Traditionally, institutions have relied on wealthy White men to reach their fundraising goals. But as state investment in public higher education lessens and institutions look to philanthropy to move from excellence to eminence, advancement officers continually need to engage all populations, including many that have historically been excluded from fundraising strategies. Based on theory, research, and past practice, *Expanding the Donor Base in Higher Education* explores how colleges and universities can build culturally sensitive fundraising and engagement strategies. This edited book presents emerging research on different communities that have not traditionally been approached for fundraising—including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) alumni, African Americans, Latinos, graduate students, young alumni, women, and faculty donors. Chapters discuss and analyze successful programs and provide practical suggestions and strategies to create and implement fundraising programs that engage these new donor populations. *Expanding the Donor Base in Higher Education* is an essential resource for any institution looking to expand their pool of donors and cultivate a more philanthropic mindset among alumni and students.

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EXPANDING THE DONOR BASE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Engaging Non-Traditional Donors

Edited by Noah D. Drezner
In Memory of

Irene Greenhall (1934–2012)
Who inspired me, made me laugh, loved me,
and I continue to love
and
Donald Greenhall (1928–2013)
Whose quiet support
is already missed.
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Thinking about all of the people in my life that have influenced and helped me both directly and indirectly in being able to edit Expanding the Donor Base in Higher Education: Engaging Non-Traditional Donors was a daunting task. I am very fortunate to have so many people supporting me. To begin with I have a number of students that I work with formally and informally at the University of Maryland who inspire me as a faculty member in and out of the classroom. First and foremost, I thank Jason C. Garvey for not only joining me on our Queering Philanthropy research project, of which we report some of our findings from the first phase of our research, but also for reading and commenting on this manuscript at various stages from the writing of the proposal through its final versions. Jay is a great research partner, mentee, and friend.

Beyond Jay, I must thank my other wonderful Ph.D. advisers, Rebecca Villarreal, Steve D. Mobley, Jr., Michael Puma (another chapter author), and my newest additions to “Team Drezner,” Nina Daoud and Candice Staples. I continue to be excited to see prior students excel in their philanthropy scholarship and practice. It is a pleasure and honor to include three chapters from such students in this volume, Luke Greeley, Ryan Merkel, and Kozue Tsunoda. I benefit from their work every time I read it.

Additionally, my colleagues at Maryland provide me with a supportive work environment in which I thrive. Special thanks to Tom Davis, a colleague and friend since starting at Maryland together, for reading this manuscript and giving it an outsider’s eye. Thank you especially to Sharon Fries-Britt, Alberto Cabrera, KerryAnn O’Meara, Marvin Titus; those who have left Maryland, Susan Komives, Connie North, Stephen Quaye, Susan Jones; and my newest colleagues, Kimberly Griffin and Michelle Espino, who have made my...
tenure track both a continuing learning and growth experience and—dare I say it—pleasurable.

In addition to my higher education and student affairs colleagues, I am lucky to have found others with the passion for philanthropy scholarship and teaching. Thank you to Robert Grimm, Jr. and Jennifer Littlefield for their support and opportunity to help create the University of Maryland’s Center on Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership. I never thought that I would be part of creating a center for scholarship and teaching devoted to creating future philanthropists. This experience is simply inspiring.

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Everyone who knows me knows that children give me smile, inspire me, and give me a strange energy that feed my work. Thank you to some of those children that give me that energy: Chloe Epstein, Philip, Matthew, and Christopher Baldridge, Emily and William Chressanthis, and Lucy and Annie Lippard.

Finally to Oren Pizmony-Levy, whose support and love bring a smile to my face and a confidence to my work—I am so lucky to have met you.
During the closing plenary session of the 2011 Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) International Conference on Fundraising, conference chair Andrea McManus, CFRE, charged those in the audience to take the profession beyond fundraising and to engage ourselves and our donors in philanthropy. This call was more than semantics. She challenged the field to engage all potential donors in their giving and their reasons they wanted to support others by moving beyond merely “closing the gift” and working with the “usual suspects.”

