



Navigating What's Next

Advancement Trends Shaping the Role of the Dean



Dr. Holly Chatham

Managing Director and Principal

hchatham@eab.com

Working In Higher Ed Keeps Getting Harder

Deans are asked to wear more and more hats...



Expanding Advancement Duties Create an Oversized Responsibility for Deans...

- "25% of my time is spent on advancement...the president has a target of 50%."
- 24% of deans have a fundraising goal that they are held accountable for every year

Fundraising asked to Make Up for Higher Ed Woes

4

Higher Ed Revenue Faces Threats from all Sides...

15 state governments in 2025 proposed or enacted cuts to higher ed funding

\$8.2 billion in cuts to federal awards

13% of Millennial and Gen Z alumni report giving to their alma mater

...Deans Have Little Training to Meet the Moment



"I've never been trained for this...the reality is I am not a development officer."



"When I first started as a dean, I had very little understanding of fundraising...I only thought of fundraising as you have a development officer who will go do it. I didn't understand the complexity of the job"

Source: [2026 National Alumni Survey Annual Report](#). CMAC, 2026; Anderson, Lee B., [The Role Academic Deans Play in Public Higher Education Fundraising](#). UNF Graduate Theses and Dissertations, 2021; Allum, Jeff, et al., [American Law School Dean Study](#). Washington, DC: Association of American Law Schools, 2022; Woodhouse, Kellie, "Deans increasingly required to be top fundraisers," [Higher Ed Dive](#), July 13, 2015; Forrest, Page, et al., "Higher Education's Uncertain Fiscal Future," [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#), November 12, 2025; Center for American Progress, "Mapping Federal Funding Cuts to U.S. Colleges and Universities," July 23, 2025; EAB interviews and analysis.

Deans Critical in Reaching Advancement Goals



Academic Expertise & Connections Ideal for Working with Donors

“

“Deans are the **best people on campus to articulate the mission and discuss the funding needed** to create and build a compelling vision for an academic program.”

Director of Development

”

