VOLUNTEER GUIDE TO LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

THE TERP ADVOCACY NETWORK
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There’s never been a better time to be a Terp! Our alumni network is more than 369,000 strong, and Terps are making an impact with their Fearless Ideas in business, government and their communities. By picking up this guide and becoming a Terp advocate, you are joining alumni, students, employees and friends who believe in the university’s value to Maryland and the world. You are taking the next steps to share that message with your federal, state and local elected officials.

The University of Maryland has a $3.16 billion economic impact on the state. As a land-grant, public research university, we are dependent upon the budgetary and policy decisions made at the state and federal levels. As a Terp, you are a stakeholder of the university and your voice and insight are invaluable to decision-makers. This guide will provide you with the tools you need to get started as an advocate. Your input to elected officials is valued and can truly make a difference. Your involvement allows Terps to have a say in the agenda.

I hope you will join me at one of our marquee events in Annapolis or Washington, D.C. such as Advocacy Day or Terps on the Hill. I also encourage you to get involved in your local community organizations, volunteer with a political campaign or just get to know your local representative.

Thank you for taking time to volunteer on behalf of the University of Maryland—we look forward to hearing your voice!

Go Terps!

Amy Eichhorst
Executive Director, University of Maryland Alumni Association
MISSION, VISION AND GOALS

MISSION

We connect, cultivate and channel the power of alumni to enrich themselves and advance the university.

VISION

We are the heart of the university, inspiring lifelong connections with a global network of Maryland alumni.

NETWORK GOAL

The primary goal of our networks is to strengthen Terp pride among all alumni and their connection with the university. Running a network is a collaborative effort between network volunteer leaders and the Alumni Association.
PILLARS OF ENGAGEMENT

JOIN

Alumni Association members are the proudest Terps, supporting scholarships for current and future Terps while strengthening the reputation of their alma mater and enhancing the value of their own degrees.

VOLUNTEER

Give back by donating your time on a local network board or as a mentor to a current undergraduate. Join other Terps volunteering for a local non-profit and become a part of the university's commitment to “Do Good.”

ADVOCATE

Become a champion for UMD. Spread news and messages promoting UMD achievements and initiatives with your social networks or build relationships with your elected representatives helping advance the university’s legislative agenda.

GIVE

Help ensure an affordable, accessible, world-class education for current and future Terps. Make an investment in Fearless Ideas propelling your alma mater forward as a leader in teaching, research, innovation and service.
WHERE DO I START?

The first step to assisting the university in its efforts is to sign up for the Terp Advocacy Network. When you become an advocate, you will join a group of supporters who are committed to advocating for higher education and the University of Maryland. The university will provide the support and direction to make sure your time will be minimal but your influence significant.

You can find out more about becoming an advocate on our website at alumni.umd.edu/advocacy. You can also contact Andrew Griffin, director of alumni advocacy, at 301.405.2489 or by email at agriffi3@umd.edu to learn more about Terp Advocacy Network or if you have questions.
CALLS TO ACTION

A call to action is issued by the university when a bill is being considered by the Maryland General Assembly or the United States Congress that affects the university (e.g. higher education appropriation). Calls to action are carefully timed and typically require immediate attention. They are issued by email or telephone and describe the issue at hand. The call to action will include the university’s position, contact information for legislators and background information if needed. The call to action will prompt you to either email, call or share a message with your elected official on social media. While it is important to respond to a call to action in a timely manner, remember that you can take action through whatever avenue best suits you. You can choose to write, call or visit your elected officials—as an advocate we want you to participate in a way that fits your comfort level.

The University of Maryland utilizes a grassroots advocacy platform called Phone2Action. Phone2Action gives the Alumni Association the ability to connect with advocates quickly and efficiently and allows advocates to communicate with their representatives through the click of a button. If you have additional questions about Phone2Action or calls to action in general please contact the advocacy director.

If you have not already, please visit alumni.umd.edu/advocacy and sign up for Phone2Action.
MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

A face-to-face meeting is the most effective means of communicating with your elected officials, as they enjoy meeting with their constituents. Most meetings last less than a half-hour and setting up an appointment is easily done by calling or emailing their office. Here are some suggestions when meeting with an elected official:

**DRESS ACCORDINGLY**

If you plan to meet in your legislator’s Annapolis or district office, business attire is strongly encouraged. If you are meeting somewhere more informal, casual dress is acceptable. However, be mindful of your representative’s expectations as you are representing the University of Maryland and only have one chance at a first impression.

**PLAN YOUR VISIT CAREFULLY**

Make an appointment by contacting the legislator’s staff and let them know what you wish to discuss. If necessary, prepare materials in advance that will assist the legislator in understanding the issue and your position. The advocacy director may already have materials you can use so contact the alumni office before scheduling any visit. Always arrive a few minutes before your scheduled meeting time.

**BE PATIENT**

It is not uncommon for a legislator to be running a few minutes late due to demands on his or her schedule.

