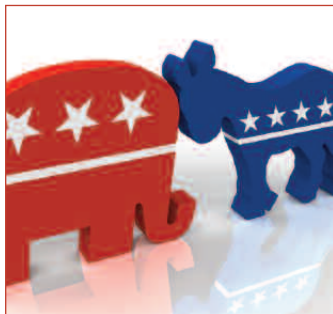


The Political Scene

Ick. *Politics* can be such a loaded word. It often implies backroom dealings, hidden agendas and, worst of all, *schmoozing*.

Yet, when it comes down to it, politics don't have to be a dirty little secret. The word "politic" actually describes someone as "wisely discerning" or "shrewdly expedient." And you are a big part of the political structure on campus! As a collaborative, connected student leader, you help this campus hum.



It may be that part of in your role in interacting with campus VIPs involves the college political structure. This may be on a formal basis, such as through committee work, or an informal basis, like when you stop by someone's office or bump into her during a social event.

Top 10 Ways to Navigate the Political Waters

As you begin interacting with campus administrators and "friends of the college," let the following tips be your guide:

1. **Search for Common Ground.** Talk about common interests, families, etc. There is so much more to these folks than just their jobs.
2. **Joke Appropriately.** Remember that VIPs are people, too, and many like a good laugh, as long as it's not at anyone else's expense.
3. **Don't be Afraid.** You didn't get to this point by holding back. No one is better than the other in this scenario.
4. **Learn About Their School Days.** Many VIPs have attended college and may have roots in student leadership so, ask them about it and let them reflect on those "glory days." You're bound to learn a lot.

Take some time
to keep in Mind ...

...politics can be genuine. In our society, politicians are often seen as false representatives with agendas of their own. Yet, many people get into leadership positions because they hope to make a difference, politicians included. So, don't knock the political game!

5. **Corral Your Own Confidence.** Remember, as a leader on campus, you're a valuable commodity to VIPs. They can learn from you, just as you can learn from them!
6. **Beware of Self-Fulfillment.** Rather than using good relationships with VIPs to advance your own cause, stay true to the institution and the needs of your organization.
7. **Remember Names.** Repeat someone's name several times during a conversation to help it stick. People like to hear the sound of their name! Don't you?
8. **Make Title Distinctions.** Academic "labels" such as "professor" or "doctor" may be more important than you think. If unsure, refer to individuals as Mr. or Ms. Try to make these distinctions and address people appropriately.
9. **Have Faith in Yourself.** Don't minimize your impact or your importance, simply because you may be younger and less experienced than many administrators are. You're something!
10. **Start Now!** If given the opportunity to interact with college VIPs, jump at it before your time as a student leader is over. This is more real, more honest and less "schmozy" because you're not just socializing and networking, you're getting to know people as people.