Deans are Ideal for Donor Cultivation & Engagement



Deans are **passionate** about unit and school initiatives



Deans are **content experts** & have industry connections



Deans are **involved with faculty** & other academic leaders

Advancement Trends Shaping the Role of the Dean

6

Today's Agenda

External

Internal

State of Advancement



Evolving Donor Demands



The Rise of the Perma - Campaign



Advancement Trends Shaping the Role of the Dean

7

Today's Agenda

External

Internal

State of Advancement



Evolving Donor Demands



The Rise of the Perma - Campaign



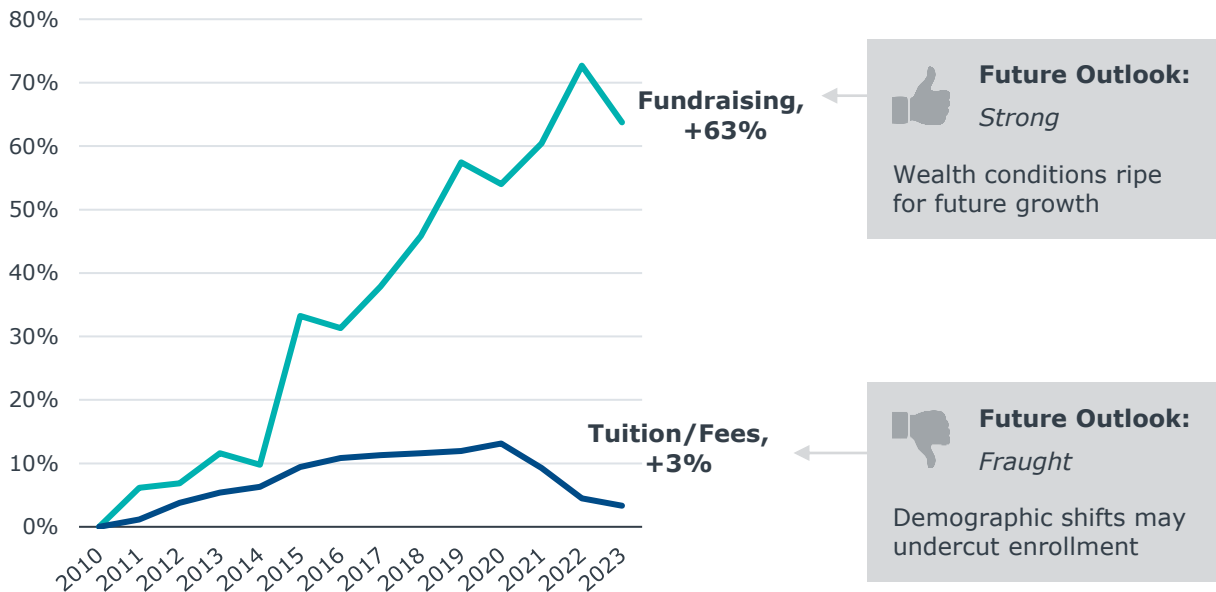


The Era of Good Feelings (About Fundraisers)

With Higher Ed Revenues Faltering, Advancement Emerges as a Bright Spot

Advancement Growth Outpaces Stagnating Tuition

Cumulative Fundraising Cash-In and Tuition/Fee Revenue Change, 2010-2023¹









1) Inflation-adjusted to 2023 dollars.
©2026 by EAB. All Rights Reserved. eab.com







Source: Voluntary Support of Education Survey, 2010-2023; National Center for Education Statistics, 2010-2023; EAB interviews and analysis.

Synchronized Compression Hits Higher Ed Budgets

Institutional Expenses

Source	Outlook	Strategic Imperatives
Instruction		<i>Rebalance faculty workloads; expand more flexible delivery and staffing models</i>
Academic & student support		<i>Automate routine tasks; scale high-touch supports selectively</i>
Institutional support		<i>Reduce hidden subsidies; digitize back-office functions</i>
Research & public service		<i>Double-down on strength areas with extramural funding potential; share costly infrastructure</i>
Auxiliaries		<i>Decommission underused space; invest in units with clear pay-back; outsource non-core services</i>
Financial aid		<i>Optimize financial aid packages; secure employer partnerships or state/local support</i>

Institutional Revenue

Source	Outlook	Strategic Imperatives
Tuition & fees		<i>Differentiate your value proposition; align programs with market demand</i>
Government funding		<i>Demonstrate ROI; tie outcomes to policy priorities</i>
Auxiliaries		<i>Monetize campus assets year-round; maximize housing/dining margins; launch new fee-based services</i>
Private gifts		<i>Grow major gifts; expand corporate/foundation ties; link giving to visible impact</i>
Investment returns		<i>Diversify asset mix; manage spending discipline</i>
Private grants & contracts		<i>Build long-term partnerships aligned with institutional strengths; pursue fewer, targeted opportunities</i>

The Changing Fundraising Landscape



Giving Totals Remain Strong, But Dollars Are Increasingly Concentrated

**\$592.5
Billion**

**Total U.S. Charitable
Giving (2024)**

Charitable giving in the U.S. remains historically strong with an increase of 3.3% when adjusted for inflation

**\$61.5
Billion**

**Higher Education
Fundraising (2024)**

Philanthropy to colleges and universities grew modestly by 3% when adjusted for inflation

**\$11.7B in megagifts
in 2024**



A growing share of giving comes from very large gifts, while participation from smaller donors continues to fall.

**66% of giving is from
individual donors**



Individuals remain the backbone of philanthropy, though dollars are increasingly concentrated in megagifts.

**7% decline in individual
donor counts**



Even as dollars rise, donor counts are shrinking — putting more pressure on pipeline development.

Policy Shocks Add Complexity

Advancement Not Immune to Political Changes



Research Gaps

- **Workload evaluation policies must adapt** in an environment where faculty struggle to fund research
- Faculty inexperienced **securing private grants** and may need deans' help



*"Clearly, we **cannot fill the gap** and we're never going to be able to, but we have to try."*



Compliance & Donor Stewardship

- **Gift agreements reassessed** for DEI compliance
- **Donors concerned** with rising presidential scrutiny and lawsuits



*"We're trying to be **responsive to donors** without drawing further attention to ourselves from the administration."*



Endowment and Tax Threats

- **Endowment tax** raises concerns for donors
- **New tax laws** may decrease giving, disincentivizing **DAF**¹ use for strategic giving and dean-led giving drives



*"Donors are questioning if an endowment tax is going to mean their gift will have **less impact**."*

“

*"We spend half of our time rewriting gift agreements from 25 years ago ...
The environment in which we can write gift agreements has change."*

Dean, School of Engineering

”

