Perceptions of Campus-Level Advocacy and Influence Strategies among Senior Administrators in College and University Libraries

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In recent years, interest has grown among academic librarians on developing strategies that garner support for library initiatives and influence campus-level decision-making. This practice has been characterized in the literature on managing academic libraries as increasing advocacy, or the capacity to grow support for library priorities among faculty and administrators using influence and persuasion. As past ACRL president Camila Alire stated in her challenge to the organization's membership,

> We can no longer act like we have a captive audience on our campuses. We need to become advocates and convince others to help champion our cause to meet the missions of our colleges and universities to better serve our students and faculty. We can't and shouldn't do this alone. (Alire 2005)

The practice of advocacy nevertheless remains a double-edged sword. While necessary in an environment of increasing complexity and competitiveness over resources, its adopters navigate between different visions for library and information services across academic communities and cultures and the priorities of campus administrators and faculty. As David Garvin and Michael Roberto, two Harvard Business School professors, observed, "There's nothing inherently wrong with advocacy. Problems arise, however, when power is unequally distributed among the participants, when information is unequally distributed, and when there are no clear rules of engagement—especially about how the final decision will be made." (Four Questions for David Garvin and Michael Roberto)

The arguments favoring the practice of advocacy by academic librarians have been well reasoned; however, little empirical evidence exists on the interest of advocacy—let along its incorporation as managerial practice—within the academic library community and, specifically, among senior administrators. Our study is an exploratory attempt to open the prospect of observing advocacy as a strategy to exert power and influence beyond the walls of the library to other campus-level decision makers. We will provide results from a prelimi-

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nary investigation drawn from a survey of college and university library deans and directors in institutions of higher education offering four-year degrees. The study initially sought to investigate one broad dimension of influence—perceptions of lateral influence of library deans and directors on their peer group, that of other deans and senior-level campus administrators. The study was initially suggested by the conceptual work on power and decision-making in academic libraries by Julie Todaro (2006a, 2006b), who associated advocacy with persuasion and influence. Todaro observed the following,

> No matter who we are trying to influence, we have so little time with those we are trying to convince and—as in other professions—people in legislative arenas and in our own institutions really know very little about what we do. Realistically speaking, sitting down with a legislator, a legislative aide or, for our initiative at hand, a department chair, dean, or even classroom faculty for 15 minutes at a time (no matter the educational content we bring) is a matter of getting attention, creating a teachable moment, indicating value and worth of what we do, making an impact, connecting with a promised outcome or a memorable, unique or targeted fact, and seeking follow-up opportunities." (Todaro 2006b)

Thus, even within formal or hierarchical structures, influence manifests itself in lobbying, coalition building, and other tactics of organizational politics that affect decision situations. The position outlined by Todaro corresponds with research on intraorganizational influence tactics and strategies traced back to a seminal study by Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980, 1982) that recognized the directions of influence—upward, downward, and lateral—as used by managers at different levels of organization. Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson's studies were grounded in a necessity to understand an association between organizational politics and influence strategies and tactics. Therefore, we also grounded our study in earlier work by Jeffrey Pfeffer and by Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal (2001). Pfeffer (1992) has drawn important parallels between power and influence as an alternative to understanding decision making through formal hierarchies in organizations. According to Pfeffer, power is "the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things that they

would not otherwise do." (Pfeffer 1992) Hence, power is realized through the "processes, the actions, (and) the behaviors" of politics and influence. Bolman and Deal provide further theoretical framing of the association between power, politically framed leadership and decision-making, particularly in the area of coalition building. Their political frame gives context to the relative importance of advocacy as an influence strategy or tactic more directly associated with organizational politics.

Finally, we sought to understand whether or not the propensity toward one influence tactic over another could be associated in differences in characteristics of colleges and universities in which the deans and directors served. The long-term work of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (McCormick and Zhao 2005) recognizing important similarities and differences between colleges and universities in the United States provided a basis on which to see whether or not characteristics of organization, such as size, environment, or culture, may be related to the influence strategies employed by library deans and directors or to their thinking about influence and the dynamics of politically framed decision making.

