

Public Policy Advocacy Projects

Effective Leadership Program

2009/10

May 2009

Rationale

Katrina and Rita did not just physically destroy, it made even clearer the serious deficiencies and fault lines in Louisiana's social, economic and political landscape. One of those deficiencies - the lack of support for the development of leaders, especially those of color – is the reason this Program was created.

Arguably other deficiencies are even more pressing: on-going failures, in the face of patent need, to provide adequate support for public education, decent and safe housing (including rebuilding homes in those areas most directly affected by the Hurricanes), health care, economic opportunity, and the environment.

Fundamentally, these are matters of social justice...better said, social injustice. Katrina and Rita demonstrated – especially in the continuing aftermath of failures to restore New Orleans and other devastated Gulf communities – that Louisiana's public policies and practices, and the public will that supports them, are themselves seriously deficient and, still warped by racism. Consequently, *only inadequate responses are possible* to immediate crises and, over the longer term, to injustices of longer standing.

Ask yourself: if Katrina and Rita had skipped Louisiana and, instead, decimated Galveston and Houston (predominantly white cities) would not massive state, as well as national, resources have been devoted to rebuilding both in short order and until the jobs were done? That 'no' is all but unutterable says volumes.

In short, effective public policies in Louisiana need to be changed and sufficient public support must be built on behalf of sound policies and of the decision-making to implement them – so that the State's citizens are equitably served.

This Program would be seriously lacking if it did not connect these challenges to its central message – *that leadership is a way of being*. The effective leader is aware of self, of one's obligations to serve and to find the leadership in others, and to respond to obvious and critical societal needs. The Program would fail, too, were it not to realize and capitalize on the fact that many of the Fellows in this first class are already deeply engaged in public policymaking and advocacy¹.

¹ For the sake of clarity, we suggest that *Policy Advocacy* is a type of public policy communication that states and supports an issue position with informed arguments. The goal of policy advocacy is persuasion. Persuasion requires two essential features. First, a clear, compelling and contentious (there needs to be some policy controversy for persuasion to matter) position needs to be defined. Second, a set of informed, engaging and targeted arguments is communicated that will support the position and can build public and political will to act. Informed arguments are ones that substantiate claims through statistics, logic, and authoritative sources.

What the Program needed was to structure a public advocacy component for the Fellowship that acknowledged the problem and directed some part of the Fellows' in-program energy and talent to its resolution. But we needed to fashion the component in ways that were a) real enough to be worth Fellows' efforts, b) were consistent with our emphasis on values in leadership development and effectiveness, c) honored the fact that this is an in-service Program (Fellows remain in their jobs across the year), and d) might also have actual and positive impacts.

The Assignment

Each team, over the course of the year, is expected to develop a public policy and advocacy plan. Specifically:

1. The plan should address a specific public policy failure or inadequacy within the area assigned to the team. Each team's final presentation to the Fellowship will:
 - a. define and defend the specific policy change(s) at the state level that the team believes will produce significant public benefit;
 - b. chart a strategy for building the public will necessary to convince policy makers (legislators, executive branch actors, even the courts) to make and implement necessary change(s) in policy and practice; and
 - c. suggest how grantmaking organizations like the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation might shape grantmaking programs to support public policy development and advocacy.
2. The team's process also should contribute to each team members' growth as a servant leader, through the way team members' work together and through the ways each member contributes to the teams' work (in the eyes of other members and against her/his own goals and standards as an effective leader).

The Product and Related Issues²

The product must be at least a visual presentation (PowerPoint preferably) and, better, it would take the form of a written document. Note, please, that the work products of the

Engaging arguments give compelling examples and anecdotes and are cleverly communicated. Finally, targeted arguments are intentionally integrated to appeal to solve specific problems. The advocate should foremost inform and mobilize those potential supporters sharing the advocate's concerns.

