



## **What Are We Advancing?**

**Advancing Sustainability in Higher Education:  
Integration of the University and College Development Office**

**Eileen E. Joseph  
HEASC Sustainability Fellowship 2012-13**

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*"Sustainable development meets the needs of the present  
without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>1</sup>  
-United Nations Commission of Environment and Development (1987)*

#### **Introduction**

Even before the current recession-driven budget crisis, institutes of higher learning in the United States have been forced to re-examine their core business practices and funding models. This has been especially evident in building the case for more sustainable policies, practices and programs in higher education. As higher education economies are being re-shaped through shifts in public and private spending, and at a time when cost, access, technology, workforce readiness and global relevance are driving a conversation about the return on investment of historic institutional models, we must learn to work smarter.

The current and future challenges will require building on past efforts with more comprehensive, efficient, collaboratively designed strategies, policies, and actions that produce much greater ecological, economic, and social benefits. We can no longer afford to spend \$1 to get \$1's worth of benefits (and maybe \$1.50's worth of unintended costs). We have to spend \$1 and get at least \$4's worth of benefits...a growing sense of urgency is affecting every sector of society.<sup>2</sup>

This challenge, if well-managed by campus leaders, provides an opportunity for their institutions to not only move beyond the conversation about how to operate more sustainably, but to transcend the traditional funding paradigms of higher education.

The disruption in higher education, combined with an opportunity to develop more sustainable institutions, also creates an opportunity to advance the next philanthropic era – one that promotes a more comprehensive approach to addressing one of society's most enduring values. Philanthropy is a purposeful application of human and financial resources toward a social good, it is an organizing tool, and it is often a policy driver. It is also an important piece of a very large and intricate puzzle of how to address some of the unprecedented challenges universities currently face. Appropriately developed and aligned, philanthropy can accelerate

the transition to the kind of systemic change that is encapsulated at the very heart of the sustainability movement. To fulfill this potential, the interrelated nature of campus sustainability and development must be examined.

“What Are We Advancing?” examines the shifting role of the university and college advancement office in a national trend toward advancing sustainability in higher education and presents a range of ideas in support of a more whole-system approach to the conservation, alignment and development of resources in support of more sustainable institutions. This is not about green funding initiatives; rather, it is about how campus leaders can collectively advance a future vision of higher education - by modeling the very principles of sustainability they purport to advance.

This paper is designed to initiate a conversation among higher education advocates and practitioners who understand that “what” we are advancing is as important as “how” we are advancing it. “What Are We Advancing?” presents a vision for the future of university and college advancement that integrates the following as core tenets of sustainability:

<b>Systemic:</b>	System-level Opportunities, Organizational De-segmentation, Symbiotic Roles
<b>Collaborative:</b>	Inclusive Organizing, Transparency of Information, Collective Impact
<b>Integrated:</b>	Vision Alignment, Inter- and Intra-Sector Planning, Donor Involvement
<b>Leveraged:</b>	Multi-tiered Revenue Strategies, Regional Catalyst, Strategic Investment
<b>Innovative:</b>	Adaptable Best Practices, Fostering Creativity, Philanthropic Trends
<b>Proactive:</b>	Positioning for Success, Marketability of Efficiency, Effective Communication
<b>Modeling:</b>	Socially Responsible Organizations, Raising the Profile, Creative Leadership
<b>Long-term:</b>	Fundraising Campaigns & Smart Growth, Efficient Use of Capital

Private fundraising for higher education should be driven by society’s needs to create a sustainable future for the planet and its people. The educational, research and infrastructure goals promoted from within and advanced through donor support must always strive to meet this test. Fundraisers and funders alike – both public and private – share a responsibility to encourage the kinds of initiatives, partnerships and policy changes that will drive higher education toward this goal. An eco-system approach to achieving this goal will not only save millions of future dollars, it will maximize and attract the investment needed to drive the outcomes we desire.

"Together we need to think about funding education holistically over the long-term."

- Martha J. Kanter, Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education  
2009 Presentation to the American College & University  
Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC)

## Systemic

*We now need to usher in the third wave of the campus sustainability movement, an era focused upon addressing the irrational and unconscious aspects of our institutions, to foster a new organizational capacity for innovation and transformation, steered by a systems-thinking perspective.*<sup>3</sup>

-Leith Sharp

Leith Sharp, Chair of the Sustainable Futures Academy at Harvard and 18-year veteran of the campus sustainability movement, writes that "we will not be able to realize the benefits of systems thinking until we address the separations of our universities." To think about systems effectively," she notes, "you need to bring the people that represent each of the system components into the room, that is, all of the key individuals who represent the system must engage in conversation before you can understand and identify system-level opportunities and implications"<sup>4</sup> In "Strategy for Sustainability," Adam Werbach similarly argues that to ensure internal flexibility in a chaotic, external world, a strategy must engage every part of the system.<sup>5</sup>

Many recognize that systems thinking presents academia with a challenge as it "forces us to confront the way in which higher education's functions are compartmentalized into divisions, units, departments, disciplines, and tiers of management."<sup>6</sup> Sustainability advocates in all sectors maintain that systems-thinking can engender innovative solutions just as failure to apply systems thinking "often results in incomplete or erroneous solutions to problems."<sup>7</sup> In American higher education, whole system thinking is recognized as a desired outcome for graduates but a skill not outwardly demanded of staff and those facilitating change on campus.

The standard model for the university and college advancement office is one in which fundraising hours are driven in part by the priorities of the institution and in part by the priorities of its major donors. The most effective development professionals are those who can successfully integrate the vision of each, aligning priorities within a larger strategic framework. Unfortunately, as non-profit consultant Mark Fulop notes, "many nonprofit organizations uncouple organizational strategic planning and fundraising planning – facilitating a separate process for each."<sup>8</sup> This segmentation disconnects the fundraiser not just from key sustainability objectives but from other fundraisers and resource drivers on campus. It is becoming, adds Fulop, "increasingly less tenable to think about revenues apart from strategy."<sup>9</sup>

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*It is becoming increasingly less tenable to think about revenues apart from strategy.*

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This segmentation in planning also undervalues the reality that fundraisers are informed, values-driven facilitators who can contribute their own knowledge, ideas and understanding of the philanthropic marketplace to the discussion. "Development staff members themselves are another opportunity to find perspective and tools to cope in a bad economy – and are often

“The University of Buffalo has charted a course toward climate neutrality that – however trite the terms might have become – is both strategic and holistic. It is designed to vest the mission of carbon reduction in every element of the institution. It takes seriously the imperative to change our culture as much as the urgency to transform our policies. It works from the bottom up and from the top down. It works to connect the “silos” of the bureaucracy even as it acknowledges the traditional autonomy of units in a university. It is an experiment, but we think it is working.”

- Bradshaw Hovey and Robert Shibley, University at Buffalo

*In a July 2010 presentation to AASHE, University at Buffalo representatives spoke of the university’s goals to promote a concept of the university as a single enterprise with unified strategic goals. The university established an Environmental Stewardship Committee to lead the work of creating and implementing a climate action plan. The university-wide panel includes undergraduate and graduate schools and student associations, business services, student services (food services, housing, and transportation), external affairs, information technology, facilities and the Provost.*

overlooked as leaders with great ideas to add to the mix.”<sup>10</sup> Additionally, fundraisers also bring with them the trust-based relationships they have cultivated.

