

Perspectives

Community College Leadership for the 21st Century

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Today's leaders must possess a sophisticated toolbox of competencies of which chief fundraiser, "friendraiser" and passionate advocate for the community college mission are essential.

- Walter Bumphus

Community college presidents and other leaders have long recognized that effective organizational development depends on strong fundraising.

- Steven Budd

Finding Wonderland: Resource Development in Recessionary Times

Carol A. Churchill, *President, Mid Michigan Community College, Harrison, Michigan*

Despite great diversity in community colleges across the nation, most are facing declining resources that threaten to cripple the quality of programs and services provided. The Great Recession exacerbated trends that were already obvious in many colleges, including dwindling state appropriations, shrinking property values, and demands to restrain tuition increases to protect our long-cherished mission of accessibility. In many cases, rural community colleges have been hardest hit due to aging, tax resistant

populations, barriers rooted in generational poverty, and shortage of growth-oriented businesses and industries. While resources have declined, deferred maintenance has increased, resulting in deteriorating buildings, laboratories that do not reflect industry standards, and infrastructure issues ill-suited for training skilled workers who can compete in our high tech, global society.

The challenges are many, but successful colleges must develop new resources or fall ever further behind in the competitive marketplace that is the reality of postsecondary education. Students choose colleges based on a number of sometimes subjective criteria. However, this much is certain: students do not select colleges where poor services, unprepared instructors, crumbling buildings, and limited programs are obvious. Even in the most recessionary times, resources must be developed.

Create the Vision

"Begin at the beginning," the King says gravely in Lewis Carroll's classic, *Alice in Wonderland*. It sounds so obvious, but even the most resource-strapped colleges sometimes overlook this basic step. The vision for a college's future does not spring up, isolated, in the mind of an individual leader or group. Rather, the vision begins with a thorough needs assessment that gathers information from environmental scans, data analysis, metrics, and identified trends. A vision grows in a fertile, iterative process that involves a wide range of representative stakeholders: community members, business leaders, students, faculty and staff, and the college's governing board.

The vision must have substance. While it is laudable to

aspire to overall greatness, a vision driving resource development must be sufficiently concrete to quantify the resource needs with more than a fair degree of accuracy. The vision does not focus on the gap or need. A general statement, such as "if we had more funds we could accomplish more," does not constitute a vision. Instead, a powerful vision depicts the future desired state of the college. The vision must be supported by overarching strategies designed to attain the future state.

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~ Carol Churchill

Prioritize and Plan

Resource development takes consensus and intense focus. The deafening clamor for more resources has been well documented in all realms of education. A needs

assessment undoubtedly will identify many gaps that must be addressed. There will be profoundly competing interests, both internally and externally, so prioritizing needs becomes a critical duty of executive leadership teams and their governing boards. The college's leaders cannot be divided about which needs are most urgent. Priorities cannot be reshuffled, based on personal agendas or factional pressures.

Resource development takes a long viewpoint. It doesn't happen overnight. To succeed, any strategy takes thorough preparation. If you are planning a capital campaign, how ready is your Foundation Board? Do they express angst about how potential donors are identified, developed, and tracked? Are board members themselves prepared to contribute financially? If you are considering a proposal that requires voter approval, have you made the general public aware of your importance to the community and the legitimacy of your financial need? If you are seeking a grant, particularly highly competitive federal or state grants, have you developed the wherewithal and the multiple partnerships necessary to write a complex, winning application? If you are seeking appropriations through a legislative process, have you identified key legislators and are you prepared to lobby effectively, so that your cause resonates among myriad requests legislators field daily? Because most community colleges historically have not sought funds from multiple sources (we are particularly unsophisticated in the

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EMERGING LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES

As community colleges struggle with substantial decreases in traditional funding sources while expenses continue to increase, innovation becomes key to institutional viability. Colleges are forced to re-examine how efficiently they are using existing resources, while at the same time college leaders must become externally focused to generate fiscal and physical support for the unique role community colleges play in their communities. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders; their answers appear below.

Steve Nunez, M.S

Dean, Sauk Valley Community College
Dixon, Illinois

Many community colleges are experiencing a difficult financial dichotomy. As traditional funding sources disappear, the cost of supplying education to our students continues to increase. To respond to increased demands of accountability while simultaneously "meeting students where they are" academically, community colleges must become ever-more fiscally innovative to enhance their resource bases and enable them to meet these additional financial demands head on.

