

**SAMPLE**

**COMPREHENSIVE  
FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS**

**A GUIDE FOR PRESIDENTS AND BOARDS**

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JAMES M. LANGLEY

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JAMES M. LANGLEY

# PREFACE

In the course of running three university campaigns, and in guiding dozens more as a consultant, I have seen virtually every college or university fall short of its full fundraising potential because of one significant, persistent, and largely unrecognized barrier: competing assumptions held by various institutional leaders about the keys to success and, therefore, the strategies and tactics that are most likely to produce it. Imagine, for instance, if a board chair believes that the key to success is a charismatic president; the president believes it is hiring a charismatic vice president for advancement, and the vice president for advancement believes it is a matter of hiring aggressive, extroverted fundraisers and holding them to meeting precise metrical goals. In those competing expectations, we see the weight of responsibility being shifted to another party, rather than the requisite acceptance of shared responsibility. We also see each party cleaving to a very incomplete part of a more complex reality.

In an earlier book, *Fundraising for Presidents: A Guide*, I stressed the importance of “the triangle of fundraising leadership,” composed of the president, the board chair, and the vice president for advancement, and enumerated their shared responsibilities. “If this triangle of fundraising leadership is formed,” I wrote, “and each party meets the expectations of the others, the institution will greatly improve its probability of philanthropic success.”

If, however, each of these parties holds to a different theory of fundraising success, agreeing to a division of labor will prove difficult. Even if some nominal cohesion is achieved at the outset, it will come under strain as

difficulties and frustrations are encountered in the course of a campaign.

Or imagine the leadership team of a political campaign composed of individuals with very divergent notions of the key to securing a majority of votes, and each second-guessing the other right up to Election Day.

In a higher education setting, it is not the least bit unusual to find competing assumptions about fundraising success, not only among members of the leadership triangle, but also among individual members of the board, members of the senior administration, and the senior staff of advancement. While a certain amount of this in a large, complex organization is inevitable and never fully resolvable, every effort to minimize it should be made when an institution resolves to conduct a comprehensive campaign.

***A comprehensive campaign, by definition, is the means by which an institution seeks to advance its strategic priorities, an effort that requires focus, the marshaling of its human and financial resources, and the subordination of individual agendas to a common good.***

Institutions of higher learning must rise to the great strategic challenges of the day and develop campaign priorities that are responsive to current and emerging societal needs. Cohesion of purpose and clarity of mission is more important than ever before. This book, therefore, does not aspire to be a “how-to” manual. It seeks to ground board members, presidents, vice presidents for advancement, deans and other critical stakeholders with an objective and comprehensive understanding of what it

takes to achieve higher levels of success in a campaign, and to sustain that growth well after the campaign is complete. In particular, it will review and elucidate under what conditions a comprehensive campaign should be considered, how it should be configured to align institutional competencies with societal needs and opportunities, how it can build and not deplete constituent strength, and why it must be conducted with the highest integrity.

Finally, it will call out, as no book before has done, the most constructive roles that boards (both governing boards and foundation boards) and individual board members can play in achieving these purposes, which are far greater and more strategic than the usual injunctions about “giving and getting.” Indeed, greater optimization of a board’s strategic oversight and individual board members’ skills and experiences will be essential if institutions are to raise their game in these ever more challenging times.

# A ROADMAP FOR THIS BOOK

## Part 1: The Principles of Campaign Success

### *Introduction*

#### *Chapter I: So Much More Than Money*

Institutional planners are encouraged to avoid the trap of striving to reach dollar goals for their own sake and to focus far more of their efforts on defining where the receipt of private funds will produce a significant and lasting impact, not only on the quality of the institution, but in the lives of those it serves.

#### *Chapter II: The Case of the Disappointing Results*

A fictional case study demonstrates why disappointing fundraising results are rooted in weak strategic planning and false assumptions, not in the tactical performance of one or more persons in campaign leadership positions.

#### *Chapter III: President, Vice President of Advancement, and Board: The Most Productive Division of Labor*

If a campaign is to reach its true potential, three key offices and the people leading them must have a unified grasp of the critical challenges ahead and the role that each must play in meeting them.

