

**Learnable Skills, or Unteachable Instinct?
What Can and What Cannot Be Taught in the Lobbying Profession**

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Executive Summary

In this paper, we make the case that there is a critical set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that can be taught to pre- and early-career lobbyists at the graduate professional training level. We acknowledge that, as with any profession, there are intrinsic personal qualities and life experiences that improve the ability of lobbyists to represent their clients and contribute to the policy process. Yet, we also identify three basic areas of lobbying in the literature that can structure a curriculum to prepare prospective professional lobbyists to be effective and ethical advocates for their clients' interests. First, recent research on interest group politics and lobbying can offer students and practitioners insight into the structure and dynamics of lobbying communities. Second, the literature highlights three useful kinds of knowledge – political process, substantive policy, and analytic – that can be systematically taught. Third, the consensus among political scientists that lobbying plays primarily an informational role implies that students should master oral and written communication strategies for effective advocacy. And finally, best practices in building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders in the policy world can be modeled. We then recommend a curriculum that offers training in these areas through a combination of seminars, simulations, and a practicum experience that may be delivered in person, online, or through a hybrid course.

Keywords: lobbying, advocacy, skills, ethics, teaching, learning

‘It’s all about good instincts, and instincts can never be taught’, said veteran Washington lobbyist Mike House of the prominent firm Hogan Lovells when asked by a *Washington Post* reporter whether lobbying can be taught (Goldman, 2012). We do not know how widespread Mr. House’s belief is in the lobbying community, but we suspect it is widely assumed by practitioners of a profession so dependent on good people skills and instincts for political combat. Yet somebody must believe that some part of the lobbying business can be taught because there seems to be a small, but growing, industry issuing degrees and certificates in lobbying and political management. Washington-based universities offer training programs, as do professional societies like the Public Affairs Council, the American Bar Association, the Congressional Management Foundation, the Association of Government Relations Professionals, the Digital Advocacy Institute, and the American Association of Political Consultants. Presumably the people running these programs, and the people and employers paying money to enroll in them, must believe that something about lobbying can be taught. What might it be? In this paper we offer an answer.

Before we get started, though, there are three caveats. First, we do not believe that everything a student needs for a successful lobbying career, or advocacy career for those preferring the arguably broader term, can be taught in the classroom. We have no doubt the Mike Houses of the world are right in the sense that experience, as much as training, is the key to success, just as it is in any profession. But as political scientists who study the influence industry, who have led earlier lives in and around this industry, and who actually teach the subject of interest groups and lobbying at the undergraduate and graduate levels, we have good reason to believe that many aspects of lobbying can be taught. Based on our own experiences and conversations with practitioners we know, we argue that, yes, much of the profession of

lobbying can be taught; just not quite all of it. Just as a fish does not know it is surrounded by water, we suggest that even the most seasoned lobbyists can learn a great deal by taking a step back to understand recent advances in the empirical study of the lobbying and interest group politics.

Second, when we say teaching ‘lobbying’, we mean more than just teaching students about legally-defined lobbying, which is going to the capital in designer clothes to meet quietly with lawmakers and staff. We would be doing our students a terrible disservice if we limited ourselves to artificial statutory definitions of who qualifies as a lobbyist under the current registration rules (see LaPira and Thomas, 2013). Of course we mean the contract lobbyist at a major K Street firm representing a handful of Fortune 500 companies as much as we mean an activist-turned-lobbyist working on a shoestring nonprofit budget. Yet we also mean the professional advocate who transforms an interest group’s membership into a well-oiled grassroots machine with targeted messaging, phone calls, marches, and angry visits to district offices and town hall meetings (see Kollman, 1998). We mean the regulatory expert who focuses exclusively on the rulemaking process inside a single, obscure agency (see Golden, 1998). We mean the coalition broker who can identify all of the organized interests with a stake in an issue and negotiate common ground among them to form a powerful lobbying coalition (see Hula 1999). We even mean the public relations consultant so crucial to our new era of technology-driven politics (Lathrop, 2009; Parti, 2014), who can reframe an issue in a compelling way in the early morning, get it before members and supporters in the late morning, connect them to their proper members of Congress in the early afternoon, jam the phone lines, email servers, and Twitter accounts by later afternoon, and go on to an evening fundraiser knowing they have fundamentally re-shaped the way a sleepy issue is understood in Washington,

DC. There is no such thing as the model lobbyist; rather, there are varieties of lobbyists. Our aim, then, is to envision a curriculum that addresses what is common across them, but that is flexible enough to allow students to specialize.