In the future, educators will see community colleges form more robust partnerships with business and industry. For example, an employer may be willing to fund an employee's education as long as that student commits to working for the company for a minimum of one year after earning a degree or certificate. This creates a "win-win-win" situation for the student, the employer, and the community college, since the student gets a nearly free education, the employer gets a committed employee who doesn't have to be trained or recruited, and the community college gets a completer.

Historically, community colleges have astutely created 2+2 and 3+1 agreements with local universities in order to increase the demand for their own local transfer programs. Going forward, community colleges will need to increase their partnerships with other local colleges in order to supplement their own finances, rather than expending the resources required for a high-cost program startup. Agreeing to share instructional and program costs for an emerging industry should result in both colleges flourishing, instead of becoming major competitors for similar student bases.

Leveraging legislative resources has always been key, but possibly even more so today. It is important to remind legislators that community colleges provide high quality educational opportunities to the community at an incredible value, they are essential to the economic prosperity of the region, and they provide the last educational opportunity for many low income and minority community members. Community college presidents should be frequent visitors to their legislators' offices and provide positive media opportunities when legislators come to campus.

Community colleges have always been innovative and have managed to do "more with less." This philosophy will allow community colleges to continue to offer affordable education while meeting the resource challenges of the 21st century.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

What innovative strategies can community colleges employ to develop and augment resources?

Jan Karazim, Ed.D.

Dean, Kellogg Community College
Battle Creek, Michigan

As colleges and universities seek to find equilibrium between an increased demand for workforce training and a decline of state and local funding, intercollegiate partnerships may serve as a viable strategy for cost-efficient program delivery. These partnerships can provide a means for individual institutions to realize shared visions and common goals that may otherwise prove cost prohibitive if approached in isolation.

An intercollegiate partnership brings an attitude of "serving the greater good" to fruition by setting aside individual agendas and intentionally serving a state region, as opposed to a defined community college district. This strategy avoids saturation of a job market in one community, while underserving in others. An intercollegiate partnership requires leaders, faculty, students, and employers to think differently. It requires a strong willingness to change the status quo of traditional competition and instead adopt a spirit of collaboration.

The Michigan Radiologic and Imaging Science (MiRIS) Consortium offers a six-college partnership model of hybrid delivery, coupling shared online didactic courses in advanced medical imaging specialties such as MRI with work-based clinical education arranged in each students home community. The business model established by the MiRIS group provides colleges the leverage to better address student and employer needs. The ability to offer a comprehensive menu of highly specialized training provides individuals currently employed in an occupational field the opportunity to develop their professional value by mastering new and emerging technology, while providing those just entering the career a choice to acquire competency in multiple technologies. A strong collaborative model lending to efficient flex programming in response to advancing technology provides a constant supply of highly trained workers, which translates to higher productivity and improved consumer product or service.

Historically, colleges have politely notified neighboring institutions of their intent to start or expand programs that might impose a sense of competition. These polite notifications will need to assume a different tone as language regarding competition is replaced with conversations about collaboration. It will be important to pay attention to partnerships such as the MiRIS Consortium so that best practices can be established for others to replicate.

Steve Nunez serves as the Dean of Institutional Research and Planning/Marketing and as the Accreditation Liaison Officer at Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon, Illinois. He is a former faculty member of 15 years at the same institution. He earned his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Biology from Virginia Tech University and is currently a student in the DCCL program at Ferris State University.



Dr. Jan Karazim serves as the Dean of Workforce Development at Kellogg Community College (KCC). After graduating from Jackson Community College in the 1980's, she worked in healthcare for 14 years, continued her education, and taught as an adjunct before making the transition to full-time teaching at KCC in 1999. A recent graduate of the Ferris State University DCCL Program, her dissertation work focused on intercollegiate collaboration.



NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

As community colleges struggle with substantial decreases in traditional funding sources while expenses continue to increase, innovation becomes key to institutional viability. Colleges are forced to re-examine how efficiently they are using existing resources, while at the same time college leaders must become externally focused to generate fiscal and physical support for the unique role community colleges play in their communities. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders; their answers appear below.