Higher education’s ability to address a myriad of issues going forward – and to affect meaningful change – depends upon an integration of knowledge and resources that transcends traditional entities. “The silos we have operated under in the past—within our respective organizations or agencies and between us—are no longer relevant when we are simultaneously tackling complex problems and moving our strategies to the mainstream. This is especially true if we are going to achieve the economic, social, and environmental outcomes we want to see in our states, cities, towns, neighborhoods, and of course, our nation.”<sup>11</sup>

A sustainably-oriented institution integrates the conversation about what we are advancing through higher learning with how we are advancing it. In this paradigm, sustainability principals and plans are intertwined in strategy that integrates academic, operational, organizational, cultural and fundraising goals.

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*A sustainably-oriented institution integrates the conversation about what we are advancing through higher learning with how we are advancing it.*

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Philanthropy is part of a larger economic strategy, one that shapes and enhances university and college impact today while developing a foundation for the job growth and decisions that will support future investment and viability. The fundraiser is a key player engaged in the development of the vision and strategies that will

rely in part upon the contributions and influence of private supporters. The advancement office works synergistically with campus and community leaders as well as external investors, including private donors, volunteers, advisors, parents, students, government, community organizations, companies and foundations. The collective focus is on the outcome.

In a 2009 presentation to the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), Martha J. Kanter, Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, stated that "together we need to think about funding education holistically over the long-term."<sup>12</sup> Whether sustainability priorities are institutionalized or grassroots, they represent a shared value in shaping a future of the institution and recognition of the societal impact of investment in higher education. A comprehensive approach to fund development around sustainability goals leaves a university or college better positioned to compete for resources and to partner with funders in more systemic ways.

“In short, effective collaboration is an ongoing learning process that demands an unusual degree of openness – of mind, heart and will - to challenge taken-for granted assumptions and ways of operating, and cultural norms. Sometimes, what will most limit progress will be the very behaviors that have made organizations effective in the past.”

- Peter Senge and Darcy Stallings Winslow, Society for Organizational Learning

## Collaborative

*“To make real headway on really tough sustainability issues is a ‘massive undertaking in collaboration’.... You’ve got to wake up and say ‘We’re all part of the system.’<sup>13</sup>*

*-Peter Senge, Keynote address  
MIT Sustainability Summit 2010*

Today’s universities are facing complex issues; financial and environmental sustainability are chief among them. A shift toward systems-thinking in support of a more integrated advancement effort to address these issues relies on effective collaboration. “Collaboration is the human face of systemic change,” says Peter Senge and Darcy Stallings Winslow of the Society for Organizational Learning. “Effective collaboration,” they note, “requires people and institutions working effectively across (intra- and inter-organizational) boundaries ... building trust among diverse players and shared visions that transcend individual organizations’ interests.”<sup>14</sup> Collaboration fosters a common understanding of institutional values, vision and goals within a larger contextual framework.

Sustainability advocates argue that success is contingent upon the effective engagement of all people who have a stake in the outcome. Similarly, development professionals understand that stakeholder engagement is vital to capitalizing on the human and financial capital required to advance society’s goals. An inclusive process that effectively engages a diverse group of

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Donors respond to institutions that offer a ‘sense of shared enterprise.’

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constituents generates ideas from a broader perspective, builds upon existing networks, strengthens the case for support and serves as a catalyst for comprehensive problem solving. The resulting strategies are universally understood and owned by its participants, which includes future

donors. As fundraising expert Jim Langley observes, “donors respond to institutions that offer a ‘sense of shared enterprise.’”<sup>15</sup> Yet, as noted in *Academic Impressions’ A Roadmap for Campus Sustainability*, “for all but a handful of colleges and universities, donors’ potential interest in sustainability initiatives remains untapped.”<sup>16</sup>

The integration of sustainability and advancement planning around a key campus initiative can plant the seeds for the vital organizational change required to address some of the complex issues facing higher education today. This effort connects the facilitators of change (e.g., campus sustainability leaders, advocates, business officers, fundraisers, communicators) with the change agents (e.g., investors and policy makers). Participants are engaged throughout the process, inspired by a shared purpose rather than working at parallel or cross-purposes.

Peter Senge says to “look for small steps of things you can do together with people with whom you traditionally would never have cooperated — and do something useful, no matter how

“In 2006 the Cleveland Foundation started the Greater University Circle Initiative, a strategy supporting collaboration among the area's major anchor institutions and the surrounding communities to stimulate economic development among the 43,000 residents. Recognizing that job development and training, wealth and asset building, and robust community economies were all necessary to addressing poverty where the median household income was less than \$18,500 and where there was over 25% unemployment, the Foundation and other Initiative partners established the Evergreen Cooperative Development Fund. The Fund provides low-interest, long-term financing to start up cooperative businesses that are based on worker ownership and provide employment, training and services to local residents, and focus on economic and environmental sustainability. The Fund has helped launch two businesses, Evergreen Laundry and Ohio Cooperative Solar, and is funding a third, Green City Growers, currently in planning stages. The Fund expects to create up to ten cooperative businesses and 350 to 500 new jobs, resulting in employee holdings of \$25 to \$30 million.”

- Tides Blog, May 9, 2011

small.”<sup>17</sup> Collaboration can be achieved within existing organizational structures and budgets. For example:

- Assign a member of the development team and budget office to participate on the campus sustainability committee
- Include the advancement office on the campus-wide strategic planning committee as a permanent member representing not just the philanthropic perspective, but the input of key external stakeholders
- Broaden the scope of identified participants – on campus and off – to include in development planning
- Educate and involve campus sustainability champions in the fundraising process by providing information liaisons from the advancement office
- Inform advancement officers of campus sustainability activities at regularly scheduled meetings to leverage efforts and jointly identify opportunities for collaboration around funding priorities
- Explore cross-collaboration opportunities through AASHE (Association for Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) and CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Higher Education) around educational events and activities

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Cooperation takes a commitment – of leadership and of resources. Recognizing the appropriate people, units, programs and initiatives, identifying either duplication or unity of efforts, and bringing them together over a long period of time is time consuming. Additionally, as staff positions tend to be the hardest hit in a time of economic downturn, the natural enablers of internal collaboration – directors, administrators and communicators – may be physically missing. However, many would agree that “those who represent the public interest have a special responsibility to be resourceful (and) collaborative.”<sup>18</sup>

The key for campuses now is to transcend traditional boundaries and to know who, how and when to connect with the right participants – and on what scale – from all sectors. The quality collaborative process supports an organizational and cultural shift by promoting transparency, understanding, and trust among participants. We share knowledge so that we are better positioned to take action. It is an ongoing learning process, but “to be successful in this



“Since 2001, Portland State University has made systematic efforts to integrate sustainability principles into its operations, campus planning, and academic and research programs. Sustainability is not confined to a single department or discipline. Our pursuit of institutional excellence in sustainability is based on two principles central to Portland State’s identity – our commitment to being a fully engaged partner with our community, and our belief that sustainability is a concept that must be understood and addressed in an integrated manner.”

*In 2008, the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation awarded a challenge grant of \$25 million to Portland State University – the largest gift in Portland State University’s history and “the largest single gift to academic sustainability programs in the U.S.” Per Portland State, “this grant has allowed Portland State faculty, students, and staff to significantly advance their work in integrating sustainability into teaching, research, and campus projects and to expand their engagement with business, community, and public partners.” The James L. and Marion F. Miller Foundation initially approached the university for a proposal because of PSU’s integrated approach and the opportunity to implement transformational change in both the university and the community.*

transformative era, we must continue to work together.”<sup>19</sup> An integrated advancement organization can serve as a model for collective impact.

