

Remarks
Council of Alumni Association Executives
Wednesday, July 23
Pheasant Run Hotel, St. Charles, Illinois

- Good morning, and thank you, Debbie, for that introduction. And thank you for the very good work you have done with the UGA Alumni Association. I know that you and your colleagues often find yourselves caught in the middle between events and issues on campus and the emotions of your alumni bases.

- On behalf of my colleagues at all your institutions, I want to let you know that we value and appreciate what you do.

- At our institutions today we are all dealing with challenges and opportunities presented by the changing cultures and changing demographic of our time. For those of you who are, like UGA, in the South, the migrations of students and families to our areas makes it all more pronounced.

- We did a survey at UGA a few years ago and learned that some 38% of our students come to us from out-of-state. Of that 38%, almost 70% of those students have at least one parent with a degree from a Big 10 school. These students become our alumni, and they, along with their families, generally stay in the state and region.
- In external affairs work, we must prepare ourselves to cater to their needs and engage them at our institutions.
- I am glad that you mentioned my external affairs background, because I think that gives me a perspective that many of my presidential colleagues do not have. I started out on the academic side of this life, earning a doctorate in political communications at The Ohio State University and teaching there for two years. Through happenstance or chance or fate, I landed in external affairs through politics.

- I was chief of staff for Senator Howard Baker in the late 1970s. One Monday, he called me into his office. At the time, he was in some political trouble because of his stand on the Panama Canal. He told me that he was sending me to Tennessee to run his campaign – and by the way, I had to raise \$5 million. Now, keep in mind that this was 1978, and \$5 million was a lot of money.
- But I learned that I was a decent fundraiser, and I had a good product to sell. That, coupled with the Ph.D. and my academic experience, made me attractive to academic institutions, and in 1982 I was named Vice President for University Affairs, i.e. the chief advancement officer, at Pepperdine University, where the alumni director reported to me.
- Debbie has shared with me some of the “thorny issues” you are addressing at this summer institute. I don’t know whether you’ll find comfort or concern in this, but I remember discussing many of these same topics with my alumni director 20 years ago at Pepperdine – the role of the alumni association on campus; issues with volunteer boards; staffing concerns; and how to engage current students and maintain those relationships after graduation; among others.

- I want to speak to you about those and other issues from the perspective of the president's office, but first I would like to share with you some thoughts on the role of external affairs as we approach the second decade of the 21st century.
- Having been a president for more than 20 years now, I have spent some time trying to project what will happen in higher education in the next 10 years. I have a few thoughts for you to consider.
- One, this is the decade of External Affairs leadership. Show me a small and weak Institutional Advancement program and I will show you a university or college that is making little progress. Specifically for our purpose today, an institution with a lethargic or ineffective alumni program will have trouble being a great institution.
- But if you show me an institution with a large and aggressive Advancement operation, particularly one with a vibrant and creative alumni program, I will show you a university or college that is making great progress.

- There is a new paradigm in university funding, particularly on the public side, but much of what I will discuss applies to the private side as well. I will note that 81% of all students are in public institutions. But the charge for schools, both public and private, is to promote the value of higher education. I always say that there is no fight between lighthouses.
- There is little chance that government at any level is going to increase support for higher education substantially, and private school tuitions are reaching the outer limits of what people will, or even can, pay. Even federal research funding is leveling off.
- Over the past decade, the Consumer Price Index has risen at an average annual rate of 2.4 percent, while tuition at public four-year colleges and universities has risen at an average annual rate of 6.6 percent. We will not be able to maintain that differential going forward – families won't accept it and legislators won't accept it.

- All of this adds up to the fact that the work of Institutional Advancement professionals – in development, in alumni relations and in communications – is critical to progress at our institutions. Institutions, both public and private, will have to depend more on annual fundraising and endowment earnings to achieve their goals. This is even more so the case for capital projects, scholarships and endowed faculty positions.
- It is probably too strong to say that there is a budget crisis in higher education, although the past few years have been difficult for public institutions. But there will be an altered funding mix moving forward, and that is a reality that everyone in higher education is going to have to understand, accept and address.
- The places that really commit to strong institutional advancement programs will do well – the rich will get richer.
- All of this means more pressure on the president, provost, vice presidents and deans to commit time to institutional advancement. That commitment can lead to tension with the faculty, many of whom do not yet fully understand the changing role of the president, in particular.

