

# STUDENT AFFAIRS LEADER

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## “But I Hate Asking for Money...”: Development Tips for Administrators

*Jeffrey L. Buller*

Despite the widespread expectation that administrators participate in fundraising at their institutions, many of us feel poorly prepared for development work. In candid conversations, many rank “asking a donor for money” second only to “firing someone” as a least favorite task.

Is there any way, then, to make this activity less unpalatable for people who don't enjoy development activities? What do you need to know about fundraising if the idea of asking people for money makes you nervous or uncomfortable?

### Development involves much more than simply asking people for money

The first step is to realize that although we often use the terms “development” and “fundraising” as though they were identical, they really aren't. Development involves a wide range of activities that create closer ties between individuals and an institution. Sometimes those ties are forged by financial contributions, but many times they are not. If you do not feel that you can effectively solicit others for funds, it might be possible for you to play an active role in development efforts in other ways.

Certainly, you are in an excellent position to discuss the strengths, vision, and needs of your individual area. Perhaps you can form a team with a development officer; when making donor calls, you can

bring the excitement of all the great new achievements of your faculty and students, while the development officer actually makes the request for the funding that will permit you to build on these successes.

Or perhaps you can outline how your area could be transformed by a major new project such as an additional facility or an endowed scholarship fund, while the development officer outlines the ways the donor could make a gift that would help achieve that vision. In other words, one alternative for administrators who hate to ask for money is to participate in development activities that do not require them to do so. Your role can be that of the visionary leader or the public face of the institution; a trained development officer can be the individual who actually presents the request for funding.

### The “ask” should come only at the end of a suitable “cultivation” process

Even if you do find yourself in a position where you must make a specific request for funding, you should realize that asking people for donations is not the purpose of every development visit. In fact, you are far less likely to be successful with fundraising if you proceed immediately from “hello” to a solicitation than if you take some time to get to know the prospective donor, find out about that person's philanthropic priorities, and explain the full range of your area's most

important needs.

Each “cultivation period” is different. With certain donors and for certain large projects, you may meet frequently over the course of several years before a formal request for a contribution is actually made. With other donors or for smaller projects, you may simply have an initial meeting to introduce an idea and a single follow-up meeting to secure funding for that idea.

The point is that it is a poor practice to solicit donors for a contribution at the very first meeting or immediately after discussing a new idea.

The prospective donor will almost always need time to reflect on the project being proposed, consider what might be possible in light of his or her current financial situation, and discuss the matter with family members or a financial advisor. So you should not view the fund-raising aspect of development work as little more than making requests for money.

Frequently, numerous discussions take place before the actual “ask” occurs, and that moment should never arrive before the donor is fully prepared. If you are unlikely to be successful in soliciting a particular donor for a particular purpose, you'll notice indications of resistance long before you actually make your request for funding.

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President - William Haight  
billh@magnapubs.com

Publisher - David Burns  
dburns@magnapubs.com

Editor - Catherine Stover  
catherine.stover@magnapubs.com

Creative Services Manager - Mark Manghera

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*BUT I HATE ASKING*  
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### Many donors expect to be solicited for funds and will indicate when they are ready for a request to be made

Any individual whom you are likely to consider as a possible donor will be someone who has attained some level of success through his or her professional judgment and skill. This type of person, in other words, is no fool. This person will understand why you have come to discuss your proposal and probably has been involved in several dozen such solicitations. If there is a history of involvement with philanthropic causes, he or she may even have solicited others for similar contributions.

By the time you reach the "ask," your request for support will come as no surprise. In many cases, the potential donor will even signal that he or she is ready for the solicitation. "All of that sounds very exciting," the person might say. "What can I do to help?" or "How can I become involved?"

For this reason, you should not think of your development work as persuading the unwilling to yield to an unwanted request. On the contrary, you are providing someone with the opportunity to fulfill a desire to make a difference in the world. Because of your cultivation visits, the donor will understand your values, the significance of the project that you're proposing, and what his or her potential role in the project might be. Such a donor is highly unlikely to say no when you ask for help in achieving an important goal.

### A refusal is not an insult or an indication of failure

Most important, if a prospective donor does say no when you make a request for a contribution, don't take it personally. The donor may simply have other philanthropic priorities at the moment or may not have access to funds for your request. Most negative responses, you'll learn, are not absolute no's but statements more like "not at this time," "not at this amount," or "not for this particular purpose."