Shelley Poticha and Allison Brooks of Reconnecting America argue:

“As we move into the future, philanthropy should play a greater role in facilitating conversations about change and simultaneously modeling the kinds of problem-solving methods that are increasingly seen as essential ingredients to successful change... philanthropy can be a critical leader at this time, helping to model and chart the course for a new era of collaboration, cooperation, and alignment in order to achieve desired economic, social, and environmental outcomes.”<sup>20</sup>

In the fundraising landscape, “one thing is clear: everyone in the organization has a role in philanthropy. Staying flat-footed is simply not an option.”<sup>21</sup> A more inclusive process provides an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the role of fundraising and sustainability in higher education as it serves to re-shape the role of its professionals.

## Integrated

*“Integrated decision-making is not possible without integrated thinking.”<sup>22</sup>  
-Wynn Calder and Richard M. Clugston,  
Progress Towards Sustainability in Higher Education*

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Agenda 21) and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development call for "integrated decision-making based on integrated information to enable individuals, organizations, institutions, businesses and governments to incorporate environmental decisions and goals into social, economic (and even security) decisions." Traditional approaches to advancement planning and sustainability planning have served as important functions in the development of academic programs, infrastructure, and other educational opportunities. An integrated advancement planning effort with a sustainability lens recognizes the interconnectivity of these efforts and seeks to maximize outcomes. Opportunities are sought to inform and engage faculty, staff, students and external partners in an effort to align

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Integrated decision making based  
on integrated information

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“It is a renewed commitment to make the world more fair and decent while preserving a beautiful and livable Earth. And if we don’t stand for such things, what do we stand for?”

- David Orr, Paul Sears Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies and Politics and Senior Advisor to the President, Oberlin College

*The Oberlin Project is a joint effort of the City of Oberlin, Oberlin College, and private and institutional partners to improve the resilience, prosperity, and sustainability of their community. The effort brought together “otherwise disparate objectives as an overarching initiative” to “revitalize the local economy, eliminate carbon emissions, restore local agriculture and forestry, and use the entire effort as an educational laboratory relevant to virtually every discipline.” Since its 2009 launch, the Project has:*

- *Raised \$9 million in grants, gifts, and commitments from 14 foundations and individual donors;*
- *Organized the community into 10 teams working such issues as energy, education, policy, civic engagement, economic development;*
- *Established a Friends of the Oberlin Project group with a five year \$1 million+ goal*
- *Pursued a power purchase agreement to deploy 2 MW of solar electricity;*
- *Organized a faculty team to track economic, social, and physical data and provide community-scale, real-time feedback with Lucid Design, Inc. (a company founded by Oberlin students and faculty);*
- *Completed a \$1.1 million Department of Energy-funded study on the regional transition to energy efficiency and renewable energy;*
- *Established a downtown office in the East College Street complex—a \$17 million LEED-gold facility created by three Oberlin alumni.*

strategies and identify related resource needs and opportunities. Goals are aligned not only across departments, colleges, and operational units, but with regional entities and relevant partners in government and industry. A wide spectrum of key players is involved in the earliest stages of planning, including the institution's business and advancement organizations.<sup>23</sup> Wynn Calder and Richard M. Clugston extend this thinking to include “collaboration with other institutions of higher education, with local primary and secondary schools, and with businesses to foster sustainable practices.”<sup>24</sup>

An integrated effort can accelerate progress. Leadership within the advancement office can help drive this process by:

- Promoting its role internally as a partner in advancing a more sustainable financial and institutional focus
- Seeking opportunities to inform and engage funding partners and external experts in collective efforts
- Incorporating campus sustainability priorities throughout its own planning processes, as a core value or “means test” by which all funding priorities are measured, and
- Enabling development staff to facilitate and participate in the process

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The advancement office can provide significant leadership in driving integrated decision-making by promoting its role internally as a partner in advancing a more sustainable financial and institutional focus.

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By doing so, universities and colleges will be more strongly positioned to attract the kind of large scale funding opportunities and organizational changes required to advance a more sustainable future for the institution and its partners.

In Progress Towards Sustainability in Higher Education, Wynn Calder and Richard M. Clugston recommend that external stakeholders:

- Pressure federal and state governments to move the education and research agenda of higher education toward a greater focus on sustainability
- Actively encourage colleges and universities (especially those schools with which they are directly affiliated) to educate for a sustainable future
- Expand their support for higher education programs, as well as NGO projects that promote higher education sustainability development

## Leveraged

*"Higher Ed needs to serve as a better leader, a catalyst for bringing together regional goals and leveraging - look for opportunities of alignment among community and business leaders, public agencies, and elected officials."*<sup>25</sup>

*-Policy Matters*

In the face of disruptive forces in higher education today, educational institutions can and should wield significant influence in shaping future policy and practice. As recipients of public and private dollars, as knowledge centers that inform and engage citizens, as businesses with purchasing power, universities have much to leverage. "Higher education in the United States is a \$300 billion industry with the active audience, intellectual resources, and research-related infrastructure to drive positive change at the local level. Most importantly, institutions of higher education also have the ability to transfer the knowledge, skills, ideas and values needed to usher in a new era of environmental sustainability in the 21st century."<sup>26</sup>

Private support of education in the U.S. rose 7% in 2012, as compared to a 3.5% increase in giving overall,<sup>27</sup> and efforts to raise this bar will most likely accelerate. In *Smart Money*, a

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report of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, the authors note that, "over the past decade, expectations about the role of private philanthropy in expanding access to and success in postsecondary education have increased. These expectations are based on assumptions that philanthropic organizations—both national and community foundations—can enhance the capacity and performance of postsecondary

institutions."<sup>28</sup> The report provides evidence that illustrates the significant role of philanthropy in higher education, including more than \$6.3 billion committed to postsecondary education institutions or related enterprises between 2007 and 2010.<sup>29</sup>

Philanthropy in higher education can be leveraged to drive public-private investment and influence decision-makers around sustainability goals. Shelley Poticha and Allison Brook observe that, "given the profound shifts in the political, economic, and social fabric of the country, partnerships, leveraging, and efficiency will be the currencies of success."<sup>30</sup> Dr. Ken Wilson, Executive Director of The Christensen Fund, advocates "connecting with entrepreneurial innovators and imaginative legislators" in pursuit of mutual goals."<sup>31</sup> Indeed,

*Partnerships for Smart Growth: University-Community Collaboration for Better Public Spaces* profiles 13 university-lead collaborations on smart growth initiatives, including:

- The Community Preservation Institute, a collaborative effort between the University of Massachusetts (UMass) and the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) to provide smart growth education to current and future local leaders.
- The 2001 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill campus master plan, the culmination of a four-year endeavor with the town of Chapel Hill to pass a new development plan that allows capital projects contained in the master plan to move forward more quickly, in exchange for adhering to higher environmental and neighborhood standards.
- The National Center for Neighborhood and Brownfields Redevelopment's two-year university-based effort to assist six small towns in New Jersey plan in their collective redevelopment in concert with smart growth principles.

university and college partnerships with local, regional and statewide organizations and businesses have yielded results on the path to smarter communities. *Partnerships for Smart Growth: University-Community Collaboration for Better Public Spaces*,<sup>32</sup> released by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning in conjunction with the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy and written under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, profiles 13 university- and college-lead collaborations on smart growth initiatives.<sup>33</sup>

The growth of private funding as indicated above, however, has yet to equate to large-scale investment in systemic change. As fundraisers are well aware, this kind of philanthropic engagement is unusual in the traditional funding world, which is typically defined by specific categories and tends to be risk-adverse. Therefore, it is important to remember the potential impact of grassroots efforts on long-term objectives. Observes Dr. Manuel Pasto of the University of Southern California, "projects make us see the possible, policy helps makes the possible standard practice, and power is what ultimately drives policy."<sup>34</sup> For example:

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"One the world's most sustainable and innovative business school facilities" and an "inflection point" for the Stanford School of Business.