Historic Challenges Persist



Rising Campaign Goals

+394%

Increase in campaign goals, 2020-2032

Non-Profit Competition

2M

Registered non-profits compete for funding

Alumni Giving Still Down

31%

Of alumni who donate give to their alma mater

Donor Demands for Impact

97%

Of donors cite **impact** as major motivator

Public Value Crisis

64%

Of people don't feel higher education is very important

Source: "2025 National Alumni Survey," RNL; "2025 Philanthropic Landscape," CCS Fundraising, September 9, 2025; "Gap Between Donor Expectations," NonProfit PRO, February 18, 2025; J Jones, "Perceived Importance of College Hits New Low," Gallup, September 11, 2025; K Fallon, "Top Concerns Entering 2025," Urban Institute; EAB interviews and analysis.

Advancement Trends Shaping the Role of the Dean

13

Today's Agenda

External

Internal

State of Advancement



Evolving Donor Demands



The Rise of the Perma - Campaign



Big Gifts Power Fundraising Growth

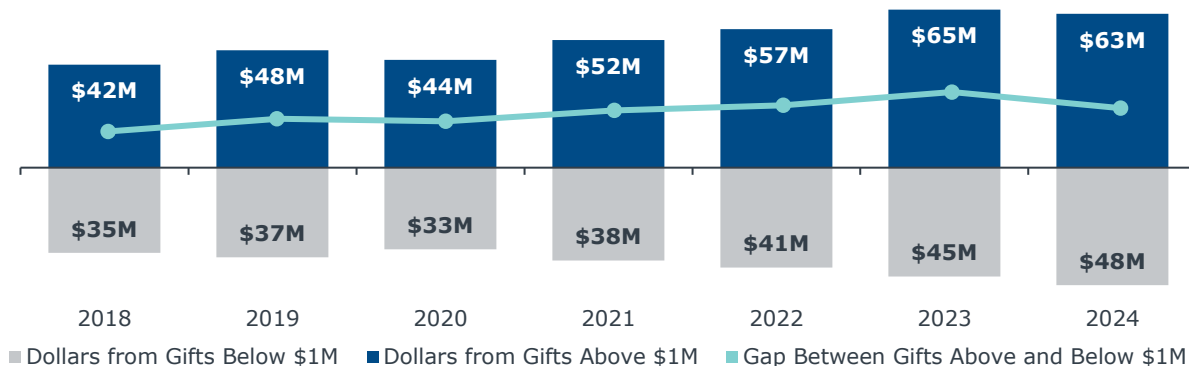


\$1M+ Gifts Needed to Reach Rising Goals

62% Of fundraising production growth **attributed to \$1M+ gifts**, on average, 2018–2024

Principal Gift Revenue Consistently Outpaces Smaller Gifts

Average Annual Fundraising Production from Gifts Above and Below \$1M, 2018–2024



Generational Challenges on the Horizon

Great Wealth Transfer Coming Soon

Boomers hold majority of wealth

Current wealth: \$83 Trillion

2025

Millennials and Gen X to inherit \$124 trillion

Current Wealth: \$60 Trillion

2050



50% of wealth transfer will come from **2% of households**

\$105 trillion will be transferred to heirs with \$18 trillion going to charity



Boomers **prefer direct giving** (e.g., cash and equities)

72% of young people are **skeptical of traditional investments** (i.e., stocks and bonds)



Older generations more likely to give to **"institutions"**

Millennials motivated by **social impact** and **transparency**

Source: "Cerulli Anticipates \$124 Trillion in Wealth Will Transfer Through 2048," Cerulli Associates, December 5, 2024; "2024 Bank of America Private Bank Study of Wealthy Americans," Bank of America Private Bank, 2024; J Coacci, "America's Richest Generation is Only Getting Richer," Fortune, September 3, 2025; EAB interviews and analysis.