Paul Heaton

Director, CASE Center for
Community College Advancement
Council for Advancement and Support
of Education (CASE)
Washington D.C.

Contrary to fundraising in other sectors, community colleges are poised to usher in a new era of resource development...provided they are willing to take a fresh look at how they approach this increasingly vital aspect of their operations.

The more successful community colleges typically do the following:

1. Reconsider – don't abandon – your state funding strategy.

As public funds decreased during the Great Recession, many community colleges abandoned their legislative efforts when the opposite should have happened. Retailers know that when business is bad, you should invest more in marketing, not less.

Legislators increasingly want to know the return on investment and impact on the economy. Who can make a more compelling argument about economic impact than community colleges? It's not about asking for state funding; it's about showing how you can help meet state needs through a legislative agenda.

Joe D. May, while president of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, was the driver behind the passage of several pieces of legislation that have benefitted the system's students. (See "A Call to Action on Advocacy," <http://bit.ly/1jWbYr9>)

2. Embrace your former students.

Community colleges are guilty of perpetuating a myth: That alumni "transfer their allegiance" to the four-year institution where they receive their bachelor's degree. Not true. (See "Revealing the Community College Alumni Donor," <http://bit.ly/Pewnti>)

What's true is that, unlike four-year institutions, community colleges have not kept in touch with their alumni, engaged them in the life of the college and, yes, asked for their financial support. Given that the majority of former community college students end up living within the service area of the school they attended, this presents an army of potential supporters, advocates...and future customers for lifelong learning programs.

3. Explore public-private partnerships.

Community colleges also have a strong economic case to make for partnering with local businesses. For example, Tyler Junior College in Texas partnered with Luminant, a local utility that provided funds to equip and furnish a corporate training academy for power plant employees. Luminant also invests more than \$175,000 a year

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for scholarships to students enrolled in the Luminant Academy. Students earn an associate degree from the college, receive internships to work in Luminant facilities, and many become full-time employees after graduation.

California's Taft Community College, which is located in a major petroleum and natural gas production region, partnered with local industry to improve economic and workforce development and grow new sources of support for the college.

Successful partnerships emerge when the college questions what an industry needs,

responds quickly, and asks what the industry is willing to do in support of the college's efforts.

4. Invest in advancement.

Community colleges in general have great brand recognition and high affinity. But they lack the resources to capitalize on their proud history of providing educational opportunities and strengthening the regional economy. The old adage, "It takes money to make money," holds true for community colleges as well. Regional and state universities raise more private dollars because, while they also have larger alumni bases, they also have invested in staff and resources for decades.

A college with only one or two fundraisers – many of whom have multiple responsibilities – cannot expect to operate a robust fundraising operation. People give to people, so the more people you have asking for support, the more support you can expect.

5. Take the long view.

While everyone wants instant results, it takes time to develop a robust fundraising operation. It can take years to identify and cultivate a major donor, or realize a planned gift. What's important is that community colleges start planting those seeds now. And just like creating a healthy garden, it takes hard work, persistence, plenty of water and fertilizer, and time.

The bottom line: People will support you – if you listen to what motivates them, make a compelling case, and finally, if you ask.

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~ Paul Heaton

Paul Heaton is the inaugural Director of the CASE Center for Community College Advancement, which provides training and resources to help community colleges build and sustain effective fundraising, alumni relations, communications, and marketing programs. Paul earned his M.S. degree in Communications from Ithaca College. Prior to joining the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), he served as Director of Public Relations at Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City, Michigan.





QUICK TAKES
Highlights
from the Field

How Community Colleges Can Help Themselves, by Neil Kreisel and Vanessa L. Patterson:

The authors assert that our colleges must improve efforts to provide an affordable, high-quality two-year-college education to all and suggest that the solution may lie with equitable philanthropic support. For each dollar given to a four-year college, only a cent or two goes to support community colleges. Given that the amount of private support can impact a college's effectiveness with programs that focus students on career paths and educational preparedness, community colleges are facing a considerable struggle. Read the complete article at: <http://bit.ly/1dPhmK5>

Community Colleges Explore Creative Approaches to Counter Budget Cuts, by Dorine Bethea:

After enduring many years of severe decreases in state funding, then the recession and its slow recovery, followed by further funding threats and a government shutdown, community college leaders are finding themselves forced to resort to unprecedented measures to help make ends meet. Of these, fundraising, a long-standing activity at four-year institutions, is fast becoming a necessity, rather than an option, for community colleges struggling to continue the mission. Read the complete article at: <http://bit.ly/1pKbSA8>

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Finding Wonderland: Resource Development in Recessary Times

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area of philanthropy), college systems and sensibilities probably are not sufficiently mature. Developing capacity takes time and dedication.

