Fundraising for Programmatic Student Success Initiatives

Strategies for Effective Donor Cultivation, Solicitation, and Stewardship

Advancement Forum

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1) Executive Overview

Key Observations

Decentralized development officers raise funds for student success or support programs within their individual division or unit portfolio; development officers in student affairs and diversity affairs divisions are most likely to devote time to program fundraising. However, centralized gift officers dedicated to student success initiatives (i.e., traditionally focused on scholarship aid) are also tasked to raise funds for programs across academic and non-academic divisions, especially those whose volume of giving or potential donor base is too infrequent or small to necessitate a dedicated gift officer. Some institutions incorporate student success as a component of the campaign theme or designate it as an annual giving option.

Close collaboration between dedicated development staff members and program directors enables effective donor cultivation and gift solicitation. Development directors teach program directors to identify, cultivate, and appeal to promising prospective donors. Program directors offer subject matter expertise and prepare development officers to explain the needs their program serves.

Individual donors are the primary patrons of student success programmatic giving, though development officers occasionally solicit gifts from corporations and foundations. Because programmatic giving is a recent priority at profiled institutions, officers have not yet established the relationships necessary to secure major gifts from donors; fundraisers expect donors to give larger gifts and establish endowments for programs as programmatic fundraising schemes grow. Programmatic giving opportunities appeal to prospects without major gift capacity; it is easier to demonstrate the impact of even a small gift to a tight-margin student support program than to an already-substantial scholarship endowment. The most common individual donors include: former program participants, alumni who were first generation students, former student leaders, current parents, women's philanthropy group participants, and former staff.

Contacts recommend bundling a set of similarly-themed programs and causes into several larger giving opportunity categories. Donors may struggle to attach to broad imperatives like "student success" or "student support." Instead, development officers arrange opportunities into groupings that pertain to common goals (e.g., enhancing STEM, encouraging first-year retention) or student segments (e.g., veterans, first-generation students, international studies). They may display these groupings in marketing and public relations materials or use them to steer conversations with donors. Some institutions even create corresponding annual funds, honoring donor intent and allowing designated giving, but ensuring donations are somewhat-unrestricted and fungible among administrator-determined needs.

Anecdotes of program beneficiaries and personal impact stories are especially resonant to donors of programmatic gifts. Although reportedly less interesting to donors, development officers collaborate with institutional research staff and program directors to quantify program effects (e.g., student retention and graduation data).

Program directors must help steward programmatic gifts through thank you letters from program directors and program participants, newsletters describing the impact of gifts, and invitations to program events. Contacts recommend that development staff copy program directors on thank you emails to donors or deliver them weekly gift updates so that program staff may commence program-specific stewardship.

2) Overview of Programmatic Fundraising

Motivation

Institutions Increasingly Seek Direct Donor Giving to Student Success Programming Beyond Financial Aid

While development functions have long supported student success through fundraising for scholarship funds and emergency aid (i.e., funds designed to provide short-term monetary support to students in need), contacts increasingly prioritize fundraising directly for the operational expenses of programs and staff that impact student success. Such efforts range from supplemental instruction to student engagement to specialized support for disadvantaged populations that persist and graduate at lower rates:

- **Students of historically underrepresented backgrounds** (e.g., mentorship programs for African American students)

- **International students** (e.g., English as a second language programs)

- **Low-income students** (e.g., food banks)

- **Regional elementary and high school students** (e.g., summer bridge and access programs)

- **Other populations with special needs** (e.g., veterans services)

Reasons for an Increased Focus on Programmatic Fundraising:

Increased pressure to improve student outcomes: Although scholarships allow students to attend college, support programs enable them to succeed in coursework and graduate on-time. Performance based funding, in which state legislators allocate funds based on student outcomes instead of enrollment levels, is becoming more prominent in the United States and pressures higher education leaders to increase student course completion, retention, and graduation rates. Prospective students and parents are also increasingly aware of these measures as they compare institutions, making positive student outcomes impactful in increasing enrollment yield. More support programs with high operating expenses necessitates raising private support to ensure program sustainability.

