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Because of limited resources and rising populations, more intentional relationships among university departments are needed to achieve common goals, especially in parent programming. This chapter focuses on novel partnering opportunities for student affairs and institutional advancement departments.

Partnering with Families Through Institutional Advancement

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The current environment in higher education creates an optimal opportunity for student affairs (SA) and institutional advancement (IA) to work together. Once compartmentalized with independent goals, these two areas now focus on student development, and they bring both friendships and families to the campus. Their work with the families of students best exemplifies their interdependent potential.

Many campuses now offer or coordinate some type of parent program based on the premise that parents can contribute significantly by volunteering, networking, and donating their time, talent, and resources. This is an understandable and appropriate trend, especially considering the growing lack of resources; however, many potential opportunities remain.

There are many reasons why involving parents in the campus community is a good idea. Parents may be graduates or students, business owners or community leaders, regents or trustees, politicians or activists, opinion leaders or "merely" voters. Between the activities of IA and SA, parents in each of these roles may be contacted. How campuses coordinate these relationships and what drives the working philosophy behind parent programming are key issues for institutions.

Over the past twenty years, the roles of IA and SA have changed, most notably in the extent to which the two areas have been brought closer together. Although much of today's literature on enrollment management focuses on the impact of admissions and retention figures, the coordinated

efforts of IA and SA embody the essence of a true enrollment management philosophy. When the two entities become allies in the student-centered institutional mission, it highlights the energy, expertise, enthusiasm, and awareness of people that each department contributes. Moreover, each can diminish what it sometimes perceives as campus balkanization by reaching out to involve the other.

Present Environment

SA now deals with everything from on-campus activities to late-night crisis calls, from homecoming traditions to community service, and from financial aid to legal aid for students battling family law or immigration law issues. Truly, student affairs touches the social, psychological, educational, and experiential growth of students. IA, in contrast, has usually been seen simply as the money source, particularly in these days of mini-, mega-, capital, and comprehensive campaigns. The processes leading to a concerted fundraising effort and the effects of new money on the campus can combine to create long-term change at the institution.

To launch a significant fundraising campaign effectively, an institution articulates its mission and its method of delivering on its organizational vision. Included in that process is self-reflection about its ultimate goal. For most schools, that goal is to provide a complete education to students. That analysis of organizational purpose-mission-vision translates into a case statement that fundraisers use to persuade foundations, businesses, and agencies to support the institution and its work. But no matter how the case statement reads, the bottom line is that donors support work that enhances the students' educational (academic and social) experiences. Thus, SA represents the students of a university while IA tries to convey that students are at the center of all donations. SA and IA must join their activities, their perspectives, and their communications if they are to succeed. Both programs need the time, talent, and treasure of others to fulfill their goals.

Bringing Families into Campus Life. Parents are critical to IA and SA activities, initiatives, and communications strategies. IA, SA, and parents can make up a formidable team that takes an institution to lofty new heights. However, strong leadership, a collaborative environment, and consistent internal commitment to the long term are required for success.

Many universities and colleges sponsor parent programs. Many of these are relatively new initiatives when compared with alumni and development programs. As with most new developments, building parent programs requires a leader who compares the potential costs of a program with its anticipated benefits. This can be done only if there is a long-term vision. Two such institutional initiatives with long-range plans built in are the University of British Columbia's coordinated communications efforts and Cal Poly's Parent Family Association.

Until about fifteen years ago, precious little research was available on the advancement profession (Rowland, 1986). However, research on the role of the president or development officer (Worth, 1995) and theories about donor motivation and system management of donors and prospects (Cook and Lasher, 1996) now appear more frequently. A common theme in today's readings and institutional self-reports is that parent programs are successful, essential to IA and SA programming, and enhanced when the two work together.

