Newer Legislators Hone Skills at Western Legislative Academy

Mary Lou Cooper

Since its inception in 2000, more than 100 state legislators, most of them in their first four years of service, have graduated from the Western Legislative Academy, the premier training program offered by the Council of State Governments-West. About 20 percent of WLA graduates have gone on to leadership positions.

From the beginning, the Academy had two clear goals. First, WLA seeks to help legislators become more effective by supplementing on-the-job legislative training with high quality outside professional development. Second, WLA fosters support for strong legislative institutions at a time when public trust in them is declining.

Why do busy legislators take three and half days out of their lives to become “students” at the Academy? CSG-West officer Assemblyman Lynn Hettrick of Nevada sums it up this way: “Just as many other occupations place a high value on professional development education, so must state legislators.”

Last summer, lawmakers from around the West competed for slots in the 2002 Academy. CSG-West’s bipartisan Executive Committee chose the Class of 2002 from a highly qualified pool of legislators. On December 10, 36 lawmakers from around the West arrived in Colorado Springs for the third Western Legislative Academy. Their ranks included a former gold miner, a commercial fisherman, several authors, a former homicide investigator, a prison chaplain, a potato farmer, an ironworker, two skydivers and a former judge—to name a few. This very diverse WLA Class of 2002 jumped into long class days with energy and enthusiasm.

Legislators moved with ease from sessions on changing legislative institutions to ethics to personality profiling, team building, time management, leadership skills, negotiations and communications training. They questioned and challenged a faculty drawn from leading universities, the U.S. Air Force, legislative leaders, the press and corporate America.

At the end of this intensive training, legislators evaluated the Academy and ranked it among the very best legislative training programs ever attended. After five ballots, feisty class members elected Montana Representative Jim Keane as their president. Keane said that for him, “WLA really gets to the core of what being a legislator is all about.”

In 2003, the Western Legislative Academy will convene October 14-17 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Applications are due June 25. For applications and information, call 505-424-3322 or go to http://www.csgwest.org/wla/wla2003/contents.html.
Why “Ain’t” the Old Statehouse Like It Used to Be?

Rich Lindsey

Profs. Gary Moncrief, Boise State University, and David Magleby, Brigham Young University, kicked off the Western Legislative Academy with a look at changing legislative institutions at the beginning of the 21st century. Moncrief is the author of “Who Runs for the Legislature,” and Magleby is the author of “Direct Democracy: Voting on Ballot Propositions in the United States.”

According to Moncrief, two of the most important impacts have been population growth and term limits. Population growth has meant greater workloads, more diverse issues to address and longer and more expensive campaigns. Term limits—which are in place in more than half the Western states—have shifted power from state legislatures to the executive branch, legislative staff and special interest groups.

Government by ballot box also has taken a toll on legislative institutions. Direct democracy is a threat to state legislatures, said Magleby. The initiative process, which has become more widespread since the 1970s, has not delivered on its promises of increasing public trust, raising voter turnout and reducing the power of special interest groups.

Consultants, Magleby said, now drive the initiative process, which can be exceedingly profitable. In contrast, the legislative process allows for deliberation, which he believes results in better public policy.

## Growth in House Constituencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>% Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alaska</td>
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<td>36,970</td>
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<tr>
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<td>68,954</td>
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<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
<td>5,449</td>
<td>8,230</td>
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Becoming An Effective Legislator

“When I was young and free and my imagination had no limits, I dreamed of changing the world. As I grew older and wiser, I discovered the world would not change. So I shortened my sights somewhat and decided to change only my country. But it too seemed immovable. As I grew into my twilight years, in one last desperate attempt, I settled for only changing my family, those closest to me. But alas, they would have none of it. And now, as I lie on my deathbed, I suddenly realize if I had only changed myself first, then by example, I would have changed my family. From their inspiration and encouragement, I would then have been able to better my country, and who knows, I may have changed the world.”

Anglican Bishop (anonymous)

Figuring Out What Matters

Becoming a more effective legislator and leader is what the WLA is all about. Two dynamic corporate trainers were brought in to help Western lawmakers with practical lessons in effectiveness, time management and organization.

