

ACE on the Hill 2025 Toolkit

Introduction

The new Trump administration and the 119th Congress are facing numerous challenges in securing our country's economic, cultural, and security goals. American higher education and its nearly 4,000 institutions—including community colleges, public regionals, major research institutions, liberal arts colleges, faith-based institutions, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities—are a vital national asset. Investing in higher education and enhancing educational access and completion contributes to a well-educated workforce that is essential for the country's long-term economic growth and national security.

The key to realizing America's potential is strengthening and utilizing our world-leading colleges and universities. This is because of one simple truth: Higher education builds America. ACE has developed policy recommendations to promote college affordability, support students, advance research, and more. Pursuing policies such as raising the maximum Pell Grant award to \$13,000, providing enhanced support for military learners, and emphasizing the role of research in national progress will advance growth and opportunity for all Americans. In partnership with the federal government and the states, these colleges and universities contribute to the most powerful system for learning, training, research and innovation in the world.

The American Council on Education (ACE) leads higher education with a united vision for the future. ACE galvanizes its members to make change, collaborates across the sector to design solutions for today's challenges, serves the needs of a diverse student population, and shapes effective public policy. ACE is the only major higher education association to represent all types of U.S. accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities. ACE members educate two out of every three students in all accredited, degree-granting U.S. institutions. For over 100 years, ACE has engaged with our federal policymakers in shaping legislation to support postsecondary education and research at our institutions. ACE and its members present a large and unique voice to policymakers as employers, educators, and community leaders.

The following information will help you in your participation as you prepare to meet with policymakers in February 2025 for the first annual ACE on the Hill event.

Logistics

U.S. CAPITOL Visitor Center



CVC 23-004

https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/sites/default/files/2023-06/CVC_SystemMap_June2023_Web.pdf

The morning session of ACE on the Hill 2025 will take place in a central location on Capitol Hill, conveniently accessible via either the Union Station (Red Line) or Capitol South (Blue and Orange Lines) metro stations. It is also about a 15–20 minute ride from the Washington Hilton, the host hotel for the ACE Experience 2025.

The morning meeting location will be open all day for attendees who may need a place to work or relax between congressional meetings.

Most of the meetings will take place in the congressional office buildings, located on each side of the U.S. Capitol. On the Senate side, the buildings include the Russell Senate Office Building, the Dirksen Senate Office Building, and the Hart Senate Office Building. On the House side, the buildings are the Rayburn House Office Building, the Longworth House Office Building, and the Cannon House Office Building.

Note that some entrances of those buildings are marked for members and staff only, and others are specified as visitors' entrances. Attendees will need to go through a security screening process, including passing through a metal detector and scanning belongings in an X-ray machine. U.S. Capitol Police are stationed at the entrances and can assist with any questions about the security process. Additional information about the security screening process and what visitors are allowed to bring into the buildings can be found on the [U.S. Capitol Hill Police website](#).

Senate Buildings

The Senate offices are all multistory buildings. If an office is located at 509 Hart, that means it is on the fifth floor of the Hart Senate Office Building. If an office is in 509 Dirksen, that means it is on the fifth floor of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.

From a Senate building, visitors can use the tunnels to travel between the buildings. Those tunnels are located in the basement of Russell and Dirksen and on the ground floor of Hart.

There is a coffee shop (Cups) located in the basement of the Russell building, a large cafeteria in the basement of the Dirksen building, and a snack shop on the ground floor of the Hart building. Information on those facilities can be found on the [Senate website](#).

House Buildings

Each House building has a different way to mark the floor where the office is located. For Cannon, the first number indicates the floor—so, for example, 509 Cannon would be located on the fifth floor. Longworth and Rayburn offices, however, include a building number that precedes the floor and office number. For example, in Longworth, that office would be listed as 1509 Longworth. This does not mean that the office is on the 15th floor; rather, the "1" indicates it is in Longworth. For Rayburn, the same office would be listed as 2509 Rayburn. Again, this means the office is on the fifth floor of Rayburn, and the "2" indicates the office is in Rayburn.

Like the Senate office buildings, visitors can travel in the tunnels between the House office buildings. The Cannon tunnel is located in the basement. The Longworth tunnel is also located in basement, with an escalator down to the subbasement to enter Rayburn. The Rayburn tunnel can be accessed in the subbasement.

There is an Au Bon Pain located in Cannon on the first floor, a large cafeteria and Dunkin' in the Longworth basement, and a large cafeteria located on the Rayburn ground floor. More information on those facilities can be found on the [House website](#).

Know Before You Go

Plan for plenty of walking between meetings. To reduce travel time, try to schedule Senate meetings together and House meetings together whenever possible. Wear comfortable walking shoes for the day! Please note that the buildings are ADA compliant, but not all entrances are ADA accessible.

Capitol Hill staff dress in a conservative and formal manner—business casual hasn't quite made its way there. When Congress is in session and members are present, expect to see most staff in suits and men wearing ties.

