufficient time to get through security and possible lines to get into the building.
- Be flexible – you may have to wait, or be asked to go to another location for the meeting. You may end up meeting in the hallway or the reception area.
- Meetings generally last 30 minutes, but may be as short as 15 minutes or as long as an hour.
- Introduce yourself, indicate that you are a constituent and a member of HECSE.
- Specify what you would like to discuss.
- Utilize HECSE talking points.
- Listen and gather information that may be helpful for follow up
- Make at least one specific request (e.g. would you co-sponsor this bill?)

- Leave behind HECSE legislative priorities.
- Do not assume the person you are meeting with is familiar with your issues.
- Do not discuss partisan politics.
- End the meeting by letting them know you want to be a resource for them on special education and teacher preparation.
- Leave your business card, materials and thank them.

After the visit

- Send a thank you email.
- Maintain communication with the office by sending them good news about your programs, reporting progress, offering to be a resource etc.
- Find out when the staff or Member of Congress will be in the district and invite them to visit your program or teach a class.