Elmer G. Leterman published a book

in 1967 titled *The Sale Begins When the Customer Says "No"* (MacFadden-Bartell). The same principle can be applied to development work.

When a prospective donor turns down a request, there is no need for the conversation to end. On the contrary, it is then time to find out other ways of engaging the donor in the important work of your area, perhaps through a different type of gift or through work on a committee, an advisory board, or a council of experts. The donor might be able to provide you with an introduction to someone else who is more interested in the project you have proposed.

Or you might receive constructive advice on how to make your proposal more attractive to other potential donors. In no way was your investment of time wasted on this particular contact, and the person's refusal certainly does not mean that you have done anything wrong or that the project is not in itself worthwhile. It is simply not a good match between this individual and this particular project. Now is the time to seek a better match.

*Jeffrey L. Buller, Ph.D., is dean of the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College at Florida Atlantic University. He is the author of two books published by Jossey-Bass: The Essential Department Chair: A Practical Guide to College Administration and The Essential Academic Dean: A Practical Guide to College Leadership (forthcoming).*

*This article first appeared in Academic Leader. For a sample of that newsletter, contact [Catherine.stover@magnapubs.com](mailto:Catherine.stover@magnapubs.com).* ●

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By not voting, you are only affirming the power of a few to make our country less and less democratic.

Those who are interested in starting a SAVE chapter should check out [www.savevoting.org/](http://www.savevoting.org/). If you send an email to [info@savevoting.org](mailto:info@savevoting.org), we will be in touch immediately with our chapter manual and additional information. ●

# On-Campus

## Report

C A P S U L E S

**ACE student loan report:** According to a new report by the American Council on Education, about one of five undergraduate private loan borrowers did not take advantage of federal student loans that offer lower interest rates and more flexible payment options, even though they appeared to be eligible for this aid. This information is consistent with findings in other studies conducted this year. There is no consensus on why the students did not act in their own best interests or on the set of steps campuses should take to better educate student borrowers.

**Increase in dorm fires:** While high-tech safety devices have been the star attractions in many campus safety programs this fall, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) issued a reminder ([www.cpsc.gov/](http://www.cpsc.gov/)) that we should not forget about the danger of dorm fires. According to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) data, the number of fires in campus housing has risen dramatically in recent years, from a low of 1,800 fires in 1998 to 3,300 fires in 2005. According to CPSC and NFPA:

- Cooking equipment causes 72 percent of dorm fires.
- Most deaths and injuries occur in sleeping areas and are associated with smoking materials like tobacco products, candles, and incense.
- Electrical products – such as portable heaters and halogen lamps – are the source of many dorm fires.

**Student attire:** Sometimes the high volume of commentary by subscribers in response to *Inside Higher Ed* (<http://insidehighered.com>) stories catches us by surprise. For example, on August 22 they ran a story about a decision at Illinois State University's College of Business to require students to dress in "business casual." Apparently many readers had

very strong opinions about this issue. Is student attire something you'd like to see a story on? Do you have a war story you'd like to share? If so, drop us a line at [Catherine.stover@magnapubs.com](mailto:Catherine.stover@magnapubs.com).

**Study abroad inquiry:** First New York's attorney general investigated the student loan industry. In case you've been on vacation, now he is looking into study abroad service providers. The story broke in the *New York Times* on August 16. The investigation follows disclosures that providers of study abroad services are offering colleges rebates, free and subsidized travel, unpaid seats on advisory boards, help with back-office services, and marketing stipends. At this time, Congress is considering offering \$80 million in subsidies for study abroad as part of a larger effort to increase the number of students who study abroad to one million a year from the current level of about 205,000.

**Students for Concealed Carry on Campus:** Is your campus one of 60 in the nation that has a chapter of this group? (Go to [www.concealedcampus.org](http://www.concealedcampus.org) for a glimpse into this world.) Utah is the only state that specifically allows people to carry concealed weapons at public colleges and universities. Other states, such as Virginia, allow schools to adopt their own gun policies. One Virginia school, Blue Ridge Community College, allows concealed carry. The International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, which represents campus public safety officials, said the presence of students carrying concealed weapons "has the potential to dramatically increase violence on our college and university campuses."