- Many faculty are still operating with the model of people in university leadership positions having come up through the faculty ranks. Yet even those who do so find that once they are in the position of president that the demands have more and more to do with External Affairs issues and somewhat less to do with academic issues. More and more, academic issues fall into the hands of the Provost.
- In many ways, on most of the major university campuses in America, provosts are doing much of what the faculty think the president ought to be doing – curriculum issues, research funding, admissions, financial aid, public service and outreach.
- Every vice president and dean must accept the Advancement responsibilities that come with those positions. At the University of Georgia, I ask my administrative team, including deans, to spend at least one-third of their on friend-raising and fundraising. That may not be a historically conventional model, but it is a 21st century model.

- At the University of Georgia, we recently completed the Archway to Excellence campaign. That campaign set a goal of \$500 million; we raised \$654 million. And while that pales in comparison to the campaigns of some of your institutions, it is far and away the most successful campaign in UGA's history.
- Our alumni and friends are beginning to understand the role of private money in the success of the institution. And their involvement at every level of our campaign is the reason we have been able to reach such a milestone.
- It has been my experience that the art of development has become more complicated over the past 10 or 15 years – and it is my prediction that it will become even more so in the coming years. Creative, and more complex, ways of giving become even more important in light of the demographic shifts facing this country.
- The men and women of the “Greatest Generation,” as Tom Brokaw dubbed it, are in their 70s and 80s, and will, in the next two decades for the most part, divest themselves of resources in a wealth transfer unlike any the world has seen. This transfer is going to take place whether it is planned or unplanned.

- We are sitting on the largest run-up of appreciated property in U.S. history. *American Demographics* magazine reported in 2003 that a Boston College sociologist had estimated that \$41 to \$136 trillion – yes, TRILLION – could change hands by 2052.
- The second event with the potential to impact higher education is the retirement of the Baby Boomers – let's say those born between 1946-1956. I was born in 1948 and, at age 60, I am starting to think that I've probably got five or six more years in the workplace. How do I prepare?
- While the media has focused on the unprepared Boomers, many have made fabulous amounts of money, which raises hard questions for alma maters and adopted alma maters. If your institution has not identified those people in your database, let me suggest that that be your first task when you get home after this conference.
- All of this causes me to note that since so much big money is dependent upon relationship-building, I am concerned about the lack of job security and consistency in the advancement profession.

- In short, there is too much job-hopping and too little institutional loyalty. I know that salaries can have something to do with that, and I will talk about that in a few minutes. But I cannot tell you how many resumes I have seen in the past five years with a move every 24 months. There are too many people concerned with resume-building instead of relationship-building.
- My point is that sometimes, staying power and commitment are as important, or more important, than ability or money. Some of the most effective fundraisers and alumni relations people I have known were all highly talented people, but their most important credential might well have been the fact that they stayed at one place for 15 or 20 or 30 years. All of them have built up a reservoir of relationships, memory and good will which drive the friend-raising and fundraising processes at their institutions.
- Next, I would also encourage external affairs people to have some academic credibility. I don't think I have to tell you that the academic world operates on its own set of rules, and that occasionally the way campuses operate can be maddening, especially for people in External Affairs, who by definition like to get things done and get them done quickly.

- What we do in higher education requires the support of the faculty and it requires a level of understanding about what the faculty do. It is in your best interests – as an advocate for the needs of your institution – that you understand those needs as fully as you can.
- A master’s degree is a good start, and graduate school provides one with a deeper level of experience in higher education. Graduate students are exposed to the “inner workings” of academic departments and, in many cases, have the opportunity to teach introductory classes.
- A doctorate carries that level of experience even further, and if you have had the chance to be a member of the faculty at a college or university, I know that you will be a more effective member of the development team on campus.
- Finally, people in Institutional Advancement must understand that the government’s role in higher education is going to be less financial and more regulatory in the coming years whether we like it or not. There will be more challenges, more red tape and more intrusion into our daily lives.

