Conversation Guide: Creating a One-Stop CFR Shop

How to Use This Guide

This conversation guide is designed for CAOs and institutional leadership to help decide whether and how to centralize their corporate and foundation relations (CFR) function. For each section, note outstanding questions and potential roadblocks before moving on to the next section. This will help guide decision-making.

Strategic Alignment

- What institutional priorities would centralization most directly advance?
- Is there leadership support for unified corporate engagement? If not, how will you secure it?
- How would a centralized model strengthen or harm university brand consistency?

Current-State Assessment

- Have you mapped existing corporate engagement activities across units?
- To what extent is there duplication, inconsistent outreach, or confusion around existing CFR relationships?
- What feedback have you received from corporate partners?

Stakeholder Readiness

- What stakeholders need to be involved in centralizing operations?
- How will you educate units on the opportunities and limitations associated with centralization?
- How will you ensure there are champions to support centralization across campus?

Structural Considerations

- Does your shop currently have a centralized, hybrid, or decentralized model for CFR?
- How well are roles and responsibilities currently defined?
- Will a centralized model improve accountability? Are there any potential drawbacks to consider?

Operational Readiness

- What processes needed to be standardized for outreach and stewardship?
- What investments need to be made such that your CRM can support centralized management of corporate relationships?
- How confident are you that corporate partnership data can be integrated institution-wide?

Resource Requirements

- What staffing or skills are needed that aren't currently present?
- What technology investments will be needed?
- What transition costs do you anticipate with moving to a centralized model?

Success Metrics

- Are CFR KPIs defined?
- Which cross-campus partners need to weigh in on metrics?
- How will you solicit feedback to ensure ongoing refinement?
- How will corporate and foundation partners evaluate the centralized model?

Implementation Planning

- How much time have you allotted for a phased rollout plan?
- Who is responsible for disseminating communications to internal and external stakeholders?
- Who is responsible for creating training materials for staff?

Monitoring and Evaluation

- What risks should be taken into account as you begin the rollout?
- How will you address setbacks that arise as you transition to a centralized model?
- How will you communicate progress to internal stakeholders (e.g., president, Board?) as well as donors?