Finally, we know that the chances of any student, graduate or undergraduate, getting their degree and going right into a high-powered lobbying position is not particularly realistic. Freshly graduated bachelors-degree holders do not just walk into lobbying, any more than a new graduate of the biology department can expect to perform surgery. Of the roughly 30,000 people in Washington, DC who more or less were lobbyists (even though it rarely says that on their business cards) in 2012, only 12 per cent are younger than thirty-five (Rehr, 2012). Roughly 52 per cent have gone through the so-called revolving door from government to the lobbying industry; among them, 48 per cent have held two or more positions in government to prepare them for careers in lobbying (LaPira and Thomas, 2014). Indeed, undergraduate political science programs are arguably not in positions to certify lobbyists like law schools prepare students to practice law. Like most liberal arts degree programs, and unlike graduate level professional schools, producing students with well-rounded sets of skills suitable for a variety of jobs, political science tries to train students with skills useful in all political fields, which perhaps explains why most departments have ‘Interest Groups Politics’ courses rather than ‘Lobbying 101’ courses and certificate programs. In other words, what we can do is to prepare our students well enough to get those jobs that can lead to the lobbying field, and develop specific, targeted training programs informed by academic political science as part of graduate-level professional degree program to better prepare them after they earn some experience. In making this argument, we assert that lobbying is a type of profession with a growing body of knowledge and increasing specialized training.

What Perhaps Cannot be Taught

In response to the assertion that lobbying cannot be taught because it is all about ‘instincts’, it is hard to imagine in the 21st Century that *any* profession can be learned on the job without the benefit of a university-level education. There is no reason to believe that a lobbyist is that different from the banker and investor, laboratory scientist, attorney, military officer, health care practitioner or administrator, architect, civil engineer, and so forth. Jobs in these professions cannot be earned without significant higher education; in some professions, their own accrediting bodies (like the bar association) do not allow it. Perhaps 19th Century influence peddlers like William Chandler, Grenville Dodge, and self-styled King of the Lobby Sam Ward could succeed in Washington by just feeling their way through a situation (aided perhaps by a little bribery), but today it is far too large, complex, and sophisticated, with too many rules and too many rivals for any single person to make it up as they go. Even in the 1920s, political scientist Pendleton Herring (1929) found that the capital city’s lobbying corps had become highly professionalized, employing sophisticated strategies and tools to win political influence. Politics today is big business requiring a big education, and we argue that good instincts are as much the result of good training as they are experience or any natural ability to attune oneself to other people.

Having said that, we recognize that in lobbying, as in all other professions, experience plays a significant role, and so too does personality. Experience allows a lobbyist to make quick decisions because they have either made similar decisions before, or have been in the room when they were made. Much of lobbying is about relationship building, and the experienced lobbyist knows which lawmaker is likely to be receptive to a persuasive argument and who should be left alone. Experience helps a lobbyist effectively formulate strategy for an advocacy campaign

because many of the circumstances confronting clients are ones the lobbyist has witnessed before.

Experience also teaches a lobbyist about the idiosyncrasies of the people he or she must deal with in order to wield influence. A student can be taught how important the House Rules Committee is for getting anything done in Congress, and, given what they were taught, may feel that the committee chair ought to be responsive to information regarding the constituency the lobbyist represents. Yet experience may also tell the lobbyist that the chair is a miserable bastard who wants nothing to do with you and the people you represent, even though on paper he or she should. Best to stay away from such people. On the other hand, from working in the field you may learn that this same cantankerous committee chair changes his or her tune when swigging single-malt scotch or when asked about how the children are doing in school. Yet the theme that emerged at the 2014 conference by the Digital Advocacy Institute assessing all of the new advocacy technology was that ‘advocacy even in this digital age was still fundamentally about cultivating and building upon the interpersonal relationships. The work of digital advocacy, then, is the same as it was in the analog era. Or the horse and buggy era for that matter’ (Nehls, 2014). In other words, technology comes and goes, and so do the people advocates have to work with, but the basic methods of lobbying remain the same. Any fundamental rules undergirding how a profession is practiced can be taught, it is just a matter of figuring out what they are and how best to teach them.

As for personality, some of this can be overcome with good training and determination. Nothing, though, can make up for an individual who is fundamentally unable to keep his or her mouth shut when necessary, who is unable to be anything but rude or say the socially awkward thing, or who cannot look another person in the eye when speaking to them. The professor may

advise such a student to avoid the lobbying profession, or any people-oriented and sales-oriented professions (lobbying is basically a sales job), and go to law school.