The Millennial Wealth Boom

Younger Generations Expected to Gain in the Years Ahead

Millennials' Financial Wealth Expected To Grow Significantly



\$46 trillion

By 2048, Millennials will inherit \$46 trillion in assets to become the **richest generation in history**

Women Rising as Major Players in Ultra-High-Net-Worth Giving

- ▶ **Women**, who constitute only 11% of UHNW individuals, **now represent 22% of larger donors**

Average Age of Ultra-High-Net-Worth Decreasing

- ▶ Between 2020 and 2023, wealth of 18–39-year-olds grew by 80%, outpacing other age groups by 30%; a stark departure from the past
- ▶ Between 2014 and 2019 the average age of investors worth \$25M+ fell from 58 to 47 years old

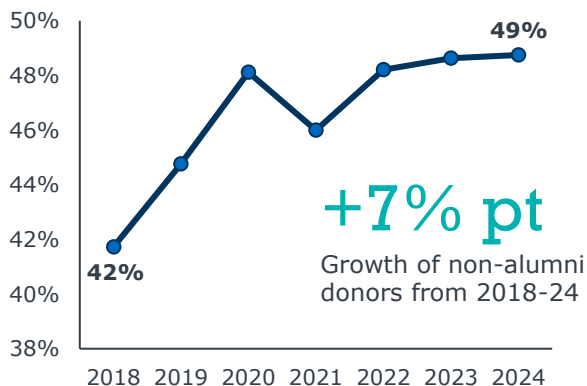
Source: "[Cerulli Anticipates \\$124 Trillion in Wealth Will Transfer Through 2048](#)," Cerulli Associates, December 5, 2024; [The Wealth Report](#), 18th Edition. Knight Frank, 2024; [Ultra High Net Worth Philanthropy 2024](#), Altrata, Mar. 13, 2024; Rajashri, Emanuel, and Lahey, "[Wealth Inequality by Age in the Post-Pandemic Era](#)," Liberty Street Economics, Federal Reserve Bank of New York, February 7, 2024; EAB interviews and analysis.

The Overlooked Donor Base



Non-Alums Account for Growing Share of Total Donors

Median % of Non-Alumni Donors, FY18-FY24



50%

Of all higher education **principal gift donors** were non-alumni between 2005-2021

“

Larger First Gifts from Friends and Family

“Non-alumni donors in our principal gifts portfolio typically **give at higher levels earlier in their engagement** and advance more quickly to transformational giving.

Their philanthropic goals are often well-defined from the outset, driving a more direct path toward major impact.

*Alan Taylor, AVC for Principal Gifts,
North Carolina State University*

”

Higher Ed Not Ready for Next-Gen Donors



Millennials Demand More From Institutions

Current Donors



Meaningful Impact

Seek giving opportunities as solutions to real world problems



Millennial Major Donors

Measurable Progress

Seek quicker turnaround with measured data toward a goal



Endowments & Pledges

Attracted to the long-term impact of endowments & pledges



Current-Use Gifts

Attracted to the tangible results & ability to address issues in real time



Unrestricted Support

Trust institutions to allocate funds where most needed



Specific-Person Support

Trust only specific faculty or programs to make desired impact

Pressure for Constant Ideas, Connections, and Impact

Top Donor Demands



Ongoing Fresh Ideas

Multidisciplinary ideas aimed at **solving real-world problems**

Visionary initiatives that reshape schools or programs



Increased Expert Involvement

Access to experts that can **bring their own vision to life**

Regularly **include deans or faculty** in all gift meetings



Measurable Impact

Results delivered quickly & regularly

Invitations to **witness impact firsthand**



Donors Seek Transformative Impact

Primary Affinity to Issues, Not Institutions

Donors Are Impact-Centric

62%

Want information on how the organization plans to use the gift

75%

Want information on results achieved with their gift

64%

Want stories about people who were helped

How Next-Generation Donors Consider Philanthropic Investments¹

- 1 | Set Goals** Decide philanthropic goals, then search for potential recipients
- 2 | Evaluate Orgs** Conduct research and due diligence before deciding what to support
- 3 | Solve Problems** Fund efforts that address root causes and attempt systematic solutions
- 4 | Analyze Results** Prefer information on proven effectiveness or measureable impact

“ I enjoy telling the stories ... the money and opportunities are there for students and for us for philanthropy.

Dean, *School of Health*



1) Survey participants were individuals aged 21 to 40 years-old who were “currently or potentially active in their families’ significant philanthropic processes and/or who are wealth creators themselves and currently or potentially active in their own philanthropy.”

