

1 This chapter reviews the circumstances in which fundraising in student affairs has evolved and the ways in which development work is well suited for student affairs operations.

The Context for Development Work in Student Affairs

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In challenging economic times, student affairs administrators need to employ creative tactics seeking fiscal resources for their efforts to support student learning and student services. The cost of higher education has increased as government support wanes. Transferring the cost to students and their families is often unworkable and can put student persistence at risk. The result of these colliding forces is a call to action for student affairs staff to explore strategies for raising funds from external sources. Business as usual is not going to work.

National Economic Situation and its Effect

The U.S. Congress and the Office of the President have battled to prop up the struggling economy as the U.S. housing market floundered, the automobile manufacturing industry teetered on the brink of collapse, and the complex financial system showed its flaws and failures. A long road to recovery is likely, and the impact of the economic failures that the country has faced will be long-lasting.

These economic woes have affected higher education in a variety of ways. Endowments have lost value, which can constrain the borrowing abilities of institutions while also affecting annual budgets because of lost revenue generation. Spending from endowment funds has suffered dramatic reductions and may continue to do so, because it may be some time before most endowments return to previous levels of return.

The economy has forced colleges to take dramatic measures in response, from personnel reductions to salary cuts to delays in capital improvement projects. At many large institutions, auxiliary operations have been taxed to help institutions respond to shrinking support from government. Higher education has faced difficult economic times before, but the power and significance of the current circumstances are unprecedented.

Colleges are not only direct victims of the economic downturn, of course. They are also secondary victims due to the effects that the financial crisis has had on philanthropy. Individuals who are among the wealthiest in the country have suffered staggering losses, and private foundations have also seen their holdings reduced significantly in value. Moreover, the corporate community has experienced significant losses, which may result in reduced interest in philanthropy.

Although capital campaigns have felt the pain of the economic downturn, a number of significant campaigns are still underway and making progress, although at a slower rate than before. Between the final months of 2008 and the first three of 2009, four universities announced campaigns with targets of over \$1 billion (Masterson, 2009).

State support for higher education is not keeping pace with costs. Reductions in state funding of public higher education have been made in several states in the recent past, and state support of private institutions has also been reduced or is at risk of being cut. These are sobering circumstances, but the informed student affairs professional needs to respond to the challenge with resourcefulness and creativity. In many instances, the response to reduced funding for student affairs programs and services will be budget reductions in the form of program cuts or reductions and the elimination of positions. An alternative to reducing expenditures to balance budgets is securing new sources of funding and support for the work of student affairs.

Natural Partners: Student Affairs and Development

Many senior student affairs staff members have a role in fundraising for the institution, because many times institutions are seeking support for activities programs or services that are within the purview of student affairs divisions. The expertise and knowledge of a senior member of the student affairs staff can be a powerful ally to the development officer who is cultivating a donor. Student affairs staff members might also engage development initiatives when students are sought to staff phone campaigns as part of annual fund solicitations. Student affairs personnel can help development officers identify students who are appropriate for that work and can help train them for the activity.

Capital campaigns commonly include funding targets to support student scholarships, and they often include building projects intended to

improve the quality of the student experience. Senior student affairs staff members can contribute to capital campaign targets by advocating for including components in the campaign case statement that are designed to enhance student life or student learning. These activities are examples of ways in which student affairs personnel can be involved in development work. Another form of the work is development activity that is directed by those within a student affairs division and intended to benefit or support students or the programs and services of the division.

Those who raise funds have a collection of common characteristics that are similar to those of people who work in student affairs. Strong interpersonal skills are essential for fundraising, as are good communication abilities, including good listening skills. The abilities to plan and manage events and work successfully with people of diverse interests and personalities are keys to success in fundraising. The set of traits discussed is as commonly found in student affairs administrators as in development officers: their respective work requires a similar collection of abilities. This does not mean that student affairs staff should necessarily be easily conversant with development work or that they should gravitate toward it. The fact is that the respective missions of these two areas are quite dissimilar—one focusing on raising money, the other on student learning. However, the means to those distinct ends require similar skills, and a development officer working within a student affairs division for its purposes should find it easy to assimilate with coworkers since they share so many traits.

Another factor influencing development work in student affairs is that at many institutions, particularly larger ones, development functions are decentralized as well coordinated by a central entity. It is not unusual to find development officers working within the academic colleges of a large university and functioning on behalf of those collections of disciplines. Development work also can take place on behalf of the library or intercollegiate athletics. In athletics, in particular, success has been found. In 2008, the endowment for athletics at Stanford University had grown to over \$500 million (Wolverton, 2009). Although efforts in decentralized systems would typically be tightly coordinated by a central university-level development office or foundation, their work is on behalf of their sponsor rather than the broader interests of the institution. In this type of situation, having a development operation functioning on behalf of student affairs seems logical and almost necessary.

Aspects of Development Work

A key component of any development initiative is identifying targets for benefaction. Those responsible must research the needs of students and of the division of student affairs and determine what new programs or program expansions, services for students, building or other capital projects, or educational initiatives might appeal to prospective donors.