Resource development takes creative leadership from the President. The overall plan for developing resources will look more like an intricate tapestry than a blueprint. Because of the comprehensive nature of resource development, strategies will be implemented simultaneously on many fronts and will progress at differing rates over long periods of time. Consequently, do not expect stakeholders to automatically link activities back to the vision they helped create. The President must intentionally make those connections. For every strategy implemented, there must be a well-developed, compelling story, substantiated with understandable facts. The President must identify effective venues in which to share the story consistently, frequently, and exhaustively (in every sense of the word). All members of the governing board and the executive team should also be able to communicate effectively the identical persuasive story. You will know you have succeeded when your audience begins telling the story back to you. Tell it yet once again.

Resource development requires a reality check. Don't waste your time or your political and personal capital, or that of your board and staff, chasing resources that you have limited chance of garnering. If your taxable community has been highly resistant to increased taxes, what -- if anything -- has changed? If your state legislators are slashing their way to a balanced budget, why should they be interested in your resource need? If a particular grant offers rich resources, how well does your institution's needs fit the grant's criteria? (Hint: Never seek a grant just because it's there). If you have tapped donors time and again, or if many fundraising activities are occurring in your service area, how responsive will donors be to your new request?

Seek Assistance

Admit it. No one has the time or the skill set to do everything, but you can develop capacity. Consultants skilled in the art of philanthropy can help you put a process in place and hone your talents in donor development. Successful grant writers can not only help you procure grants; they can also assist the college staff in developing the skills to apply for future grants. Lobbyists can teach you how to lobby effectively and identify the power structures where you should focus your influence. Acknowledge that college leaders are role models for life-long learning. Tap into your professional network to find out who is the best in the business, engage them, and understand that related costs are a necessary expense of developing resources.

Delegate. Not all strategies require executive leadership. Find the employees who are passionate about the strand of the overall vision that directly impacts their area. Ensure that their understanding of the goals and objectives aligns with your thoughts,

provide support as needed, and give these employees the opportunity to lead. Check progress frequently. Ensure that they feel free to engage you at appropriate times, when your presence or feedback will help move the initiative forward. You may be surprised by the leadership competencies at all levels of your organization, and the vigor with which employees will embrace and enact plans that lead to resources in their areas of responsibility.

The overall plan for developing resources will look more like an intricate tapestry than a blueprint.

~ Carol Churchill

Success Does Breed Success

It's true. People want to be part of a successful college, where they can see signs of progress and experience the thrill of positive momentum. The achieved objectives of your first grant can be leveraged to build a foundation for successive grants. Donors and voters attuned to the college's impact on their communities can become the college's strongest allies, championing programs and services in multiple and ongoing venues. But resource development does not end when the immediate goals have been achieved. The college's vision and compelling story have to be shared continuously and reinvigorated frequently. At one point, the King in Alice and Wonderland says, ". . . go on till you come to the end; then stop." Such advice doesn't apply to resource development. Rather, in an era forever characterized by the Great Recession, you are far better positioned by heeding the King's other observation: ". . . here we must run as fast as we can, just to stay in place. And if you wish to go anywhere you must run twice as fast as that."

Community colleges are going places. We have achieved recognition on a national scale. We have arrived at new heights in providing education and training that develop talented workforce professionals who can think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems creatively. Reaching heady new heights takes resources. Developing those resources takes committed leaders with a vision that engages stakeholders and captures their ongoing attention.

Carol Churchill has served as the fifth president of Mid Michigan Community College (MMCC) since 2007. Under Carol's leadership, MMCC has experienced unparalleled enrollment growth, has obtained several federal grants supporting campus-wide strategic improvement, and has embarked on an ambitious campus expansion and renovation plan supported by the college's first capital campaign. Prior to assuming her role at MMCC, Carol had experience in a wide variety of executive positions at Macomb Community College and Southwestern Michigan College (SMC).

