

**Dawn Tyler Lee**  
**Assistant Vice President — Community Relations**  
**The Ohio State University**

*As assistant vice president for community relations, Dawn Tyler Lee works closely with local government entities, including mayors, members of city council, city managers, and other city- and county-appointed and elected officials to strengthen The Ohio State University's links between community leaders and nonprofit organizations and to facilitate community and university partnerships.*

*She is the past-president of the Association of Staff and Faculty Women and the New Directions Career Center Board. She currently serves on the boards of trustees for the Columbus Metropolitan Club, Columbus School for Girls, Central Ohio Transit Authority, and the Educational Council.*

**Have you always considered yourself an advocate of the community?** When I was young, my father was always very active in the community; he was a part of the Franklin Park Community Development. He would take me around in a wagon and had me help him pass out flyers to encourage the cleanup of the area. My parents were always involved in helping in some capacity. It made me realize early on the power I had to influence change. **What have been some of your introductions to government relations during your professional climb?** I've worked in a variety of positions that have exposed me to government. It's amazing the power we all have to influence change once we learn to use our voices. In the mid-'90s, I worked as the housing policy director for the Coalition on Homelessness in Ohio. Our members consisted of homeless shelters, which housed domestic violence victims and those in some very challenging situations. We worked with members of the Ohio General Assembly. I worked as a legislative aide for a Columbus City Council Member and also worked in a board services role for Columbus City Schools. When I came across the government relations position at The Ohio State University, it was then that I realized this position was made just for me. I interviewed with former President Dr. Karen Holbrook, and took the position in 2004. **Government and community relations are necessary tools for all businesses?** Yes, they are. A lot of people have the skills, relationships, and knowledge to share with others, but just don't know where to begin. I am always encouraging myself and the people I work with to connect with the community and take stock in the value of living and working in Columbus. It's so important to tap into the intelligence in this community. **Describe your role in a nutshell.** I help to connect people to opportunities. I serve as a liaison to local and county governments, as well as community nonprofit organizations. I help to establish partnerships and make sure we're all working together for the greater good. I also help to connect students to the community. Our office has developed a program to help students to provide a service to the community as part of their coursework. It's been an amazing experience. **Describe your leadership style.** I believe in rolling up my sleeves and working side by side with people. I don't like to steer the boat alone; I like to make sure that I'm working with a team to help me navigate. I like being a part of a culmination of many voices. I've also facilitated a leadership development program through the YWCA called the "Gen Y Leadership Project"; it's the first program of its kind. The program targets women who are starting their careers and offers personal and professional development training. **Who or what continues to inspire you?** So many people: my husband, parents, my network of friends, and the amazing women in this community. **What have you learned about yourself along the way?** Often, I don't give myself enough credit. Because of this realization, my office has developed a meeting called "Toot Your Own Horn." We learned about it at the YWCA program. It's a forum to celebrate your personal and professional successes. It's helped me, and I'd like to think it's empowered members of our staff not only to be proud of their accomplishments, but to communicate those accomplishments as well, and not be ashamed of that.