Decreased central funding for student development-focused divisions: As traditional funding sources (e.g., federal and state aid) decline, individual units must become more self-sustaining. Units typically operate university-wide student success programs (e.g., student affairs divisions) increasingly employ their own dedicated development officers.

Greater proportion of low-income and underrepresented students on-campus: As degree obtainment becomes increasingly crucial for job attainment, more students seek a degree and enroll in institutions despite financial hardship. High tuition costs lead low-income students to go without housing, food, or other necessities, making programs to serve these students prevalent on campuses. More international students and underrepresented students (e.g., Hispanic students) also seek degrees and require unique support services to help them succeed.

Fundraising Staff

Decentralized Development Officers Fundraise for Student Success Programs within their Dedicated Unit Portfolio

At most profiled institutions, large non-fundraising divisions employ dedicated gift officers to fundraise for all unit-level initiatives. Student affairs and diversity affairs divisions tend to employ at least development officer that dedicates a large portion of time to fundraising for student success programs:

- At **University A**, two development officers dedicate significant time to support of student success programs: a dedicated student affairs officer and a centralized development officer that dedicates 50 percent of his time to diversity initiatives. About half of diversity fundraising efforts are fundraising for programs (e.g., tutoring and faculty mentorship program to support the academic experience of underrepresented students) while the other half support restricted scholarship funds.

- The Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at **University E** employs a dedicated development officer who fundraises for division-operated support programs (e.g., programs within the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Center). Centralized development officers focus on campus-wide initiatives and fundraise for support programs in divisions without dedicated staff.

While many donors give to colleges and schools, others without strong connections to a particular field are drawn to the opportunities inherent in centralized units (e.g., student affairs, diversity) that serve the entire student body. Institutions seeking to cultivate donors interested in academics but not attached to a particular unit should consider tasking a development officer to central academic affairs or the provost's office, especially if those divisions directly oversee student support programs.

Centralized Gift Officers May Raise Funds for Success Programs across Colleges and Divisions

Institutions that place a high priority on programmatic fundraising employ student affairs and diversity-specific development officers. However, some institutions task centralized gift officers to raise funds for student success programs in several divisions at once and for divisions that do not maintain their own development unit, in addition to or instead of scholarship aid. For example, **University E** maintains two centralized development officers for "scholarship development and campus initiatives."

Close Collaboration between Gift Officers and Program Directors Enables Effective Gift Solicitation

Contacts across all profiled institutions stress the importance of frequent communication between development officers and the program directors of the student success programs for which they fundraise. While interaction with unit leaders helps development staff determine the programs most in need of private support, employees intimately involved in day-to-day program operations can describe their impact on students and prepare development officers for donor solicitation.

Strategies to Systemize Collaboration between Program Directors and Fundraisers

Conduct Regular Meetings and Phone Calls with Unit Leaders and Program Directors	Frequent interactions between division or unit-level staff with expertise in student success and program management and development officers with experience in crafting appeals and soliciting donors help both parties collaborate to maximize private funding. At **University A**, the development officer that fundraises for diversity initiatives meets with the Vice Chancellor for Diversity face-to-face once per week.
Feature Subject Matter Expert at Development Meetings	**University B** features a program "subject matter expert" at each monthly development meeting so that they may explain program offerings to gift officers.
Conduct Fundraising Trainings for Program Staff Members	Development staff members at **University C** conduct an annual training on donor cultivation and solicitation for student affairs division staff at the divisional annual retreat. Contacts report that they will conduct these meetings more frequently as programmatic giving increases as an institutional priority.
Appoint Program Liaison to Development Staff	If program directors' schedules do not allow frequent one-on-one interactions with development staff, the director can appoint his or her deputy or another high-potential program staff member as a liaison with the development department.
Invite Unit Leaders and Program Staff to Meet Prospects	Contacts note that unit leaders often help solicit major gifts for programs within their division, especially if scholarships are not a higher divisional priority. At **University A**, the development officer that fundraises for diversity travels with the Vice Chancellor for Diversity to visit prospects about once per month. Similarly, the Senior Director of Military Services frequently travels with centralized development officers at **University B** to help raise funds for newly established veteran support programs.