**Importance of friends:** Laurie L. Hazard of Bryant University, recipient of a Top 10 Outstanding First-Year Student

Advocate award from USC's National Resource Center for the First Year Experience and Students in Transition, says, "One of the important lessons that many of these programs fail to emphasize is the importance of making friends during your first semester – and the impact that the kinds of friends you make can have on your success in college. For example, it's very easy for procrastinators to attract other procrastinators." Hazard is coauthor of the book *Foundations for Learning* (2006, Prentice Hall).

**NCES findings:** The National Center for Education Statistics' new study (go to <http://www.nces.ed.gov/>) gives us the following information about how our education system compares to systems in other Group of Eight countries:

- The US spent 2.9 percent of its GDP on higher education – higher than any other G-8 country.
- Only 17 percent of our first university degrees were awarded in science, math, and engineering-related fields, which is the lowest in all the G-8 countries. Germany has the highest, at 30 percent.
- We have the highest number of foreign students enrolled in colleges and universities, although foreign students make up a higher percentage of enrollment in other countries.

**GLBT camp:** The *Chronicle* ran a story in its August 17 issue about the first summer camp for gay, lesbian, and transgender students, which was held at Towson University, Maryland, last summer. Most of the counselors are staff members from campus GLBT centers or student affairs offices. Their hope was to train a new generation of leaders who will help make their campuses more hospitable for gay students. ●

## The Growing Strategic Importance of Student Affairs

*Brent R. Keltner*

Today's universities do much more than impart knowledge. The best higher education institutions are diverse learning communities that guide young people through a formative phase of intellectual and personal growth to become healthy, productive, and fulfilled citizens as well as leaders in a variety of contexts. Universities aim to prepare well-rounded individuals with the knowledge, qualities, and skills to make a positive difference in the world. Clearly, this requires learning beyond the academic curriculum, and it is student affairs professionals who design, promote, and facilitate a large part of that cocurricular learning.

While shouldering significant responsibility for achieving the university's highest goals, student affairs leaders are charged with the management of a vast portfolio of services, programs, and functions critical to the smooth operation of the institution and the holistic education of its students. The key challenge for many student affairs divisions is to balance the operational demands of a service-oriented entity with the strategic mission of contributing to student learning.

### Interdependence of student affairs, enrollment management and development

My company, Eduventures, provides shared-cost, collaborative research membership programs for higher education student affairs, enrollment management, and development professionals. Through our work with more than 300 higher education institutions, we have identified the dramatic interdependence among these three professional disciplines, and in particular the impact that student affairs programs have on recruitment and retention of students as well as on the productive engagement of alumni.

In a survey we conducted in 2006

among 6,200 enrolling freshmen, career preparation ranked higher than the quality of academic programs as being very important to the students' decision to enroll. Internship programs, career office quality, and job placement programs were also highly ranked. Additionally, Eduventures' Development members clearly recognize the need to instill a culture of giving during the college years through strong student affairs programs. They also universally stress the importance of strong institutional identity to promote alumni loyalty.

To learn more about the growing importance and changing dynamics of student affairs operations on university campuses, in the fall 2006 and spring 2007 semesters Eduventures conducted a survey to identify the most pressing challenges faced by student affairs professionals.

### Most pressing challenges

Our research demonstrates that admissions and fundraising are just two areas in which student affairs has a strategic role. Student affairs programs are the most intentional contributor to a student's personal growth and development. These programs and activities teach students about multicultural interactions, healthy living, social responsibility, life skills, and leadership. Student affairs departments also provide many of the services and resources needed by learning communities, and these departments have significant responsibility for students' safety and well-being.

On many campuses, student affairs departments are responsible for the logistics of housing, feeding, transporting, and caring for thousands or even tens of thousands of young people, most of whom have never before lived without parental supervision. Parents expect universities not only to educate, but to guide, counsel, supervise, protect, and even entertain their adult children.

Students expect to live without discomfort or inconvenience, and as campuses become more diverse, so do the needs and interests of the students.

Student affairs professionals across the surveyed institutions reported a desire to develop stronger relations with other parts of the university, particularly the academic side. As one public university student affairs leader told us, "My goal is that every time someone is thinking about a new project or initiative on campus, they will ask, 'How can student affairs help with this?'" Another college's vice president posed a series of questions that a great many student affairs professionals ask themselves: "How can we impact learning? How do we become real partners of the academic entity? How do we play a role in decision making? How do we get a seat at the table?"