Within a context of American higher education, as with fundraising at many other nonprofits, for too long institutional advancement officers have relied on wealthy, White, heterosexual men to reach their fundraising goals (Drezner, 2011). As campaign goals grow and the economy recovers slowly, the base of the campaign pyramid, the smaller and medium size gifts, is becoming more and more important to successfully raising the dollars needed (Grenzebach, Glier, and Associates, 2010). The small and medium sized gifts not only help reach current campaign goals, but are important in the cultivation of future campaign leadership gifts.

Therefore, there is an increased importance to engage all populations in advancement strategies, many that have historically been excluded from fundraising strategies (Drezner, 2010). As such, Expanding the Donor Base in Higher Education: Engaging Non-Traditional Donors looks at the emerging research on different communities that are often excluded from the focus of institutional advancement offices. Before going into how this book is organized, the significance of the research disseminated in the chapters, and their implications for practice, it is important to understand the context of fundraising and voluntary support of American higher education at the time of writing this book.
Where We Are Today: An Overview of the Landscape of Advancement in American Higher Education

Since the “great recession of 2008,” advancement programs at colleges and universities across the country have been wondering how to continue to provide the necessary voluntary support for their institutions in order to simply meet their budgetary needs. As fiscal year 2011 ended, there was hope that voluntary support and endowment returns had begun to recover to pre-2008 levels. In August 2011, the confidence from the philanthropic giving recovery led the University of Southern California to announce a $6 billion campaign. USC’s campaign was the largest announced fundraising goal for any higher education campaign to date. Within a few months of USC’s announcement, three universities, Case Western Reserve University, Georgetown University, and the University of Rochester, launched campaigns of at least $1 billion, which the institutions had been holding off during the recession.

According to the Council for Aid to Education’s annual Voluntary Support of Education (VSE) survey, colleges and universities raised 8.2 percent more in fiscal 2011 than the prior year. The $30.3 billion in giving is only $1.3 billion less than higher education’s record for voluntary support of $31.6 billion reached in fiscal year 2008, just prior to the economic downturn. To place this increase in context, colleges’ and universities’ fundraising dropped 12 percent in 2009. This was the largest one-year decrease in giving that the Council for Aid Education has recorded since they began conducting the VSE in 1969. The following year, giving to higher education only increased by one half of one percent (Council for Aid to Education, 2012).

While the increases in giving were significant, not all institutions fared as well as others. The top 20 institutions, in terms of gifts received in 2011, a group consisting mostly of elite private and public research universities, raised a combined $8.24 billion, accounting for 27 percent of the funds raised by all institutions. While this concentration of fundraising success is not new, giving was more concentrated in 2011 than in the past. For example, the top quartile of institutions raised 11.3 percent more in fiscal year 2011 than in 2010. However, the rest of the higher education sector raised 9.6 percent less in fiscal year 2011 than in 2010. Looking at this another way, the top quartile of institutions raised 86 percent of dollars raised, leaving 13.7 percent, or $4.15 billion dollars for the rest of American higher education (Council for Aid to Education, 2012).

Additionally, after taking a huge hit in fiscal year 2009, almost half of all college and university endowments are still worth less than they were in 2008. Yet, in fiscal year 2011 overall college and university endowment returns reached near-pre-great recession levels. According to the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO)/Commonfund annual endowment survey, investments returned an average of 19.2 percent. However, like the fundraising results, these high returns were not distributed
equally across all sectors of American higher education (NACUBO/Common-
fund, 2012). Between 2008 and 2010, institutions with smaller endowments
outperformed the wealthiest institutions. However, in fiscal year 2011, like
prior to 2008, institutions with large endowments, which are able to invest
in alternative investment strategies such as hedge funds, venture capital, pri-
ivate equity, and private real estate, due to their size, saw the highest returns.
Those institutions with smaller endowments, which tend to be invested
more in domestic equities and fixed-income investments, saw lower returns
(NACUBO/Commonfund, 2012). Therefore, there continues to be a growing
gap in endowment values between the wealthiest elite institutions and the rest
of higher education. This gap can be narrowed by institutions looking beyond
their traditional donor bases.