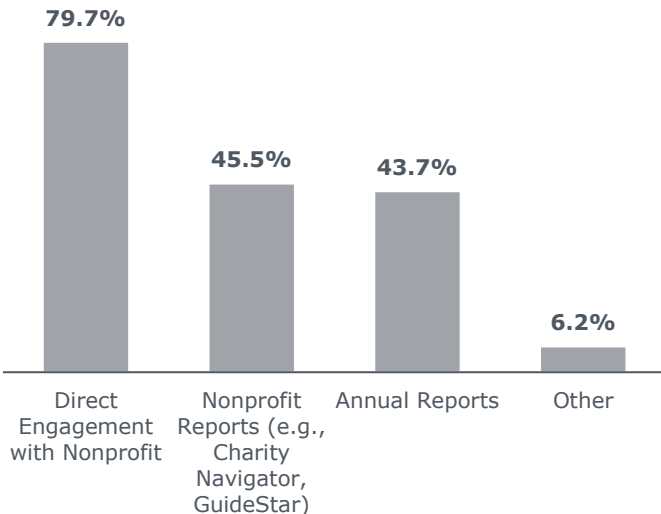
Source: Burk P, “The Burk Donor Survey: Where Philanthropy Is Headed in 2013,” Cygnus Applied Research, Inc., Sept. 2013; Johnson J, “Including the Young and the Rich,” *New York Times*, Apr. 18, 2014, www.nytimes.com/2014/04/20/fashion/white-househosts-next-generation-young-and-rich.html?_r=2; Johnson Center for Philanthropy, 21/64, “#NextGenDonors: Respecting Legacy, Revolutionizing Philanthropy,” 2013, www.pittsburghfoundation.org/sites/default/files/next-gen-donor-report-updated.pdf; *Fulfilling the Donor Investor Mandate*, Philanthropy Leadership Council, The Advisory Board Company 2014, 11; Advancement Forum interviews and analysis.

People Give to People



Direct Engagement Favored as an Evaluation Tool

How High Net Worth Philanthropists Evaluate Organizations



55%

Of alumni consider relationships with their professors to be a primary source of affinity for their college, university, or school

Source: "The 2014 U.S. Trust Study of High Net Worth Philanthropy," US Trust, Oct. 2014; Morgridge C, *Every Gift Matters: How Your Passion Can Change the World*, Austin: Greenleaf Book Group, 2015, 38; "Alumni Attitude Study," Performance Enhancement Group, in Henderson N, "It's Academic," Council for Advancement and Support of Education, Jan. 2014; Advancement Forum interviews and analysis.

Advancement Trends Shaping the Role of the Dean

22

Today's Agenda

External

Internal

State of Advancement



Evolving Donor Demands



The Rise of the Perma - Campaign



Campaigns Are Here to Stay, at Least Internally



Presidents and Boards Will Continue the Campaign Push

Campaign Goals Map to Skyrocketing Expectations

+394%

Median campaign goal by campaign end year, 2020-2032

*500 million-dollar campaigns don't cut it anymore, especially not in today's landscape. We **need to be in a one-billion-dollar campaign**. Anything less would be disappointing.*



President, Selective Private

*We know none of the Ivy Leagues are doing 'campaigns' anymore. I think we've finally found the ceiling to campaigns and it's anything over \$5B. **Whatever comes next is a campaign by no name**, so what's the difference?*



President, Regional Public

Perma-Campaigns...The New Normal in Higher Ed

Constant Campaigns Increase Demand for Internal Support

“

“Even if schools are not publicly in a campaign, they are effectively in the silent phase. **I haven't heard any colleague mention taking a break between campaigns anymore.** If they are, they're doing a micro-campaign. Which is still a campaign.”

VP of Development

”

Characteristics of Perma-Campaigns



No Breaks

All-hands-on-deck, all the time



Wavering Timelines

Campaign timelines extend beyond initial plans



Rising Campaign Goals

Dollar goals grow higher due to increased board expectations



Generic Initiatives

Catch-all buckets increase usability of dollars on campus

A New Wave of Campaigns



Innovations Adapt to Current Giving Patterns

New Campaign Types

● Micro-Campaigns

A short campaign focused on **one main initiative** such as student scholarships or faculty

● Sprint Campaigns

A comprehensive campaign where **initiatives are tackled one after another**, rather than all at once

● “No Campaign”

Fundraising with a production goal in mind but **no special branding or announce goal**

● Big Ideas Campaign

Working on cross-campus initiatives that **create impact beyond the institution**, benefiting society at large