Collaboration in Action. IA and SA professionals tend to compartmentalize their audiences. Student affairs serves all types of students: full-time, part-time, working, married, commuter, resident, advanced, remedial, traditional, nontraditional, underrepresented, underserved, and so on. Institutional advancement targets alumni, current donors, major donor prospects, planned giving prospects, opinion leaders, volunteers, advocates, sustaining sponsors, board members, and industry liaisons. Parents and families of current students make up the one set of stakeholders that often possess significant connections to both lists. It is incumbent upon higher education institutions to develop programs that effectively identify, track, move, manage, cultivate, and steward these families. This requires cooperative interaction and unselfish collaboration.

Cooperative Interaction. In higher education, working cooperatively means stepping outside the silos that often form in bureaucratic organizations. There is educational cooperation when the business is driven by the desire to help the institution fulfill its mission to students before worrying about parochial office or program needs. Even in these competitive times, sharing leads to success. Sharing goals, strategies, objectives, techniques, data, resources, expertise, and planning eliminates the need for cumbersome, authoritarian dictates that spawn committees, task forces, watchdogs, and a proliferation of reports on every nuance of work in order to assure that IA and SA activities relate effectively.

Unselfish Collaboration. On many campuses, collaboration may mean taking risks. Because strategic planning often occurs only at the onset of a major capital campaign, leadership is clearly required for the effective collaboration between IA and SA in their work toward a friendly, professional, unselfish, and communicative environment. When IA and SA agree to share in these basic tenets both formally and informally, the entire institution improves.

Cooperation and collaboration can take many forms. For example, when Texas Tech began expanding its presence throughout the state of Texas, the university established offices in several cities that included development, alumni, and admissions personnel. Other universities have similar initiatives in their home states or even nationally, especially when beginning fundraising. The University of Wyoming researched a Colorado-based office to present a unified local front to their constituents on development, admissions,

and career services. When multiple points of contact are offered to parents, it conveys a regard for the personal talents and abilities they may offer to the institution.

Parents as People. To maximize the potential of collaboration, remember that parents are people first. Friendly yet professional communications that highlight the commonalities among people will draw parents into the process. Institutions must validate that parents are not just distant consumers.

Leslie Konantz of the University of British Columbia asserts that the institution's commitment to lifelong relationships is a primary reason for its strong collaborative environment. This commitment was initiated by the president. Its effects are far-reaching. "It is not hard to manage [parental relationships between the offices]. There is no need to. Multiple [methods of] communication are good because our messages are coordinated and complementary" (L. Konantz, personal communication with the author, August 29, 2000). Though some parents are targeted in development-based cultivation strategies, the overall strategies for parents are mutually beneficial because of institutional collaboration. This sort of concerted yet open style allows for a more genuine communications approach.

Parents were people before they became parents. If an institution has that simple understanding, it can create outstanding programs. Identifying, managing, cultivating, and stewarding can be done with only a few of the most extraordinary donor prospects, but most parent relationships are formed and grow naturally as a result of well-managed activities, sensitivity, and good communications strategies.

Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs describes the motivations of individuals ranging from basic survival to self-actualization; baseline needs must be satisfied before progression to a new developmental level is possible. Institutional advancement can demonstrate to parent-donors the basic effect of their contributions by allowing them to meet student recipients in person or see them in academic action. Parent-donors or parent-volunteers will see that their contribution of time or resources is valuable when they are invited to join the campus family in activities, special events, campus festivities, formal dinners, and other activities. Because IA and SA usually are the organizers of such events, they can emphasize the whole of a person—body, heart, and brain—when they arrange opportunities for classes, lectures, demonstrations, and competitions to become shared experiences. But before undertaking parent program development, an institution should make the commitment to cooperate, collaborate, and treat parents as people first.

Focusing on the Right Issues. In 1983 Princeton University embarked on a three-year survey and analysis of parents of undergraduates in an effort to strengthen communication with and activities for them and to acquire information that would be helpful to other institutions. Halsey (1985) reviewed and broadened the findings to many campuses, private and public, large and small, research and liberal arts. The survey responses showed that parents wanted to receive more information when it was perceived as a "per-

sonal communication." Parents preferred warm and personal pieces that indicated the university's understanding of their sacrifices to send a daughter or son to college. Communications conveying that the student's attendance there contributed to the institution were especially appreciated.

