



## JGA Presidents Alert

### The President's Role in a Campaign: 10 Key Responsibilities

by Angela White, Senior Consultant and CEO, [angela@jgacounsel.com](mailto:angela@jgacounsel.com)

**Presidential involvement is a crucial component of campaign success** | A campaign will likely be one of the most important undertakings of a presidency and can transform an institution. The following list outlines the president's top responsibilities in ensuring campaign success.

#### 1. Articulate the Vision

One of the key responsibilities of the president in a campaign is to establish a vision for the future of the institution and share those aspirations with others to motivate and inspire them to fund the vision through philanthropy. Presidential tenure and the president's ability to articulate a clear and compelling vision lead to more million dollar donations, according to one of the findings of the *Million Dollar Ready* research conducted by Johnson, Grossnickle and Associates and the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy.

#### 2. Translate the Vision into Institutional Priorities

Making the vision reality requires a guide – or guides. In partnership with the board, the president serves as this guide to identify the strategies to achieve the vision and translates those strategies into institutional priorities around which trustees, deans, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors can rally. Laying this groundwork and synthesizing the vision into action steps allows the aspirations of the institution to become real and achievable.

#### 3. Bring the Vision to Life for Donors

Painting the picture of the future requires a gift for storytelling and the clear articulation of the role of transformational philanthropy. The president must find a way to make donors share the dream and understand the transformative nature of their donations. Donors will want to know how their gift will make a difference in the lives of students and society. The president is responsible for helping donors find the intersection between their philanthropic desires and the institution's needs.

#### 4. Prepare the Institution for the Campaign

A campaign will require a significant commitment of time and resources across the institution. While a campaign has the power to transform the institution, bringing about that change can stress the existing system if proper preparation is not undertaken in advance. The president has the responsibility and the ability to

allocate resources, reallocate responsibilities, and gather support from across the institution to meet the additional needs. A close look should be taken at the advancement operation to ensure it is up to the challenge of a campaign and appropriately resourced with experienced staff and sufficient funding.

## **5. Rally Support for the Endeavor**

One key responsibility only the president can fulfill is that of campaign advocate. In the unique role as institutional spokesperson, the president must serve as the face of the campaign and champion it among both internal and external constituents. This helps rally support for the campaign to a broad audience and creates a sense of teamwork. A strong partnership between the president and the chief advancement officer will allow the institution to be nimble, adjust strategies, and react to changes during the campaign.

## **6. Build Trust with Donors**

The president will be asking donors to invest in the institution and to trust that the investment will be used wisely and in a way that honors their philanthropic missions. Establishing this level of trust, particularly with major donors, requires strong donor relationships with the institution and the president. Presidents must be visible in their support and involvement in the campaign. Donors need to see the leadership involved in the campaign so they know the campaign has the support of institutional leadership and that their donation won't be wasted on a project that won't be completed.

## **7. Be Visible in the Community**

An extension of championing the campaign is the need to be visible to external audiences. During the campaign there will be much focus in the community on the institution and it is the responsibility of the president to help enhance the brand of the institution by being visible, engaged, and approachable.

## **8. Enlist Trustees, Deans, and Faculty as Fundraisers**

The president has the opportunity to enlist trustees, deans, and faculty to help in the campaign as cultivators, solicitors, and stewards of philanthropic investment. Trustees are asked to commit to the campaign by making significant campaign gifts as well as serving as campaign advocates. Deans and faculty can make excellent ambassadors to alumni, who often have strong connections to their former professors, and to institutional friends, who want to invest in the solutions to problems uncovered by faculty leadership and research.

## **9. Engage in Cultivating and Soliciting Top Prospects**

The president is in a unique position to leverage her/his role as the head of the institution and is ideally positioned to cultivate and solicit top donors. Presidents need to allocate time for donors on their calendar and hold that time sacrosanct. Approximately 25% to 50% percent of a president's time should be reserved for campaign responsibilities including time with donors. Advancement should work closely with the president to focus time on the most important donor calls and to plan solicitation strategies.

## **10. Steward Donors**

Recognizing and thanking donors for their commitment to the institution and the campaign is a responsibility that carries its own reward. This important stewardship opportunity provides a chance for the president to share the impact the gift has or will make and to celebrate progress toward the vision. Rather than a blanket thank you, it is important to tailor stewardship strategies to each donor and to find ways to describe the impact of the donor's investment over time, not just immediately following the completion of the gift.

**NOTE:** To receive future Presidents Alerts quarterly by email, please contact me at [angela@jgacounsel.com](mailto:angela@jgacounsel.com).



*Authentic and Strategic Philanthropic Consulting*

jgacounsel.com

Reference Source: Hodson, J. Bradford, "Leading the Way: The Role of Presidents and Academic Deans in Fundraising," *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2010