### Collaboration with academic affairs

Student affairs has always worked in collaboration with academic affairs, though the nature and extent of the relationship varies widely from campus to campus. Our survey suggests that the principal factors affecting the relationship are the organizational structure of student affairs departments (whether it reports to an academic provost or directly to the university president), the historical climate for academic and nonacademic collaborations on campus, and the willingness of individual faculty members to dedicate time to students outside the classroom.

All of these factors are beyond the direct control of student affairs; that is, student affairs cannot unilaterally decide to work more closely with academics. A true partnership requires commitment from both sides, and securing that commitment requires leadership from the top. Ultimately, it is the university president who issues the directives and sets

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the tone for meaningful collaboration.

Rather than convincing deans and faculty that student affairs professionals are as important to learning as they are, the better path to partnership may be to demonstrate to university leaders how excellence across the student affairs portfolio impacts student development, learning, wellness, and satisfaction – all crucial elements for achieving institutional goals and objectives around attracting, retaining, and graduat-

ing people who will be better prepared to live productive, meaningful lives.

As U.S. universities become increasingly complex communities, the opportunities for student learning and development will grow. Student affairs professionals are best positioned to integrate student learning and development into all facets of the university experience. To accomplish this, student affairs leaders will need to harness the scattered talents and energy of their vast divisions to work toward a common objective. The breadth of the typical student affairs portfolio demands a clear

strategic vision and a map to take the division to a position where its contribution to the university and its students is maximized and appropriately valued.

*Brent R. Keltner, Ph.D., is senior vice president at Eduventures, Inc., which is hosting a three-day conference October 3–5, 2007, titled Managing the Student Life Cycle. The changing and growing role of student affairs departments as discussed in this article will be an integral aspect of the conference. To learn more, go to [www.eduventures.com](http://www.eduventures.com). ●*

## Introducing: Student Association for Voter Empowerment

### *Matthew Segal*

*We think this new organization – formed in May – has a lot of promise. Founder Matthew Segal was one of many Ohio college students who spent 12 hours waiting in line to vote during the last presidential election. His group is the only student organization working to reform election policy. He believes that higher education institutions are not doing enough to encourage civic education and voting. We asked him to introduce us to SAVE. — C.S.*

The Student Association for Voter Empowerment (SAVE) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization founded to increase voter turnout among college students by removing access barriers and promoting stronger civic education. It is built on the realization that partisan voter registration drives and “get out the vote” slogans only attract certain segments of the eligible population and do not promote a true ethic or understanding of why a vote is important, why a vote is necessary, and why a vote is empowering.

SAVE seeks to make civic education as fundamental as education itself by working with community leaders, high school teachers, college professors, state and federal legislators, and fellow students to build a strong venue in their community for political dialogue, voter awareness, and active civil engagement.

Approximately 19 college campuses this fall will start SAVE chapters, including Kenyon College, Colgate University, Georgetown University, Haverford College, and University of Virginia.

Our primary objectives are as follows:

- *Institutionalize voter registration on college and university campuses.* The Higher Education Act of 1996 calls for a “good faith effort” from colleges and universities to register voters and promote civic education throughout the United States. SAVE chapters are going to work with college administrators to register all incoming college freshman during orientation and class registration in either their college district or their home district.
- *Hold bipartisan issue forums to educate voters on where candidates stand on national and local issues.* This is one way our program differs from campaigns like Rock the Vote, Vote or Die, and Choose or Lose. There is no educational ethic behind a slogan like “Vote or Die.” This is the wrong approach. We don’t believe in using pop culture. Instead, we have joined with the United States Association of Former Members of Congress to send bipartisan speakers to our chapters.
- *Launch local and national tutoring programs that focus on the duties and rights of citizens.* We will explore topics such as voting rights, civic engagement,

civic charity, philanthropy, political awareness, and the inner and outer workings of democracy. We will join with existing after-school programs in our chapter areas, and will develop our own as well, to implement such a curriculum.

- *Launch a youth poll-worker program, where students can work as administrators, poll workers, and volunteers on Election Day,* in collaboration with officers of local election boards. College communities and local boards of elections historically have poor relations. Students accuse boards of gerrymandering their ability to vote, while boards dismiss students as an administrative burden. We’d like to change this.