### ***Chapter IV: Imagining and Implementing Better Ways***

How to fully assess, in advance of a comprehensive campaign, an institution's fundraising potential by knowing how to measure the strength of the donor pipeline, the depth of constituent affiliation, the institution's ability to demonstrate greater agency through selected philanthropic investments, and institutional momentum.

### ***Chapter V: Adapting to New Realities***

A detailed review of specific strategies and approaches that will allow institutional leaders to adjust to changing economic, demographic and sociological shifts and to conduct campaigns that are more consonant with new and emerging philanthropic realities.

### ***Chapter VI: Making Effective Use of Campaign Counsel***

How to determine if your institution needs campaign counsel, and if so, what qualities, of the lead consult and the firm he or she represents, are most likely to complement your institution's strengths as well as compensate for any significant weaknesses.

#### **Sidebar: The Real Utility of a Case for Support**

This section (pages 116-118) enumerates the building blocks of an effective case for support as well as the optimal process for assembling the initial draft, vetting it with key constituents, and using it as an interactive field guide.

## Part II: Organization and Execution

### ***Chapter VII: From Planning to Implementation: The Role of the Board***

A checklist of what institutional leaders should be thinking, planning and doing as a campaign moves toward and into the first phase of tactical implementation.

### ***Chapter VIII: The Comprehensive Campaign in Phases***

Describes the “emerging campaign” in seven key phases and contrasts this model with the more rigid “traditional campaign.”

### ***Chapter IX: The Practicalities of Campaign Planning***

The considerations that should go into projecting a campaign total, how to go about budgeting for a campaign, the means of identifying the best volunteers and the best way to leverage their talents, and why stewardship should be seen as one of an institution’s highest strategic priorities.

### ***Chapter X: Concluding Thoughts***

# **PART 1: THE PRINCIPLES OF CAMPAIGN SUCCESS**

*What should a comprehensive campaign look like if it is to navigate these new realities, and under what circumstances is it appropriate or inappropriate to launch one?*



# INTRODUCTION

Before World War II, college and university fundraising campaigns, as we know them today, were relatively rare. They were more modest in their aspirations, briefer in their duration, and most likely to be conducted only by elite private colleges.

Following that war, first veterans armed with their GI Bill payments and then the large number of children that generation produced, increased the demand for a college education. More campaigns were conducted and more emphasis was placed on capital improvements for the construction of new buildings and/or the renovation of old ones. These efforts became known as “capital campaigns.” Private colleges turned to their alumni and other donors to meet these needs while public institutions relied on state support to achieve these purposes.

Then, in accordance with the first immutable law of nature, everything became more complex. Major public institutions, realizing they had a chance to shape their destinies and mitigate the vicissitudes of public funding, entered the campaign arena. As they engaged their alumni about the institution’s greater potential, they realized that campaigns could be employed to encourage support for a variety of purposes and to attract support from a variety of sources including independent philanthropists, foundations, and corporations. As donors were given more choices, philanthropic dollars began to flow toward people (students and faculty) and programs, and away from capital improvements. The term capital campaign, therefore,

increasingly became a misnomer. The search for a more appropriate term found what seemed to be a more accurate rubric: the “comprehensive” campaign. All was right with the world, but only for a short while.

Comprehensive—a term employed to convey a set of strategic objectives by which an institution’s mission could be advanced—came to be interpreted in a variety of ways, including counting everything from every source as part of the campaign, whether or not the gift was given in support of campaign objectives. Internal stakeholders began to assume the campaign must mean “something for everyone” or “everything we can think of.”

As campaigns became more common, pursued ever-larger totals, and routinely met with success, it became all too easy for many board members and university officials to believe there was an endless amount of private support available for the asking. In the heady days of a strong economy and record levels of giving each year, rigorous strategic planning fell out of fashion. It was replaced by long lists of what could be done with more money, usually in the name of academic excellence, which would take the institution to the “next level.”