A Need to Expand the Donor Base

As a result of the current economic situation and decreased funding for higher
education, institutions, private and public alike, are turning more and more
to private giving in order to meet budgetary demands. As external support of
higher education from both state governments and donors decreases and the
cost to educate a student rises, the need for alumni support to maintain higher
education’s eminence and to increase access heightens. There is a need for more
research on philanthropic giving patterns as institutions expand their focus to
new donor communities.

A greater understanding of philanthropy within the higher education set-
ing is critical because of the greater reliance on voluntary giving at all colleges
and universities since the recent economic downturn as well as the imminent
intergenerational “great wealth transfer” (Schervish & Havens, 1998). With the
higher education endowments plummeting in 2008 and 2009, retrenchment
of state appropriations at public institutions, and the possibilities of engaging a
broader range of donors, it is imperative that intuitions understand the theories,
motivations, dynamics, and ethics of philanthropy. It was with this aim that I
endeavored to bring together this edited book.

Further, as colleges and universities move into continual campaign modes,
where as one large campaign ends the next one begins its planning phase, insti-
tutional advancement officers should not only think about the larger donors of
today, but must engage those who might be able to give the leadership gifts in
future campaigns. While expanding the donor base and thinking about how to
engage in more donor-centric advancement strategies is important for all insti-
tutions, it is particularly important at many public institutions.

In the grand scheme of things many state-supported colleges and universi-
ties have only just begun to fundraise from alumni in concerted efforts. Until
the mid-1990s, many public institutions did not have the large, sophisticated
advancement offices that were commonplace at large private universities for
decades and in some cases over a century. Setting up sophisticated advancement offices and employing donor-centered cultivation and solicitation strategies that aim to expand the university’s donor base will continue to allow the universities to further increase their fundraising ability. Therefore, there are a number of chapters in this book looking at a variety of research and programs that engage different constituencies that are often not the focus of the cookie-cutter fundraising strategies that institutions employ. These new strategies are designed to expand the university’s pool of donors and cultivate a more philanthropic mindset among alumni and students.

Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990) believe that fundraising is often “thinly informed by research” (p. 1). The vast majority of philanthropic literature within higher education is atheoretical (e.g., Burnett, 1992/2002; Ciconte & Jacob, 2001; Connors, 2001; Dove, 2001; Flanagan, 1999; Greenfield, 2001; Worth, 2002). Although existing research offers some guidance for practitioners, the implications are limited by the failure to ground the research in any theoretical or conceptual framework. In this volume, each chapter examines the existing literature and introduces the reader to new research and fundraising practice that not only helps fill the theoretical void in the literature, thereby improving future research, but also informs current fundraising practice.

Organization of the Book

Creating a fundraising strategy that takes into account a person’s interests is not a new concept. “Donor centric” fundraising has been the hallmark of major gifts programs from their inception. However, identity-based fundraising is more recent. The authors of a 2012 Cultures of Giving report by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and funded by the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors found that identity-based philanthropy is a growing movement to democratize philanthropy from the grassroots up by activating and organizing its practice in marginalized communities, particularly communities of color. Simply described, it is the practice of raising and leveraging resources by and from a community on its own behalf, where “community” is defined not by geography but by race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

(2012, p. 2)

Higher education for too long has defined its prospective individual donors simply by their alumni, parent, or “friend” status. It is time that practitioners and philanthropy scholars make concerted efforts to engage their work not only by these traditional definitions but through new ones, including race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

This book is organized into three sections, each based on different social identities of potential donors to higher education. The first section explores
Introduction

5

giving among racial minority groups with chapters on giving within the African American, Latino/na, and Chinese American communities. The second examines giving behaviors and motivations among other alumni constituencies that are often not traditionally segmented for special engagement strategies. In this section chapters look at giving from women, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities, Ph.D. alumni, and young alumni who have graduated in the past decade. The third and final section looks at on-campus constituencies and future donors. Here the authors explore faculty and staff as potential donors, how to engage students, members of fraternities and sororities, and how to build partnerships between student affairs and institutional advancement. Finally, the book closes with a call to think about how fundraisers operate in order to further engage future donors.