What Can Be Taught

So what about the lobbying business can be taught? How much of what *appears* to be natural talent is actually something that can be learned at the university or in professional training seminars? Drawing on our own research, our experiences in the field interviewing lobbyists, talking to both practitioners and other teachers, and even drawing on our own personal memories of past lives we spent working in politics rather than teaching it, we identify three basic areas of the lobbying profession that we believe can be taught. Specifically, we identify three different sets of skills or abilities essential to the business of lobbying that we strongly believe can be taught: knowledge (which we sub-divide into specific types), communication and messaging, and relationship building.¹

Knowledge

While serving in the US Senate, John F. Kennedy was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, ‘Lobbyists are in many cases expert technicians and capable of explaining complex and difficult subjects in a clear, understandable fashion’ (Kennedy, 1956). Kennedy’s perception of the work of lobbyists suggests that the most obvious contribution of the classroom to students wishing to be lobbyists is knowledge, both factual information and knowledge on how to leverage what they know to advance their careers. The authors of the Constitution deliberately created a complex form of government, and each subsequent generation has contributed something towards complicating the lawmaking and implementing process. Ironically, this

benefits lobbyists *and* those who teach lobbying because it makes knowledge regarding the political process valuable.

We cannot teach anything about the idiosyncratic personalities of the people involved in lawmaking any more than our colleagues in business can prepare students for any variety of quirky CEOs, but we can teach a great deal about the structures of the three branches of government and how officials there work within a complex web of rules and norms. We label this *process learning*. The more lobbyists know how policies are really made and executed, the better they are at influencing them and the more they are valued by others wanting to be influential. For instance, why is the House Rules Committee so incredibly important to the passage of legislation? How does the Senate filibuster really work, and what does it mean to say the Senate Majority Leader fills amendment trees? What is the difference between authorizations and appropriations? How do new members of Congress get on the committees they want? What is the importance of regulatory scoping hearings? Why might you want to influence an agency's record of decision? Who is in charge of appointing key agency officials during a transition of presidential power (see Brown, 2012)? How do you know the right way to read the vast *Federal Register*? All of this and much more can be taught and certainly incorporated into a curriculum.

How to comply with lobbying laws and regulations also can be taught, and is too a part of process learning. Several professional organizations already do this, such as the Association of Government Relations Professionals, but for graduate-level lobbying programs classes can be taught regarding compliance with the Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA), the Honest Leadership and Openness in Government Act (HLOGA), and various executive branch regulations regarding lobbying and contact with government officials. It would actually be a worthwhile thing to do,

considering that a study a couple of years ago by David Rehr found that about 37 per cent of lobbyists surveyed in Washington, DC knew next to nothing about what LDA and HLOGA required of them (Rehr, 2012, pp. 6-7). An additional reason for this is to make certain courses in lobbying do not drift into cold cynicism. Lobbying regulations may not be perfect, but they can provide students with an entry point into a discussion of ethical norms and expectations about professional behavior.

We can also teach students quite a bit about specific areas of public policy – what we call *policy learning*. It is in the interests of would-be lobbyists to take these courses. Lobbyists are valuable to lawmakers and other lobbyists because they are experts on particular areas of public policy, as well as how government works (Hansen, 1991; Wright, 1996). Many spend large portions of their careers working in one or two policy areas (LaPira *et al.*, 2014), most of which are exceedingly complex, with intricate statutes which are then implemented by codes of administrative rules that would make Tolstoy feel inadequate.² University-based courses in different areas of policy would give students a leg up in the job market. Faculty experts on environmental policy may not be able to teach students all the facets of environmental laws like the Endangered Species Act or the National Environmental Policy Act, but they can broadly show how these laws work and why listing species as threatened and endangered under ESA is a powerful tool, or the important role that environmental impact statements and reports mandated by NEPA play in starting and resolving environmental conflicts.

Because lawmakers (and their staff) rarely have time to learn much about laws like ESA and NEPA and how they are implemented, they often find themselves in the uncomfortable position of casting votes on bills amending these policies without fully understanding what they are doing and how it might impact their constituents (Kingdon, 1973). To cope with this

unknown, as well as their cognitive limitations, they build relationships with lobbyists whom they can call on for advice regarding these policy domains (Hansen, 1991). Learning something about an area of policy, presumably one interesting to the student, thus becomes as important for lobbying curriculum as learning about the rules and norms of Washington. This also opens doors to incorporating lobbying education into other courses in political science and across university curriculum where departments of education, criminal justice, and health sciences and business schools teach about public policy. Additionally, business schools may find value in teaching lobbying, especially since corporate managers need to learn that businesses are only successful in politics when they earn broad public support (Smith, 2000). Moreover, corporate managers need to be prepared to deal with significant changes in how their interests are represented; corporations once relied heavily on associations to lobby on their behalf, whereas more recently they have become much more likely to establish their own presence (Drutman, forthcoming 2015).