Many institutions today, however, create situations at the other end of the continuum. They inundate their audiences, especially parents, with too many communication pieces. Mixed messages from many different offices can be inconsistent and confounding. This is expensive and counterproductive. IA and SA should coordinate messages about events, programs, and campus life so that parents receive a consistent, comprehensive view of the institution and gain a greater sense of the school's commitment to its students.

IA and SA can collaborate to collect and convey authentic stories about parental sacrifices. Families want to feel a connection in the grand scheme. For example, the sense of loss felt by parents of first-generation college students or those from cultures with particularly strong family connections can be as poignant for them as the writing of checks and signing of loan papers is difficult for others. Sharing these communal stories creates a campus bond.

According to the Princeton survey, parents expressed special interest in reading profiles of faculty and students and their academic pursuits, stories of the university's plans, insights into campus life, and articles about performing arts and sports. It is important to note what parents at individual institutions prioritize.

Although parent communications convey information and attitudes, when parents are involved in activities they can often make more significant connections. There are myriad collaboration possibilities between IA and SA, particularly with the development and alumni relations offices of IA. SA personnel tend to stay close to campus, except for admissions recruiters on the road. IA staff often travel too, visiting with donors, alumni chapters, and other networks around the country and the world. Opportunities abound for willing IA and SA offices as they collaborate on programs that involve parents in activities either on campus or in their hometowns.

Building on the concept that parents are people first, it makes sense that they want to hear about people first. Princeton's work affirmed what most SA and IA professionals know: Do not just ask for money. When institutions involve parents, their time, talents, and treasure can follow. Some parents connect for only a limited time, while their students are enrolled in school; however, others connect for a lifetime.

Leadership, Collaboration, and Commitment. When SA and IA professionals compare notes, descriptions of major changes in their areas generally begin with "our president decided. . . . " A key component of an institution's quest to involve and engage parents in meaningful ways is often the executive leader's decision to do so. Without such top-level commitment (especially when that commitment is articulated in a strategic plan or vision statement), the overworked, overstretched, underfunded programs in IA and SA can too easily revert to the "old ways" of doing business.

Leaders at both the presidential level and the IA and SA vice-presidential levels must be buttressed by staff who are willing to develop a synergy between these two naturally enthusiastic, optimistic, relationship-oriented offices. Like all good leaders, they need to support and reward the desired collaboration and cooperation in order to make the partnership work. The process of re-creating how offices interact on campus can be a time-consuming process that requires patience, diligence, and commitment, but the potential outcomes are worth the effort.

Activities, Sensitivity, and Communications. IA and SA offices organize many activities. When appropriate, institutions should bring parents into the campus community for the full spectrum of activities ranging from special development events to the campus fair on the mall. Organizations short-change themselves and parents when they assume that only certain types of activities are appropriate for parents. Seeing students actively and enthusiastically involved in an activity is energizing and engaging. The parent can travel vicariously back to his or her own time in school, be enthused by the fun, and relive the student experience.

There are many ways for IA and SA offices to share expertise and data and coordinate activities to be more efficient and cost-effective. For example, SA and IA both can accomplish their goals by including parents, alumni, and students at lunch, highlighting the freshman class, the new honor society inductees, or SGA representatives. Donor recognition improves dramatically when parents and students are invited to events to get to know and appreciate one another. SA expertise in putting together fun, youthful events can certainly improve some of the IA events that often reflect a "professional norm." Likewise, SA can often learn from IA's attention to detail and presentation. Many benefits accrue when SA and IA share their perspectives and expertise.

IA and SA programs can grow together. For example, IA professionals appreciate being able to have students meet with donors to share their views on attending the institution. But although the development officer may appreciate the students' candor, awkward situations arise when a table of major donors at a formal appreciation event hear a student talk about parties, drinking, or other less appropriate co-curricular activities. This dilemma can be avoided if SA staff work with IA to advise students on what it means to be involved in a donor appreciation event. Conversely, IA professionals must recognize the double standard exemplified when alcohol is served at a function attended by both students and donors.