Leigh Stevens with the FranklinCovey Company shared lessons from the “7 Habits of Highly Effective People” authored by Stephen R. Covey. Stevens told lawmakers that highly effective people are proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first things first, think win-win, seek first to understand, then to be understood, know the value of synergy and how to “sharpen the saw” (taking time to replenish personal resources). The premise of the Covey training is that no organization, including a state legislature, can succeed until the individuals within it succeed.

Pam Vacarro, president of the St. Louis-based Designs on Time company, brought busy legislators both “quick fixes” and tools for “real change” in her session on managing time and organizing your life. She showed lawmakers how to organize their desks, how to file and track paper work and how to say “no” to requests that cannot be met.

More importantly, Vacarro asked lawmakers to change the way they think about the people, projects and priorities that compete for their attention. Twenty percent of what you do gets you 80 percent of the results you seek. Rather than spending your time on unimportant but urgent tasks, Vacarro urged legislators to stick to those activities that embody their personal goals, missions and values. Stay in the 20 percent zone of important priorities (whether urgent or not-so-urgent) to be most effective, she said.

Learning from Legislative Leaders

Former Arizona Senate President Randall Gnart and former New Mexico Speaker Raymond Sanchez led an extremely lively session on becoming effective legislators and leaders. Gnart told lawmakers to: be like a sponge and learn everything you can, show you truly care, stand your ground when appropriate, be careful when you talk, and ask yourself if years from now will you be proud of the stands you took as a legislator.

Sanchez offered his three R’s for being effective—reality—recognize your view is not the only view; responsibility—always check with yourself as to why you are doing something; and respect. No battle, said the New Mexican, is worth losing a friend. Personal relationships, not political relationships, help you forge coalitions. Sanchez said if legislators follow the three R’s they will enhance public perception of the legislature.

El Pomar Foundation Chairman William Hybl warmly welcomes lawmakers to the historic Penrose House in Colorado Springs, which serves as the WLA campus. Dedicated to the recognition and promotion of excellence in nonprofit organizations, the foundation generously supports the Academy with funds and in-kind contributions. Hybl is a former Colorado legislator.

Legislative “students” at the WLA are encouraged to question and challenge faculty and each other during training. From left to right Rep. Dick Harwood (ID), Rep. Patricia Lundstrom (NM) and Sen. Timothy Bee (AZ)

Team-building is an essential ingredient of legislative effectiveness training. Here Sen. Richard Martinez (NM) helps classmates Rep. Merlynn Newbold (UT) and Rep Mary Kapsner (AK) figure out a tricky assignment.

Lawmakers at the Academy demonstrated enthusiasm inside and outside the classroom.
2002 CSG-WEST Western Legislative Academy

First Row (left to right): Patricia Lundstrom (NM Rep.), Merlynn Newbold (UT Rep.), Mary Kapsner (AK Rep.), Saundra Meyer (WY Rep.), Donna Mercado Kim (HI Sen.), Alice Borodkin (CO Rep.), Jackie Dingfelder (OR Rep.), Mary Hodge (CO Rep.), Toni Hellon (AZ Sen.)


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WLA Faculty Helps Lawmakers

Nevada Assembly Minority Leader Lynn Hettrick (center) enjoyed his job as WLA emcee and kept the class on time and on target.

Utah Rep. Neil Hansen and Colorado Rep. Debbie Stafford enjoy learning how to work more effectively with others in the legislative environment and have fun along the way.

Lawmakers spent a half day at the U.S. Air Force Academy engaged in some of the same leadership and team-building exercises offered to cadets and officers. Legislators also participated in personality profiling to understand “Why Isn’t Everybody More Like Me.” Whit Whitfield (pictured left), Lisa Robinson and U.S. Air Force Major Danny Miller are the instructors.

When he’s not training at the Pentagon, WLA faculty member Major Danny Miller owns and operates the New Heights Training and Development Company.