² Note that we have posted to Blackboard several resource documents that speak to selected issues of public policy in La. For example, one document sets the stage for intervention to promote the growth and development of minority business as part of the answer to **economic inequities** in our state. Another document sets the stage for addressing **inequities in the public education system** on our state. Neither document is presented as a comprehensive discussion but may suggest jumping off points for a team interested in these important issues.

three teams from the 1st class (2008/09) of Effective Leadership Fellows will be distributed to EL2 Fellows at the Opening Retreat to illustrate what is possible.

Teams are at liberty to take on the whole topic assigned to them or to define what they regard as critically important sub-issues. In either case, the product should a) analyze the topic, b) define the public policy change(s) the team would recommend, c) define the advocacy strategy it would recommend for building sufficient allies and public will in general for gaining success in a reasonably meaningful period of time, d) offer suggestions to foundations for shaping grantmaking programs that would support public policy development and advocacy, and e) based on feedback to and among team members, report on the effectiveness of and lessons learned from the process(es) the team used in fulfilling requirements a) – d).

Questions pertaining to the “feasibility” (political and practical), likely “effectiveness,” and “likelihood” (of realization) of the plan will be determined by the team’s own definitions and standards for those terms, by the Fellowship at large, and by experts that the Program draws upon to assist in and to critique projects.

Teams should plan as if its advocacy strategy would be instituted **after** the Fellowship year. It may also assume that private sector practices as well as public sector practices may (or may not) need to be influenced.

The product should represent a consensus (hopefully of all team members). But if the product has dissenters, then those dissenting opinions should be acknowledged and recognized in the full presentation

The product should demonstrate that the team addressed and resolved these issues:

- How can the assignment be made manageable and productive of significant results, given the time team members can realistically devote to the project? The team will have some 6 hours allotted to them for work on the assignment at the Opening, Mid-Year, and end-of-year Retreats and between Retreats) and may have to negotiate whether and how much time members can afford to spend between Retreats on the assignment, given already heavy responsibilities as professionals. Issues of fairness of workload, keeping commitments, and the like need to be taken into account.
- What information/expertise, both within and outside of the team, can team members access and utilize effectively to define the problem, to explore alternative approaches, and to winnow down policy options and the final approach agreed to? How might the information be validated?
- In shaping an advocacy strategy, who are likely (even unlikely) to be allies? Who are likely (and unlikely) to be antagonists? How might the team engage the first and thwart the second? What facts and arguments are likely to be most persuasive and to which constituencies? What might team members learn from successful public policy campaigns around our issue in other states or nations? How might

these be applied in Louisiana? If this is not a productive road, what will work here?

Support

1. In selecting what area your Team will develop a policy advocacy project, please note that at least two of the funders of the program are focusing their entire grantmaking around social justice for low-income children and families. Other funders are somewhat more broadly focused, but social justice is thematic for all of them.
1. Each team may utilize research support from research assistant(s), specifically hired by The College of Business at Southern University and supervised by Professor McCline. The research assistants can be very helpful in searching out key articles, or other resources that might help the team accomplish its goals. Our thinking is to have the Fellows' time focused more on analysis, reflection and consensus building. The research assistants will have primary responsibility for seeking out and posting to Blackboard material that might not otherwise be readily available to Fellows. The research assistants can help in Internet based search and will have full access to the enormous data base files of the universities. Additionally, the research assistants can work with program staff to identify and contact subject matter experts that may be useful to the Fellows and their project work. We are still thinking through what will be reasonable turnaround time for research assistance and will use feedback from the Fellows to help manage this work-in-process element of the Program.
2. Each Fellow and each team will have access to Blackboard on a 24/7 basis. This tool can be an invaluable resource for hosting virtual group discussion, archiving resource materials and maintaining discussion threads at the convenience of the user.
3. Teams will also have the support of the audiovisual technicians and experts at Southern should assistance be needed in preparing presentations and final report papers with the exception of basic word processing which will remain the responsibility of the Team.