SAVE is mostly sponsored by donations from individuals and has partnerships with Mobilize.org, Common Cause, and FairVote. We’ve won five seed grants. We hope one day that a corporation might offer its benefaction, but that has not happened so far.

Way too many people in this country are disillusioned, afraid, or alienated by the political system. They see politics as a vicious sea that will swallow them up. It is up to those of us who do not have such fears to restore the original intention of the government: that elected officials work for us -- not vice versa. Politics is the system that governs our well-being.

## CRITICAL ISSUES

## What Is the Role of Student Affairs in Assessment?

*Arthur Sandeen and Margaret J. Barr*

Assessment is at center stage on our campuses, and may now be the dominant issue in American higher education. We believe that this is not a passing fad but a reality, and that it will continue to have a major impact on how colleges and universities are funded, how they teach, and what students learn. Good assessment data gives us a better understanding of students, which can result in better policies and programs.

We propose that you consider the following:

### Provide strong leadership

Strong leadership from the top is critical. We need to be very knowledgeable about assessment and, equally important, to be persuasive advocates for the role of student affairs in campus-wide assessment efforts. If we are to become full, contributing participants in our institutions' assessment programs, we have to acquire the resources for assessment activities, establish assessment as a priority, and ensure that assessment activities are well-coordinated within the division. Further, we must be able to "tell the story" in a convincing manner to a variety of constituencies – and assessment should be at the heart of the story.

### Work cooperatively with faculty

We should broaden the focus of our interests by making it a priority to work cooperatively with faculty on core academic programs. We have substantive contributions to make to such efforts and indeed can play a leading role in initiating discussions with faculty colleagues that may lead to improvements in student learning. The undergraduate general education program is often a useful focus for such efforts. We should be contributing members of groups assigned to develop such programs. This requires us to become more knowledgeable about the content of undergraduate study and to expand our

knowledge of student learning.

### Work cooperatively with academic affairs

On some campuses, where student affairs and academic affairs both report directly to the president, the relationship between the two divisions sometimes may be more competitive than collaborative. Such separate and competing arrangements may no longer be conducive to

**Previous organizational assumptions about the role of student affairs on the campus may need to be reconsidered.**

improving the overall educational programs of the campus. If the provost's office controls most of the resources on the campus, and if student affairs is viewed as a separate entity unrelated to core academic programs, it can be very difficult to assume a significant role in campus-wide assessment programs.

Collaboration and cooperation are extremely important, so if organizational arrangements become barriers, other options need to be explored. Previous organizational assumptions about the role of student affairs on the campus may need to be reconsidered. The requirements of student learning may lead to the decision to combine student affairs and academic affairs into one coordinated unit.

### Encourage collaboration between professional associations

We should urge collaboration between student affairs professional associations and generalist higher education associations such as the American Council on Education, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, and the American Association for Higher Education. Our journals should broaden their approach to assessment, encouraging and publishing studies that focus on core academic programs on

the campus rather than on local assessment surveys of little interest to those outside student affairs.

### Provide data for external bodies

Assessment in higher education has become such a highly visible and volatile issue that we cannot ignore it, even if we find it distasteful or driven by external bodies who do not share our commitment to student learning. The governance of public colleges and universities is increasingly driven by external forces, and we cannot opt out of the process, even when it is unattractive. While it may be tempting to remain apart from the fickle and increasingly political world of institutional assessment, we will not be able to have a major impact on the improvement of student learning if we are not part of the main event.

The excellent assessment initiatives now being conducted by student affairs professionals are commendable. These efforts are contributing to the improvement of programs and services on many campuses, and they should be continued and enhanced. Our central task is to demonstrate effective campus leadership to ensure that we are full participants in processes that improve the quality of education for students.

*Arthur Sandeen, Ph.D., and Margaret Barr, Ph.D., together have over 45 years of experience as vice presidents of student affairs. They are contributing editors of Student Affairs Leader and authors of Critical Issues for Student Affairs: Challenges and Opportunities, Jossey-Bass, 2006, which this series is based upon.*

*Our October issue of Recruitment & Retention features an article by Trudy W. Banta titled "An Accountability Program Primer for Administrators." For a sample copy of this publication, contact me at Catherine.stover@magnapubs.com/. — C.S.*