Benefits of Collaboration between Development Officers and Program Directors

Development officers help program directors understand:

- Why donors and corporations give
- How to identify promising prospects
- How to cultivate donors and promote program benefits in a way that attracts gifts
- How to best steward gifts to encourage future giving

Development Officer → ← **Program Director**

Program directors help development officers understand:

- Detailed aspects of a program's services and participant characteristics
- How programs benefit student success, including how programs have increased specific success measures (e.g., retention rates)
- Terminology related to the program
- How to comfortably speak about program participants' circumstances (e.g., poverty, societal disadvantage) in a way that will not offend sensitive prospects

Development Officers and Division Leadership Collaborate to Prioritize Programs for Fundraising

Advancement staff members rely on student and academic affairs staff members to inform them of programs that could benefit from fundraising; they do not conduct their own audits or studies to determine or prioritize program impact or need. Instead, they offer perspective on which programs will most pique donor interest or appeal to specific donors broadly interested in donor success. Typically, development officers need only understand details of a wide variety of university-wide student success programs to match direct donor interest towards the one that will most resonate with him or her.

Because donor intent does not always align with evidence-based approaches to student success, development officers encourage donors to choose from a predetermined list of student success priorities for support rather than allow them to craft their own new program idea. If donors insist on new initiatives (often bearing their name), development officers should insist they endow it rather than subsidize annual operating costs; otherwise, the university may became liable for the new program's costs once donor interest and giving wanes.

Development Staff on Divisional or University-Wide Task Forces Tailor Initiatives to Maximize Opportunities for Donor Engagement and Support

Profiled institutions establish task forces to identify student needs and to determine how existing or new programs might solve them:

- A task force within the student affairs division at **University D** designed to improve student outcomes determined 20 to 25 programs to advertise to donors as giving opportunities. These are the programs that best increase student recruitment and retention, a high priority for the institution.

- The Director of University Development at **University C** sits on a task force recently established in response to a growing number of homeless students. This task force is examining the extent to which existing community resources serve these students and determining if the institution should develop a new program to support homeless students.

Development staff members help task force members understand the types of programs donors will support, which guides program development and promotion.

Fundraising Methods

University Campaigns Often Incorporate Programmatic Student Success Goals

Contacts note that as fundraising for student success programs grows and development officers cultivate and develop relationships with donors enthusiastic about giving to them, fundraising schemes become increasingly robust.

Promising Methods to Fundraise for Student Success Programs

Most Common

Ongoing collaboration with specific divisions: Profiled institutions primarily fundraise for student success programs through ongoing collaboration with divisional development staff, unit leaders, and program staff in the student affairs division and the diversity division.

Major campaign component: Student success initiatives often constitute a major component of institution-wide campaigns. While scholarships are the highest priority of these campaign initiatives, institutions also feature programs that need funds. **University D** developed divisional guides for their latest campaign for the Diversity and Community Engagement division as well as the Student Affairs division. These guides clearly presented the student success programs donors might support.

Annual fund: University C centers programmatic student success fundraising efforts on its annual fund; contacts note that they promote gifts to the student life fund heavily to annual givers. Most profiled institutions allow annual fund donors to designate gifts to the student affairs unit, which allows leaders to allocate funds to highest-need programs.

Mini-campaigns: Although profiled institutions have not yet conducted mini-campaigns for specific programs or a grouping of student success programs, contacts expect to do so after they build a solid roster of donors interested in student success programs. Development officers and program directors will collaborate to determine appropriate monetary goals and timeframes for fundraising initiatives.

Least Common

2) Gift Attainment and Processing

Donor Cultivation

Alumni Donors

75%

Contacts at **University A** estimate that alumni comprise 50 to 75 percent of the portfolios of development officers focused on programmatic giving.

Development Officers Solicit Gifts from Former Student Leaders and Success Program Participants

Profiled institutions rely on a mixture of corporate, foundation, and individual gifts to fund student success programs, but development officers focus on individual giving when raising funds for programmatic initiatives. The development officer for the Officer of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for **University E** reports that approximately 90 percent of divisional gifts come from individuals.

Because programmatic giving is a recent priority at profiled institutions, officers have not yet established relationships necessary to secure major gifts from donors. Contacts expect that donors will seek to give larger gifts and establish endowments for programs as programmatic fundraising schemes grow.