Racial Minorities

Marybeth Gasman and Nelson Bowman’s chapter, “Engaging and Soliciting African American Alumni,” builds off their experiences as both researchers and as fundraising practitioners. Their chapter highlights the prevailing literature on Black giving, including historical and current giving patterns, differences in giving based on socio-economic status, and gender differences. Finally, they discuss practical ways to engage African American alumni giving at both predominantly White and historically Black institutions.

José A. Cabrales, in his chapter: “An Approach to Engaging Latina/o Alumni in Giving Initiatives: Madrinas y Padrinos” uses community cultural wealth theory to explore the interconnectedness between careers, community, and giving from Latina/o alumni. Building off of prior philanthropic research on Latinas/os, where researchers find that three informal media of philanthropy, extended family networks, church involvement, and mutualista organizations, provide social services and social justice supports, Cabrales reports the findings from his phenomenological study. He finds that Latina/o alumni employ different forms of capital through their occupations and community engagement to give back to students and their communities, both financially and through mentorship.

Kozue Tsunoda looks at the philanthropic contributions of the largest ethnic group among Asian Americans. In her chapter, “Chinese American Philanthropy: Cultural Contexts behind Major Gifts in Higher Education,” she highlights the historical, cultural, and contemporary trends of Chinese American giving to higher education. Using in-depth interviews of Chinese American mega-gift donors, Tsunoda reveals donor motivations to give philanthropically. She finds that donors often give for reasons of racial uplift wanting to help Chinese American and Chinese international students and scholars within American higher education. By integrating existing research and her own study, Tsunoda provides a holistic view of Chinese American educational giving and
suggests ways advancement officers can better foster and harness philanthropic giving by Chinese Americans.

**Other Alumni Constituencies**

In their chapter, Sara Kaiser and Amy Wells Dolan explore women’s philanthropic contributions to higher education. Building off the work of other scholars, Kaiser and Wells Dolan explore the unique giving philosophies and interests that often compel women to give. They note that women are participating in higher education as students, faculty, staff, administrators, and friends at the highest levels in history and therefore not engaging in fundraising practices that engage women potentially leaves a large market of prospective donors untapped.

In my chapter with Jason C. Garvey, “Alumni Giving in the LGBTQ Communities: Queering Philanthropy,” we explore the motivations of LGBTQ alumni to give to their alma mater. Prior to our study, the scholarship and practice involving LGBTQ philanthropy, towards any part of the third sector, was scarce. Therefore, we look at how LGBTQ communities think about giving to higher education. Using a constructivist case study analysis, we found unconscious influences of LGBTQ identities on giving, importance of campus climate for LGBTQ individuals, and LGBTQ alumni affinity group involvement. We draw implications from our findings, discussing the need to create a warm campus climate for current students, increase and encourage involvement within LGBTQ affinity groups, systematize data collection to include LGBTQ identities, and develop culturally sensitive solicitations.

Relatively little alumni giving is generated from Ph.D. graduates. Building on her study looking at Ph.D. alumni donors at the University of Pennsylvania, Anita Mastroieni challenges institutions to look at their alumni beyond those who received their undergraduate degree at their institution. She finds that Ph.D. alumni have distinct motivations in their philanthropic giving. Using social exchange theory, Mastroieni found that Ph.D. graduates donated to their alma mater in gratitude for their training and for the graduate funding they received. As such, Mastroieni gives suggestions to universities on how they can design fundraising appeals that take these different interests and motivations into account.