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- Stanford University's Graduate School of Business started a Campus Sustainability Fund to support the sustainable goal of the new Knight Management Center Campus. Funding for the \$345 million facility of eight environmentally sustainable buildings on 12.5 acres was led by Nike founder Philip H. Knight, resulting in, per Stanford, "one of the world's most sustainable and innovative business school facilities" and an "inflection point" for the Stanford School of Business.<sup>35</sup>
- A long-standing relationship between the Dow Chemical Company and the University of Michigan resulted in a partnership to create the Sustainability Fellows Program, which Dow will finance with \$10 million over six years. The program will support the efforts of 300 graduate and postdoctoral students who are working to address society's pressing environmental problems.<sup>36</sup>
- Grand Valley State University established a Sustainability Reinvestment Fund, where students, faculty, and staff apply for grants for sustainable development projects both on campus and in the community.<sup>37</sup>

“In the United States, philanthropy also must focus on what the new normal means....philanthropists and nonprofits must not relax and retreat but instead must redouble their efforts as active players in shaping how society works. If philanthropy ignores the big issues caused by the changing economy, it could become little more than a morally righteous activity—and not a vibrant, powerful force for social good.”

-Sean Stannard-Stockton, *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*

Existing fundraising initiatives can also be leveraged to advance sustainability objectives. An institution, for example, that is already fundraising for more project-based learning can connect it as a key component of integrating sustainability into the curricula. This can include student assistantships to participate in experiential learning programs, such as Carleton College’s efforts to impact trans-generational change through active civic engagement in the environmental, economic, and social aspects of sustainability.<sup>38</sup> Advancement staff can evaluate opportunities within current fundraising priorities and meet with the sustainability committee to learn how to connect sustainability efforts. The advancement officer’s inherent facilitative role would also serve well in building coalitions of faculty, staff, students, volunteers and donors to capitalize upon trends in the campus sustainability movement, such as green building.

Ultimately, private funders are key influencers who can help nudge higher education toward the sustainability tipping point in the emerging economy. Savvy funding partners across the

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spectrum understand the impact of a shared, strategic investment and the benefits that can be gained through a more efficient alignment of resources in higher education. As noted by Susan Wolf Dittkoff, Alison Powell and Daniel Stid in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, “in times of fiscal challenge especially, donors should consider the most effective ways to use private money to help

government serve the common good...’the bulk of the work that everybody is trying to do still lies in the hands of the government:”<sup>39</sup> In an analysis conducted by the authors, they discovered that 40 percent of the donations were connected in some way with government: “The biggest chunk (17 percent) went to public universities, which is not surprising given the deep connections so many philanthropists have to such institutions...the large share of gifts with government connections makes sense. Philanthropists use their money to fill unmet needs in our society. So does government.”<sup>40</sup>

In the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* Sean Stannard-Stockton writes, “even a rapid increase in charitable giving could not possibly make up for the cuts in government spending that will probably be made over the next decade...philanthropy must embrace (the) sort of sophisticated financing strategy that aligns the interests of government, donors, and private investors.”<sup>41</sup> Additionally, as Marcel Engel observes, by recognizing and effectively leveraging this investment we can begin to create the appropriate frameworks and incentives to fully leverage businesses contribution.<sup>42</sup> “These kinds of effective public-private partnerships,” adds the *Guardian of Sustainability*, “are urgently required...and must be seen as essential policy making for our time.”<sup>43</sup> The campus advancement office can work with leaders to inform and channel private investment in ways that truly leverage government support.

“The Green Revolving Loan Fund (GRF) model is widespread, with at least 79 funds in operation in North America representing over \$111 million in committed investment as of late 2012. GRFs have proven their ability to reduce operating costs and environmental impact while promoting education and engaging stakeholders.”

*In 2011, the Sustainable Endowments Institute (SEI) launched The Billion Dollar Green Challenge, an initiative that encourages colleges, universities, and other nonprofit institutions to invest in their own GRFs. As part of this initiative, SEI has researched GRFs at a wide range of institutions and has developed a suite of tools and resources to support GRF adoption.*

## Innovative

*“There is growing evidence that the most disruptive and impactful innovations are emerging at the intersections between established disciplines and perspectives. In this setting, talents and perspectives are combined across these boundaries, uncovering remarkable insights and innovations.”<sup>44</sup>*  
-The Impact Fund

The new economy demands that campus professionals proactively plan around emerging trends and an integrated approach can drive creative solutions. Green building proponents, for example, argue that by integrating green goals and expertise from key stakeholders during the initial planning phase you engender innovation. This practice, referred to as Integrated Design, can be expanded upon and applied to cross-unit and cross-sector efforts to advance a sustainable agenda. According to the American Institute of Architects, “increasing value through shared information fosters amazing accomplishments.”<sup>45</sup>

In reality, the scope and scale of integrating sustainability goals requires both flexibility in thinking and an innovative ability to recognize multiple funding sources. The Association of Fundraising Professionals’ *Perspectives: Philanthropy in the New Economy* indicates that “coping with difficult times means leaving no stone unturned and identifying new opportunities.”<sup>46</sup> As consultant Mark Folup observes, “rather than ‘locking down’ a static revenue development strategy, an organization needs to strategically understand its larger funding model and, within that model, invest in rapid cycle testing of new resource development strategies.”<sup>47</sup>

Fortunately, there are numerous sustainability funding models from which we can learn:

- |                                   |                           |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Operational Strategies            | Government Grants         |
| Contract Services                 | Government Incentives     |
| Sustainability Reinvestment Funds | Social Impact Bonds       |
| Revolving Loan Funds              | Carbon Offsets            |
| Incentives                        | Power Purchase Agreements |
| Leases                            | Green Tags                |
| Student Fees                      | Alumni Gifts              |
| Student Projects                  | Corporate Gifts           |
| Revenue-driven Strategies         | Student Gifts             |
| Program Related Investments       | Foundation Grants         |
| Green Building Loan Fund          | Gifts-In-Kind             |
| Green Bonds                       | Matching Funds            |

“With support from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the National Wildlife Federation and Jobs for the Future have come together to form The Greenforce Initiative. This two-year program will strengthen workforce development and sustainability practices at community colleges, supporting pathways to employment for lower skilled adults.”

- Kevin Coyle and Maria Flynn, *Second Nature Blog*

Resources offered by associations such as Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), the Higher Education Associations Sustainability Network, and the SEED Center (Sustainability Education and Economic Development) provide ongoing information in this area. Additionally, a number of organizations have shared case studies on various financing strategies in support of advancing sustainability in higher education, including: NACUBO’s *Financing Sustainability on Campus* and *Boldly Sustainable*; *Academic Impressions’ Roadmap to Campus Sustainability*; the U.S. Department of Energy’s *Guide to Financing Energy Smart Schools*, Second Nature’s Campus Green Builder Initiative; AASHE’s *Creating A Campus Sustainability Revolving Loan Fund*; and the Sustainable Endowments Institute’s (SEI) *Green Revolving Funds: A Guide to Implementation & Management* (co-published by AASHE in July 2013).

*A Guide to Implementation & Management* was released as part of The Billion Dollar Green Challenge, an initiative launched by SEI in 2011 to encourage “colleges, universities, and other nonprofit institutions to invest in their own GRF’s (green revolving funds).”<sup>48</sup> The report captures data and insights from universities and colleges of all sizes that have already incorporated GRFs into their campus operations, including some of the early successes some institutions have had in leveraging their GRFs with private fundraising. President Elizabeth Kiss and her development team at Agnes Scott College, for example, “raised over \$400,000 in seed capital from donors within a few months by pitching their fund’s strong (return on investment) and its potential to turn the campus into a living laboratory for sustainability.”<sup>49</sup>

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Agnes Scott College raised over \$400,000 in seed capital from donors within a few months by pitching their fund’s strong ROI and its potential to turn the campus into a living laboratory for sustainability.

