In today's tight funding environment, it is obvious that colleges need to be seeking outside funding. What isn't so apparent are the full costs or benefits of this investment. Resource development is a broad spectrum that includes grant seeking, courting major donors, alumni cultivation, implementing capital and annual campaigns, building endowments and establishing charitable trusts. To do the job well, you need to engage a resource development team with expertise in each of these areas who can collaborate, develop and deliver a single coherent message.

You need to effectively communicate the message that raising money to support your college's survival is now everyone's job because at one time or another, the entire college will be tapped to participate in various development efforts.

As President, the hard work includes becoming the fundraising cheerleader. You need to ensure your college's commitment to resource development is ingrained in every administrator, faculty and staff member. A consistent and persistent message from the President to the college's governance, administrative team, and faculty is key to the college community's buy in. You need to effectively communicate the message that raising money to support your college's survival is now everyone's job because at one time or another, the entire college will be tapped to participate in various development efforts. It is even more effective if you can demonstrate the support of your Board of Trustees, and include a priority for resource development in your strategic plan. In addition, the greater the involvement of your local businesses and community, the greater your payoff. A strong college has strong friends, who are well informed and consistent community ambassadors for the college.

But the payoffs are worth the hard work. Before you can attempt to sell your vision, project or program to a third party, a clear, consistent, compelling presentation of the college, programs and services must be developed. The intense level of work necessary to turn a proposed program change into a mere few pages means you will have drilled down to the most important aspects of the project. During this process it is possible to transfer your static strategic plan into an action plan for change.

Each application or solicitation you undertake allows the college to build a record of things achieved, dreams clarified, and plans cemented to the reality of a budget. While they won't all lead to funding or a gift, engaging in the resource development exercise leads to a clear solution for a particular problem with milestones and measures. What a great way to energize and focus your college!

It is also important to tout your successes when you secure new grants, accept that major donation or reach a campaign milestone. Showing that you are creatively working to strengthen your College delivers a very positive message to the community, and could lead to new opportunities or partnerships that will also prove beneficial.

I firmly believe that you can't go wrong if you build a strong resource development team, and that the rewards for your college will be significant and enduring.

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