**BE A GOOD LISTENER**

It is important to the legislator to have his or her view heard. View the meeting as an exchange of thoughts and information.
**BE RESPONSIVE**

Express your willingness to obtain additional information if he or she expresses interest or asks questions you are not prepared to answer. Keep it short and to the point. Close the meeting quickly by summarizing key points. Always thank the legislator for his or her time.

**SEND A FOLLOW UP NOTE**

It is important to send a thank-you note (either handwritten or email) to the legislator and any staff who assisted you. Remember to thank the legislator for their time and reiterate your key points.

**ALWAYS COMMUNICATE WITH THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ON THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING AND IF ANY ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-UP IS NECESSARY**

Find your representative’s phone number or address online:

**Maryland General Assembly**
go.umd.edu/MDassembly

**U.S. House of Representatives**
go.umd.edu/HouseRepresentatives

**U.S. Senate**
go.umd.edu/USsenate
CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATOR BY PHONE

Due to the timing of a call to action, calling your elected officials may be the most expedient form of communication. Here are some suggestions for making an effective phone call:

**BE PREPARED**

Have the appropriate information in front of you, such as the bill number and title and be familiar with the key points of your position. Identify yourself as a constituent. Do not be alarmed if/when legislative staff ask for your personal information (i.e. phone number or address). In many instances staff are required to record this information for the representative and it helps their office with follow up.

**BE CONSIDERATE AND FRIENDLY TO LEGISLATIVE STAFF**

You may not be able to speak with the legislator during your initial call. Almost all incoming calls are received by legislative staff or administrative assistants. These staff members are typically well informed and should be treated with the same respect you would give your representative.

**FOLLOW UP**

Once you have had a phone conversation with your legislator, send a follow-up note (handwritten or email) restating your position and thanking the legislator for his or her consideration. When appropriate, send the staff a thank you note as well.

**LEAVING A MESSAGE**

Leave your name and state that you are a constituent. Make sure to include the bill number you are calling about and briefly state your support or opposition. Ask for a return call and leave your contact information.
ALWAYS COMMUNICATE WITH THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ON THE OUTCOME OF THE PHONE CALL AND IF ANY ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-UP IS NECESSARY

IMPORTANT: If you don’t know the answer to a question or a request for information is made, tell the legislator or staff member that you will get back to them and contact the Alumni Association advocacy director as soon as possible.

A sample phone script can be found in Appendix A.
Letters from constituents are important to elected officials. Here are some basic guidelines to follow when sending letters to members of the legislature:

**USE PERSONALIZED STATIONERY**
Stationery should always include your name, return address and a phone number. Government or university employees are legally prohibited from using stationary printed at federal, state or local expense.

**ALWAYS INCLUDE THE BILL NUMBER, TITLE AND SUBJECT MATTER**
Keep it short and simple. Express your opinion clearly and strongly but be mindful to not sound offensive or threatening. Cover one topic per letter and state your message succinctly.

**USE YOUR OWN WORDS**
Use a university call to action or other materials as a guide, but do not copy text verbatim. Use a personal touch by mentioning something unique to the legislator or your district. You could also include a personal story related to UMD.

**ASK FOR A SPECIFIC REPLY**
Respectfully request the legislator’s support on the issue and a follow-up stating his/her position.

**COPY THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**
Forward a copy of your written correspondence and any response you receive to the Alumni Association advocacy director.
IMPORTANT: Since email is the standard form of communication, handwritten letters and notes have become a nice way to garner attention and emphasize a point. However, make sure your handwriting is clear and free of grammatical errors.

A sample letter can be found in Appendix B.
BUILDING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

One of the most important tasks in advocacy is relationship building or enhancing personal relationships. Effective communication and follow-up are essential to enhancing relationships with elected officials and their staff. Here are some ways of keeping the lines of communication open:

**BE PERSONAL AND FRIENDLY**

Learn about their professional background, personal interests, family, etc.

**BE FAMILIAR**

Keep your name and the University of Maryland in front of your legislators and staff, e.g., send articles and other information about issues of interest.

**BE GRACIOUS**

Thank your legislators for committee and floor votes on your issue and congratulate them for professional and personal achievements, such as new committee or leadership assignments, etc.

**HOST YOUR LEGISLATOR**

Invite and escort legislators to campus and University of Maryland events. Make sure to coordinate this through the Alumni Association and the advocacy director.

**BE INVOLVED**

Get active in your community by volunteering on campaigns and becoming involved in community issues and organizations. Expanding your circle of influence is the best way to become an effective advocate.
EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATING WITH LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Legislative staff should always be treated with the same respect as the legislators themselves. The staff is responsible for setting appointments and agendas, conveying messages and orchestrating the legislative agenda. They often do most, if not all, research concerning current bills and issues.

