

Talk, Teach, Touch:

Easy Steps to  
Relationship-Building  
With Legislators  
For Faculty



# YOU DO INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION

*YOUR NAME HERE:*

*You can personally influence through an email, a phone call, a letter, or a face to face contact.*

The number of people I reasonably encounter in a typical week.

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**Students in my classes...** Students, staff, parents, community representatives, employers, etc.

**Alumni of my program...** Recent students, friends, graduates in Iowa and the surrounding areas, business owners, etc.

**People I know who make \$ decisions...** Advisory committee members, business owners, key employers who hire students, etc.

I *am* an opinion leader about Western Iowa Tech Community College.

The next time one of these people asks me "How's work?" instead of answering "Fine.... How are you?" I will say:

*"I am so proud of the work I am doing in my classroom at Western Iowa Tech Community College and how we're helping people get the Best Start. Do you have 30 seconds for a quick story?"*

***After all, if you don't advocate for what you believe in, how can you expect others to believe in what you do?***



Many voices...

Many places...

One message...

*"I am proud of my program at Western Iowa  
Tech Community College. We are helping people  
of all ages develop the skills necessary to further  
themselves and help the communities we serve.  
WITCC is the Best Place to Start!"*

**In Minnesota legislators were asked whom they relied on for information when voting on educational issues:**

- 1. 33%: "My own beliefs."**
- 2. 27%: "Constituents – Families."**
- 3. 20%: "Traditional Educational Groups."**
- 4. 7%: "Briefing materials."**
- 5. 7%: "Professional Educators."**
- 6. 6%: "No response."**

*Richard Krueger PhD Thesis  
University of Minnesota, 1997*



# Occupations of Legislators U.S. Compared with Iowa - 1995

<b><u>Occupation</u></b>	<b><u>US</u></b>	<b><u>Iowa</u></b>
Attorney	15.5%	10.0%
Full-Time Legislators	14.0%	5.0%
Business Owners	12.3%	13.0%
Agriculture	7.7%	28.0%
Retired	7.6%	11.0%
Business Executive	5.4%	14.0%
Educator	7.4%	10.0%

*\*\*Some legislators in each group did not report an occupation.*



## **Elected Officials are More Like You Than You Might Think!**

*They are concerned about issues that affect people.*

*They want to improve people's lives.*

*They are interested in many things-but have definite favorites.*

*They care about the communities they represent.*

*They network with others who share their concerns and interests.*

*They have access to vast amounts of information but have very little time to take advantage of it.*

*They often feel privately that they don't get credit for their efforts.*

*They make decisions about what information to use as well as what they will share.*

*They are over committed with more work than time to do it.*

*They are public servants who want to serve the public good.*

*They rely on trusted people in the course of their jobs.*

*They often are frustrated with "the system" and feel their best ideas are bogged down by it.*

*They want to do "the right thing" and welcome stories that indicate they have actually done good things in the past.*

*They feel vulnerable to criticism when they take risks.*

*They are more passive than active when it comes to starting and maintaining relationships.*

*They are underpaid and can't advocate for a raise to taxpayers.*



## **Over time, it is the little things that make a difference in a relationship.**

Handwritten notes - short!

Writing about personal experiences-i.e. Student success stories, graduate success stories, community impact of program, business support for program, etc.

A clipping with a Post-It Note.

A photo sent with a thank you.

A voice mail saying "good job."

An invitation to attend a class or lab.

An invitation to attend an advisory committee meeting.

An invitation to participate in a program event.

Volunteer to help with a campaign.

"Do you have a minute to help?"

Asking, "What do you think?" and then actually listening and asking questions.

Saying "Good question, glad you asked" (even when maybe you aren't sure you are).

Asking "What can I do for you?"

Maintaining optimism, not being cynical, adversarial and defensive.

An email with pertinent information.

A contribution with a personal note.

A vote cast on Election Day.