Meredith Billings reminds us that although young alumni often have lower participation rates and lower giving capacity than alumni further from graduation who might be more established and have greater disposable income to donate, recent graduates should not be ignored in institutional advancement strategies. In her chapter “Examining Young Alumni Giving Behavior: Every Dollar Matters,” Billings examines young alumni giving behavior at one university. She describes the university’s approach to target those graduating in the past decade after she developed a logistic regression model to predict young
alumni giving behavior. In addition to her predicative donor model, Billings compares the institution’s young alumni donors from non-donors in the same age group, in terms of their demographics, academics, and attitudinal characteristics. From her findings, Billings offers several strategies for fundraisers to consider when identifying, cultivating, and ultimately soliciting young alumni.

**On Campus Constituencies and Future Donors**

Genevieve G. Shaker challenges institutional advancement offices to not overlook the potential of faculty and staff in their annual and comprehensive campaigns. In her chapter, “Faculty and Staff as Prospects and Donors: Giving on Campus,” Shaker explores faculty and staff giving through data from the Voluntary Support for Education (VSE) survey, existing literature, and exploratory research by her and her colleague Megan Palmer that focuses on faculty major donors. Based on her findings, Shaker shows that faculty and staff are worthwhile prospects and that colleges and universities should enhance annual and major gift fundraising efforts “at home,” where faculty and staff—especially long term members of the community—are personally and professionally invested.

In Lori A. Hurvitz’s chapter, “Building a Culture of Student Philanthropy,” she cautions advancement officers that they must actively engage and cultivate their students in order for them to be generous alumni in the future. Grounded in social psychology and student development theories, Lori’s research study explores nine student philanthropy initiatives at different Ivy–plus institutions. Her findings indicated that students should be taught about how to be an active alumnus or alumna. She concludes that informing students about how philanthropy is used at their alma mater should be considered part of a long-term fundraising strategy that begins as students and continues throughout the life of the alumnus or alumna. Finally, she points out how institutions can reinforce an environment where altruistic and prosocial behavior is developed through a program geared toward student satisfaction with his or her overall experience.

Prior scholars have shown that student involvement greatly impacts alumni philanthropic decisions. Student activities such as fraternity and sorority involvement are particularly indicative of alumni giving. Ryan E. Merkel, in his chapter, “The Influence of Sorority and Fraternity Involvement on Future Giving,” extends this research. Using relationship marketing theory, he explores how members of Greek organizations make meaning of the relationships between alumni and their alma mater. Merkel includes student perspectives from different fraternities and sororities but focuses on those from Black Greek letter organizations and multicultural Greek organizations, as he found that these students presented unique perspectives on alumni relationships. Merkel explains that students’ experiences in fraternity and sorority life substantially influenced how they view their future alumni relationship with their alma mater. As such,
Merkel suggests that alumni relations and development offices should explore how they might be able to use student and alumni Greek experiences to further engage their alumni in the university after graduation.

Michael Puma’s chapter, “Fostering Student Affairs and Institutional Advancement Partnerships,” looks at the need to build long-term collaborations between fundraising offices and those working with current students. In response to campus budget crunches, student affairs divisions are compelled to find alternative funding sources for their programmatic initiatives. Puma explores various ways in which institutions are creating these partnerships. He finds that through new positions, trainings, and collaborations these partnerships have both spanned and expanded the traditional divisional boundaries. Puma argues that future success in these partnerships depends on mutual understanding and support for both importance of fundraising and student affairs activities in a manner that engage alumni, parents, and even students as future donors.