- Much of what the federal government has done in higher education has been very beneficial – the 1862 Morrill Act, the 1890 HBCU land-grant legislation, the GI Bill, the Pell Grant, TRIO, the NIH and the NSF – have contributed to the progress of American higher education in ways that none of us can fully comprehend or appreciate.
- With federal money comes an army of lawyers, rules, inspectors, controllers and rules interpreters and I-dotters and t-crossers.
- I do not believe there will be significant increases in the support coming to higher education from the government, but I do believe that the issue of accountability will continue to grow in significance.
- The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, which I chaired a few years ago, has been working to impact the Higher Education Act Reauthorization because of the effect it will have on what we do. Among those items that are in the bill are new requirements for us collect and report information on alumni employment, salary and graduate education.

- Our graduates would most likely not care to report that information to us, and the simple act of alumni professional asking our graduates to divulge such personal information would have a chilling effect on our ability to engender their trust and engagement.
- Many schools are investing in offering customized, branded peer-to-peer file sharing platforms to their alumni. The new provisions in the law would increase the institution's liability and the individual alum's exposure should there be any violation of existing copyright laws.
- The federal government can ultimately impact the alumni profession in very significant ways.
- These are the big picture items that you, as managers, should be thinking about. You need to continuously ask what your alumni association can do to help address these macro issues.
- External Affairs leadership on your campus. Pressure on presidents to devote time to fundraising. Committing to a position over time. Academic credibility. These are the components of a successful External Affairs program.

- Let me move now to some of the “thorny issues” that I know you are facing. As fortune would have it, there is an excellent article in this month’s CASE Currents magazine about alumni relations authored by Maura King Scully. I would advise each of you to read it, if you have not already. Some of what you hear from me today will be echoed in that article.
- First, **what is the role of Alumni Associations on your campus today?** As each of you are fully aware, Alumni Associations are no longer just athletic booster clubs or happy hour organizing groups. If you still are, then you need to change.
- Today’s more sophisticated alumni relations programs are a significant and strategic arm of any advancement shop.
- Our institutions need a body of people who will serve as volunteers, supporters, advocates, fundraisers, and lobbyists in ways that advance the strategic goals of our schools and colleges. Who more loyal than the alumni who matriculated thru our institutions and who, hopefully, enjoyed a wonderful educational and cultural experience?

- Your connection with them enables you to identify people's strengths and interests and to connect them with the volunteer and service opportunities at your institution.
- Most of us have alumni who are successful in every endeavor and who live in every county in your state; every state in the Union, and in scores of countries around the globe. It's a big responsibility, but you are the ones who need to identify them and keep them engaged in and educated about your institutions.
- You are often on the front line. When alums are upset about something at their alma maters, they call. They call when their neighbor's kid didn't get offered admission; they call when the football team loses; they call when they get a parking ticket while visiting campus; and they call when your rival school ranks higher in U.S. News and World Report.
- If they are not contacting me – and believe me, they do contact me – then they are contacting **you**, and they want you to do something about it immediately. Your role as their front door to your college or university – their continued connection for the good and the bad – is vital.

- As it relates to the fund raising enterprise, the reality is that in building relationships with your graduates, YOU, the alumni relations team, raise the money; the development officers only collect it.
- Second, **managing volunteer boards**: I suspect all of you have a volunteer alumni board of directors. Historically, this board has been populated by big donors or big wigs in your alumni community – the most fun or most popular people. In short, it was another country club filled with many of the same people, from the same graduating class, doing the same things each year.
- That day needs to end. As your student bodies become more diverse, so must your alumni board of directors. It is something you must be very deliberate about if you are serious about success.
- Also, the alumni board is not the only volunteer board where opportunities lie to connect and engage people. Many of your institutions have several boards. At University of Georgia, we have the Arch Foundation, a Research Foundation, a Real Estate Foundation, a Parents and Families Council, and an Athletic Board. Your schools, colleges and even academic departments also have alumni support councils.

- **You** should be making recommendations and stewarding alumni to institutional service opportunities for the betterment of the institution, and perhaps finding ways to groom volunteers for higher levels of service as they move between or on and off of these boards.
- But board service is not the only way to get volunteers to help. As I mentioned earlier, government relations is increasingly important in higher education. Cultivating alumni who serve as local or state politicians or engaging alumni to carry your institutional message TO those elected officials can help you reach your goals and advance your mission. The same goes for building relationships with your alums who serve are members of your local Chamber, Kiwanis or Rotary Clubs. They can help in so many ways.

