



University Business

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Juggling Act

Today's college or university president must be a champion fundraiser and a strong internal leader.

By Barbara Kaufman, Ph.D.

Gone are the days when the hire of a university president was based primarily on a lifetime of scholarship and academic credentials that resonated with faculty. Gone, too, are the days when the president was expected to focus on internal governance and maintaining the institution's status quo. Increasingly, university leaders are under relentless pressure to raise private funds to protect and grow colleges and universities. And while for the president fundraising is often experienced as *another* full-time role, the effort must be balanced with the challenging demands of campus leadership.

HIT THE GROUND RUNNING

Fundraising is one of the most visible and demanding roles expected from campus leadership today. Unfortunately, presidents whose careers have been built as scholars with sterling academic credentials (or who have come from outside higher education) are often unprepared for the task.

"Today, on the part of boards, there is a very high expectation that presidents have to raise funds," says Charles B. Reed, chancellor of the California State University system. "Fees and state funding are no longer enough to ensure quality education. With continued budget reductions and increasing enrollment demands, the need for external support is even greater."

It stands to reason then that boards seeking a leader to hit the ground running as a knowledgeable fundraiser need to look beyond academic credentials and conduct a more effective assessment of a) previous fundraising expe-

rience, b) a willingness to learn, and c) institutional fit. What are the candidate's specific fundraising successes and failures? Has the candidate ever analyzed an advancement function and infrastructure in order to assess its effectiveness? What is his or her vision of the future, and how are strategic goals linked to fundraising? It's never too early to

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—Theodore Hesburgh, University of Notre Dame

gain a shared understanding of the institutional philosophy and history of fundraising and how aggressively a campaign is envisioned, and it's never too late to negotiate the time and resources it will take to be successful.

Critical for fundraising success is a certain orientation on the part of a president, which includes:

An authentic belief in the role of president as fundraiser. In collaboration with the chief advancement officer, establishing campaign goals and bringing in major gifts are key responsibilities for the president and are often a measure of performance success.

A deep understanding of the need to invest in external relationships. A president who is distracted by his or her love of an academic discipline, or who remains in a comfort zone that is exclusively associated with internal community building, is not likely to be a successful fundraiser.

Strategic goal setting. In the long term, no successful fundraising will be accomplished without a collaborative process for goal setting, clearly articulated goals, measures of success that are monitored, and buy-in from those who will be held accountable for these efforts.

A future vision. Campus leaders must be able to paint

a compelling picture of the future. They must be able to link the ways in which private funds contribute to meeting goals that are clearly connected to faculty -- and other key constituent -- resource needs.

A passion for the institution coupled with storyteller ability. Campus leaders need to be able to articulate their passion for the institution by tapping into the richness of campus history, and alumni/advisory board "favorite tales" and crafting compelling stories for internal and external audiences. This ability draws on a repertoire of leadership styles that reflect the effective use of a personal "instrumental" approach to leadership. The Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, president emeritus of the University of Notre Dame (IN), said it best: "The leader needs a clear and challenging vision, magic with words, the ability to motivate others, the courage to stay on course, and the persistence not to lose hope." Internally, it certainly takes magic with words and personal credibility to convince faculty that salaries for development officers are worthy investments. Externally, only a good storyteller can inspire the community and potential donors.

Solid credibility. "A president who is expected to raise funds needs both charisma and credibility," says Patrick Kelly, chairman of the board of St. Norbert College (WI). "Alumni and others who are expected to donate their hard-earned money have to like the individual and believe that he or she will make the investment count."

BEGIN WITH ASSESSMENT

Often a new president comes on board with a pre-set agenda and feels compelled to forge ahead without ever having an adequate opportunity to assess the current situation and perform a comprehensive mapping of the involvement of various constituencies in fundraising. "Yet an aggressive analysis of internal readiness is key to any successful campaign," says Kelly. Such an analysis asks the following questions:

What is the degree of involvement of deans, the provost, department chairs, and faculty, in collaboration with campus advancement professionals?