Campaign Success Hinges on Top Donations

76%

Of revenue comes from gifts
+ \$100K for the median institution

87%

Of revenue comes from gifts
+ \$50K for the median institution

Tackling a Marathon in Relay Sprints

Applying Principals of Micro-Campaigns to Comprehensive Campaigns

Campaign Sprints Tackle Key Initiatives One at a Time



How It Works at Decentralized Shops

Leadership Sets Key Institution Priority



Central Staff and Relevant Dean 'Sprint'



Other Units Continue Routine Fundraising

E.g., capital project and endowed professorships

E.g., marketing and finance partner with engineering leadership and fundraisers

E.g., athletics fundraises for small priorities

Regaining Relevance



Current Appeals Don't Motivate the Majority

What is Losing Relevance

- **Generic mass appeals**
- **Trust in higher ed's inherent value**
- Urgency to reach dollar goal
- Peer pressure
- Transactional recognition

1

Creating **differentiated campaigns** that communicate higher ed's value

2

Using **tailored impact messaging** in place of mass appeals

"Making our messaging and campaigns relevant to a broader audience is difficult. We've always just been focused on alumni. Not anymore. **I have to help make our upcoming public launch feel impactful to people who may never have set foot on our campus.** It's not easy."

- Executive Director, Campaign Strategy, Private Research University

What Higher Ed Brings to the Table



Our Main Value Propositions Are Often Generic



Education

*"We are committed to providing an **exceptional learning environment** that empowers students to achieve their full potential."*

- What makes a learning environment exceptional?
- How does that help students get jobs?



Community

*"By **fostering partnerships** and promoting inclusive opportunities, we ensure that the benefits of higher education **extend into communities everywhere.**"*

- Partnerships with whom?
- What value does that bring to my family?



Research

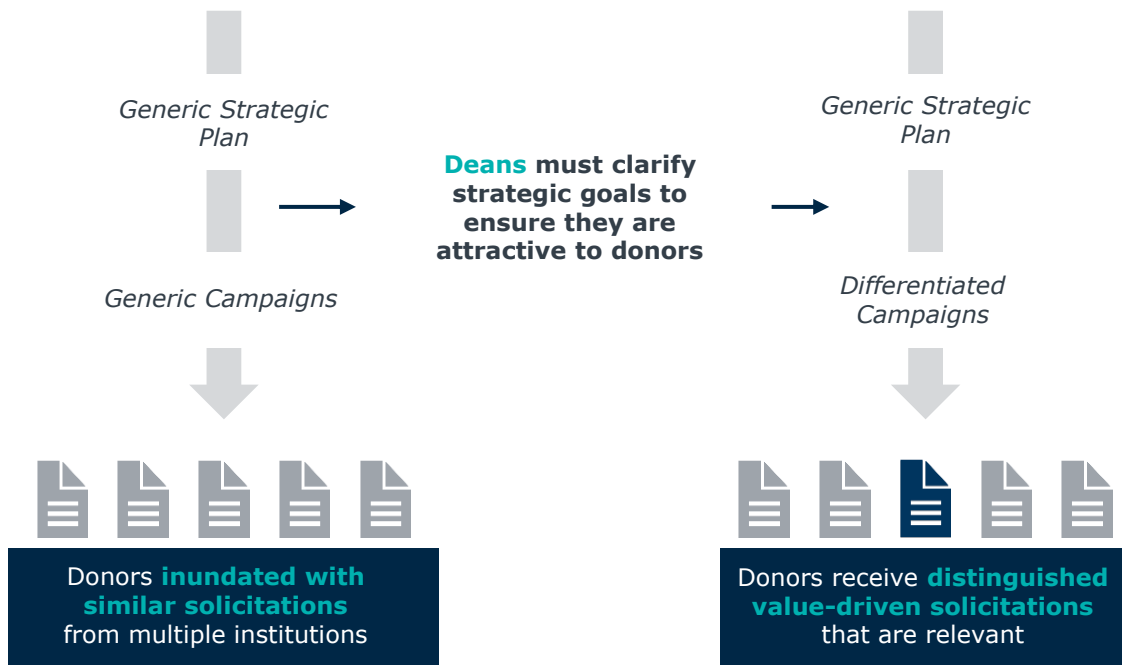
*"Our mission is to **advance discovery and innovation** that addresses the world's most pressing challenges."*

- What is the quantifiable impact?
- How does research impact students?