Framing a Study of Influence

According to Todaro, "Although the study of power is important, few can expect to achieve positions of power and few employees ever find themselves in positions where they can influence the success of their organization by assuming power through position." (Todaro 2006a) Colleges and universities are simultaneously hierarchically and heterarchically[1] structured for decision making. Academic library deans and directors function within an executive culture defined not only by characteristics of organization, environment, and culture bound by the traditions of higher education, but also by a diversity of peers in their respective administrative groups that vary from campus to campus. Accordingly, it becomes necessary to comprehend lateral influence within the uniqueness of academic executive culture, whether or not influence in strategy or tactic is extended toward staff based perhaps on the extent to which they have a role in a heterarchical decision process, and whether or not some tactics are politically framed.

In their study of lateral influence strategies and tactics employed by Human Resource (HR) executives, Enns and McFarlin (2005) noted that HR executives do not necessarily have formal authority over those they need to influence and are challenged by competition and competing interests. Consequentially they must "devel-

op the skills needed to successfully influence peers—including the choice of tactics that are absolutely essential to influence a given target." (Enns and McFarlin 2005) Although deans and their peers in the executive culture of institutions of higher education are often seen as substantially powerful on most college campuses, their formal authority is similarly situated and confined by their span of control. Therefore, they too are challenged to formulate strategies and tactics that can stretch their influence among peers. For instance, an HR executive in a college or university may not have direct authority over hiring decisions, but influences practices through policy and interpretation of governmental guidelines that ultimately extend the authority of human resources across otherwise autonomous academic units. Even the simple request of data to be compliant with institutional policy can serve to strategically influence unit level and campus level decision-making.

Prior research on the aspects of organization that might impact influence tactics employed by administrators are not common, as much of the research has focused on the impact of influence strategies and tactics on specific types of organizational and individual outcomes, such as performance evaluation or compensation (Higgins, Judge, and Ferris 2003; Enns and McFarlin 2005). Yet extant studies have benefited by eight dimensions of influence tactics initially identified by Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980) as assertiveness, ingratiation, rationality, sanctions, exchange, upward appeal, blocking, and coalitions. The dimensions of influence the authors reported in their first study were further refined as a diagnostic survey instrument called Profiles of Organizational Influence Strategies, or POIS (1982). They are:

• friendliness, attempting to influence by getting people to "think well of you,"

• bargaining, an attempt to influence by "negotiation and the exchange of benefits or favors,"

• reason, or influencing through data and information as support,

• assertiveness, or influence in a "forceful manner,"

• higher authority, or influence that "relies on the chain of command," and

• coalition, or influence that relies on "mobilizing other people in the organization to assist you."

While subsequent research has sought to test the validity of the POIS and refine the list of tactics, this early work by Kipnis and Schmidt (1982) provided a basis in the present study to distinguish different tactics used by library administrators in working with their

peers. Specific research questions raised focus on intra-organizational influence strategies and tactics as a way of relating advocacy as a political frame to other frames or approaches to leadership. They are:

1. When considering college and university library deans and directors as members of a campus-level executive group, is it possible to discern significant influence strategies or tactics used to influence peers administrators on their respective campuses?

2. What perceptions do library deans and directors have of the exercise of influence by librarians in non-managerial positions at the campus level?

3. How do these perceptions differ by three dimensions of diversity in higher education: Carnegie basic classification as a measure of organizational difference by characteristics, setting (residential or commuter) as a measure of environment, and by affiliation (public, private, religious-affiliated) as a measure of culture?

Method
The purpose of our study was to explore advocacy as influence as practiced by academic library deans and directors in their efforts to work within their peer group of executives in colleges and universities, and to do so in a manner that fits within a broader tradition of organizational research. The project collected data on the perceptions among college and university library administrators of the efficacy of influence strategies, and in particular, those strategies that are used to create opportunities for campus-level advocacy for library priorities.

Data Sources/Data Collection Methods
A dataset was built from a sample of college and university library directors and deans. The sample was drawn from the list of Institutions of Higher Education listed in the 2005 Carnegie Classification (Carnegie Classification) with students enrolled in baccalaureate degree programs (the sample excludes two-year or community colleges and graduate-only institutions). Institutions were stratified into four groups, exclusively undergraduate four-year, baccalaureate-degree granting institutions, Masters' colleges and universities, and doctoral degree granting institutions, divided into two groups, research and doctoral granting institutions.