FranklinCovey trainer Leigh Stevens has delivered leadership training to more than 7000 individuals. At the Academy she focused on the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.
Become More Effective

Pam Vaccaro, president of Designs on Time, worked with legislators on time management, organization, priority setting and on how to say no.

Just as they are in legislature, work groups are an integral part of the Academy experience.

Alan Rosenthal, professor at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University and a leading authority on state legislative institutions, presented Academy participants with a controversial ethics case study based on a real-life incident.

Media coach Arch Lustberg aims his microphone at Oregon Rep. Jackie Dingfelder as he delivers unforgettable “tough love” lessons on how to conduct winning TV interviews.

Boise State University political science Professor Gary Moncrief (left) talks about dramatic changes in Western legislatures in the 21st century, while Brigham Young University Dean and Professor David Magleby (right) reports on the impact of initiatives. CSG-WEST Executive Director Kent Briggs (center) shares his views on the West as a geopolitical region.
“Out Takes” Depict the
Lighter side of WLA
Working with the Capitol Gang

Cheryl Lee Duvauchelle

Recognizing that the press and lobbyist corps are integral parts of the legislature’s life, Academy participants devoted one morning to discussions on how to improve those working relationships. A hypothetical case involving campaign activities of Senator “Law” and Governor “Order” kicked off a discussion about media, lobbyist and legislator responsibilities during campaign season.

Capitol Gang panelists included Deborah Pacyna, communications director for California’s lieutenant governor, who boasts more than 20 years of experience in broadcast journalism. David Postman, chief political reporter for The Seattle Times, brought the print journalism perspective to the class. New Mexico Senator Diane Snyder moderated the session and also spoke from her past experience as a lobbyist. The following tips summarize some of the advice from panelists.

Tips for Working with the Media
♦ Visuals attract broadcast media, instead of being a talking head.
♦ Send digital camera photos to newspapers to promote events or issues. Perhaps a reporter cannot attend the event, but might run a photo.
♦ Morning news is a growing phenomenon. More people are watching morning news versus evening news. More people are watching television and listening to radio.
♦ Weekend news doesn’t get covered because the press corps is downsized over the weekend.
♦ Monday morning is a good slot on the radio. Morning times are best before other newsworthy issues surface during the day to pull reporters away.
♦ Keep statements simple, so important information will be remembered.
♦ Clarify what “off the record” means for each reporter.

Tips for Better Lobbyist/Lawmaker Relations
♦ Don’t call only when you need something.
♦ Never lie or tell a half-truth or omit information.
♦ Good manners require treating others as you want to be treated.
♦ Don’t burn bridges.

Ethics Case Study Generates Heated Discussion
Eagleton Institute’s Professor Alan Rosenthal taught an ethics case based on a true story that happened in the Maryland Legislature in the 1990s. Academy participants reacted vigorously to questions about what leaders should do when a colleague’s hand is caught in the cookie jar following a major media expose.

Should the lawmaker be removed from leadership? Should the case be referred to the ethics committee? Should action be deferred until a criminal justice investigation is completed? Should the impact on upcoming elections be a factor?

Isn’t the wayward member owed due process? What impact will all these decisions have on the reputation of the legislature? These questions and more were hotly debated as WLA’ers tackled a case that Rosenthal has taught to numerous legislative leaders across the nation.
Principled Negotiations: What Every Lawmaker Needs to Know

Cheryl Lee Duvauchelle

What’s one of the worst mistakes you can make as a negotiator? According to Fortune 500 negotiations consultant James F. Hennig, beginning without a best alternative in mind should negotiations fail is at the top of the list.

Hennig taught the art of negotiations to WLA lawmakers who acknowledged that these skills are critical in their legislative lives. Hennig’s lengthy client list includes Ford Motor Company, Price Waterhouse and the U.S. Forest Service.

Successful Negotiators
The session began by exploring the unique characteristics of a successful negotiator in the legislative environment. Hennig told lawmakers that successful negotiators are both good listeners and good questioners. Successful negotiators build relationships and know what makes others feel comfortable. They establish trust by honestly doing what they say they will. Finally, good negotiators obey the platinum, not the golden rule. Do unto others, as they want you to do unto them.