We also know that the research processes and data interpretation have become increasingly important in advocacy and lobbying (Hall and Dearthoff, 2006). Lobbying firms increasingly hire economists and statisticians to craft the set of facts they use to advocate for policy change. If lobbyists and their research staff are doing policy analysis for members of Congress, political science departments may need to boost the research methods and quantitative reasoning parts of their curriculum to improve what we call *analytical learning*.³ Masters programs, in particular, may be ripe for courses focusing on the kind of applied data analysis useful for lobbying, with an emphasis on the graphical presentation of analysis and how to produce so-called ‘infographics’ that visually represent complex ideas.

Different kinds of knowledge are not just a suite of tools lobbyists use in their work, they are the products lobbyists sell. Knowledge is power, and whoever has it is valuable to others. Political science professors have long known that the truth about access and influence in politics is that lawmakers grant it to lobbyists who know things they do not know or are otherwise difficult and costly to learn. Indeed, the whole theory of access and influence in politics is built on the assumption that lobbyists know more about structure, content, and process than lawmakers, and since lawmakers need to know these things they invite lobbyists into their offices (and their lives) to act as counselors (Milbrath, 1963; Hansen, 1991; Wright, 1996). This is why new members of Congress tend to hire certain types of lobbyists as their chiefs of staff (Farnam, 2011). Smart, knowledgeable lobbyists also attract the attention of other lobbyists. To the extent that coalitions and networks are important in Washington, and it seems they are, individual lobbyists are more attractive to other potential coalition partners if they bring to the table information the others lack but badly desire (Hula, 1999). Thus it should come as no surprise that we believe most of lobbying can be taught. The more students focus on learning the intricacies of government structure and functioning, the intricacies of specific areas of policy, and the art and of use data analysis and presentation, and the better job faculty do at teaching it, the better job prospects students are going to have when they enter the advocacy job market.

Communication and Messaging Skills

The second area of lobbying that we believe can be taught to a significant degree is communication. Lobbying is not only about being a trusted provider of information; it is also about formulating and delivering effective messages. Those who win political conflicts are the ones who do the best job at framing issues, presenting them to lawmakers and the public in ways

that appear sensible and consistent with broadly held social values (Baumgartner *et al.*, 2009; Tarrow, 2011). With the Washington community becoming ever more crowded with advocates, effective framing and messaging is an increasingly crucial skill to have. A whole industry of public relations consultants is emerging to do it, to a considerable extent pushing aside traditional lobbyists who are more comfortable in smoky backrooms (Lathrop, 2009). Fortunately most of these skills can be taught.

Part of what we need to teach, of course, is basic writing competency, a skill even many undergraduates do not master prior to graduate school. Good grammar and the ability to write clearly and concisely, sometimes with carefully crafted nuances, are absolutely essential to the success of any advocacy campaign. If a political message is long, awkward, rambling, and otherwise painful to decipher, it will never be read. A few years back the Congressional Management Foundation calculated that each congressional office receives about a foot and a half of paper a day in reports and letters, and countless emails and communications from social media on top of that (Goldschmidt and Ochreiter, 2008). Only the most persuasive and catchy writers using good grammar are going to get their messages through to lawmakers and their overworked staff. Students *must* learn to write well.

Concise messaging strategy is also a must, and can also be taught. Time is a precious resource in politics, and the less time lawmakers and staff have to spend learning what a lobbyist is trying to say, the more likely they are to read a message and remember it. Not all classroom writing has to be long term papers, which is good news for professors who typically do not enjoy reading them any more than students enjoy writing them. Courses in political communication and public relations often emphasize very short writing assignments.⁴ Get to your point fast, with

as few complicated words as possible. Leave a clear message for your reader and then end the communication. Try even to fit it in a message sent on Twitter.

Not only must lobbyists have good grammar and the ability to write concisely under pressure, they must also be able to write persuasively. Of course the entire point of lobbying is to persuade another to take an action you, and the people you represent, desire. A good message needs to let the lawmaker know quickly that the action you wish them to take is in their interests, perhaps because it will endear them to a constituency crucial to re-election, or one crucial to election to higher office (Fitch, 2010). It must also be a message the lawmaker, or even the lobbyist if it is hard to get lawmakers to listen, can take to the public.