The dataset was built from an electronic (email) survey of respondents (college and university library deans and directors) conducted in fall 2006 by Simmons-Welburn. Approximately 350 institutions were contacted. As the respondents are all from a closed population,

all were contacted by email with a link to the survey embedded in the email. Every effort was made to communicate with nonrespondents to increase the response rate while assuring the privacy of each respondent. The survey instrument has three parts:

• Part I: Kipnis-Schmidt Profiles of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS): a Diagnostic Survey and Profile (Forms C: Influencing Your Co-Workers.)

• Part II: 11 closed- and open-ended questions.

• Part III: Demographic information on respondents' institutions: setting (residential/commuter), culture (public/private/religious-affiliated), and Basic Carnegie Classification (Research, Doctoral granting, Master's, Baccalaureate).

Results

Of the approximate 350 institutions contacted to participate in the study, 109 usable responses were received for an overall response rate of 31 percent. The distribution of responses among types of institution by Carnegie classification mirrors the population reasonably well, with a slightly greater response rate from the research extensive universities and doctoral degree granting institutions. Of the responses, 18 percent (19) came from research extensive universities, 9 percent (10) from doctoral degree granting institutions, 41 percent (45) from masters degree granting institutions, and 30 percent (33) from exclusively undergraduate 4-year, baccalaureate-degree granting institutions. Two percent (2) did not indicate Carnegie classification.

Public colleges or universities account for 39 percent (43) of the responses; 33 percent (36) were private schools; and 27 percent (29) of the responses received came from religious-affiliated schools. One institution did not respond to this question. Institution settings reported include 36 percent (39) reporting a highly residential setting; 39 percent reporting a primarily residential setting; 21 percent (23) reporting a primarily non-residential setting; 3 percent (3) reporting a non-residential setting; and 2 percent (2) did not indicate setting.

Overall there does not seem to be a great deal of difference between the scores and variables for much of this study. Whether or not that is due to the small size of the study, or the relative lack of difference in library deans' and directors' use of different influence strategies or techniques on their peers is not known.

Assertiveness as an influence tactic is assessed through responses to six questions on the POIS. These questions are:

• I set a date or time deadline for my peers to do what I want.

• I become a nuisance by continually bothering my peers in order to get what I want.

• I repeatedly remind my peers of what I want.

• I have a face-to-face confrontation with my peers in which I forcefully state what I want.

• I point out to my peers that my organizational rules require that they comply with my request.

• I verbally express my anger to my peers in order to get what I want.

Over half of the respondents indicated that they frequently (26%) or occasionally (31%) set deadlines. Interestingly, 9 percent indicated that they never set deadlines. 47 percent of respondents believe that they are never a nuisance the first time they ask something of peers. When a peer resists doing what they ask, however, respondents report considering themselves a nuisance occasionally 18 percent of the time, seldom 38 percent of the time, and never 40 percent of the time. Respondents seldom use face-to-face confrontations. Respondents rarely point out organizational rules to peers to influence and respondents overwhelming report seldom or never expressing anger to get what they want.

There are some noteworthy differences in assertiveness, or influence in a "forceful manner," among different levels of Carnegie class. Assertiveness decreases with the Carnegie classification, with research universities reporting the highest use of assertiveness and four-year/baccalaureate institutions reporting the lowest use of assertiveness.

Two questions from the POIS determine whether coalition, or influence that relies on "mobilizing other people in the organization to assist you", is used. These questions are:

• I obtain the support of other peers to help me convince peers; and

• I obtain support and cooperation of my subordinates to back up my request.

When first trying to influence peers, 76 percent of respondents report almost always, frequently, or occasionally obtaining support of other peers to convince peers; zero reported never doing this. When peers resist, 81 percent of respondents reported that they almost always, frequently, or occasionally obtain support from others to convince them. Seven percent reported never doing this. The responses to these questions do show some differences in the organizational culture (public, private, and private/religious-affiliated), with the private and private/religious-affiliated institutions coali-

tion data remarkably similar and public institutions' being remarkably different. However, culture does not seem to have a significant effect on coalition.