The Dean's Role in Elevating Campaigns



High-Impact Campaigns Differentiate Institutional Priorities



Best Messages Are Relevant, Specific, and Provable

Undifferentiated Claims Standard strategic plan language	Specific Institutional Differentiators Approaches or assets that allow the institution to deliver unique benefits	Potential Support Outcomes data, social proof, external recognition
Our students go on to great careers	Because we map liberal arts to high-growth fields, our BA graduates have options in IT, business, and healthcare	BA graduates' starting salaries 25% greater than average
We're community-centric	We strengthen local ties by engaging community partners in our work – from participating in reverse career fairs to sitting in advisory positions on our Enterprise Partnerships team.	100+ employers participate in mentorship program
We lead with innovation	We seek out the best and brightest industry partners to work with our faculty on advancing healthcare and technology for our community and beyond.	<i>New York Times</i> article profiling inaugural women's health consortium

Reimagining Campaign Messaging



Lead with your audience's interests, not yours



Bring statistics to life with relevant reference points



Focus on "magnets" not "wedges"



Anticipate and resolve potential doubts early



Use an Outside-In Approach to Address the "So What" for Your Audience

<i>Before</i>	"Our faculty secured six new patents last year"	"95% of our aviation students have jobs within 6 months of graduation"	"Our graduation rate is among the highest in the country"
<i>After</i>	"Over 150 regional health clinics use medical tech patented by our university"	"The regional airport was able to add 20 new flight options because we produce 70% of their pilots"	"80% of our graduates stay and work within the state, contributing to ed attainment goals and tax revenue "

How Can We Demonstrate Distinctiveness?



Two-part workshop for Deans, Department Chairs, and Select Faculty

Ready to Use Resources for You and Your Team

1

Use the Science of Story to Turn Research into Advancement Impact

Participants will gain:

- Practical approaches to translate academic work and impact into compelling, donor-centered narratives
- Plug-and-play framework for crafting clear, compelling stories that resonate with donors

2

Active Stewardship to Drive Advancement Success

Participants will gain:

- Useful strategies to engage donors meaningfully in alignment with academic priorities
- Clear sense of their role in fostering a culture of gratitude and accountability
- Audit to assess their stewardship effectiveness



Key Questions for Deans on the Future of Campaigns

33

Core Challenge

Emerging Questions



Dollar Goal

How can I work with advancement staff to set an achievable dollar goal for my college's projects?



Campus Value

How can I articulate the value of my college's goals beyond the operations of my unit and instead for the whole campus?



Engagement

How do I use campaigns to connect and engage with donors interested in giving principal gifts for my college's project?



Relevance

How can I communicate what my college does in a way that differentiates and resonates with donors and the public?



Today's Agenda

Ext

Internal

COMPELLING IDEAS
 Today's donor investors are looking for ideas that are innovative, transformative, and have a high potential for impact. They are also looking for ideas that are aligned with their own values and interests.

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT
 Donor investors are looking for ideas that have a high potential for impact. They are also looking for ideas that are aligned with their own values and interests.

CREDIBLE CONNECTIONS
 Donor investors are looking for ideas that have a high potential for impact. They are also looking for ideas that are aligned with their own values and interests.

CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS

- Get the right people in the room
- Define what a donor would bring to the table
- Create a clear, credible case for investment
- Have who impact reporting to agency or institution
- Strengthen existing partners, align existing skills and capabilities to address and solve strategic and high-potential issues
- Help faculty members develop a compelling pitch

What Donor Investors Want from Higher Ed

Today's higher and postsecondary education institutions are being asked to do more than ever before. They are being asked to provide a high-quality education, to be a leader in research and innovation, and to be a force for social and economic change. To continue to succeed in this environment, higher education institutions need to work with donor investors to create a strong and sustainable financial base.

State of Advancement

Evolving Donor Demands

Next Gen Donors

The Rise of the Perma - Campaign

EAB

MEMBER REPORT SERIES

Corporate and Foundation Relations

Maximizing Opportunities for Engagement and Giving

Targeting the Next Generation of Principal Gift Donors

The next generation of high-net-worth donors is increasingly focused on their own problems and solutions. To attract this generation, higher education institutions need to work with donor investors to create a strong and sustainable financial base.

Partner Report on Experience

Make Good on Your Promise

Focus on Change, Not Charity

Advancement Trends Shaping the Role of the Dean

35

Today's Agenda

External

Internal

State of Advancement



Evolving Donor Demands



The Rise of the Perma - Campaign





202-747-1000 | eab.com

 @eab  @eab-  @WeAreEAB