The book closes with Luke Greeley’s “Creating an Engagement Model of Advancement for Young Alumni” in which he calls for a shift in operating paradigms among university fundraisers in order to expand the donor base of their institutions. He points out that traditionally philanthropy and fundraising scholars have operated primarily from objectivist and rational paradigms. Additionally, Greeley shows that practitioners are mostly focused on institutionally self-centered goals, such as persuading wealthy donors to give to serve the purposes of the university. In a shift in perspective, Greeley points to emerging scholars and practitioners who adopt a constructivist paradigm in their work. Here the scholars and practitioners view universities as part of a larger community in which they engage others to reach the goals of the university. Drawing on student development, alumni relations, and donor motivation theories, Greeley’s chapter proposes a way in which institutional missions, volunteer solicitations, and university programming might be altered to adopt an engagement model for fundraising. His discussion focuses on how community residents, students, faculty, staff, and alumni can interact as equal partners in promoting the simultaneous advancement of the institution.

A Call to Action in Research and in Practice

When I began my career as a development officer, as a privileged Jewish-gay-White man, I often felt a lot of discomfort with the fact that the vast majority of donors, volunteers, and leaders were older White wealthy men—almost all married and straight. While I was able to see myself within many of those who were deemed as the university’s leaders, I felt that something was wrong. To deal with my discomfort, I began to ask why we were not engaging more people who did not look like me. After many professional conferences, where I was not getting answers, I decided to return to graduate school to find answers
myself. While beginning my research and reflecting on my experiences as a practitioner, I realized that as fundraisers much of our engagement and solicitation strategies were due to stereotypes, in particular, that people of color were less generous. Therefore, we approached most prospective donors with the same strategies. This did the university and fundraising, more generally, a disservice and renders people of color with wealth and giving in communities of color invisible. This is not acceptable.

While the majority of wealth in the United States is held by the White majority, that is beginning to change. There is an increase in the number of people of color in the middle class; however, that is a reflection of income rather than wealth. Wealth is accumulated, and a wealth gap continues to exist. Sociologists and economists have looked at the racial wealth gap of individuals in the United States. Conley (2003), Adelman (2003), and Shapiro (2004) argued that past forms of institutional racism have put communities of color, particularly Black families, at a continual disadvantage in the accumulation of lifetime wealth.

These social structures and institutional racism, both historical and contemporary, that impede the ability for the accumulation of assets in communities of color contribute to the stereotype that people of color are less generous than the majority. When we, as practitioners or scholars of philanthropy, operate based on this stereotype, the consequences for our institutions are extraordinary. We can no longer operate like this, when fundraising is so important for colleges and universities to make their annual budgets. In fact the W. K. Kellogg Foundation contends:

Identity-based philanthropy is transforming the way that generosity flows through and to communities of color—and creating new philanthropic resources, new forms of community empowerment, new leading actors, and new methods to tackle complex problems in the process. As a result, this emerging field is influencing and invigorating the way that philanthropy across all communities gets practiced at a time when many of our old forms are crumbling.

(2012, p. 20)

Therefore, advancement offices must engage in culturally sensitive fundraising practices that honor prospective donors’ different social identities.

Beyond looking at race, it is important to think about engaging others in the fundraising process. It is too easy to only focus on those who are wealthy now. While current students, young alumni, and most university faculty and staff might have less disposable income than other donors, we should not use this as a reason to wait until they accumulate wealth to fully engage them. A number of scholars find that establishing a habit of giving among young alumni is important in increasing the potential of major gifts in the future (Meer, 2011; Monks, 2003; Turner, Meserve, & Bowen, 2001). In fact, Meer (2011) found that those
alumni who gave frequently in their first five years from graduation, on average, gave 5.6 times more when older than an alumnus or alumna who did not give regularly in their first five years out of college. Therefore, it makes sense to invest in engaging our students and most recent alumni in philanthropy, even if their giving in the short-term is small.

Expanding the donor base of our institutions by thinking of how to engage those that we have not gone to in the past is definitely needed for higher education to continue to survive in our current economic context. This approach requires long-term investment and commitment, but in the end, we will have a more engaged donor base and better institutions. I hope that this book not only furthers our understanding of non-traditional donor groups, but that it also pushes advancement offices to look within their own practices and think about how to create more culturally sensitive engagement and solicitation strategies.

**Note**

1. CFRE is a professional accreditation, Certified Fund Raising Executive.

**References**