Part III of the survey asked respondents to rate statements on a 5-point scale. For the statement, "I am successful in getting what I need for the library when I have strong allies on the faculty," survey responses show significant differences by culture and Carnegie classification and by culture and university setting. Forty-three percent of respondents indicated that they are frequently successful in getting what they need for the library when they have strong allies on the faculty. Twenty-eight percent reported that they are almost always successful; 21 percent reported that they are occasionally successful; 6 percent reported seldom and 2 percent reported never. Of the largest group responding frequently, 21 percent are from private baccalaureate institutions, 2 percent from private master's level, 4 percent from private research universities, 9 percent from private/religious-affiliated baccalaureate institutions, 2 percent from private/religious-affiliated doctoral degree granting institutions, 20 percent from private/religious-affiliated master's level, 18 percent from public master's degree granting institutions, 9 percent from public doctoral degree granting institutions, and 13 percent from research universities.

For the statement, "I receive more support for the library from our humanities faculty than I do from our science faculty," responses show differences by university setting. Most responses to this statement were occasionally (36%) or seldom (29%); 7 percent indicated almost always and 10 percent indicated never. Over half of respondents (57%) indicating almost always receiving more support from humanities faculty than science faculty were from highly residential campuses. For these responses, 57 percent were from private/religious-affiliated institutions; 29 percent from private institutions; and 14 percent from public institutions. Of the 36 percent indicating "occasionally", 42 percent were from primarily residential campuses.

For the statement, "Most administrative support that I get comes from my peer administrative group on campus," culture, Carnegie class, and university setting have an affect on the results. More than two-thirds of the responses (69%) indicated frequently (33%) or occasionally (36%), with 13 percent indicating always, 15 percent indicating seldom and 3 percent indicating never. For those responding frequently, 31 percent were public institutions, 33 percent private, and 36 percent private/religious-affiliated. Of the same group (those

responding with frequently), 37 percent were from baccalaureate colleges or universities, 37 percent from master's level, 13 percent from doctoral-granting, and 13 percent from research extensive universities. Of this group, 39 percent indicated highly residential for setting, 42 percent indicated primarily-residential settings, 19 percent indicated primarily non-residential settings, and 0 percent reported a non-residential setting. For those responding with occasionally, 44 percent were public institutions, 35 percent were private, and 21 percent were private/religious-affiliated. Of the same group (those responding occasionally), 31 percent were from baccalaureate colleges or universities, 46 percent from master's degree-granting institutions, 5 percent from doctoral degree-granting institutions, and 18 percent from research extensive universities. Of this group, 33 percent reported highly residential settings, 41 percent reported primarily residential settings, 20 percent reported primarily non-residential settings, and 5 percent were non-residential.

For the statement, "I rely more on senior administrators, such as the president and vice presidents, than I do from deans on my campus," responses vary by culture. For the overall responses, 24 percent indicated almost always, 34 percent indicated frequently, 26 percent indicated occasionally, 12 percent indicated seldom, and 4 percent indicated never. Of the almost always responses, a disproportionately large number come from private/religiously-affiliated institutions (50%). Of the respondents reporting occasionally, 54 percent came from private institutions, also larger than the general population, which was 33 percent private institutions.

Interpretation of Results

As stated from the outset, this study is unequivocally exploratory in opening up research on advocacy as a practice in dealing with organizational politics by libraries in institutions of higher education. By using preexisting research on influence as a way of measuring advocacy-in-action among deans and directors of academic libraries, we were able to place our study within a broader context of power and influence exercised by deans and directors in their effort to "get people to do things that they would not otherwise do."

There are clear limitations to the results, specifically the modest response received to our request for participation. This is consistent with prior research in the field on efforts to study executive lateral influence. Enns and McFarlin (2005) noted, "One reason for the paucity of empirical research in this area is that gaining access to

senior executives is difficult." As a consequence, they observed that much of the research has focused on lower level managers and reported more robust findings on upward or downward influence.