Writing must also connect audiences. Much of the public tends to be uninformed and quiescent, so lawmakers pay them little attention (Arnold, 1990). Part of a lobbyist's job is to make certain their group members or clients do not fall into this category. They need to keep the people they represent informed and engaged. Lobbyists, after all are really just professional go-betweens, agents acting on behalf of principals in the public, even if they often do so with a significant amount of autonomy and discretion (Ainsworth and Sened, 1993; Kersh, 2002). Thus a good message should not only move lawmakers to want to serve the constituency the lobbyist represents, but to get members excited about pressuring the lawmaker into doing it. Most of this can be taught. However, are we prepared to be the ones teaching it? The writing norms learned in a doctoral program may not overlap with the expectations of a lobbying firm. Political scientists might consider re-training to improve our teaching of professional writing. In other field, such as law and medicine, there is a long tradition of mandatory continuing education to update skills. Just as we maintain our methodological skills with short courses on the newest statistical

techniques, the same approach may be needed to better teach about effective writing for lobbying.

Good political communication and messaging is not just content and quality, it is also effective targeting and delivery (Fitch, 2009). Generally speaking, people involved in interest groups are more likely to contact their lawmakers than people who are not (Holyoke, 2013), but some methods of communicating are more effective than others under particular circumstances and the means of delivery often shapes the type of message delivered (Lathrop, 2009). When is it best to use Facebook or other types of social media? When to use email? When to have members and clients go old-school and write letters and make phone calls, and when to actually bring people to Washington for personal meetings or hold a ‘lobby day’? Even e-petitions are becoming somewhat more precise in terms of what constituencies are mobilized and which lawmakers their opinions are targeted at (Nehls, 2014).

If an issue important to association members is about to be voted on, the lobbyist may want to quickly tell members, and provide them with a message they, in turn, can send to their representative in Congress through the internet. If possible, the lobbyist can help members personalize the message before they email it, post it to Facebook, or tweet it because personalized messages are far more effective than duplicate messages (Fitch, 2010). If the lobbyist’s group or clients are known and trusted by the legislator, his or her staff may regularly monitor the group’s website or Facebook site, which makes communicating this way quick and easy. Many congressional offices have a staff person who spends at least some of his or her time going through the Facebook sites of interest groups the office considers important to read.⁵

On the other hand, if an organization is trying to gain the attention of lawmakers because they are new to politics or are otherwise marginalized, their lobbyist may be well advised to stay

old-school and encourage members or clients to telephone their lawmakers or to visit Capitol Hill as these make a personal impression on lawmakers. If all else fails, the lobbyist may want to stage an old-fashioned protest. What faculty can do for students is teach them which method of message delivery is most appropriate given the political circumstances surrounding an issue. There is a growing body of research on the practical dimensions of digital politics and organizing on which we can base this instruction (see Han, 2014; Karpf, 2012).

Another aspect of communications and messaging that can be taught is the value of follow-up. Grassroots advocacy, real or virtual, is generally used to get the attention of lawmakers so that a foundation is created allowing the lobbyist or a few especially motivated members to meet with key lawmakers (Kollman, 1998; Nehls, 2014). That means lobbyists for the interest must personally follow-up while the message communicated from the grassroots is still relatively fresh in the minds of targeted lawmakers. Even more entrenched interests not needing large-scale grassroots advocacy will still often signal to a lawmaker's office that an issue is important to them by having a prominent member of the organization, who is also a prominent person in the lawmaker's constituency, call first.

This at least suggests that when it comes to targeting messages, it is often best to have interest group members and clients target their own elected officials. Showing the constituent connection always helps a lobbyist make a case because members of Congress at least say that nothing persuades them like communications from constituents, especially when that communication contains a personal story from the constituent connected to the issue at hand (Fitch, 2010). Students can be taught these new kinds of best practices in messaging, just as they can be taught other little bits of wisdom. For instance, they can be taught to stay away from certain kinds of allegedly grassroots-oriented technology, like the e-petition companies which do

nothing more than send worthless identical messages to Congress and may be more interested in selling the contact information of the people who sign such petitions (Fitch, 2009; Shih, 2011).

