

Influence without Authority

Panelists

Mitch McClaran, Professor of Range Management
 Raina Maier, Professor of Soil, Water and Environmental Science
 Tsianina Lomawaima, Professor of American Indian Studies
 John Allen, Distinguished Professor of Psychology
 (in reverse alphabetical order)

Thursday, April 23rd, 2009

UA-ADVANCE Stewardship work-group co-chairs Randy Richardson and Kim Ogden posed three questions to the panelists. Both the questions and the panelists' responses are noted below.

1. What are the attributes of an individual who is influential without authority?

McClaran	Maier	Lomawaima	Allen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Knowledge</i> of how things operate within the institution • <i>Knowledge</i> is valued by those in authority because of institutional memory and administrative turnover. • <i>Credibility</i> built through actions, such as thinking beyond oneself and working towards building a larger – mutually beneficial – goal. • Making <i>constructive and critical</i> contributions during meetings. • It takes time to build this knowledge and credibility, so <i>develop a long-term plan and be strategic</i> in accepting and pursuing service opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a model of <i>implicit power</i> that focuses on personal agency to effect influence rather than embracing a top-down notion of explicit power that requires one to have power to be influential. • Although not every influential person has all the attributes necessary to be influential, most lay-people have a good mix of the following, many of which they can draw upon to exert influence without authority. The key is to <i>recognize your own personal attributes and draw upon them</i>. Some of the key attributes include: capable, altruistic, good listener, slow to judge, creative in approach and thought, fair, open to new ideas, and having a good work ethic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Good scholars</i> who are respected both in and out of their fields. • <i>Workhorses</i> extraordinaire • <i>Sense of integrity</i> – possessing a set of core values that guide what you do, combined with an ability to project core values through actions • <i>Selflessness</i> – Invested not only in self- but also in communal goals/interests • <i>Strong ego</i> or strong sense of self that doesn't mask insecurities • <i>Generous</i> and willing to share resources • <i>Strong, decisive, able to say no, and committed</i> to following through on chosen battles • <i>Optimistic</i> and with a sense of humor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Avoid being in a position of authority</i> in order to be selective about the kinds of things you do. Being in a position of authority can be constraining. • Be a <i>team player</i> • Be <i>simultaneously indirect and candid</i> i.e. be honest without being confrontational.

2. How does one exert influence without authority?

McClaran	Maier	Lomawaima	Allen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Serve</i> on committees that make personnel, programmatic, and funding decisions. • <i>Lead initiatives</i>, especially grassroots efforts that address a larger goal than your personal program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Influence can be exerted by example.</i> For example, by being persistent and passionate, respecting other's opinions, speaking a well thought-out vision, and compromising. • <i>Understand</i> those whom you want to influence • <i>Learn how to say no</i> and pick your battles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focused primarily on attributes of those who are recognized as influential without authority because they are able to effectively use those attributes in a variety of contexts in order to either be heard or influence others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Raise questions</i> without seeming to push an agenda, especially when you are socially- or rank-vulnerable • <i>Develop a service plan</i> that is designed to "brand" who you are in order to gain credibility. • <i>Gain visibility for service work</i> in a variety of ways, either by speaking face-to-face with those who evaluate your performance, or locating an ally who is willing to blow your trumpet for you.

3. What are some examples of influence being exerted without authority?

McClaran	Maier	Lomawaima	Allen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Serve on committees that enable you to learn about how the institution operates.</i> Some examples include, search committees, promotion and tenure committees, program review committees, and executive committees at departmental or institutional levels. • <i>Lead initiatives that improve existing programs</i>, build relationships among colleagues. • Show <i>benefit to many</i> and beyond your personal sphere. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using <i>critical listening skills and making significant contributions</i> at key moments was one strategy to be listened to by colleagues. • Another strategy is using listening skills to <i>mediate dialogues</i> between people who are failing to understand each other. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Advocating for a group, speaking on behalf of that group.</i> If someone in power knows that your views represent a larger group, you may have more influence