Chapter 4
Senior Leaders as Effective Fundraisers: A Toolbox for Dealing with Complexities in the New Ecology

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ABSTRACT

Funding in higher education continues to be volatile and complex, so senior leaders must focus on fundraising among a host of other key roles (Bornstein, 2003, 2011; Cheng, 2011; Clevenger, 2014; Cohen, 2010; Drezner & Huels, 2014; Essex & Ansbach, 1993; Gould, 2003; Hodson, 2010; Kaufman, 2004; Rhodes, 2001; Tromble, 1998). The goal is creating win-win relationships with a donor and the institution (Bornstein, 2003, 2011; Bruch & Walter, 2005; Carroll & Buchholtz, 2015; Clevenger; Eddy, 2010; Levy, 1999; Prince & File, 2001; Siegel, 2012). There is “a new ecology—a context deeply different from that in which many of today’s institutions, assumptions, and habits were formed” (Fulton & Blau, 2005, p. 4). Senior leaders must have a toolbox filled with expertise to be effective fundraisers.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education continues to face resource challenges; therefore, creating win-win, long-term relationships of all kinds are of high importance (Clevenger, 2014; Cohen, 2010; Essex & Ansbach, 1993; Gould, 2003; Kaufman, 2004; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Rhodes, 2001). Resource dependence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) pushes
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higher education leaders to devise keen relationships to gain access to appropriate resources. While it is the primary function of the development office to raise funds, senior leaders — such as presidents, board members, provosts, deans, advancement officers, community and government relations officers, corporate and foundation relations officers, and key volunteers — must spend time building relationships with individuals (e.g., alumni and alumnae, major donors, philanthropists, elected officials, and community friends) and other organizations’ leaders (e.g., corporations, foundations, governments, and other community initiatives) who can contribute to the needs and programs of the institution (Bauer, 1993; Bunce & Leggett, 1994; Clevenger, Cook, 1997; Flanagan, 2002; Hunt, 2012; Norton, 2009; Prince & File, 2001; Sanzone, 2000; Saul, 2011; Siegel, 2007, 2008, 2012; Slinker, 1988; Weidner, 2008; Weinstein, 2009). Drezner and Huels (2014) summarize the challenge:

Within a philanthropic context, academic leaders must convince both internal (professional fundraisers, faculty, staff, and students) and external (alumni and other donors) stakeholders of their long-term vision of the institution. Fundraising success is only achieved if all of these constituents partner in the efforts. (p. 68)

Further, Kaufman (2004) indicated, “Fundraising is one of the most visible and demanding roles expected from campus leaders today” (p. 50). The process of fundraising and philanthropy is “relationship intensive” (Day, 1998, p. 37).

To be effective, higher education leaders “need to develop key strategies for fundraising techniques, provide multiple opportunities with several areas of the institution, create clear value propositions, invest in stewardship of relationships, prioritize key people, and always act ethically” (Clevenger, 2014, p. 468). Therefore, senior leaders must have a toolbox filled with expertise to be effective fundraisers including: maturity, a visionary thinking, an inspirational attitude, optimism, personal commitment and connectivity, excellent communications, ethical integrity, professionalism, sensitivity, “a systematic perspective to create strong relationships” (Kinnicutt & Pinney, 2010, p. 27), powerful influence, determination, flexibility, and patience. Additionally, these senior leaders “model appropriate behavior to their entire organizations” (Clevenger, 2014, p. 146). All members of an organization give emphasis to key goals and policies set by leaders.

BACKGROUND

Higher education is funded by a basic combination of tuition, investment income, and support from both individuals and other organizations (both private and public) such as alumni and alumnae, corporations, foundations, and strategic partnerships.
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