Contacts note that programmatic giving opportunities attract prospects not yet able or willing to make a major gift because even small gifts to programmatic initiatives can have visible and quantifiable impact, while small gifts to scholarship endowments increase annual returns by infinitesimal sums. For example, early-career donors demonstrate excitement that a $100 gift to a student food bank could feed several students for a week.

Contacts maintain close collaboration with development officers from other divisions to ensure little prospect overlap and to receive permission to engage prospects already in the portfolios of other institutional development officers. Development officers that span several divisions at **University D** conduct frequent "strategy sessions" with each other to discuss major donors with multiple interests to match them with the best upcoming giving opportunities.

Individuals Most Likely to Give to Student Success Programs

Profiled institutions typically tag donors that fit these categories in prospect management systems.

Former Program Participants

Contacts recommend soliciting alumni who participated in programs as students, since they tend to feel strongly about program impact on student experience. To raise funds for new programs (i.e., programs that do not yet have former program participants), cultivate donors that have benefited from programs with similar goals or alumni that might have participated in programs when they were students had they existed at the time. For example, development officers at **University B** solicit gifts from alumni that served in the military to raise funds for programs within a new comprehensive veterans support center.

First Generation Alumni

First generation students graduate and persist at lower rates than non-first generation students, and often overcome challenges to reach graduation, such as poverty, poor English, and insufficient college preparation. Alumni who were first generation students relate to these challenges. Development officers often solicit first generation alumni to support pre-college bridge programs that encourage students to attend college.

Former Student Leaders

Profiled institutions tag former student leaders in prospect databases; many of these students possess more appreciation and gratitude towards co-curricular aspects of their experience (e.g., team sports, student government) rather than academic foci. These alumni can also provide further referrals to other student leader alumni.

Parents of Current Students

Parents often seek to support student success to make a direct impact on their child and their child's peers. A parents' fund at **University A** exclusively supports student success programs within the student affairs division. However, contacts warn that unless their child was deeply impacted by a program, parents typically only give while their child is a student at the institution. Development staff should administer cards for new students to complete during orientation that inquire about parents' alma mater, employer, and job title, so that they may identify affinity to give to certain areas.

Development officers also solicit the following individuals for gifts:

- **Scholarship recipients:** Contacts acknowledge that research shows scholarship recipients are not more likely to give than non-recipients, but profiled institutions tag recipients in prospect management systems to identify alumni that likely would have benefited from support programs for low-income students. Annual fund officers may currently solicit these individuals for scholarship funds, but they may prefer to give to programmatic causes if asked.

- **Alumni of underrepresented backgrounds:** Development officer solicit alumni from minority racial or ethnic backgrounds to fund programs that support students of a specific ethnicity or programs that support all minority students.

- **Staff members and volunteers of support programs:** Staff members directly involved with student support programs and student life see how programs impact students and understand what resources programs need to run effectively. Contacts recommend that divisions run internal mini-campaigns for student success program fundraising.

- **Women's giving group members:** Contacts at **University A** report that women's philanthropy group members often support student success programs through monetary gifts and volunteer work.

- **Public service and social services degree recipients:** Alumni that received degrees in public service or social services disciplines (e.g., social work, public health) demonstrate a high affinity for giving to student success programs as they are sensitive to the needs of low-income students and students in ethnic minorities. However, contacts note that these graduates typically do not earn high enough salaries to give major gifts.

Prospect Lead Generation at *University D*

The Director of Development for Student Affairs at **University D** contacted former directors of student success programs and conducted meetings with each of them. These directors identified participants of programs and others involved in the programs (e.g., students and professional employees, volunteers), to whom development officers may contact gifts.

Development staff are also starting an initiative to code current students as participants in student organizations and programs so that these tags may simply be uploaded into the alumni database when students graduate.

Develop Systems for Program Directors to Pass Prospect Leads to Development Officers

Program directors, staff members, and volunteers often encounter prospective donors through program and divisional events as well as everyday interactions with community members and parents. Institutions without a formal process for staff to identify these prospects to development staff fail to leverage opportunities for donor cultivation. A formal process is particularly important at institutions where centralized development officers are responsible for student success programmatic fundraising but lack frequent interaction with other divisional and unit leaders who may manage those programs.

