

# **Strengthening the Bridge: Strategies for Aligning Public Affairs Institutions to Serve Policymakers' Need for Timely Research**

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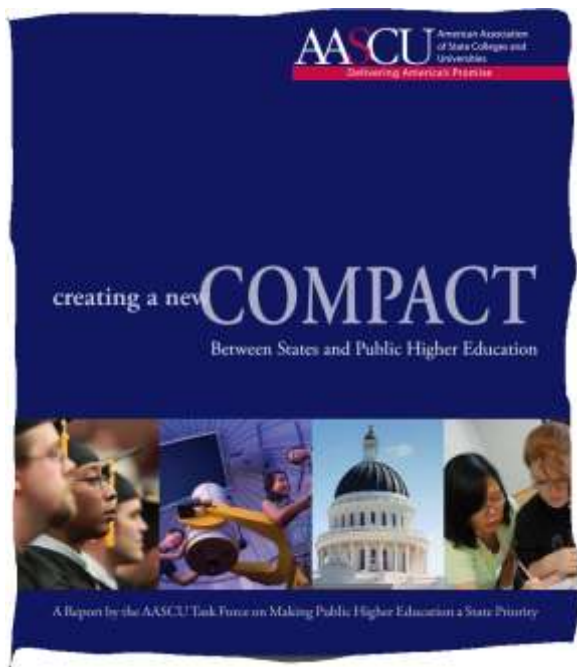
# About AASCU

- **420 presidents/chancellors of public universities & systems**
- **Emphasis: undergraduate education, college access, student success, institutional leadership**
- **Federal lobbying and federal/state/institutional policy leadership**
  - **Only D.C. higher ed association with state policy focus in addition to federal focus**
- **Leadership/professional programming for CEOs, CAOs, Government Relations, Communications, International Affairs**

# Question

**How can a school of public affairs better organize itself to be a key bridge between academic expertise and policymakers?**

# AASCU P5 (Political Perceptions and Policy Priorities Project)



## Partnering for Prosperity



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

# Suggestion #1-Create a Public Engagement Master Plan

- Higher education can help provide solutions to dozens of policy challenges---but the “embassy of ideas” needs to translate into change.
- Engagement with policymakers shouldn’t be haphazard, siloed, and disjointed. Needs to be baked into the campus culture beyond the public affairs school, with leadership from the top
- Universities create master plans on all sorts of things---academics, fundraising, etc. What would we ignore our largest funder?
- If our engagement starts when the session starts, it’s too late. This is a year-round, never-ending endeavor. Proactively build relationships.
- What are the goals, objectives, timelines and outcomes for your engagement with the state?

# **Suggestion #2-Build an Index of Expertise, Be a Research liaison.**

- **Public affairs schools have expertise on many, but not all issues**
- **Example: Humphrey School, University of Minnesota, has programs on urban and regional planning; leadership and management; politics and governance; science, technology and environmental policy; social policy**
- **What's missing?**
- **Need to find the expertise across campus and connect with policymakers. School of public affairs can be a policy liaison. Collaborate with other departments.**
- **Be a leader in developing policy “subsystems.” How? Conferences, workshops, etc.**

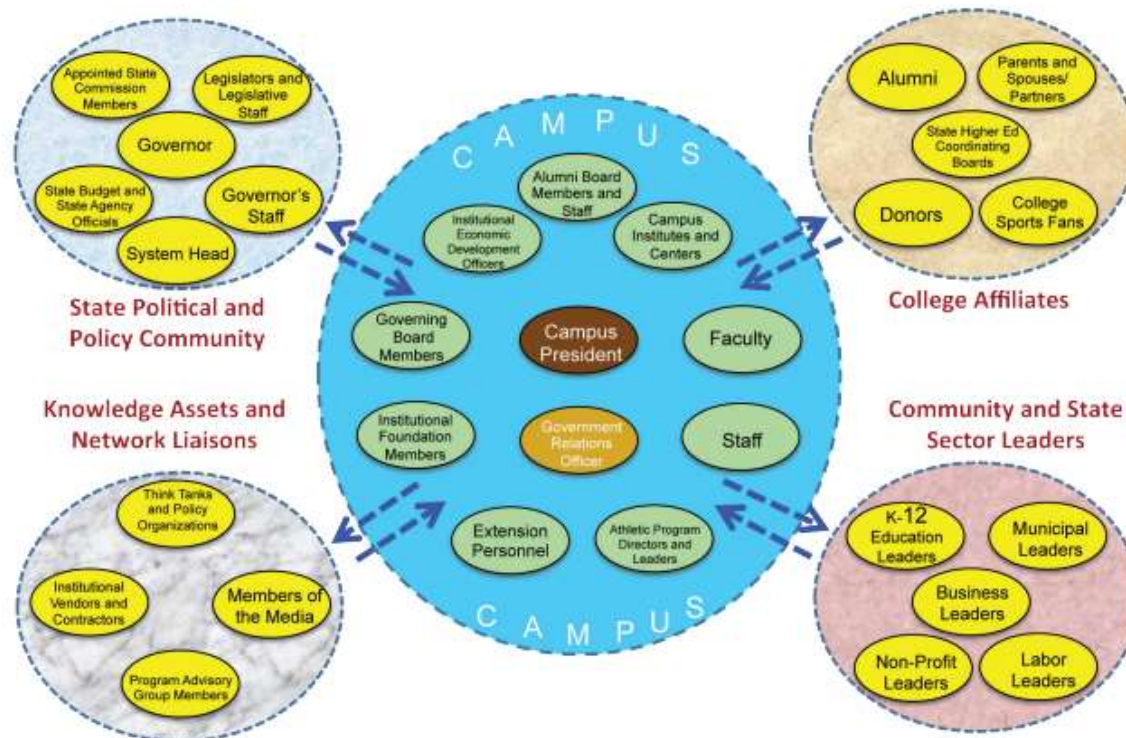
# **Suggestion #3-Know What's Going On. Use government relations.**

- **What particular issues are hot in your state right now? Who are the major players on these issues. Need to be timely.**
- **Use your government relations office to build understanding, relationships, and trust.**
- **Relationships also for conversation and trust, getting ahead of the game. Can't always be reactive.**
- **Should be integrated into the state relations agenda**
- **State relations shouldn't just be about our needs. More of "How can we help?" on other issues**

# Building Networks Through State Relations

## 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.





## **Suggestion #4-Organize and incentivize with the policymaker in mind.**

- **Put yourself in their shoes. What challenges would they have with academic research? Time, access, how to find it, and understanding it for starters.**
- **What are some of the big challenges your state is facing?**
- **What are some strategies? Try blogs, social media, short policy briefs. Write so we everyone understand. Do we encourage and incentivize scholars to be engaged?**
- **Be mindful of politics.**
- **Are we encouraging collaborations with other academic departments?**

# Conclusion

- **At the state level, historic turnover in lawmakers. Huge challenge and opportunity.**
- **The possibilities for advancing the public good are limitless**
- **Be strategic and intentional in engaging policymakers**
- **Collaborate across the university to address policymaker concerns**
- **Use government relations division**
- **Organize and incentivize with the policymaker in mind**