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To steer the innovative funding process within their own institutions, universities must first understand their unique role and desired outcomes. An organized, intentional effort will better prepare campus facilitators to capitalize upon existing opportunities, for example “shovel ready projects” that might capture revenue opportunities such as power purchase agreements and capital projects or government funds or incentives around workforce readiness. It will also help strengthen their understanding of applicable lessons from best practices to help to minimize costs and maximize opportunities. The engagement of the advancement office in this process can help spur the kind of informed self-assessment required to fully weigh financing opportunities.

Additionally, trends in the philanthropic sector can be integrated through the help of informed advancement leaders to better foster relationships, resources and innovative strategies in support of sustainable institutional strategies. Lucy Bernholtz, visiting scholar at Stanford University’s Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, observes, “On the cusp of the first

“Taking a page from the playbooks of corporations, a small but growing number of charities are hiring chief innovation officers and starting innovation teams as a way to be more deliberate and disciplined in how they test new ideas and put them in place.”

-The Chronicle for Philanthropy

modern foundation’s centennial, we may be looking at the dawn of a new form of organizing, giving, and governing that is better informed, more aware of complex systems, more collaborative, more personal, more nimble, and ultimately, perhaps, more effective.”<sup>50</sup>

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Everybody with a phone and an app from Square will have the capacity to receive grant level sums of money, track it against specific line items, and make expense reports.

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The shift to a networked information economy, for example, has already enhanced public advocacy and fundraising efforts, including how we collaborate around common goals. “Crowdsourcing,” predicts Ms. Bernholtz, “will go mainstream...and (will be used) for an ever-wider range of funding activities. Friends asking friends for support is the oldest (and most reliable) fundraising mechanism we know.”<sup>51</sup>

“Smartphones,” she adds, “are “information and money in one device... everybody with a phone and an app from Square will have the capacity to receive grant level sums of money, track it against specific line items, and make expense reports.”<sup>52</sup> In the emerging Big Data era, proponents of change – funders and organizational leaders alike – will better link information with opportunities. Serving as a bridge between information and people, fundraisers are a critical link to the human aspect in this rapidly evolving technological framework.

The ability to integrate more innovative solutions, of course, will be determined by a number of institutional factors. Leadership – both from above and within – is also a critical component in easing the transition to change. Professionals on all sides of the equation need to learn how to be more nimble. Some institutions, for example, “are hiring chief innovation officers and starting innovation teams as a way to be more deliberate and disciplined in how they test new ideas and put them in place.”<sup>53</sup> By working collaboratively around sustainability goals and providing room to grow in smarter ways, we increase opportunities to find innovative solutions.

## Proactive

*“The green revolution is just starting and there is plenty of market-share up for grabs.”<sup>54</sup>*

- Trey Trenchard, Triple Pundit

In the world of corporate social responsibility, businesses have discovered that the successful adoption of sustainability strategies depends on aligning financial, social and environmental interests. They have also recognized that it also represents good business. “In order to satisfy the more sophisticated and conscientious consumer of today,” notes David Beecher Brauer of the University of Pittsburgh, “successful business must address sustainability issues and articulate its commitment to social responsibility...Sustainability and commitment to social issues need to become a part of the fabric of an organization and most importantly they must be implemented from the top down.”<sup>55</sup>

Universities, as evidenced by groups such as AASHE, NACUBO (both members of HEASC) and Second Nature among others have also increased efforts to integrate a triple-bottom line



“Since their first decision to “go green” in 1993, Nike has been an early adopter of numerous sustainable strategies. It has taken a serious stance on selling recyclable components, reducing waste, and reusing byproducts like rubber or plastic to create new products. This has resulted not only in cost savings but in a wave of positive PR. Its financial results are also staggering. In the last 10 years, Nike’s stock price has increased 216%, and year to date, has increased 31%, relative to the S&P 500’s 4% decrease and 19% increase respectively.”

- Trey Trenchard

approach to higher education’s operations and programs. Where academia, however, may be falling behind leading companies is in understanding how to use sustainable responsibility to their marketing advantage. Beyond the educational, organizational and economic value many universities have already discovered from sustainable practices, green has branding power. Says Jerry Yudelson, “Developers, large corporations, universities, schools, local government and building owners have long recognized the marketing and public relations benefits (including branding) of a demonstrated concern for the environment.”<sup>56</sup>

Ashok Kamal says that sustainability has become a strategy for innovative companies to distance and distinguish themselves from competitors.<sup>57</sup> He writes, “‘Green business’ is not an oxymoron and leading companies – across sectors – are approaching Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as an asset rather than a burden. The bottom-line: if you are

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In the image-conscious world of higher education, a thoughtful, proactive message around sustainability can deliver a tangible advantage in the competition for students, faculty, research dollars and private funding.

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not greening, you are not competing. Companies that fail to catch the green wave will suffer the same fate as dinosaurs: extinction.”<sup>58</sup> In the image-conscious world of higher education, a thoughtful, proactive message around sustainability can deliver a tangible advantage in the competition for students, faculty, research dollars and private funding.

As advancement offices bring awareness and support to their institutions, it is important to include the value of sustainability in their message – including social responsibility. Higher education provides a critical role in guiding students through the complexities of the human condition and in empowering graduates to help design and participate in the economy as if both people and the planet matter. Recognizing this role, several campuses have launched major capital campaigns around this theme<sup>59</sup>, including:

- The University of Pennsylvania’s Marking History: The Campaign for Penn – “Buildings & Renovations: A Green Urban Campus” is one of the five campaign priorities. Of the more than \$4.3 billion raised, over \$752 million was donated for new and renovated sustainable facilities and the reclamation of concrete for green space.
- Bristol University’s Centenary Campaign – “Global Change and Sustainability” is one of six campaign priorities. The campaign launched in 2009 with \$100 million goal; \$15 million is allotted for Social Responsibility.
- Princeton University’s Aspire Campaign – “Engineering and a Sustainable Society: Generating Real-World Solutions” was one of the six campaign priorities. The five-year campaign ended in 2012 after raising \$1.88 billion, including \$65 Million for research, graduate fellowships and equipment for Engineering and a Sustainable Society.

“A comprehensive and enduring commitment to sustainability, in short, strengthens existing income streams and creates new ones. As in corporate America, colleges and universities that grasp this insight and act on it are the mostly likely to thrive in the age of climate change.”

-Boldly Sustainable: Hope and Opportunity for Higher Education in the Age of Climate Change

- Stanford University’s Stanford Challenge Campaign – “Environment & Sustainability” was one of their eight campaign themes. Over \$432.8 Million was raised for this initiative.
- University of Nottingham’s The Nottingham Campaign – “Health and Well Being” and “Sustainable Futures” are two of the five campaign priorities. The campaign launched in 2011 with a \$150 million goal.