With frequent changes in the makeup of the Maryland General Assembly, it is more important than ever to develop relationships with staff members. Pay attention to the following items when communicating with staff members:

**ALWAYS BE POLITE**
Go out of your way to introduce yourself and develop a personal relationship.

**EXPRESS YOUR GRATITUDE**
Mention the assistance of the staff when sending follow-up notes to legislators.

BECOMING AN ONLINE ADVOCATE

As a Terp Advocate you will have the opportunity to communicate with your elected officials through various forms of social media. When participating in a call to action you will commonly be asked to tweet at your elected officials.

Through the Alumni Association’s UMD Champions program you can become a dedicated social media advocate, sharing exclusive stories and content across all forms of social media with just one click. To learn more about becoming an online advocate, visit the UMD Champions page at alumni.umd.edu/champions.
OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS

Your elected representatives will not always share your point of view. In fact, they may completely oppose your position and the position of the University of Maryland. The manner in which you handle this situation may determine the legislator’s willingness to consider your position in the future. Use the following tips to work through opposing views:

THANK THE LEGISLATOR

Express your gratitude to the legislator or the staff member for listening to your position.

BE THOUGHT PROVOKING

Ask a few questions that will encourage the legislator to think about your position and help you better understand his or her position.

FOCUS ON THE FACTS

Emphasize your reasoning and the information for supporting your position.

RECOGNIZE THE GOOD IN THE OPPOSING ARGUMENT

This helps build your rapport as a thoughtful advocate.

USE “I” STATEMENTS

“I” statements help to soften the language and approach of your message and can make a big difference in how your position is received.

DON’T GET PERSONAL

Your goal is to effectively present your ideas—not just poke holes in the other person’s.

KNOW WHEN TO MOVE ON

Agree to disagree. Respectfully refute your legislator’s arguments and make a few strong points that reflect your position.
GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING

As an individual volunteer with the University of Maryland Alumni Association advocacy program, you are not required to register as a lobbyist because no compensation is provided. Terp Advocates are not agents of the Alumni Association, but simply individuals with personal opinions contacting legislators in support of or in opposition to legislation.

Any individual compensated by the University of Maryland in any way (e.g., an employee) may be subject to separate guidelines and should contact the Alumni Association advocacy director prior to making contact with members of the general assembly or statewide office holders.

For further information please consult the State Ethics Commission website at ethics.maryland.gov.
APPENDICES

Electronic copies of these resources can be found on the Alumni Association website at alumni.umd.edu/advocacy. Contact the Alumni Association advocacy director for additional questions or resources.

TERPS IN GOVERNMENT

UMD grads have made their mark on the political scene—at the state and national level. Find a list of the Terps who are strolling the corridors of power at govrelations.umd.edu/terps-in-government.html.
APPENDIX A: SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a constituent in Delegate ___’s (or Senator) district. May I please speak to the staff person who handles Appropriations or Education Issues for the Delegate (or Senator)?

(Re-introduce yourself to the staffer.)

I am calling today to ask Delegate / Senator ________________ to support (or oppose) appropriations requests (or bill no.) for the University of Maryland, College Park. This money will be used for curriculum development, scholarships and job placement opportunities for graduates.

(Include a brief personal story here.)

I would appreciate if Delegate / Senator ____________ would get back to me on this important issue. My address is _____________ and my phone is ______________. If Delegate / Senator ____________ has any questions, please call me. Thank you for your time.

*If you are asked questions you do not know the answer to or if additional information is requested by the representatives office, please contact the advocacy director immediately for follow up.

* If you call and do not get an answer, leave a brief message following the outline above.
[Your Name]
[Your Address]
[Your City/State/Zip]

[Insert Date]

The Honorable [Full Name]
[Insert Address]
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear [Senator/Delegate/Governor/member of Congress Last Name]:

[Tell Your UMD Story! Introduce yourself as a constituent and a [student/alumnus/friend of the University of Maryland]. Tell your elected official why UMD is important to you or how your UMD degree has helped you. Mention any personal connection you may have to the elected official].

As a [student/alumnus/friend of UMD], I am writing to urge your continued support for the University of Maryland as you and other members of the state legislature continue your work on the [fill in the issue].

As an elected leader, you will be facing numerous issues and decisions this session. The economic climate may make funding difficult for many government services. However, it is critical to the state's future that the University of Maryland continue to attract and retain the best faculty members, provide quality facilities, maintain access for Maryland students and generate high-quality graduates to move Maryland forward.

I ask for any positive actions you may be able to take on behalf of the University of Maryland during this session and into the future. I hope you recognize—as I certainly do—that your vote for the University of Maryland is a vote for all Marylanders.

Thank you for supporting the University of Maryland.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Insert Date]

The Honorable [Full Name]
[Insert Address]
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear [Senator/Delegate/Governor/member of Congress Last Name]:

I appreciate you taking time to [visit with me/respond to my message] about [issue], and for listening to all the reasons that I believe the University of Maryland, College Park is one of the state's most valuable assets.

[Re-state your position on the issue you discussed].

Your support for the University of Maryland can help move Maryland forward. I look forward to [visiting with/corresponding with] you again in the near future.

Thank you for serving the people of Maryland.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]