***In the heady days of a strong economy and record levels of giving each year, rigorous strategic planning fell out of fashion.***

This increasing drumbeat for more donations, backed only by broad rhetoric and imprecise promises, led to higher levels of donor fatigue and lower levels of alumni support. As the grip of the Great Recession was felt more acutely by larger swaths of society and as more alumni spent a large portion of their disposable income on repaying student loans, even the most loyal donors began asking

hard questions and pushing back against broadly stated cases for support. At the same time, younger alumni began wondering if their alma maters were the most legitimate claimants for their philanthropy.

What, then, should a comprehensive campaign look like if it is to navigate these new realities, and under what circumstances is it appropriate or inappropriate to launch one?

College and university leaders must know what evidence to weigh before approving the additional expense of a campaign and, if one is warranted, how the institution can design and implement a campaign that optimizes its singular strategic potential given its history, core competencies, special circumstances, and unique assets. The material provided in this book will help those leaders ask the right questions; understand how to make the most effective contributions of time, talent, and treasure; and assess institutional fundraising effectiveness.

The generic campaign of the past few decades—in which institutions spent seven to 10 years in the field to secure funding for a wish list of projects, often celebrating the dollars raised more than the institutional purposes achieved or the societal services rendered—appears increasingly inefficient and ill-designed to navigate ever-more challenging realities, including lessening interest among potential donors. Yet the pursuit of private support, above and beyond the results it yields, keeps an institution in touch with its constituents, causes its leaders to listen, challenges their thinking, and helps them adjust to changing realities.

Let us explore, therefore, the design of a better campaign vehicle. The times demand it. Higher learning is critical to the expansion of opportunity, which has everything to do

with a higher functioning economy, a more cosmopolitan culture, and a more vibrant democracy. The missions of our colleges and universities need to be advanced in more relevant and sustainable ways. The comprehensive campaign is a means of doing so, but the vehicle cannot be built on the assumptions of the past; it must be designed to navigate new realities and to demonstrate how it will make the institution most responsive to greater societal needs.

# CHAPTER I: SO MUCH MORE THAN MONEY

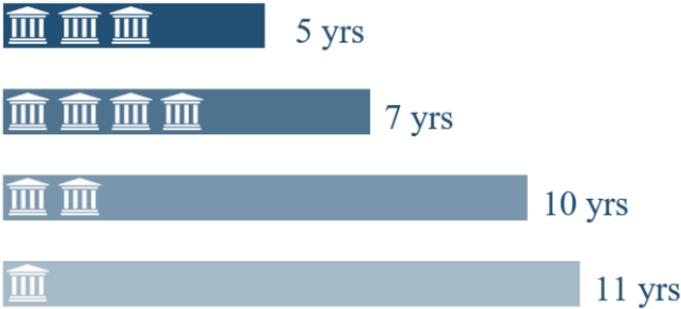
We are fortunate to live in a philanthropic culture in which a significant portion of our citizenry feels obliged to give of their time, talent, and treasure to improve the human condition. The truly philanthropic give a percentage of their earnings or wealth, no matter what. If they benefit from an expanding economy or good financial fortune, they give more. If they suffer from a contracting economy or a loss of wealth, they give less. Yet, remarkably, they continue to give. Donors, upon considering the fine work done by our institutions of higher learning, have risen to their calls many times. In fact, one hardly ever hears about a campaign that did not reach its goal in the requisite time.

*The truly philanthropic give a percentage of their earnings or wealth, no matter what. Loyal, grateful alumni have been, far and away, higher education's greatest source of financial support.*

Higher education has achieved wider margins of excellence thanks to the awe-inspiring generosity of so many alumni, parents, friends, foundations, and corporations. In turn, higher education has converted that investment into greater societal gain by widening the circle of opportunity, fueling upward mobility, enriching culture, advancing science and technology, remediating suffering, inspiring

innovation, and enriching the human condition in so many ways.