As part of a comprehensive sustainability strategy, the advancement office can play an important role in identifying and building partnerships with industry and community organizations with similarly proactive sustainability agendas. For example:

- The Colorado Renewable Energy Collaborative is a research partnership that links three primary research universities in Colorado with the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and other colleges, universities, public agencies, foundations and non-profits to support the research and development of renewable energy. The Collaborative’s \$2 million in state seed money qualified for federal and private funding and its first project, The Center for Biorefining and Biofuels, received \$500,000 in private sponsorship and matching state funds to support research projects and fellowships.<sup>60</sup>
- Following a long history of successful partnering, Colorado State University recently announced a new Water Scholars Program funded by Coca-Cola with two universities in China -- East China Normal University (ECNU) and Anhui Agricultural University (AAU). The new program combines the universities’ expertise in water issues with Coca-Cola’s focus on water sustainability in China and throughout the world. The \$1 million gift will benefit undergraduate students at all three institutions.<sup>61</sup>

When driving large scale public-private partnerships, the ability to understand the vision and offerings of an institution and its role as a regional catalyst and eco-partner are imperative.

The sustainability brand is marketable to individual donors as well. Donors in general tend to give to organizations who are seen as leaders and who provide them with a sense of true

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“The donor was thrilled to be a part of the facility with the greenest lab in the world.”

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partnership in making something good happen.<sup>62</sup> The Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at UC Santa Barbara, for example, leveraged bond funding to attract approximately \$500,000 worth of green products to help the Bren School achieve LEED™ Platinum. They also received \$1 million post

construction for an outdoor space adjacent to the building. “The donor was thrilled to be a part of the facility with the greenest lab in the world,” says Jennifer Purcell Deacon, Assistant Dean of Development. She adds, “The awareness of green grew after the building. Now people are impressed. It perks them up. This has created a bit of a halo effect around the school, and has provided for the schools’ meteoric rise in distinction, which is on par with similar schools that

*Trane*, an energy service company (ESCO) involved in a renewable energy project with the University of Missouri, prepared student ambassadors to share ESCO project facts with visitors and prospective students, assisted UCM Communications Department with archiving the ESCO project details, provided quarterly speakers to discuss various sustainability issues and assisted UCM in planning a weeklong celebrate for Earth Day 2010.

-Betty Roberts and Chad Remboldt, University of Central Missouri

have been around for 100 years.”<sup>63</sup> Northern Arizona University benefitted from a similar experience when the new College of Business and College of Engineering buildings were rated at LEED™ Gold. According to Richard Bowen, the business building has also changed the way the school thinks about themselves; applications doubled and the student investment group won its first national award. After the College of Engineering’s new LEED™ Gold building was constructed, enrollment increased dramatically. Without any changes to the curriculum, the College is now listed as one of the “Top 25” in US News and World Report.<sup>64</sup> “Our College of Business,” says Bowen, “received a \$25 million donation from a donor because he was looking for an M.B.A. program that was teaching values, not just finance.”<sup>65</sup>

Staying ahead of the curve is important to alumni as well. In a 2002 UC Berkeley alumni survey, the top reasons cited for giving included the university’s influence on the life of the alumnus and the “opportunity to fund innovative programs, address urgent needs, and take advantage of unforeseen opportunities.”<sup>66</sup> Brauer notes that the issue of sustainability will become more and more critical to students in their decision-making process: “The future educational consumer will have an ingrained sense of sustainability along with a social awareness that the current and previous generations were not exposed to...institutions that recognize the changing face of the consumer and position themselves to take advantage of it will flourish.”<sup>67</sup> Alumni, along with students, their parents and their future employers are prospective investors and sustainability adds a competitive advantage.

There is a little time to waste. Sustainability as a brand may become redundant as practices become more embedded. In this case, there is a reputational cost to inaction. “Institutions of higher education don’t want to be seen as laggards on climate change.”<sup>68</sup> Observes AASHE board member, Matthew St. Clair, “Enough universities have instituted green building practices that all others have to follow or suffer a potential competitive image disadvantage.”<sup>69</sup> Rick Legon, President of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, advises university and college business officers, “higher education has a chance to play a significant leadership role...boards must consider the financial and reputational risk of inaction.”<sup>70</sup>

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Higher education has a chance to play a significant leadership role...boards must consider the financial and reputational risk of inaction.

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Advancement staff, students, volunteers, and donors can serve as ambassadors, communicating sustainability values and actions to potential investors. This is not about talking points. This is about the conversation we elect to have when raising money for higher education. A proactive advancement strategy supports the message that sustainability is far broader than “green.”

“Efforts to improve sustainability at higher education institutions often require challenging shifts in organizational priorities, patterns of behavior, management strategies, and community expectations. In guiding these shifts, sustainability leaders must grapple with a diverse array of competing needs, requiring thoughtful approaches to change management.”

- Sara E. Smiley Smith, Yale College

## Modeling

*You must be the change you want to see in the world.*

*- Mahatma Gandhi*

Along with its campus partners, the development office can serve as a model for change through its core organizing principles and practices. Fundraisers can lead by example, learn to inform and be informed across traditional silos, collaborate toward practical solutions, raise the profile on what works and engage the campus and donor community.<sup>71</sup> The opportunity to develop and execute these tasks – and build a fundraising organization around them – is a complex but exciting challenge. It represents a nimbleness not often found in institutes of higher learning and requires leaders who can invoke and engender systems thinking and collaboration. As Leith Sharp recognizes:

The nature of this conversation must advance beyond a dynamic of territorialism and component optimization toward a dynamic of deep collaboration and engaged interdisciplinary thinking. To this end, the people must be effectively incentivized and facilitated from beginning to end to strive for shared success and to generate team-based problem definition and solution development. To date, we have very few examples of effective systems thinking being achieved in our universities, but recognition of its importance is growing.<sup>72</sup>

There is significant evidence that companies and organizations that integrate practices of social responsibility – ethics, citizenship, accountability, sustainability – benefit organizationally, and save money while enhancing performance and social good will. Business for Social Responsibility demonstrates some of the applicable benefits of socially responsible corporate performance, including<sup>73</sup>:

- Improved Financial Performance
- Reduced Operating Costs
- Enhanced Brand Image and Reputation
- Increased Sales and Customer Loyalty
- Increased Productivity and Quality
- Increased Ability to Attract and Retain Employees
- Reduced Regulatory Oversight
- Access to Capital

In practice, higher education advancement organizations can model the behaviors of socially responsible companies through a triple bottom line approach that prioritizes human and environmental sustainability along with fundraising goals. Through a number of core areas including leadership, operations, investment, organizational structure, human resources and

“Leadership development has come to a point of being too individually focused and elitist. There is a transition occurring from the old paradigm in which leadership resided in a person or role, to a new one in which leadership is a collective process that is spread throughout networks of people. The question will change from, “Who are the leaders?” to “What conditions do we need for leadership to flourish in the network? How do we spread leadership capacity throughout the organization and democratize leadership?”

- The Center for Creative Leadership

communications, advancement organizations can work with campus sustainability leaders to identify opportunities to embed effective practices into the organizational DNA.

### *Leadership*

The disruptive forces in higher education today require individuals who can steer organizations through change, who have the willingness and capacity to challenge assumptions, and who can engender a culture of collaboration and innovation. The Center for Creative Leadership defines creative leadership as the “capacity to think and act beyond the boundaries that limit our effectiveness.”<sup>74</sup> Effective leadership is critical in positioning the advancement office as a partner in more sustainable strategies and an important factor to consider when defining goals for recruitment and professional development.

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Think and act beyond  
the boundaries that limit  
our effectiveness.