Nonetheless, in the present study responses were broadly distributed across the strata of colleges and universities. Given the limitations in response rate, there are several substantive observations to be made. First, we asked the following: When considering college and university library deans and directors as members of a campus-level executive group, is it possible to discern significant influence strategies or tactics used to influence peers administrators on their respective campuses?

Our evidence indicates that there may be little discernibly significant differences in our heterogeneous population of academic library deans and directors in the influence strategies and tactics. Among the six measures found in the POIS—friendliness, bargaining, reason, assertiveness, higher authority, and coalition—only two measures proved salient: assertiveness and coalition. With the caveat that our sample was small, this issue begs further analysis. Are academic library deans and directors similar in their selection and use of lateral influence strategies with their peer groups of campus level executives? It is also important to note, that seeking support from peers or co-workers is consistent with the original study by Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980), who reported that "The primary goal sought from co-workers was to get assistance with the respondent's own job."

We also asked: How do these perceptions differ by three dimensions of diversity in higher education: Carnegie basic classification as a measure of organizational difference by characteristics, setting (residential or commuter) as a measure of environment, and by affiliation (public, private, religious-affiliated) as a measure of culture?

An analysis of survey responses indicates that there may be some significant differences by institutional characteristics. As reported, there seems to be some relationship between assertiveness and Carnegie classification, specifically that assertiveness seems to decrease with Carnegie classification. It is possible that assertive influence strategies, or strategies carried out in "forceful manner," are more prevalent in larger and more complex institutions, particularly among research and doctoral institutions. One might surmise that the size or collegial environs of smaller institutions require less need for assertiveness, or are less tolerant of forceful lateral influence strategies.

Coalition building, or the effort to mobilize support from peers, also indicated a salient albeit complex strategy for lateral influence. The overwhelming majority of respondents sought support from peers in confronting decision situations. However, our crude measure of organizational culture—public, private, and private/religious-affiliated)—suggested some difference, though not statistically significant. As we have already reported, there appeared to be greater unanimity among private and private/religious-affiliated institutions than among public institutions. More work needs to be done to see whether or not there is association between an organizational culture and the use of building coalitions as an effort to influence decisions.

The significance of coalition as a lateral influence strategy is further affirmed by the series of questions that explored efforts to secure the support of allies. Support from faculty, and in particular humanities faculty, peer administrators, senior administrators was frequently sought, although there was some variance by measures of culture, environment, and Carnegie classification.

These results provide inconclusive evidence that while there are few differences overall among lateral influence strategies employed by academic library deans and directors, there are some differences between the two salient strategies—assertiveness and coalition building—by characteristics of institutions. This suggests two important observations about power and influence. First, the need to exercise lateral influence—in effect, to advocate among one's peers—is not an insignificant characteristic of library administrators' managerial style and ability to cope with organizational politics in decision-making. Second, some lateral influence strategies exhibit variance by characteristics of the campus, be it setting, culture, or Carnegie classification.

Our study suggests fertile ground for further research on influence as a way of analyzing advocacy as a way for libraries to get things done on college campuses, as a way of seeing how library deans and directors cope with organizational politics. This was suggested in the initial research of Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980) who suggested that there was little systematic attention given to influence within the study of organizational politics, about "how people use power to influence their colleagues and superiors."

The POIS may be an imperfect way to examine influence in association with advocacy. Other researchers have attempted to revise the instrument and test its validity; however, it may be more useful to take a different methodological approach through use of qualitative

research strategies to more closely examine the social dynamics of collegiate decision-making. Moreover, the initial impetus of Alire was to foster support for grassroots advocacy, or involvement in increasing support by frontline librarians. While our study indicated that many library deans and directors saw their staff engaged in influence tactics with faculty and others on campus, there is a need for systematic study of upward, downward, and lateral influence of staff within the dynamic of power and influence.

Finally, while our study does not report substantial statistical variances by characteristics of organization, environment, and culture as related to executive lateral influence, they are nuanced, especially in differences in the organizational cultures or, perhaps, the missions of the colleges and universities from which we received responses.

Notes

1. The term heterarchy is used here to refer to horizontal rather than hierarchical structures of organizational decision-making. In colleges and universities, this is associated not only with faculty governance but with an engineering or networked, project driven or team-based culture.

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