Chapter 11
The Role of Corporate and Foundation Relations Development Officers (CFRs)

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ABSTRACT
Corporate and foundation relations development officers (CFRs) play a vital role in philanthropy and resource development within higher education. Specifically, these leaders focus time building relationships with individuals who represent corporations and foundations that are able contribute to the needs and programs of an academic institution (Clevenger, 2014; Hunt, 2012; Sanzone, 2000; Saul, 2011; Walton & Gasman, 2008). CFRs must be intimately familiar with their own institution, organizational priorities, and key leaders to be able to create and orchestrate touch-points, engagement and volunteer opportunities, and mutually beneficial inter-organizational partnerships. CFRs manage a complex intersection of internal constituents’ programs and interests while simultaneously trying to meet aggressive signature philanthropic platforms for companies or foundation programmatic initiatives.

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations do not operate in a vacuum. Organizations must interact with their external environment through other organizations in inter-organizational relationships while contending with various environmental factors, such as politics, social constraints, and economies (Clevenger, 2014; DeMillo, 2011; Rhodes, 2001). As higher education continues to face resource challenges, academic institutions have purposely engendered a variety of funding partners including corporations and foundations (Clevenger, 2014; Cohen, 2010). These significant organizational partners are forced to justify funding and engagement with academic institutions. “In an environment of receding economies, deregulation, global competition, ever-changing tax codes, and increased financial accountability, corporate philanthropy to academia has been in transition for an ad hoc activity to a long-term business strategy” (Abbot et al., 2011, p. 2). Foundations, and even governments, have also organized to be more strategic and long-term oriented to create win-win relationships to benefit the organizations and society.

Higher education fundraising professionals and management typically follow the Association of Fundraising Professionals’ (AFP) formula for justifying and defining causes and include items such as “mission, vision, history, statement of community problem, goals of the campaign, objectives to meet these goals, programs and services, staffing, governance, facility needs, endowment, budget for the campaign, statement of needs, gift range chart, and named-giving opportunities” (Saul, 2011, p. 167). However, leaders of corporations and foundations also want to understand the intended impact a higher education institution and/or its programs and services make, the strategies to support those programmatic intents, and a detailed explanation of all metrics for performance, which may need to include proof of a successful track record (Clevenger, 2014; Saul).

While many examples of best practices originate from a corporate interface, these concepts are applicable to any external funding partner including foundations, governments, and special interest organizations willing to partner and engage on key initiatives. Academic institutions’ corporate and foundation relations development officers (CFRs) are specialists in creating win-win relationships to mutually benefit two or more organizations simultaneously. These individuals’ roles have evolved during the past 50 years. Larger academic organizations often have teams managing various intersects with corporations, foundations, and other partnering entities.

Managing these complex inter-organizational relationships has become a special concern for CFR officers. “Inter-organizational relationships are subject to inherent development dynamics” (Ebers, 1999, p. 31). Ebers’ (1999) explanation of these four dynamics includes “[1] the parties’ motives…[2] the pre-conditions and
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