Partnering Principles
Many of the tips offered by Hennig pertained to the give and take between negotiating partners. To improve the success of your negotiations, you should:
1 – Interact as if the relationship will last forever,
2 – Recognize feelings as facts,
3 – Recognize needs and wants and satisfy both,
4 – Understand that a “they” not “you” orientation makes others feel comfortable,
5 – Take no personal offense,
6 – Be honest and open in your communications, and
8 – Agree ahead of time how to resolve differences.

Guidelines for Concessions
Inevitably in any negotiation, the time comes when concessions must be made. When that time comes, Hennig told lawmakers to remember to:
• Make people work for concessions,
• Get a concession when you are asked to give one (If I can do that for you, can you do this for me?),
• Make small concessions slowly and progressively smaller,
• Determine all requests before granting concessions, and
• Don’t assume you know what the other party wants for a concession. ASK!

Common Errors in Negotiating
Hennig also outlined common errors in negotiating. In addition to beginning without a BATNA (best alternative to negotiated agreement), mistakes include jumping to conclusions, underestimating your own power, offering to split the difference and assuming a fixed pie. Lawmakers ended their class in negotiations with a simulated financial negotiation. To learn more about Jim Hennig and principled negotiations, go to www.jimhennig.com.

Platinum Rule: Do unto others, as they want you to do unto them.
Lawmakers Learn Communications from the Pros

If Bob Dole had sold himself as a candidate as effectively as he’s sold Viagra, he’d have been elected president. That’s according to national communications trainer Arch Lustberg, who is a “regular” at the Western Legislative Academy and an expert on how to sell yourself.

Lustberg and former White House speechwriter Professor James Humes worked with the WLA Class of 2002 to make them better communicators—whether on camera during a hostile interview or at the podium speaking to constituents.

The key to a winning media interview, said Lustberg, is likeability. Likeability happens when a communicator speaks with an “open face.” To get an open face, raise your eyebrows, show your eyes and smile when appropriate. Before you say a word, your expression tells your audience, I care. An open face makes you look honest and believable, confident and self-assured.

If the key to media interviews is likeability, the key to “podium power” is conversation, said Lustberg. Tell your audience a story to make your point. Don’t lapse into acronyms and bureaucratis. Don’t subject your audience to piles of statistics. Be yourself, prepare, have confidence, be positive, be concise and remember to “open your face.”

In the character and costume of Winston Churchill, Professor James Humes takes legislators back in time for lessons in the language of leadership from one of history’s greatest orators.

In a grand finale at the Academy’s graduation exercises, Professor Humes brought home the language of leadership with his dramatic portrayal of Winston Churchill. He masterfully drifted in and out of character to give Academy participants Churchill’s commandments for giving a great speech. Humes noted that all of Churchill’s principles were based on his belief that the ear is one-tenth the organ of the eye.

Humes, aka “Churchill,” urged lawmakers to begin a speech strongly, make a statement and save introductions of dignitaries until the middle of the text. He told legislators to keep to one theme and know the bottom line before writing a speech. A great speech should use simple, poetic language and create a picture in the mind. Humes cited Churchill’s famous “iron curtain” metaphor to illustrate how powerful word pictures can be. Finally, Humes in his role as Churchill, told Academy members that a great speech should end emotionally with references to hope, country and love of family.

“Short words are the best, and old words when short are best of all.”
Winston Churchill

Arch Lustberg is a former drama and speech teacher at Catholic University of America. He has trained powerful leaders in government and industry and is the author of a new book “How to Sell Yourself.” You can e-mail him at lustberg@erols.com to sign up for his free on-line commentaries on political speeches you’re glad you didn’t make, or to find out about his book.

James C. Humes is professor of language and leadership at the University of Southern Colorado, former White House speechwriter and Churchill scholar. His most recent book is “Speak Like Churchill, Stand Like Lincoln.”