Young people run Washington, DC. Expect member offices to be staffed by young professionals with large portfolios and significant responsibilities. They advise their member of Congress and—although they may appear to be young—bring substantial policy knowledge.

Meetings generally take 15–30 minutes. Blocks of members' time are usually scheduled in five to 15-minute increments.

Congressional office spaces (House offices in particular) are small! A staff member may take meetings in a hallway, in the front office, or even in the member's office. This doesn't reflect that they are not taking the meetings seriously.

If taking meetings on the House side, there will be a bell that rings to signal that votes are taking place on the floor. A meeting with a member may be interrupted by votes, and one of their staff may then finish the meeting.

Members have changes to their schedules all the time. A scheduled meeting with a member may become a meeting with their staff, the member may ask you to walk with them to talk as they rush to another engagement, or the Member may ask you to meet them in another location other than their office.

Be flexible! You may have a meeting scheduled, but you should be willing to pivot when members or staff are running late or ask for last-minute changes.

Requesting a Meeting

1. Identify whether your institution has a federal relations office, which can be helpful in scheduling your meetings.
2. Identify your delegation (one representative and two senators) **for the House** and **for the Senate**.
3. Call the DC office of the member to identify the scheduler and their email address to send your meeting request. You should also copy the legislative assistant (i.e., the staffer) who handles education issues. The front desk in the DC office of the member of Congress should be able to provide those email addresses. Make sure you identify yourself as a constituent from the state and district when requesting the contact information.
4. Once you have scheduled a meeting, we ask that you share your plans with ACE's government relations team at govrel@acenet.edu so that we can track when and where meetings are taking place.

Note: We recommend that meetings be scheduled between noon and 4:00 p.m. Make sure to allow enough time for travel between meetings.

Meeting requests should be sent via email and include:

- The name of your institution and its president or chancellor
- That the meeting is part of ACE on the Hill 2025 to discuss higher education priorities in the 119th Congress
- An offer to provide an update on campus and institutional initiatives
- How your institution is working to address national issues impacting the United States
- Your availability to meet on February 11, 2025 between noon and 4:00 p.m.

Preparing for Your Meeting

Look at your member's webpage and read their bio. Check to see their alma mater! Know the higher education priorities of the member. Look at the issues section of their website and recent press releases and research legislation the member may have introduced at www.Congress.gov.

Check your member's committee memberships. This information is usually included in the about section on their website, or can be found on the **House** and **Senate** websites.

If a member has already taken a stance on an issue (for example, support or opposition to increasing funding for federal student aid), you should acknowledge either the support or their concerns about the issue.

Capitol Hill 101: Tips for Effective Meetings

Always arrive early for your meetings.

You never want to have staff or a member waiting on you for a meeting if you can prevent it. If you are running behind, we recommend that you let the staff or scheduler know as soon as possible.

Remember to introduce yourself and your institution and let them know that you are participating in ACE on the Hill 2025.

ACE on the Hill 2025 includes over 100 ACE member presidents who are taking meetings on Capitol Hill to talk about the importance of higher education in addressing national issues of concern.

Meeting with a staff member, member of Congress, or senator

- A member of Congress or senator will also have staff attending; this will usually be the staff member who handles education or other issues related to your institution.
- Meeting with a staff member can be just as useful as—if not better than—meeting with a member of Congress or a senator. Congressional offices are staffed by a legislative director (who directs the legislative activity of the office) and legislative assistants (LAs). Each LA will have a group of issues that they manage, such as education, tax, research, etc. That staffer will advise and inform the member of Congress about the issue as legislation is considered.

To reinforce your points, have documents readily available to share and leave behind with the member and staff.

Also, have an electronic copy ready to send to staff in your follow-up email after the meeting. ACE will prepare talking points and leave-behind materials for ACE on the Hill 2025 attendees.

Structure of the Meeting

1. Start by introducing yourself and your institution.
2. Let them know you are here as part of ACE on the Hill 2025 and are one of the over 100 presidents and chancellors who are participating.

3. Discuss your institution: How many students does it educate? What type of student does it serve? Are there institutional initiatives you are proud of that you want to highlight for the office?

Note: ACE staff will provide information about the economic impact of institutions of higher education in all 50 states for you to reference and leave behind.

4. Discuss the priorities for your institution in 2025 and before the 119th Congress. This can include funding for federal student aid programs, support for international students, and pending legislation before Congress.

Note: ACE staff will provide leave-behind materials and talking points for major priorities within the 119th Congress.

5. Ask if there are any questions from the member or staff. If you are unable to answer a question, promise to follow up with that information.
6. Thank the member or staff member for the meeting and their continuing support of your institution.

After the Meeting

- Members of Congress like to share that they have met with constituents. Take a picture with the member or outside by the member's office sign to share on social media, and tag the member in the post. Remember to use the hashtag **#ACEontheHill2025**.
- Within the following week, send an email to thank the staff you met and to remind them about the priorities you discussed. Attach an electronic copy of the documents you shared in the meeting.
- Make sure to provide relevant feedback from the meeting to ACE Government Relations staff at govrel@acenet.edu.