Process for Passing Prospect Leads

Development officer conducts annual or biannual training for program directors and staff members on prospect identification.

Program staff members seek prospects during interactions with parents, alumni, and community members.

Staff members report prospects to program development officer, including prospect name, details of interaction, and additional background information.

Development officer performs prospect analysis (or refers the case to prospect research for wealth screening) and handles outreach.

Incentivize prospect identification by offering monetary prizes to staff members who identify prospects that subsequently give to student success programs.

Donor Solicitation

Bundle Similar Programmatic Giving Opportunities Together to Mitigate Restricted Giving

While donors unfamiliar with the nuances of higher education are better able to understand "student success" than "student retention," the former term is still so broad and overused such that it does not inspire donors to action. Contacts also consider it misleading: all university services and programs, even those who do not technically serve current students (e.g., faculty development, the bursar, HR benefits) exist in support of student success, albeit indirectly and somewhat tangentially. Distinctions between "student success" and other kinds of academic, instructional, developmental, and support programs are often merely rhetorical.

To effectively fundraise for the diffuse topic of "student success," contacts recommend bundling several programmatic giving opportunities into categories or "buckets" of specific and similarly-themed programs that help donors understand the direction of their support. For example, the student affairs development officer at **University D** features about 25 programmatic giving opportunities divided into six categories: student access, social justice and community building, students in need, and others. Development staff

might also promote programs divided into the student segment they serve (e.g., low-income students).

Strategies to Leverage Groupings of Similar Programs

Give Categories Specific Labels to Promote Program Goals	Donors are more likely to give if they better understand how their gift's beneficiary serves students. Specific labels identify what a program actually does. "Programs that Prevent Sophomore Year Attrition" or "Programs that Serve Low Income Students" are easier for donors to understand in conversation and help the development officer narrow a donor's area of focus.
Establish Funds for Pre-established Buckets of Programs	Program groupings create opportunities for development officers to establish corresponding funding mechanisms. The student affairs development officer at **University D** is currently assessing the viability of creating endowment funds for pre-established buckets of programs to which donors could give designated annual or larger gifts. For example, development staff may establish a fund for leadership development for students that participate in programs that promote social justice (e.g., women's center, LGBT center). Promoting similar types of programs at once attracts donations from donors that do not feel drawn to supporting a specific program but may feel strongly about supporting a general goal (e.g., success in STEM courses) or audience (e.g., international students). It also allows leaders to allocate funds to programs that most need it: honoring donor intent while ensuring financial resources are fungible as institutional priorities change, needs shift, and new programs are born.
Fundraise for Programs across Several Divisions at Once	Multiple divisions often run programs that serve the same purpose or type of student. For example, both the college of business and the student affairs division may run mentorship programs for African American students. Centralized staff members dedicated to students success initiatives best fundraise for programs across divisions through program groupings that maintain a common thread. Alternatively, assigning program groupings to centralized development officers allows them to specify their responsibilities without necessarily embedding in a particular academic or administrative unit or division.
Apply for Grants to Support Program Groups	Contacts at **University D** note that program bundles are particularly attractive to grant-giving foundations that often seek to make a larger impact than just one program.

Possible Program Category Opportunities

The following bucket labels attract donor attention. Each institution should develop their own list and name them with words that are easy for donors to understand and sound appealing, exciting, and impactful. Administrators may intentionally place high-priority programs into multiple overlapping categories to maximize the likelihood they receive support.

Programs Divided by Program Goal

- Academic Success and Tutoring
- Retention
- Social Justice
- Mentorship
- Leadership
- Psychological Wellness
- College Preparation
- STEM focus

Programs Divided by Student Segments

- Low-Income Students
- Veterans
- First Generation Students
- International Students
- Underrepresented Ethnicities
- LGBT Students
- First Year Students
- Homeless Students
- Student Parents

Program Beneficiaries' Personal Stories Most Inspire Donors

Detailed stories that describe how programs enable participants to succeed best prompt donors to give. Profiled institutions post student stories on giving websites and in newsletters, brochures, and emails sent to prospects to encourage giving. Development officers also collect these stories from program directors and share them with prospects in-person.