Relationship Building

While knowledge and communication can be taught, the third area, relationship building, starts to straddle the line between what can and cannot be taught. The value of relationships, and how to maintain them, can be taught, but some of what is needed for knowing how to build relationships perhaps cannot be because it is too much a part of an individual's personality. Who the lobbyist knows is very much a part of measuring her value in Washington (Blanes i Vidal *et al.*, 2012). Perhaps more than anything, a lobbyist's market value, especially if they work for a private, for-hire lobbying firm, is their portfolio of relationships. They are retained by individuals, corporations, and interest groups, often for significant amounts of money, because they have built relationships with powerful, influential individuals in Washington. By doing lots of little favors for lawmakers, such as connecting them with important constituencies, supplying valuable information, helping plot strategy, and being generally useful, a lobbyist builds a reciprocal relationship based on trust and mutual need and even a sense of obligation (Wright, 1996; Susman, 2008). The danger, which we can warn students of, is that these relationships can end-up being more important to lobbyists than the people they are supposed to represent (Holyoke, 2011).

So what can we teach students about relationship building? Arguably, five elements of relationship building are teachable. First, what can be taught is that relationships with lawmakers are not like real, personal relationships, or even many relationships in business. They are built on mutual need, the ability of each person to provide the other with something they have to possess to achieve their goals. Second, relationships are targeted, and lobbyists must know

with which lawmakers they need to build relationships to get their work done. A particular lawmaker should be targeted because the lobbyist has something to offer the lawmaker, who, in turn, will offer the lobbyist a crucial point of access to the lawmaking superstructure. Students can be taught, to some extent, to identify which lawmakers might be responsive to the information they can offer, and who have an electoral-based interest in aiding the constituency the lobbyist represents. Or perhaps the lobbyist and lawmaker have a mutual interest in the same areas of public policy.

Students can be taught to identify these links. Just as with communication and messaging, they can be taught best practices in identifying targets and how to approach them. They can even be taught to respect a lawmaker's precious time, learning the best time to approach a lawmaker, like when an issue important to both the lobbyist and lawmaker is about to come up, and when to stay away, such as when there is no chance the issue of concern to you both is going to come up. Lawmakers and their staff rarely have time for small talk, except perhaps at fundraisers.

Third, it is vital that any student who hopes to have a career in lobbying better learn to at least look like they are enjoying spending time with other people. Sometimes time spent socializing for the interest group needs to be balanced with time spent with friends or family. Even if going to a fundraiser in the evening is the last thing you want to do and you are sick of small talk with other people, it still needs to be done. To be seen by the lawmaker shows that you value the legislator, and helps build the sense of obligation. The same goes for calling other people to also come to the fundraiser and give. And if you feel conspicuous because the smile on your face at the event is fake, take comfort in knowing that you are almost certainly not the only one!

Fourth, nearly every student we teach will do an internship or practicum, often more than one. The first professional relationships can be built during these semester long experiences, but students may need to be reminded of this during advising. Reinforcing the long-term benefits of building a professional network can complement teaching about relationship-building in class.

Finally, the ethics of relationship building, such as they are, can be taught. A curriculum on professional lobbying, like law or medicine, must incorporate a code of ethics, such as the one adopted by the American Government Relations Professionals.⁶ What can we teach about ethical behavior? Not lying, the most basic rule of all in lobbying (Jankowsky, 2006), can certainly be taught (though it might surprise students to hear it). Similarly, students can be taught the importance of confidentiality. If they understand the importance of reciprocity and mutual need defining the lobbyist-lawmaker relationship, then the crucial importance of honesty ought to be self-evident. They can also be taught that there is a crucial exception to the confidentiality rule of the lawmaker-lobbyist relationship – the lobbyist is, first and foremost, an agent of an organized interest or client employing them and that they not the lawmakers, are a lobbyist’s first responsibility. This may mean the ethical lobbyist cannot promise the lawmaker confidentiality if something comes up crucial to the people the lobbyist represents, even if the relationships furthering their professional ambitions are better served by prioritizing the lawmaker’s needs. Of course good lobbyists make sure there is never a conflict between what their members and clients know and what lawmakers knows so there is no confidentiality problem. Mastering this balancing act, though, is something one has to learn on the job; it cannot be easily taught.

