USE YOUR VOICE TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

Tips for Creating Your Story

When creating your story, it's first important to think about what you want to focus on. This will become the focal point of your story, so you should be comfortable talking about it, and it will provide the foundation for everything else you say. The goal is to find something that promotes your mission. Even if it doesn't impact you directly, think about how other people around you are impacted. How has meeting or working with them benefitted you?

The next thing to think about is your hook, how you provide the motivation for your cause. Be specific. Talk about a specific experience.

Once you have your hook and your focus, you can put them together to create your story. It's important to keep your story short and concise, so a good rule of thumb is to make a story that you can tell in about 2 to 3 minutes. It doesn't have to be exact, so there's no need to memorize exactly what you want to say, but it's helpful to have a general path that you plan to follow.

Given how memory works, it's also helpful to put your punch at the start and the end. That means it's good to start with what you're asking for, and then really emphasize the benefits at the end, and the context, while important, is not as necessary for others to remember, so that can go in the middle.

Here is what this process looks like when a student is advocating for college funding with a state legislator.

1. Introduction (Start with the "ask" or your cause)

Hi, my name is [Your Name], and I'm a student at [Your University]. I'm here to thank you for supporting the Washington College Grant and other public funding that increases access to higher education, and to ask that you continue to invest in these programs, as they make a real difference in students' lives, including mine.

2. Cause (Your point)

For me, dual credit programs played a key role in making college more accessible. I was able to earn college credit in high school, which helped me save money and feel more prepared for the rigor of college courses. These programs gave me a head start and made higher education more manageable financially.

3. Context (Why it matters)

But what's had the biggest impact on me isn't just what I gained academically, it's the people I've met. Some of my closest peers wouldn't have been able to attend college at all without programs like the Washington College Grant. Because they're here, I've had the chance to collaborate with students from all kinds of backgrounds. That diversity has enriched my education far beyond the classroom.

4. The difference it made (Personal impact or story)

One of the most meaningful experiences I've had was in a [specific class, project, club, etc.] where we tackled a complex problem together. A peer brought a completely different perspective shaped by their lived experience that changed how I thought about the issue entirely. Without financial aid programs, they wouldn't have been in that room. That moment made it clear to me how important access really is not just for the individual, but for everyone around them.

5. Thank you (Wrap up and restate the impact)

Thank you for supporting programs like the Washington College Grant and dual credit initiatives. They open doors, bring diverse voices to our campuses, and make higher education better for everyone.