Program directors identify students who most benefit from program participation, can articulate how the program has impacted their success, and who demonstrate willingness to share their story with donors. Development or marketing staff interview these students about their stories and write impactful narratives to share with donors.

> Donors also appreciate stories from other donors about why they gave. Contacts recommend featuring prominent and well-liked alumni or other university friends that gave large gifts in marketing materials – this both persuades other donors and serves as a high-profile kind of stewardship for the original donor.

Student participants of some programs may not be willing to feature themselves if known participation is stigmatizing or could embarrass them (e.g., homeless students, low-income students). In this case, marketing materials may also feature stories of other program staff members (e.g., student tutors or peer mentors, or full-time staff) and volunteers (e.g., food bank workers) who share why the cause is important and why they hope donors will consider a gift. In other cases, though, personable and willing students may even join development officers at later stages of solicitation.

Recommended Components of Participant Stories

Student affairs development staff at **University D** are currently creating a double-sided 8 ½ by 11 inch sheet for each of about 25 programs. Development and program staff members will mail these sheets to prospective and past donors to encourage giving. Sheets will include:

▪ Participant story

▪ Program offerings

▪ Impact of program, described with data points

▪ Ways to give

- Picture of student
- Motivation of student to attend institution
- Specific challenge faced
- How student discovered the program
- How student is involved in the program and how it has enabled them to succeed
- Resources that would enhance program operations (i.e., funding needs)
- Why donors should consider a gift

Collect Data from Program Directors and Institutional Research Officers to Market Program Impact

Development officers partner with institutional research and program staff to collect and share data with prospects to demonstrate precisely how programs have increased participant retention rates, graduation rates, grade-point averages, and other easily-understood metrics. Donors also seek to know how many students programs serve and how that number has changed over time. While positive metrics inspire donors who seek to quantify their impact, development officers can leverage low or declining evaluative rates in conversation; for example, they can note the program's lack of funds forces it to turn students away or hinders its ability to reach peak effectiveness, scale, or potential. While staff members tend to dislike and deprioritize completion of outcomes-based assessment exercises, they may be more inclined to conduct them if the results will be used to help raise additional program funds.

Metrics to highlight in giving opportunity marketing materials:

▪ Number of program participants

▪ Number of students programs cannot serve due to budgetary constraints

▪ Number of volunteers

▪ Participant retention rate

▪ Participant graduation rate

▪ Participant GPA

▪ Portion of pre-college program participants who matriculate in college

Participant responses to feedback or evaluative surveys (either open-ended or selected from answer choices) are easier for institutional researchers to collect. They may also better persuade donors more swayed by anecdotes and stories.

Market Impact Measurements to Scale Stewardship Efforts to Small Donors

Contacts recommend that development officers encourage gifts by calculating the impact even a small gift could make on a student's life. Contacts emphasize that many gifts to programs are small and donors must understand that any amount they can give helps. Infographics are particularly effective in capturing donor attention and communicating how little they would need to give to help a student.

University D developed an infographic for a mini-campaign in which development staff challenged the University community to raise $40,000 in 40 hours for several featured funds, including those for some student success programs. The infographic alerted

individuals to minor luxuries they could forfeit (see below) to improve a student's college experience. The campaign was wildly successful, raising $128,516 from 2,104 donations. Contacts are enthusiastic about creating similar infographics for other programmatic giving opportunities.

Sample Infographic to Market Small Gift Opportunities

One **$2** phone application funds one bottle of shampoo for the student pantry.

One **$5** latte per week for one year funds the travel expenses for a low-income student to attend a national leadership conference.

One **$10** movie ticket funds a week's worth of food for two students who cannot afford to buy their own.

One **$40** video game funds four hours of chemistry tutoring for a Hispanic student.

Donor Stewardship

Institutions seeking to prioritize programmatic student success giving could assemble alumni affinity groups or chapters (i.e., "student leaders alumni society"), form targeted giving societies to reward these donors, or convene program- or division-specific advisory boards comprised of donors.