Additionally, teaching standards of ethics should focus on the role many lobbyists play in raising and contributing campaign money, at least in the American national setting. Students can examine the empirical research on the role and impact of campaign finance to learn that evidence

suggests its impact to be, at best, mixed (Baumgartner and Leech 1998). Moreover, studies show that very few lobbyists actually engage on campaign finance activities, and those who do are partisan (Koger and Victor 2009), whereas most industries vary in their partisan distribution of campaign money (Bonica 2014). In short, campaign finance matters less in lobbying than popular imagination believes it to. Yet, the overlap between lobbying and campaign finance can raise significant ethical questions. A lobbyist, as a professional advocate, would be unethical if he or she did not use all of the available tools, including strategic campaign donations, if it will advance members' or clients' interests. A curriculum on lobbying should explain the status quo that money is a widely accepted legally permitted tool, and give students the knowledge they need to determine for themselves if using the tactic is appropriate for the interests they represent.

Moreover, ethical training ought to address the need to balance the public interest with their clients' specialized interests. After exploring conceptually whether there is such a thing as an objective common good or public interest, future lobbyists can learn how it may be no more their responsibility for achieving it than it is for a lawyer to see his or her client convicted when they, in fact, are guilty. Put another way, just as an ethical lawyer must see that a clients' due process is followed if she or he knows they are guilty, so too must an ethical lobbyist vigorously advocate the interests of the group of citizens, nonprofits, or businesses that are paying the lobbyist to petition the government for a redress of grievances as guaranteed under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Allard 2008; Holyoke 2015). The ethical lobbyist is a faithful advocate for the political interests of others, not the interests of the entire polity. A republican form of government lays the responsibility of determining the public interest on elected officials, not contractually obligated lobbyists.

Value of Simulations

The classroom is not only a place for learning knowledge and information, but also a place for developing skills, and one way of doing that is through simulated experience. If the job is to teach one to be a lobbyist, then it makes sense to practice being a lobbyist, even if everyone is still in the classroom. Dr. Alan Rosenblatt (who was interviewed for this article) had for twenty years used simulations to teach digital advocacy to graduate students, practitioners, and even undergraduates.⁷ Significant parts of his courses involve requiring students to design whole lobbying campaigns from start to finish (at least to the extent that any lobbying enterprise has a start and finish) within a political context he provides. Though specific simulation assignment prompts ought to be tailored to the course and faculty members' preferences, some possible modules may include (and are certainly not limited to):

- Process learning:
 - Recruiting clients for a lobbying firm;
 - Seeking policy priority inputs from senior managers and boards of directors;
 - Learning advanced budgeting, legislative, and bureaucratic procedures;
- Policy learning:
 - Determining lobbying strategies and identifying stakeholders, such as coalition partners, primary competitors, and policy champions inside government;
 - Conducting detailed policy histories and detailing policy alternatives and arguments;
 - Expanding lobbying strategies to include:
 - Policy implementation beyond the legislative setting;
 - Policy development at the state and local or international institutional settings;
- Analytical learning:
 - Collecting, organizing, and analyzing relevant data to support lobbying strategy,
 - Drafting 'white papers,' and preparing testimony for public hearings;

- Reporting results and recommending future actions back to the client or to senior organizational managers.

Hypothetical assignments will introduce students to the complexities of a lobbying campaign, and can also serve as a professional portfolio when they enter the lobbying and advocacy job market. While simulations often cannot capture the unexpected and unpredictable swings of political warfare, they nonetheless give the student a chance to put all of the pieces together to see how different strategies under different circumstances might bring a favorable conclusion.

Curriculum Thoughts

There are several good textbooks on interest groups and lobbying that are written at a level accessible to undergraduates and graduates (e.g., Berry and Wilcox, 2008; Lowery and Brasher, 2011; Nownes, 2012; Holyoke, 2014), and several good collections of scholars' work on various aspects of the topic similarly accessible (e.g., Petracca, 1992; Cigler and Loomis, 2012; Grossmann, 2014). Yet these are only starting points in a lobbying curriculum, texts that give broad overviews of how interest group politics works. A curriculum that teaches the skills needed for lobbying and similar forms of political management and consulting need to go much further than these. So what recommendations can we make any regarding the curricula based on what we have presented here? We offer three thoughts which suggest an approach, but not a steadfast instructional rule. First, actually teaching the profession of lobbying is best focused at the graduate level, supplemented later by continuing education programs. Undergraduate education is often still covering the fundamentals of American government and research methods, mainly what we called earlier process learning and analytical learning, and it is doubtful that even upper-level classes on interest groups, lobbying, Congress, and the executive branch could cover everything in enough detail for students to really be qualified to be even an

apprentice lobbyist. Lobbying can be incorporated into those courses, but likely not taught as a stand-alone course as at the graduate level. A student who excels in these broader classes at the undergraduate level, however, should be in a good place to study the advanced material in a graduate program, probably one that really specializes in teaching lobbying, advocacy, and interest group management. This is especially the case if the undergraduate student supplemented their experience with a political internship.