Yet as more institutions have launched more campaigns, success has become an increasingly relative term. Not every institution that announced it has raised \$100 million, for instance, achieved that result in the same number of years as others did or financed the campaign at a similar level or converted dollars raised to similar institutional or societal gains. In a sampling of 10 institutions, public and private, that claimed to have raised that amount or more in the past decade, we see very different phenomena at work.



Taking a closer look:

- Three institutions reached that mark in five years of campaigning, four in seven years, two in 10 years, and one in 11 years.
- Two institutions raised 70 percent to 75 percent of that total for the stated purposes of the campaign, while three raised 60 percent to 70 percent for the original targets. Two others raised 50 percent to 60 percent of their totals for the original goals, while two others fell in the 40

percent to 50 percent range, and one raised less than 40 percent of its total for the designated purposes.

- Two institutions raised the requisite amount for designated capital improvements; three fell short by 20 percent or less; two by 30 percent or less; one by 40 percent or less; one by 50 percent or less; and one didn't even get close.
- Four institutions raised sufficient funds for new centers or institutes to allow those entities to be self-sufficient for a decade or more. Two incurred institutional obligations by accepting endowment gifts of \$5 million that provided only 80 percent of the annual operating costs of the desired centers or institutes. Two had endowments whose earnings covered 50 percent of the annual costs, and two obligated the institution to match the \$250,000 in earnings from those endowments each year from their precious unrestricted funds to keep the centers afloat.
- Three reached their \$100 million total by counting only irrevocable deferred gifts from donors who were 70 years of age or older; three also included revocable deferred gifts from donors in the same age group; two included both revocable and irrevocable gifts at face value for all donors over 60; and two counted everything, including insurance policies at full face value for everyone regardless of age.
- Two reached that total by spending 10 percent or less on fundraising overhead; two spent 20 percent or less; four spent 30 percent or less; and two spent 40 percent or less (and all of them

understated and/or underestimated their real costs).

- One institution's alumni participation rate increased by more than 1 percent over the life of the campaign; two saw their alumni participation rate decrease by an average of less than 1 percent; four institutions' decreased by less than an average of 2 percent; and three institutions' decreased by 3 percent or more (all but one of which reported "dollars up, donors down" each year).

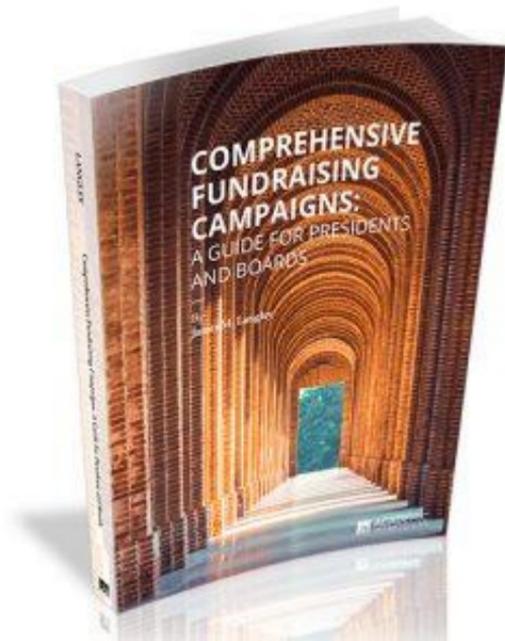
All of these institutions declared victory for having achieved the same lofty goal of \$100 million. Yet the celebration masked subtle but disturbing trends that have persisted in their respective cultures and across the landscape of higher education over the previous two decades. These included the following:

- **Dollars up, donors down:** campaign successes became increasingly dependent on large gifts and mega-gifts given by relatively few donors;
- An almost 50-percent decline in the **volume of total alumni giving** annually (according to a Johnson, Grossnickle, and Associates study of data from the "Voluntary Support of Education" report); and
- The **loss of philanthropic support from "Millennials"**: only one-third of the members of this generation believe that their alma maters are deserving of their philanthropic support, according to a 2014 *Chronicle of Philanthropy* study.

## READ MORE

We hope you have enjoyed this complimentary sample from *Comprehensive Fundraising Campaigns*.

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