Development officers cannot accurately portray campus life and the issues students face when they provide only staged events or admissions marketing information. SA can help IA staff (development officers, media relations writers, proposal writers) convey the realities of life on campus by inviting them to various SA activities, ranging from socials to educational presentations on topics such as date rape.

There are many communications issues between IA and SA relating to messages going out about the institution, information coming in from various audiences (particularly parents as supporters or informed consumers), and information distributed internally. IA likely includes media affairs, marketing, legislative affairs, and other offices charged with creating and maintaining an institutional image to various publics. SA's work through admissions, recruiting, and outreach activities also conveys an institutional image. These messages must be synchronized, and the respective program leaders should promote the same image. SA often can create a personalized proposal for a donor who seeks to support the school that gave him memories of exciting, developmentally important times.

Barbara Chamberlain, at Washington State University–Spokane, suggests that campus communications are most successful when the institution takes a holistic view rather than focus on discrete components (whether public relations, media affairs, or other). For example, she created a reading committee to review the institutional newsletter. Committee members receive tables of contents several issues in advance so they can see where the publications are going in both content and image. The members also receive a draft of each newsletter to review in search of clarity, complementary messages, and programming nuances. A broad range of participants enables the school to put out a newsletter that better reflects the university's life story and links many of its messages with desired outcomes (B. Chamberlain, personal communication with the author, August 31, 2000). Such an interoffice approach can be used with special events, promotional materials, video and Web-based communications, and proposal writing.

Both IA and SA programming can benefit from institutional research that provides descriptive information on familial backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and so on. With their common goal of customer service, the two entities can benefit from collaborative efforts in collecting focus group and program evaluation data as well as anecdotal information that may result from one-on-one interactions.

Development officers daily meet with people off-campus, and SA professionals are in regular contact with parents through activities, publications, surveys, and special events. Whether informally or formally, the institution must find ways to coordinate the information gained between the offices and among other relevant departments.

Internal communications in higher education often are deficient. In a collaborative environment, task forces or committees with representation from the various IA and SA components can be brought together to share information, serve notice on upcoming events, share expertise on projects, and review publications and materials together. In institutions that have not yet reached natural collaboration, more formal structures may be needed.

Gary Montgomery of Cal Poly–Pomona identifies the elements of the school's successful parent associations. He states that their success is due in large part to the framework on which they were built (G. Montgomery,

personal communication with the author, August 7, 2000). SA and IA teams have a shared purpose that is defined through organizational interdepartmental relationships and institutional attention to cohesive SA and IA reporting structures. In some universities, IA and SA report to the same vice president. This can set the tone for long-term planning of their activities. The goal should be a seamless fit in programming, communications, and interactions with parents.

Future Possibilities

The future will be more rewarding if institutional advancement and student affairs work together to involve parents for the benefit of the institution and its students. However, IA and SA must also recognize that the family is changing. Parents today may be single, gay, or students themselves. The institution's communications must reflect the variety of such issues so that all parents can feel included in the campus community. For example, parent activities should not focus on parent-couple teams, because that may create tension for a multiple-parent, combined family or isolation for a single-parent family. Though there are challenges, the richness of new family structures can be incorporated into IA and SA activities when multiple views are represented by interdepartmental task forces charged with the sensitive adjustment of parent programming.

Conclusion

Although there are many ways for SA and IA to work together, perhaps nowhere is the importance of their doing so better seen than in the institution's relationships with parents. Parents come on the scene not only in a variety of roles but also with a connection to the school that is stronger than that of alumnus, donor, or volunteer. They are connected through their children. By honoring this connection, IA and SA can collaborate with each other and with parents to create more fulfilling experiences with the institution. Both when the institution is courting the students and when it is educating them, it has the opportunity to communicate with, involve, inspire, and engage the parents because they have a common cause: the students' educational experience. Throughout the students' tenure at the school, from recruitment through alumni relations, it is paramount that IA and SA collaborate on key issues and essential messages. This can be done through a variety of communications and interactions. This very human link is an opportunity for parents and higher education institutions to grow together as partners and as friends.

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