Program Directors Lend Credibility to Gift Stewardship

Contacts recommend that development staff feature donor names on program websites, in program or division newsletters, and on the wall of the office or building where the program is located. Contacts stress that development officers must also actively engage program directors in the stewardship process to ensure donors stay engaged in program activities and give again. At **University D**, development officers copy the relevant program director on all thank you emails to donors so that program staff may start their own program-specific stewardship process.

Centralized development officers should also send the leaders of large divisions or units that are frequent gift beneficiaries weekly or monthly updates with instructions on how to thank the donor. Unit leaders unfamiliar with development activities appreciate sample verbiage or pre-scripted notes for their repurpose.

Strategies for Program Directors to Help Steward Programmatic Gifts

Write Program-Specific Thank You Notes

Program directors often follow up standard thank you notes from the development division with their own thank you letters or emails to donors more specifically describing the impact of their gift on students. Directors may ask student participants to write thank you notes to donors. Contacts recommend personalizing each note to the extent possible; for example, the director may ask a student to comment specifically on how a program impacted his or her experience that semester.

Design Newsletters that Describe Program	Contacts recommend that program and development staff send out newsletters to describe the impact of student success programs. Program directors should create short newsletters to send to donors that describe the impact of their gift.
Invite Donors to Program Events	Direct interaction with program participants best encourages donors to give again. Contacts recommend that program directors invite high-level donors to program events so that they may meet exceptional students and volunteers participating in the program, receive tours of program facilities, and better understand how their funds are being used. Development officers may also formally recognize and thank donors at these events.
Name Events in Lieu of Physical Spaces	Naming opportunities recognize gifts of major donors, but opportunities are limited since most programs do not maintain dedicated operating space. To alleviate this problem, program, staff with the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at **University D** held a week of activities open to all University students and called it ""Name of Donor" Week." In this case where the donor was a private corporation, company executives were invited to the week's events to explain why they gave to the program. Donors appreciated the ability to see their gift "in action."
Operate Recognition Banquets for Major Donors	Profiled institutions hold institution wide or division-specific banquets for donors who gave large gifts. These events typically recognize scholarship donors and direct program participants alongside those who gave to other success programs. The University B hosts an annual reception honoring major gift donors. Development staff recently changed the name of this event from the "Scholarship Dinner" to the "Donor Recognition Dinner" to acknowledge that donors increasingly give large gifts to academic and student support programs in addition to or instead of scholarships. Staff members seek to ensure these donors feel just as appreciated as those who give to scholarship funds.

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Choreograph Customized Donor Experiences to Facilitate Meaningful Encounters with Students

Program directors and divisional leaders should facilitate customized experiences for major program donors to engage ongoing giving. For example, a donor interested in funding a program that provides leadership opportunities for Hispanic students might participate in a half-day on campus where they attend a student leader workshop, visit the program center, meet with the director, have coffee with current program participants or program graduates.

5) Research Methodology

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- How do advancement leaders determine which student success programs and initiatives that would benefit from fundraising? What types of initiatives and campus services are the most frequent beneficiaries of donor gift agreements or proposals?

- How do contacts describe their fundraising initiatives focused on student success and support programs?

- How are responsibilities for management and execution of student success fundraising campaigns or initiatives assigned to or dispersed among advancement staff and/or unit-level development officers?

- What prospective donor entities do development officers prioritize in the cultivation and solicitation of funds for student success programs? How do administrators recognize and acknowledge gifts made in support of student success programs?

- How or to what extent do development officers collaborate with institutional research or student affairs staff to generate evaluative data to assess the effectiveness of student success programs supported by raised funds?

Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries (eab.com)

  - Education Advisory Board. "Innovations in Student Affairs Fundraising: Leveraging Relationships with Affinity Groups, Parents, and Alumni." 2011.

- The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://chronicle.com)

- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (http://nces.ed.gov/)

- Profiled institution websites

Research Parameters

The Forum interviewed development officers that raise funds for student success.

A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief

Institution	Location	Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Undergraduate/Total)	Classification
University A	South	20,000/25,000	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University B	Mid-Atlantic	28,000/42,000	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
University C	South	26,000/33,000	Research Universities (high research activity)
University D	South	40,000/52,000	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University D	Pacific West	26,000/32,000	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University E	Pacific West	23.000/28,000	Research Universities (very high research activity)