Second, in graduate courses, a curriculum following our three basic topics should work. Traditional graduate lecture courses or in-depth seminars have a role to play simply because there is a lot of information and knowledge which still needs to be provided. Of course that also means having faculty on staff who are themselves specialists in the three branches of government as well as lobbying, organizational management, and communications and public relations. Public relations courses on the crafting and delivery of messages are also a must, and this includes a course on effective use of social media. Hopefully a less tradition-bound, set-in-their-ways professor can be found to teach that! University curricula are probably not full of courses on relationship building, but an innovative faculty member in a program on political management might be in a good position to take this on. All of this should be supplemented with simulations, and a good capstone course would require students to design and execute through simulation an entire lobbying campaign. Such capstones need not be static assignments, rather we can enliven the simulation with dynamic elements such as where the professor throws surprise barriers at the student to be overcome across the course of the semester. Finally, graduate-level internships for full-time students or practicum experiences for working professionals would be a must, especially because they could lead to actual placement at the end of the graduate program.

Finally, it is, of course, worth pointing out that experience and a university education can go together, as exemplified by the internship. Working for a semester, or even just a summer, gives a student significant exposure to the intricacies of the rules and folkways of Washington, DC, and even some insight into the different personalities of key lawmakers on Capitol Hill. Whether it is interning in a congressional office, with one of the parties, or in an actual lobbying or consulting firm or interest group, such opportunities provide students with enormous insight into how the political system works, and may even provide them with a few crucial contacts so necessary for achieving much of anything in Washington, including the landing of one's first job.

Still, it is always fun to speculate about just what a lobbying-focused curriculum would look like. Courses would focus on the structure and function of institutional politics at the national, state and local and supra-national levels of governance. Emphasis would be placed on the idea that the institutional context may determine the degree that lobbying is relationship-dependent and professionalized. A curriculum leading to a master's degree or a more condensed graduate-level certificate program would most likely be training people already in the lobbying profession, and could focus on:

- Interest group politics
- Legislative politics
- Executive branch politics
- Judicial politics
- Course specializing in an area of policy (one or two of these, the second replacing the second internship or practicum course)

Courses emphasizing communication and messaging might be:

- Writing in public relations
- Political communication and advocacy
- Communicating through digital technology and social media

Courses helping students understand, and actually build, political relationships are a blend of experience-based internships or practicums along with actual classes:

- Political management
- Internship or Practicum (one or two of these, the second in place of a course specializing in a policy area)
- Capstone (using simulations to pull all of these elements together in a professional portfolio)

Regardless of the targeted audience or the specific delivery method, there is clearly much that political science can do to train the would-be lobbyist.

Notes

1. The idea for these divisions was suggested to us in an interview one of the authors conducted with Dan Hurley, a government relations and communications specialist with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, on 25 August 2014. We also need to acknowledge the work of Lee Drutman (New America Foundation) and Ray Scheppach (University of Virginia) who joined a roundtable discussion of these ideas at the 2014 American Political Science meeting in Washington, DC, as well as the helpful comments of those in the audience, including Craig Holman (Public Citizen) and Jacob Straus (Congressional Research Service).

2. Unfortunately this is not just a poor attempt at humor. A recent study of local government budgets in the United Kingdom found that it required fewer years of education to comprehend Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, and Isaac Newton's *Principia* than what is needed to understand many council budgets. See:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2805454/Council-budget-Call-Einstein-Study-finds->

[takes-time-understand-texts-published-genius-scientists-learn-decipher-local-authority-documents.html](#).

3. It perhaps goes without saying that if students better understand how statistics will serve their career aspirations, we may mute the famed moaning-and-groaning ('Why do I have to take research methods if I don't want to be a political science professor?') that dominates most methods courses.

4. Or so we have heard from colleagues who teach these classes.

5. An assertion made in an interview with Brad Fitch, President of the Congressional Management Foundation, on 4 September 2014. The assertion is supported by a communication from Nicole Folk Cooper of the Congressional Management Foundation, dated 11 September 2014, on file with Holyoke and available on request.

6. The American Government Relations Professionals Code of Ethics may be found at <http://grprofessionals.org/join-all/code-of-ethics/>. Accessed 21 October 2014. Of course, only members of this association are bound to uphold this code, and since lobbyists are not required to belong as with traditional bar associations, there is little enforcement.

7. Interview on 11 September 2014.

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