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In an environment that calls for flexibility and resourcefulness, leadership is a skill to be engendered in professionals at all levels. John P. Kotter, Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership, Emeritus at Harvard Business School, notes that strong leaders understand how to empower all professionals to lead. The ability is especially vital at a time that calls for inspired professionals with leadership character.<sup>75</sup> This character trait is also vital to long-term effectiveness. Per the TCC Group, organizations that have strong “internal leadership” (leaders who apply a mission-centered, focused, and inclusive approach to making decisions and inspire and motivate people to act upon them) and “leader vision” (leaders who formulate and motivate others to pursue a clear vision) are significantly more sustainable than those that do not.”<sup>76</sup>

### *Operations*

Sustainably-focused organizations seek to both streamline operations and adapt new solutions to reduce cost, conserve resources and enhance return on investment. Working with campus sustainability groups, advancement offices can research best practices and adopt green workplace performance strategies. This includes existing campus assessment tools and performance guidelines that can be applied to colleges, departments and operational areas. Additional guidance can be found through the College Green Report Card, the first major initiative of the Sustainable Endowments Institute, which listed nine sustainability categories:<sup>77</sup>

- Administration (e.g., policies and commitments by school administrators and trustees)
- Climate Change & Energy (e.g., energy efficiency and conservation)

Tufts University recently announced that Pierre Omidyar, founder of eBay and co-founder of Omidyar Network, along with his wife, Pam – both graduates of Tufts – will invest \$100 million in international microfinance initiatives through a unique partnership with their alma mater.

The \$100 million endowment gift – the largest in university or microfinance history “will bolster international microfinance institutions in their efforts to scale their capacity to make loans to poor, predominantly female heads of households, who lack adequate income to provide the basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing for themselves and their families...fifty percent of earnings from the fund will be reinvested in the original pool for additional microfinance programs. The remaining 50 percent of income will advance important Tufts programs such as support for faculty, financial aid, debt forgiveness for graduates pursuing careers in public service, and scholarships that will enable economically disadvantaged students to attend classes during summer session.”

-Tufts University

- Food & Recycling (e.g., recycling and composting programs)
- Green Building (e.g., green building design for new and existing buildings)
- Student Involvement (e.g., student participation in sustainability initiatives)
- Transportation (e.g., alternative transportation for students, faculty, and staff, as well as alternative fuel or hybrid technology for campus fleets)
- Endowment Transparency (e.g., accessibility to endowment investment information)
- Investment Priorities (e.g., prioritization of return on investment, investment socially responsible funds, and investment in community development loan funds)
- Shareholder Engagement

At a cross-campus level, the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System™ (STARS), developed by AASHE in participation with the higher education community, is a self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance.

### *Investment*

Operational strategy can also apply to how private funds and organizational assets are invested. One example is selecting investment managers or policies that consider environmental and social factors while optimizing investment return. Additional considerations include utilizing endowment assets to impact campus and community sustainability projects via renewable energy funds, community development financial institutions, or on-campus water/energy-efficiency projects.<sup>78</sup> According to the Green Report Card 2011, one in six schools invests part of its endowment in community development funds.<sup>79</sup>

The report also indicates that approximately one in five schools makes lists of endowment holdings available to the campus community, and in many cases, the public. Endowment transparency policies, which open up information about endowment investment holdings, can help foster dialogue about opportunities for sustainable investment and encourage responsible corporate practices.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, institutions can allow donors to direct their gift to an investment fund that considers sustainability factors – a marketable option given the fact that “socially responsible investment in the U.S. alone grew from \$639 billion in 1995 to \$3.74 trillion in 2012.”<sup>81</sup>

“Re-evaluate individual job descriptions and incorporate into them duties related to sustainability. As long as employees believe sustainability is something “extra” to do, something on top of the already full plate of duties they’re juggling, meaningful change is unlikely.”

-Marcia Willard, Awareness Into Action

Endowments have also sourced green revolving loan funds (GRF’s), returning operating savings to universities and colleges as well as investment income. According to SEI, the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) has allocated almost \$8 million into the Caltech Energy Conservation Investment Program and, excluding utility incentives, reports a portfolio return on investment of 24 percent.<sup>82</sup> This GRF capitalization, notes SEI, is structured as an endowment investment, not as a payout from the endowment. With higher education’s trailing three-year returns averaging 10.2 percent (NACUBO, 2012), the Caltech strategy may be one to watch.<sup>83</sup>

### *Organizational Structure*

If, in higher education, sustainability implies “interdisciplinary,” does the common practice of assigning campus fundraisers by colleges or units achieve the best results? If so, how can fundraisers succeed around cross-campus and cross-sector initiatives? Donor assignments, operating dollars, reporting lines, planning and goal-setting that are targeted around college entities may be important in engaging the key knowledge experts and in aligning donor interest, however, it can reinforce a siloed culture. In effect, there may be little incentive to pursue intra- or inter-sector collaboration under this organizational model.

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Employees who participate in both strategic and fund development planning will be strong fundraisers.

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By considering structural changes that encourage innovation and collaboration, advancement offices can more effectively integrate sustainability values and practices. Where it might be challenging to implement institutional change, advancement units may have more flexibility in redefining job descriptions and re-structuring organizational hierarchy. For example:

- Organize fundraising around long-term initiatives instead of college or unit areas
- Evaluate fundraisers based on short- and long- term indicators
- Include collaborative proposal development as a performance benchmark
- Assign a central advancement staff position to facilitate development planning and execution around inter-disciplinary initiatives; utilize the role to include non-traditional campus stakeholders in the fundraising process
- Establish a Sustainability & Philanthropy Program and assign a lead fundraiser to facilitate strategic communication, goal alignment and prospect research
- Use scheduled retreats to identify and address factors that hinder collaboration

Advancement offices can also re-examine how they engage their fundraisers in the strategic planning process. In sustainable organizations, says Peter York, “employees who participate in both strategic and fund development planning will be strong fundraisers.”<sup>84</sup> Directors can tap talent from within by looking for opportunities to align professional skills with organizational

goals and by ensuring there is sufficient support and reward for collaboration, value integration and co-strategies.

### *Human Resources*

There is a significant amount of documentation outlining the organizational and cultural benefits of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies. A report by McKinsey states that high-performing CSR programs often serve as a proxy for the effectiveness of company

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A strong CSR program can positively affect employee recruitment, engagement, morale and productivity

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management and that managers who value CSR tend to exhibit greater leadership qualities, responsiveness to change and strategic vision.<sup>85</sup> Research also shows that a strong CSR program “can positively affect employee recruitment, engagement, morale and productivity.”<sup>86</sup> In fact, the high turnover field of fundraising represents a high cost for universities in terms of recruitment and

training as well as loss of institutional memory and long-term relationship development. According to a recent Chronicle for Philanthropy survey:<sup>87</sup>

- Half of chief fundraisers plan to leave their jobs within two years or less—and many nonprofit leaders worry that this "revolving door" mentality is hurting their ability to raise money
- Forty percent are thinking about leaving fundraising entirely
- More than half of the executive directors reported that they can't find well-qualified people to run their fundraising staffs

The integration of CSR in the advancement organization provides an opportunity to consider the barriers to recruitment and retention, review hiring practices and criteria, and invest in professional development. HEASC recently established that, in addition to professional development, one of the best ways to institutionalize sustainability in action and policy development is through the establishment of sustainability related performance criteria in the annual staff review process. This change in emphasis can also support a cultural shift toward team-building, collaboration and leadership development in the advancement office – as it cultivates individual professionals with the skills and diversity of thought that we need to develop new solutions. This is especially important in a competitive hiring environment when the public interest of higher education demands that it can attract and retain the best talent and develop new leaders over time.

### *Communications*

Higher education priorities and values such as sustainability are more likely to become universally embedded in strategic development if those expectations are well-defined. Successful development work is best supported by a motivating, well-communicated and clearly articulated vision. However, as Peter York indicates, this is not enough. “To be effective, the vision and mission statement must be communicated successfully by staff and board leaders to the organization’s internal and external stakeholders, constituents, and donors.



