

2026 CCATT ANNUAL CONFERENCE

STATE & LOCAL ADVOCACY WORKSHOP



Community College
Association of Texas Trustees



SEPTEMBER 17-19, 2026



HYATT REGENCY BAYTOWN, TX

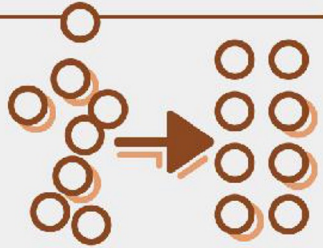
Organize

Refine your goal

Plan your approach

Know your targets

**Know your
allies/opponents**



Inform

Develop your message

**Maintain a uniform,
consistent message**

**Utilize recent,
relevant data**

**Use existing channels
where possible**

Keep it simple



Engage

**Be intentional about
relationship cultivation**

**Participate in the
complete process**

**Capitalize on existing
opportunities**



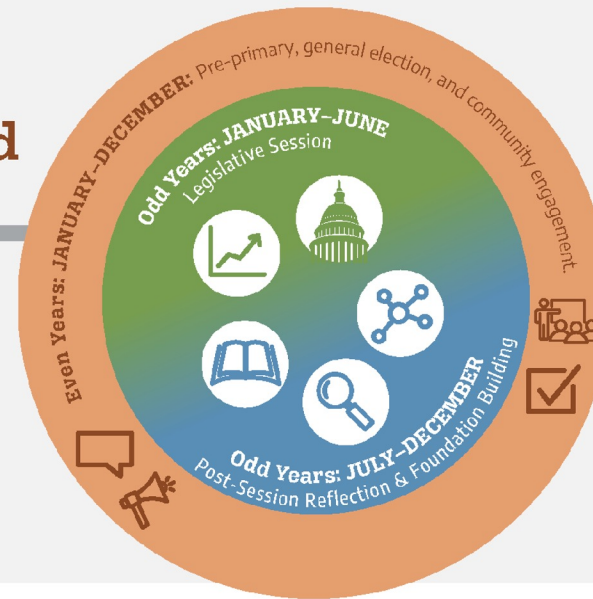
**Community College
Association of Texas Trustees**



Texas Year-Round Advocacy

The key to successful advocacy initiatives is to cultivate relationships throughout the year, and to be prepared for a legislative session well in advance of its start. The timeline below can help you and your college visualize your advocacy plans throughout the year. You are encouraged to work with your college administrative team to build out an action plan based on the content in the CCATT Advocacy Toolkit, as well as your knowledge about what best fits your college and the specific policy initiatives you might have.

This resource is designed to support nonpartisan, educational advocacy efforts for community colleges. All activities focus on providing factual, data-driven information to policymakers, stakeholders, and the public. The content does not encourage lobbying, political endorsements, or attempts to influence specific legislation.



Odd-Numbered Year: January to June

January-June: Legislative Session



- **Testify with Data:** Share evidence-based information during committee hearings to provide context about your college's impact.
- **Champion Amendments:** Provide data and insights to help inform policymakers and staff prior to any pertinent floor debates.
- **Showcase Advocacy:** Participate in Capitol visits and CCATT events to highlight priorities.



Odd-Numbered Year: July to December

July-August: Post-Session Reflection

- **Debrief with Legislators:** Discuss the impact of passed laws on your college.
- **Prepare for the Next Cycle:** Evaluate outcomes and set priorities for the next advocacy year.

August-December: Foundation Building



- **Set Policy Focus:** Collaborate with CCATT, TACC, and college administrators to identify legislative priorities, and utilize interim committee hearing engagement to be a part of the policy conversation.
- **Form Strategic Alliances:** Engage with industry partners, legislators, and community leaders to align goals in settings like round table discussions.
- **Craft Data-Driven Stories:** Use regional data to develop compelling advocacy messages. Analyze and prepare workforce impact and student success stories for messaging.
- **Conduct Local Visits:** Schedule meetings with legislators in the district to discuss community college value to the area and regional talent development needs.

Even-Numbered Year: January to December

January-March: Pre-Primary Engagement



- **Host Policy Forums:** Organize candidate forums to discuss postsecondary education priorities.
- **Mobilize Voter Voices:** Provide nonpartisan education about the importance of higher education in local elections.
- **Publish Community Messages:** Release op-eds, social media posts, articles and newsletters highlighting workforce development and funding needs among other policy priorities.

April-June: Community Engagement



- **Organize Town Halls & Round Tables:** Hold public discussions to educate stakeholders on legislative priorities.
- **Showcase Workforce Impact:** Share data-driven stories tied to local needs and student success.
- **Harmonize Stakeholder Messaging:** Align regional partners and administrators for cohesive advocacy.

July-October: General Election Preparation



- **Host Impact Tours:** Organize campus tours and events to engage policymakers and stakeholders, highlighting college achievements and demonstrating student success stories.
- **Revise Advocacy Materials:** Update messaging and tools for legislative outreach.
- **Strengthen Candidate Relationships:** Meet with candidates to reinforce education priorities.

November: General Elections

- **Welcome New Legislators:** Provide them with introductory information about your college and its impact.