Where and to what extent should the president be involved in fundraising? Moving quickly into a fundraising mode requires artful candor with the board about campus challenges and the impact on community relations and fundraising efforts. Presidents who are not candid about internal issues will find it difficult to negotiate with boards or systems leaders for the resources they need to get the job of fundraising done.

How can the president's style, interests, skill sets and past successes be aligned and leveraged with donors?

How competent is the advancement team? Are

infrastructure and resources sufficient to support agreed-upon fundraising goals and efforts? A gap analysis begins with an accurate assessment of the current development or advancement function in terms of core competencies, resources and infrastructure. "Before undertaking any fundraising, the president has to take a long, hard look at the advancement group and make sure they're the right

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—Patrick Kelly, St. Norbert College

people to get the job done," says Kelly. "The president has to have full confidence that the advancement group has done its homework, for instance, so that the donors he or she approaches actually have the financial ability to meet the request. Further, when a gift comes in, the president has to be confident that processes and disciplines are in place to invest it appropriately." What's more, Kelly adds, the president must be acutely aware of the necessity to thank the donor "not just once, but continuously."

The answers to these questions will clarify the nature and complexity of internal challenges and facilitate negotiations with the board concerning the time and resources that can be devoted to fundraising and community relations. Any agreement reached between the president and the board must also be understood by the campus community to avoid faulty faculty assumptions.

"When St. Norbert College's new president was charged with increasing the College's endowment," says Kelly, "he immediately proceeded to raise awareness and develop processes to get the internal community on the same page. Now that everyone communicates the same message he can go out to raise money with confidence that the institution is behind him."

Fundraising requires an understanding of why it needs to be done; clear, system-wide goals; and a commitment by each campus to fulfill its strategic plan.

Charles B. Reed, California State University system

DEVELOP A STRONG TEAM

Carving out time for fundraising without jeopardizing the institution's teaching mission and strategic direction is a juggling act. If campus operations are not running smoothly from the faculty or board's perspective, the president will operate in a crisis management mode. Reed offers the following guidelines for aligning internal and external tasks. "Fundraising needs to be a part of the university's strategic and long-range plans, and has to provide a margin of excellence for the campus. Fundraising also has to be a part of the goals of the university, and deans, department chairs and faculty members all need to be part of those efforts."

To avoid dropping the ball internally, campus leaders need to be able to delegate with confidence to their direct reports. These cabinet-level players have to function like

well-oiled self-managing teams. "Every president needs a strong leadership team," adds Reed.

"Fundraising often takes presidents off campus and requires a great deal of travel. Presidents have to have confidence that everything on the campus is running smoothly while they're gone." If presidents do not set clear expectations when they are delegating to cabinet members to resolve day-to-day issues on campus, the result is often confusion over roles and lines of authority. In the long term this can lead to an erosion of morale, delayed or ineffective problem-solving and decision-making, and labor issues. "It's a matter of balancing institutional needs and requirements with a 'need to have it yesterday' mentality," says Kelly. If a president cannot confidently delegate while absent, a change in cabinet members may be in order.

IT TAKES STRATEGY

From Reed's CSU system perspective, successful fundraising requires "an understanding of why it needs to be done; clear, system-wide goals; and a commitment by

each campus to fulfill its strategic plan. Having an effective fundraising strategy is a top priority, and campuses will realize the benefits from their commitment."

The CSU Leader, an internal publication for California State University leadership, reported in January that CSU reached a record \$302 million in philanthropic support in 2002-2003 despite a lackluster stock market that reduced charitable giving to higher education nationwide. Although in-kind and cash gifts declined, CSU was able to boost future commitments received through multi-year pledges and estate commitments. This kind of fundraising success does not happen without a planned, comprehensive strategy, an engaged board, a strong leadership team, and most importantly, campus leaders with vision, passion and a sense of urgency.

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