

# On-Campus Advocacy Toolkit



Prepared November, 2022

When it comes to addressing board issues amongst college students (e.g., mental health, food insecurity, and equity) there are many stakeholders who can and should act to address them. One important stakeholder are college administrations. While schools can sometimes seem like a monolith when it comes to changing, there are a variety of ways to effectively advocate for change on your campus.

## Step 1) Research



This can involve a variety of methods of collecting information about the issue such as discussing with other students, staff, and faculty or consuming media (e.g., reading, watching videos). This is an important step as it will inform you on the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the issue. For example, by developing a better understanding on the issue you should be able to answer the following general questions: Who can address this issue? What is currently being done to address it, if anything? How else can it be addressed? Why should someone act on these proposed changes? While this can be done individually, your efforts will be enhanced if you are able to get more people involved in this stage of the process.

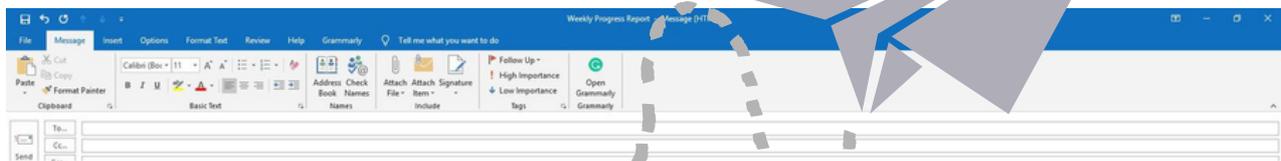
# Step 2) Dialogue



Through research you can determine the specific requests being made to college or other stakeholders. The next step involves meeting with them\* to start a dialogue around the changes you would like to see. It is important to note that system-wide changes can take a fair amount of time, so being combative with college administration and faculty is trading short term self-satisfaction for long term meaningful changes. Instead, approach these meetings with collaboration in mind. Acting with respect, developing dialogue, common ground, and trust between students and administration are key to achieving positive working relationships and win-win solutions.

\*Who you contact depends on the issue at hand and your college's organizational structure. Typically you will want to work your way up the organization rather than go straight to the President or Provost. For example, for matters regarding a course you could start at either the professor or the department chair level and then escalate to the Dean and then the college President, if necessary.

## Example Email



Greetings,

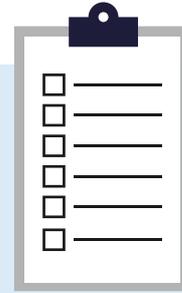
My name is John Doe. I am a student at Ontario College. I am contacting you today in regards to issues with the food being offered on-campus. I, along with many students I have spoken to, are noticing a substantial increase in prices yet poorer quality food being offered. We are looking into the benefits of a self-operated food service models and want to know more about if/how Ontario College can adopt (fully or partially) such a model to retain control over prices and food options.

I would like to request a meeting with you to discuss this issue and opportunities' further.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,  
John Doe

# Step 2a) Petition



While opening up dialogue is always advised as a first step, another route for getting your voice heard is through petitions. This step involves receiving formal acknowledge and support from others on-campus regarding the issue and your request(s). This can be especially impactful if college administrations are not responding for your meeting requests, as they may not have the time nor inclination to discuss concerns of an individual student. When creating your petition, try to keep it brief. You may be passionate about the topic, but you don't want to put people off by giving them a lengthy letter, so aim for a maximum of 4-5 short paragraphs. Be sure to include the issue, who is responsible, and your proposed recommendations.

## Petition Example

A large illustration of a clipboard with a red and yellow clip at the top. The clipboard contains a document with the following text:

**Petition Summary**

Food on-campus is becoming too expensive and lacking nutritional content. Unfortunately, there is also a lack of easily accessible options for food off-campus for most students and staff; thus Ontario College is failing to meet the UN's definition of food security. Currently, the college outsources it's food services to a third-party vendor. This vendor is privately owned and earning record profits. We are urging that Vice-President, Finance and Administration and President take action to address the access and affordability of food on-campus.

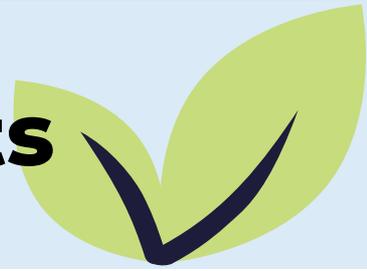
**Actions Petitioned**

**We, the undersigned, petition Ontario College as follows:**

- Adopted a self-operated or mixed method food service model in three-years.
- Increase options for nutritious and culturally relevant foods on-campus
- Offer food discounts in conjunction with students' financial need.

Name (printed)	Signature	Contact (printed)
Jane Doe		416-567-1111

## Step 2b) Grassroots



Another way effective method for influencing change is through social movements and grassroot initiatives. These consist of people who rally around a common goal but often operate outside the current system, thereby changing the status quo over time. This process may start small and grow over time. It may also happen organically when you are reaching out to others in the petition process. For example, even in the face of large support, if colleges are unwilling to implement more mental health supports, a social movement could involve developing informal peer-to-peer supports at the college. Such informal actions can eventually become legitimized and implemented by the college as support grows and its efficacy becomes more proven.

## Step 3) Seek Support

This "step" can be taken at any point in your advocacy journey. There are plenty of individuals and non-profit organization out there who will align with your mission and can help guide and support your efforts. When it comes to advocating to enhance student experiences, you can look no further than our organization!

If you want help with research and voicing student focused change, then you can contact us at [advocacy@collegestudentalliance.ca](mailto:advocacy@collegestudentalliance.ca).

### About College Student Alliance



College Student Alliance (CSA) advocates on behalf of Ontario college students in partnership with student leaders. Through our member student associations, CSA represents the collective voice of Ontario's college students, advocating to enhance all student experiences.