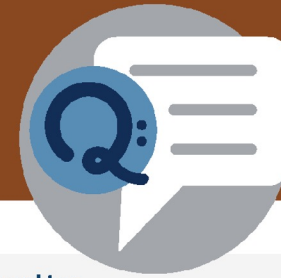
December: Pre-Session Planning

- **Plan Legislative Visits:** In coordination with TACC and CCATT, develop targeted strategies for advocacy during session.
- **Prepare Talking Points & Written Material:** Make sure you are ready with talking points and specific examples from your college that align and emphasize shared policy priorities.
- **Share Priorities:** With local strategic partners, pass a local resolution or make a joint statement with shared policy priorities.
- **Track Legislative Submissions:** Stay updated with CCATT and TACC to track filed bills relevant to community colleges.
- **Finalize Advocacy Tools:** Refine op-eds, infographics, and briefing materials for upcoming engagement opportunities.

Evergreen Opportunity: An excellent way to continue cultivating relationships is to invite elected officials and their staff to special events, such as trustee swearing-in ceremonies, ground breaking or ribbon cutting events, and graduations.

Town Hall Example Questions

Here are several example questions you might consider bringing up at a town hall or similar event that may assist in starting productive dialogue related to community colleges in Texas.



Legislative Priorities:

Can you please share your legislative priorities for higher education in Texas and discuss how do you plan to address the needs of community colleges and students specifically?



Community Partnerships:

What strategies do you propose to enhance partnerships between community colleges and local businesses to ensure that graduates are prepared for the workforce?



Workforce Development:

What role do you see community colleges playing in workforce development, and how could you support programs that align with local job market demands?



Technology & Innovation:

With the rise of artificial intelligence and technological advancements, what is your vision for the future of higher education and workforce development?



Funding for Education:

What role do you see community colleges playing in state funding priorities, and how can we better inform policymakers about our impact?



Cross-Sector Collaboration:

How can the state support better alignment between different sectors of higher education and our K-12 systems?



Student Support Services:

How can state and federal policies better support student success initiatives, such as mental health services, academic advising, and tutoring programs?



Support for Faculty & Staff:

What ideas do you have to ensure community colleges can attract and retain high quality staff and instructors, particularly for programs in high demand fields?



Access & Affordability:

What measures will you advocate for to increase access to higher education, especially for underrepresented and low-income students in our communities?



Transparency & Communication:

How do you plan to ensure transparency and communication with constituents about the decision-making processes affecting education policy at the state/federal level?



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TRUSTEES' GUIDE TO DATA-INFORMED ADVOCACY · TACC.ORG/CCATT



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STATE & LOCAL ADVOCACY

Ray Martinez III

President & CEO, Texas Association
of Community Colleges (TACC)

Jacob Cottingham

Senior Director for
Government Relations, TACC



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WHY ADVOCACY MATTERS NOW

BUILDING

A NEXT GENERATION

WORKFORCE



Texas Association of
Community Colleges



TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

BUILDING

A NEXT GENERATION

WORKFORCE



Texas Association of
Community Colleges

STORYTELLING EXERCISE

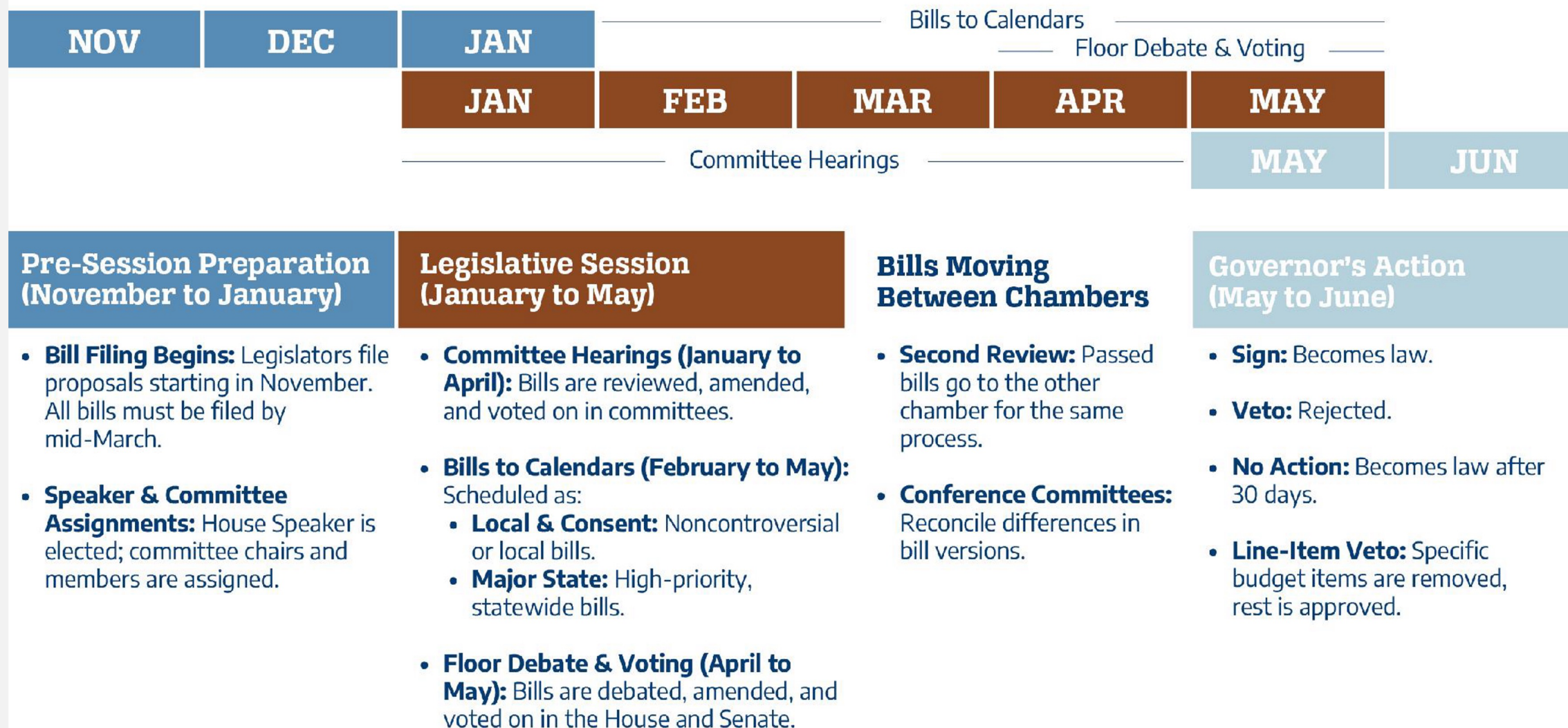
At your table, draft a 2–3 sentence advocacy message using either data or a student story.

