Developing an Effective Advocacy Strategy for the Postdoc Community: Tools for Involvement at the Local and National Level

Innovation in Action Session
Sunday, March 6, 9:00 – 10:30 am
Today’s Moderators

- Jennifer Zeitzer
- Keamey Gunsalus
- Tom McHugh
- Tracy Costello
- Yvette Seger
Session Goals

• Review results of recent, informal survey to identify current issues affecting postdocs at the national and institutional levels

• Learn how to use the Midwest Academy Strategy Chart to develop an advocacy strategy

• Participate in an interactive exercise to develop advocacy strategy for at least two key topics
The NPA Advocacy Committee

Co-Chair: Kearney Gunsalus
Co-Chair: Tom McHugh

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)
Prior to the Annual Meeting...

- Short survey distributed to postdoc community through NPA social media channels and other vehicles (FASEB social media, ASCB COMPASS blog) to obtain current perspectives on postdoc issues
- 173 complete responses received in 12 days
Survey: Question 1

What do you view as the top challenges or issues for postdocs at your institution?
Survey: Question 2

What do you view as the top challenges or issues for postdoctoral scholars nationally?
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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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Long-term objectives</td>
<td>1. Resources your organization has available a) People b) Skills c) Reputation d) Money, facilities, etc</td>
<td>1. Constituents (who will support you) a) Who else has the same problem? b) What do they gain by joining your effort? c) What power do they have?</td>
<td>1. Primary targets a) Who has the power to say “yes”? b) What power do you have over them?</td>
<td>Specific actions you will take to influence primary and secondary targets</td>
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<td>2. Incremental goals</td>
<td>2. Ways to build your organization a) Build membership base b) Expand into new constituencies c) Increase skills/experience of individuals</td>
<td>2. Allies (who cares enough to help you) a) What do they gain if they help you? b) What power do they have? c) What risks are they taking if they help you?</td>
<td>2. Secondary targets a) Who has the power over those who can give you what you want? b) What power do you have over them?</td>
<td>Tactics must be: a) Flexible and creative b) Directed at a specific target c) Make sense to members of your group d) Backed up by a specific form of power</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?) a) How strong are they? b) What will your victory cost them?</td>
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<td>Tactics Include: a) Meetings, letters, phone calls b) Public pressure (social media, petition drive, etc.) c) Media events d) Raising public awareness</td>
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<p>| 4. Immediate objectives | 4. Identify internal problems that need to be addressed in order for the campaign to succeed | 4. Opponents (who will oppose you?) a) How strong are they? b) What will your victory cost them? | 4. Secondary targets a) Who has the power over those who can give you what you want? b) What power do you have over them? | Tactics must be: a) Flexible and creative b) Directed at a specific target c) Make sense to members of your group d) Backed up by a specific form of power |</p>
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<td>ISSUE: There are few – if any – professional development resources for postdocs at my university</td>
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<td>1. Long-term objective Establish a formal Professional Development Programs for postdocs</td>
<td>1. Resources available a) Cohort of existing postdocs b) Committee of volunteers c) Small grant that can be used to support this project</td>
<td>1. Constituents a) Postdocs b) Postdoc advisors c) PI’s</td>
<td>1. Primary targets a) Postdoc advisors b) PI’s</td>
<td>Specific actions you will take to influence targets a) Survey current postdocs to find out what resources they need b) Collect data on benefits of professional development programs c) Identify low cost professional development resources</td>
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<td>2. Incremental goals Ask university to appoint a coordinator for professional development</td>
<td>2. Ways to build your organization a) Give postdocs opportunity to gain new skills b) Increase size of postdoc association c) Improve career prospects for postdocs</td>
<td>2. Allies a) Existing postdocs b) PI’s c) Professional societies</td>
<td>2. Secondary targets a) VP of research b) Department Chairs c) Deans</td>
<td>d) Determine survey questions/format e) Review available data sets for usefulness f) Develop a fundraising plan to purchase resources g) Identify other universities with prof. development programs</td>
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<td>3. Short-term goals a) Identify what kind of resources postdocs want/need b) Write a consensus statement in support of professional development for postdocs</td>
<td>3. Internal problems a) University is under a hiring freeze b) Size of postdoc population on campus is small c) University bureaucracy</td>
<td>3. Opponents a) University President b) Other faculty c) Human Resources Department</td>
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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