



# TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL HILL MEETING

## ■ When you meet with legislators and/or congressional staff:

**Be flexible.** Schedules change frequently on Capitol Hill, and members may be called away unexpectedly for committee business or floor votes. Meetings may need to be shortened, rescheduled, or relocated to accommodate the evolving legislative schedule or the number of people attending.

**Be prepared.** Review the key messages and talking points in this booklet and think about how you want to put them in your own words. Plan as a team who will deliver which messages to keep the conversation running smoothly. Prepare a succinct version of your talking points in case the meeting gets cut short.

**Have a U of I System story ready.** You can amplify the impact of the key messages by incorporating a story from your own experience with the University of Illinois System. For example, consider talking about how your education has made a difference in your life, or how research benefits your community and the state.

**Know your audience and make connections.** Familiarize yourself with the elected official's policy views, committee assignments, and the demographics of their district. Look for things you may have in common, such as interests, hometowns, friends, and of course, the U of I System universities. If you're meeting with your own local representative, make sure to mention that you're a constituent!

**Be sure the information you provide is accurate.** Legislators may ask you questions about the policies you are advocating for or about unrelated topics. Don't guess or overstate anything. It is okay to tell them you don't know the answer and you will relay their questions to external relations staff to follow up.

**Be courteous.** Sometimes a legislator may have a different opinion than you. Please remember to be respectful despite any disagreements, both in person and on social media. If the legislator is unavailable, remember that congressional staff play an important role in advising members on policy issues. Staff meetings can be just as useful as member meetings.

### After your meeting:

Debrief with your team about your conversation. The team lead will be responsible for submitting your feedback form for each meeting. Please make note of any promised actions, unanswered questions and responses to the items you discussed with the legislator or their staff.