Share why this resonates with you and your intended audience.

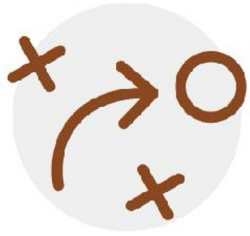


Refer to pages 21-22 for the Step-by-Step Guide: Building Data-Informed Policy Messages

Key Milestones in the Texas Legislative Process



Key Ways TACC & CCATT Support Trustees



Legislative Strategy:

TACC and CCATT develop coordinated, sector-wide strategies to advocate for community college funding and policies with statewide impacts.



Testimony & Engagement:

TACC and CCATT provide talking points and assist trustees in preparing for committee hearings and meetings with policymakers.



Communication Collateral:

They provide advocacy tools like leave-behinds, talking points, data, and stories to support trustees in their meetings with legislators.



Regular Updates:

Trustees receive timely updates and briefings on legislative developments, often through Zoom meetings and other digital platforms.



Bill Tracking:

TACC and CCATT track legislation relevant to community colleges, ensuring trustees are informed about bills that may affect their institutions.



Stakeholder Coordination:

They work with key stakeholders, including other education associations and advocacy groups, to improve policy outcomes.



Community College Day:

They organize statewide events, elevating student voices to bring attention to community colleges and their priorities at the Capitol.



Responsive to Feedback:

TACC and CCATT host conferences and meetings where collaborative discussions and panels with members inform strategy, communications, and future policy interests.



TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

COMMUNITY COLLEGE DAY

2027

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28TH





Opportunities for Advocacy Engagement: State Legislative Session



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Key Insights for Data-Informed Advocacy

- **Define Your Goals:**

Keep it simple and real. Be clear about what you want to achieve.

- **Tell the Truth:**

If you don't know an answer, find out and get back to them. Don't guess or dodge.

- **Identify Your Audience:**

Tailor your message specifically to your target audience.

- **Consider Counterarguments:**

Be prepared to handle opposing viewpoints effectively.

- **Include Data:**

Incorporate recent, relevant information to back up your claims.

- **Create Messaging in Advance:**

Don't wait until the last minute—prepare your talking points early.

- **Use Real-People Stories:**

Personalize your message with stories that make data relatable.

- **Provide a Problem & Solution:**

Always include both in your messaging for clarity and impact.

- **Dispel Myths:**

Address misconceptions directly with facts.

- **Evaluate & Test Your Message:**

Review your talking points with peers or community members to refine and improve them.

Elected Official Engagement & Relationship Cultivation Strategies



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SCENARIO: CAMPUS VISIT

Your legislator is visiting campus.

What do you highlight, and how do you frame it?

Who participates from the college?



Refer to pages 23 for the Elected Official Campus Visit Checklist & pages 27-28 for Round Table guides



Key Points to Remember

Be Consistent

Regular engagement builds relationships with key stakeholders and strengthens advocacy efforts.



Tailor Your Message

Adapt your message based on the audience, whether it's local officials, community members, or legislators.



Follow Up

After meetings or events, ensure that you follow up to maintain momentum and reinforce the message.

Up Next

3:00 – 5:00 PM

Breakout Sessions

6:00 – 6:30 PM

DINNER

6:30 – 8:00 PM

Opening Plenary Session

Credentials of Value, Workforce Outcomes, &
Community College Funding