Advocating for Postdocs: Strategies for Involvement at the Local and National Level

Innovation in Action Session
Saturday, March 14, 10:15 – 11:45 am
Today’s Moderators

• Jennifer Zeitzer
• Juliet Moncaster
• Tracy Costello
• Christopher Pickett
• Yvette Seger
The NPA Advocacy Committee

Chair: Juliet Moncaster
Vice-Chair: Tracy Costello

—Role:
—Make recommendations about national policies to the Board of Directors and Executive Director

—Tasks:
1. Keep abreast of legislation and policies that will affect postdocs
2. Recommend actions for the Board of Directors and Executive Director to advocate for causes that affect the postdoctoral community
3. Disseminate information to postdoctoral community about important advocacy issues, keeping people informed (newsletter, email and/or social media)
The Midwest Academy Strategy Chart

A tool to:

• Facilitate the research and planning needed to develop an effective advocacy campaign

• Create a concrete strategy to win a specific advocacy campaign and build power that grows organizations
  – A strategy is a roadmap for working on an issue
  – Key steps include:
    • Stating your goals
    • Identifying people you need to support your goal
    • Determining who can help you achieve your goal
    • Listing individual actions/activities to achieve your goal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS</th>
<th>CONSTITUENTS/ALLIES/FOES</th>
<th>TARGETS</th>
<th>TACTICS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Long-term objectives</td>
<td>1. Resources your organization has available</td>
<td>1. Constituents (who will support you)</td>
<td>1. Primary targets</td>
<td>Specific actions you will take to influence primary and secondary targets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>a) People</td>
<td>a) Who else has the same problem?</td>
<td>a) Who has the power to say “yes”?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) Skills</td>
<td>b) What do they gain by joining your effort?</td>
<td>b) What power do you have over them?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Reputation</td>
<td>c) What power do they have?</td>
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<td>d) Money, facilities, etc</td>
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<td>2. Incremental goals</td>
<td>2. Ways to build your organization</td>
<td>2. Allies (who cares enough to help you)</td>
<td>2. Secondary targets</td>
<td>Tactics must be:</td>
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<td>a) What counts as a victory?</td>
<td>a) Build membership base</td>
<td>a) What do they gain if they help you?</td>
<td>a) Flexible and creative</td>
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<td>b) How will you win improvements, give people more power, alter existing relationships?</td>
<td>b) Expand into new constituencies</td>
<td>b) What power do they have?</td>
<td>b) Directed at a specific target</td>
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<td>c) Increase skills/experience of individuals</td>
<td>c) What risks are they taking if they help you?</td>
<td>c) What risks are they taking if they help you?</td>
<td>c) Make sense to members of your group</td>
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<td>3. Short-term goals</td>
<td>3. Identify internal problems that need to be addressed in order for the campaign to succeed</td>
<td>3. Opponents (who will oppose you?)</td>
<td>3. Opponents (who will oppose you?)</td>
<td>Tactics include:</td>
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<td>a) What are partial victories that can be steps toward the larger goal</td>
<td>a) How strong are they?</td>
<td>a) Meetings, letters, phone calls</td>
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<td>b) What will your victory cost them?</td>
<td>b) Public pressure (social media, petition drive, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) Media events</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>d) Raising public awareness</td>
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**GOALS** | **ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS** | **CONSTITUENTS/ALLIES/FOES** | **TARGETS** | **TACTICS**
---|---|---|---|---

**ISSUE:** Postdocs at the University of The State of Confusion do not receive formal orientation when they arrive on campus

1. Long-term objective
   Establish a formal orientation program for all new postdocs

   1. Resources available
      a) Cohort of existing postdocs
      b) Committee of volunteers
      c) $500 in discretionary funds

   1. Constituents
      a) New postdocs

   1. Primary targets
      a) Postdoc advisor

   Specific actions you will take to influence targets
   a) Survey current postdocs to find out what info they wish they had received
   b) Develop an agenda for the orientation
   c) Find a location for the orientation

2. Incremental goals
   Plan an informal meeting for all new postdocs at the end of the spring semester

   2. Ways to build your organization
      a) Empower existing postdocs to improve services for their peers
      b) Increase size of postdoc association
      c) Shorten “learning-curve” for new postdocs

   2. Allies
      a) Existing postdocs
      b) Administrative personnel
      c) PI’s

   2. Secondary targets
      a) VP of research
      b) Deans

   d) Establish learning objectives for the orientation
   e) Determine date of orientation
   f) Establish a budget
   g) Develop a plan to solicit donations to raise $$ for the budget
   h) Identify speakers

3. Short-term goals
   a) Determine how many postdocs arrive each year
   b) Document problems arising from lack of orientation

   3. Internal problems
      a) Insufficient budget
      b) Lack of support from administration
      c) Need contact info for new postdocs

   3. Opponents
      a) Department chair
      b) Human Resources Dept.

   d) Establish learning objectives for the orientation
   e) Determine date of orientation
   f) Establish a budget
   g) Develop a plan to solicit donations to raise $$ for the budget
   h) Identify speakers
Tips/Hints/Suggestions

• Fill-in the columns in the chart starting with goals and finishing with tactics
• Move on if you get “stuck” in a specific column. Go back later and fill-in missing details in the columns you skipped
• It is okay if you are not sure what resources your organization has available for the specific issue campaign. Make your best guess
• Frame your “issue” as a specific solution to a problem
• Know the differences between friends and foes:
  – Constituents = people/organizations with the same self-interest as yours
  – Allies = people/organizations who want the same thing you do but have different self-interests
  – Foes = people/organizations who do not want the same thing you do and could lose something if you win
• Be realistic in defining your goals:
  – Long-term = usually accomplished within a year
  – Incremental = something that you can count as a partial victory toward the long-term goal
  – Short-term = an immediate victory
• A target is always a person, NOT:
  – An institution (e.g. the University of Maryland)
  – An elected body (the Congress of the United States)
• Tactics are specific actions to apply pressure on targets so they give you what you want