“Only the truly transparent will survive. Opacity is the enemy of sustainability.”

–“7 tenets for sustainability,” The Nonprofit Times

Ultimately, if organizational leaders and stakeholders are not motivated and inspired by the organization’s mission and vision, these statements are nothing more than words.”<sup>88</sup>

Dyer & McKay add that “establishing a big-picture context and a strategic direction are crucial steps, but they are just the beginning. People and the processes of change that are continuously experienced add many layers to the complexity of organizational development.”<sup>89</sup> Transparency of effort and information is critical. A better understanding of the sustainability vision, policies, processes and actions can motivate staff and donors alike to engage in the process of change. Effective communications help move the conversation beyond “green” and emphasize the value of the cross-functional nature of our work.

On a basic functional level, university and college communication strategies have to include visible acknowledgement and celebration of sustainability projects, processes and outcomes. All fundraisers and external advocates should have talking points around their institution’s successes, which should be seen as a tool to generate interest and as part of a larger strategy that weaves sustainability goals into campus fundraising initiatives. Communication has to go beyond vision to specific plans for implementation that are encouraged, held accountable and then celebrated by the communication process to all relevant stakeholders.

### Long-term

*“Sustainability is a characteristic of a process or state that can be sustained at a certain level indefinitely”<sup>90</sup>*

*–The International Sustainability Council, Inc.*

Higher education is an ongoing and long-term investment. What we advance is as critical as the means by which we advance. As campuses across the United States push forward in their multi-million and multi-billion dollar fundraising campaigns, shouldn’t we at least take pause? Capital campaigns hold significant potential for institutional change long after the “final” dollars have been counted. A fundraising campaign that aligns resources and integrates sustainability objectives has implications not only for the future of that educational institution but its co-existing communities and society as a whole. It can drive the kind of collaborative partnerships needed to achieve the greatest long-term impact. Additionally, the enhanced visibility around large-scale fundraising campaigns provides an opportunity to shape the conversation among campus constituents, including donors, who may be operating without the advantage of a broader context for their decision-making.

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As campuses across the United States push forward in their multi-million and multi-billion dollar fundraising campaigns, shouldn’t we at least take pause?

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The kinds of investments we make are also important. In the rigorous quest to shine – to remain competitive and relevant, and to fill the gap between funding fallout and the increasing price-tag for education – are competitively-driven universities addicted to growing at all cost or

In a 2009 report, the Higher Education Funding Council for England outlined its goals to integrate sustainability into all of their funding initiatives. They state that each higher education institute can contribute to sustainable development not only through its role as educator but in its business strategy. As well as “reducing their direct ‘carbon footprint’, higher education institute’s (HEI’s) can use what might be called their ‘brain print’ to contribute greatly to the reduction of carbon emissions through knowledge transfer and local leadership.

-Higher Education Funding Council for England

focused on creating long-term value and access? Fundraising is simultaneously a short-term (responsive to donors and urgent needs) and a long-term (proactive and vision-driven) effort, but the value asserted by both should be clearly defined and understood as part of a larger continuum. The relatively short 7-10 year focus of university and college fundraising campaigns has long-standing implications for infrastructure, educational programs, student access and the greater institutional ecosystem. A “smart growth” approach maximizes existing resources, programs and infrastructure in the short-term and considers regional sustainability values such as economy, community, health and the environment for both the short- and the long-term.<sup>91</sup>

In the forward to *Communities of Opportunity: Smart Growth Strategies For Colleges and Universities*, Jim Wheeler claims that for centuries, institutes of higher learning had adhered to smart growth patterns that created connected, compact, and coherent campuses. He asserts that while this has been lost on many campuses during the latter half of the twentieth century, better development patterns can support the goals of institutions of higher learning to the

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While institutions must grow to meet demand, address aging and outdated infrastructure or ensure educational relevance, “growth” does not always equate to “more.”

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benefit of students, faculty, staff, and community members.<sup>92</sup> While institutions must grow to meet demand, address aging and outdated infrastructure or ensure educational relevance, “growth” does not always equate to “more.” Michael Kinsley, Director of the Rocky Mountain Institute's Economic Renewal Program, observes that communities can develop themselves without growth and, in fact, “innovative communities and businesses create more jobs by

further refining their products before exporting them out of the community.”<sup>93</sup> “Instead of harvesting more,” he adds, “they add value to what they’ve already harvested.”<sup>94</sup> Philanthropy, properly structured, adds value in higher education. While it is not the job of the fundraiser to define that value, he or she does contribute to how it is conveyed. How the advancement office organizes and communicates around these core institutional objectives will greatly influence the process of change at a potentially transformational time.

As campaigns celebrate dollar goals achieved, let’s not forget the outcomes we seek. Are we advancing goals that will actually achieve a more sustainable society? Are we building programs and institutions that are adaptable and can grow to scale? Are we doing more for less? Are we building the kinds of long-term relationships required of long-term solutions? Observes Peter York, “leaders of sustainable organizations (should) connect with funders by sharing results at a level that resonates with them in order to inspire long-term commitments. Again, this is not particularly surprising, and the cause and effect relationship is unclear. Nonetheless, leaders must achieve credibility and community support in order to develop or strengthen long-term funding relationships.”<sup>95</sup> It is important to understand the goals of your donors – and not to underestimate them as partners in continual problem solving.

When universities and colleges adopt sustainability as a core operating strategy, “it can lead to a more efficient use of limited resources, higher productivity, the development of distributed leadership on campus, greater collaboration across traditional silos, strengthened trust among external stakeholders, and enhanced brand value that makes it easier to recruit and retain outstanding students, faculty and staff, all of which can produce a significant competitive advantage for the institution.

-Boldly Sustainable

## Conclusion

Fiscal disruption, the national trend toward sustainability in academics, operations, research and partnerships, increasing demand coupled with shrinking resources, and innovation in technology and practice – each offer an opportunity to re-examine higher education advancement through the lens of sustainability. An eco-system approach to moving universities forward requires significant shifts in how we think about resources, how we organize and how we capitalize upon opportunities. It is an undertaking that will depend upon a continuing commitment of leaders and a collective vision for financial, institutional and environmental sustainability in higher education.

Such a re-imagining transcends the boundaries of traditional thought and action in higher education, but it is one in which philanthropy can play a significant role:

As we move into the future, philanthropy should play a greater role in facilitating conversations about change and simultaneously modeling the kinds of problem-solving methods that are increasingly seen as essential ingredients to successful change...It is critical that philanthropy be proactive in collaboratively expanding our networks and our collective impact.<sup>96</sup>

To truly leverage the role of philanthropy, however, campuses might need to think differently about how they count fundraising success. Converse to the holistic, outcomes-based sustainability perspective, fundraising success is often measured on an annual, college, unit or project basis. This does not fully reflect the true value of a shared financing strategy that simultaneously aligns, conserves and attracts resources to advance goals. Neither does it capture the human investment needed to facilitate the types of long-term inter- and intra-sector partnerships necessary to attract the level of resources required nor the ongoing nature of the process. With an understanding that private resources, like public resources, are finite, successful development integrates co-occurring efforts, maximizes resources, seeks clarification of funding goals and is driven by outcomes.

The work to fund and advance more sustainable colleges and universities has never been easy and it is a journey without end. But it is here and now that we can leverage the lessons of the emerging economy to simultaneously benefit the financial and environmental needs of educational institutions while building investment that is and investors who are strategically engaged. Ultimately, a more comprehensive approach will strengthen the core purpose of higher education: to develop learning communities that are equipped to instill the knowledge, skills and adaptable thinking that will lead to more sustainable businesses and communities in the future.

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