Many of the activities of a student affairs operation could generate interest from those with common interest. A program of service or civic engagement might be attractive to a potential donor who shares the values associated with that activity. Efforts to develop leadership abilities in students may have special appeal for potential donors. Programs targeted to a special subsection of the student body, such as first-generation students, students with disabilities, or commuting students, may address the values of a particular potential giver. Efforts associated with enhancing student wellness may provoke interest in a possible benefactor.

Generating ideas for possible benefaction is not difficult for student affairs staff members: there always seems to be a list of projects or programs that could be accomplished if the funds could be secured. Student affairs programs that are intended to promote societal development or contribute to better futures for students are excellent activities to include in a list of needs for donor attention. Most donors want to know that their contributions are making a difference in some way, and many actual or potential efforts in student affairs are doing just that.

Another key activity for the development officer in student affairs is identifying possible donors. This activity must be accomplished in close coordination with a central development office or foundation, because it is extremely important that no donor experiences multiple contacts from the institution for purposes of benefaction. If this happened, the university would seem disorganized and appear to suffer from poor internal communication. And then the potential donor could lose interest in contributing to the institution.

An important constituency is the collection of individuals with affiliations to the institution. Alumni and parents of alumni represent individuals with the best connections to a student affairs division or department. The effective student affairs organization has made positive impacts on many former students in a variety of ways. Former students who held leadership positions in student government or clubs and organizations are excellent prospects for cultivation. They would have worked closely with student affairs staff members and in many cases would have had strong, positive relationships with them. Alumni do not usually forget the kindness and helpfulness of administrators who supported them. Alumni who had affiliations with Greek letter organizations may remember advisors or affiliated administrators who gave them important guidance or assistance. Former student staff members who worked in residence halls or in new student orientation may have fond recollections of their administrative supervisors and feel a special connection to the institution as a result. The former students who were served by student affairs staff members are excellent prospects for development efforts.

Parents of former students form another constituency group with a natural connection to student affairs organizations and personnel. Many of these parents have had some sort of interaction with student affairs admini-

strators, and they may well remember such an experience where a problem was solved or a concern received a good response. A key component of successful development work is donor cultivation, that is, establishing a connection and rapport with prospective donors. The building of relationships with students and their parents, normal activity of student affairs work, can actually be characterized as prospective donor cultivation.

A student affairs development officer should recognize that donor behavior is usually tied to some self-interest. Benefactors who contribute to higher educational institutions may not see it as charity, but as contributing to a cause that is consistent with donor values. Good prospect research and donor cultivation will generate insight into the values and interests of possible donors and permit those interests to be connected to specific student affairs projects or programs. The stewardship of donors involves showing them how their contributions were used and what results were produced. If a gift from a donor went into endowment funds, it is important to let the donor know what income was generated and how it was used. Giving donors feedback and showing results are important elements of the development enterprise.

Representatives of companies that do business with colleges or with college students are excellent prospects for donations or for sponsorships. Corporations can benefit by having their names exposed to the college community, so funding a building project, a program, or an activity can give a company a promotional or marketing advantage over competitors. In addition, the company's gift is tax deductible, so it produces an additional financial benefit. Philanthropic foundations are another potential source of contributions to the efforts of student affairs organizations. A significant amount of work is required in researching foundations and generating proposals for funding, but student affairs departments are engaged in activity that can match up nicely with the philanthropic interests and purposes of selected foundations. Local, state, and federal government agencies are also possible sources of contribution to the efforts of student affairs organizations. As is the case in assessing prospects with private foundations, a considerable amount of research is required to comprehend the specific interests of government agencies and how those interests can be furthered through the work of student affairs.

A student affairs fundraiser has a variety of vehicles for generating development opportunities. A campaign designed to raise support for student affairs can be designed for a special purpose. For example, the focus of a theme of a campaign can be honoring a retiring student affairs employee, in memoriam for a widely admired student leader, or celebrating the success of a program. A campaign for capital improvements can generate special interest by particular donor prospects.

A key aspect of a student affairs development project is the existence of a divisional mission statement and a strategic plan. Donors need to know the values and the mission of the division of student affairs, so they can

determine whether their own values align with them. A strategic plan that is current demonstrates purposeful direction and again allows donors to determine whether the direction is one that they wish to support.

Student affairs organizations at large institutions have an advantage in establishing and supporting a development function. The costs of such an enterprise can more easily be absorbed by a large budget; the percentage impact of an addition to the budget is not a very large one. Getting started can mean setting up a one-person office and provided operating and technical support. The expectation may be that expansion of the staff is dependent on the effectiveness of the fundraising effort. However, at a smaller institution, the impact of new staff and operating funds on a much smaller budget may be more significant. Smaller institutions may be disadvantaged by the budget impact, but they typically have an advantage in the culture of personal attention known so well at smaller institutions. When a campus functions as a closely knit community, those who pass through it feel a connection and a sense of family and shared values. That culture is a powerful ally to a development effort, and it is often unique to smaller institutions with distinct missions and purpose.

References

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