- Next, **Engaging students and establishing long-term relationships**: Alumni relations begins on the student's first day of school, not on graduation day. Today's students should hear from you early and often, and the programs you build should engage them throughout their time on campus, so that they have a relationship with you that continues to grow well past the day when they walk across the stage to receive their diploma. I believe in the concept of "Alumni For Life."
- I would also highlight the growing importance of constituency-based alumni programming. Today's student builds a connection to your school thru the intense activities and experience he or she enjoyed. Their loyalties to the institution can be strong, but their memories and experiences define them. Building networks and reunions around a study abroad programs, the marching band, a Greek organization, the yearbook staff, summer orientation leaders or an academic department – although labor-intensive -- can reap benefits.
- Students identify themselves with their groups and activities. Their collegiate investment is thus validated when the institution, thru the alumni relations program, connects with them after graduation thru their common experience.

- **Communications and Technology:** Admittedly, I am an old newspaper person. I often fuss at my staff because they don't get subscriptions delivered to their homes. They tell me that, instead, they read their news online.
- The fact is simply that people communicate in completely different ways than they did when. E-Harmony and Match.com show that some even date differently.
- The traditional alumni magazine, phonathons and snail mail are still valuable. And while I would never advocated abandoning traditional communications, I implore you to keep up with how today's alumni – who are getting younger and younger every year – share and receive information. In today's world, Facebook, MySpace, Linked In, Twitter, Blogs and Evite are powerful communication tools. You need to make sure you are using today's technology to reach tomorrow's alumni.
- The message about your institution and your institutional image must be succinct in order to be effective. Recently I was talking with a person who runs many large newspaper operations, and we discussed the online news.

- He told me they conducted research on what people were viewing online and how much time they spent online. The research showed the average reader spending only 38 minutes per month reading their news. Surface level reading like that demonstrates that you have about 1 minute to capture the reader's attention and to get your message across.
- And the messages need to be relevant. Nothing turns off a potential volunteer or program participant than to get a message from you that does not relate to their experience or their interests. Nothing irritates alums to open up the quarterly magazine and not see people that they know, not see people who look like them or not see people who did what they did in college.
- Finally, I'd like to address the issue of **staffing concerns, especially the pressure that can exist to have quantifiable evaluations similar to development staff.** Your roles are somewhat different than the roles of your advancement colleagues in communications and development. Or maybe it is a hybrid of those two fields, because you certainly help communicate an institutional message and help raise money.

- But your outcomes are not as easily quantifiable as counting how many dollars are raised in a certain year or how many articles about your university appear in the New York Times. Sure, you can count how many alumni attended a reception or game-watching party, or how many showed up at a reunion. But I would offer to you that your work should have a qualitative component as you evaluate what you do. Examine the quality of your programs and initiatives and ask yourself if they are meeting institutional goals.
- For many in your profession – and for many presidents and advancement vice presidents – this is a new way of thinking. But it’s a model that we must follow so that we can appropriately recognize the increasingly important role of alumni relations programs in the grand institutional scheme.
- That same CASE Currents issue to which I alluded earlier carries a report on salaries in the advancement profession across the country. That survey shows the average salaries of alumni professionals lagging behind communications and development professionals.

- Granted, this field offers great opportunity for entry level recent graduates who bring enthusiasm to your operation – and that may affect salaries somewhat.
- The good news from that survey, however, suggests that those who remain in their field and at the same institution for a number of years are compensated well compared with their other advancement colleagues. The value of continuity in an alumni shop is almost immeasurable, and we need to encourage a model at our institutions that encourages such.
- As I mentioned before, we president's, vice presidents and alumni relations managers must find ways to reward our staffs for their work and validate the contributions alumni associations make to the whole.

- In closing, let me summarize what I think are the keys to success and things you should be discussing as alumni relations professionals:
 - Advancement Matters
 - Faculty and Administrative Rules are Changing
 - The Cash Register Must Ring (Baby Boomer Generation)
 - Relationship Building Matters
 - Stay a While: Your Education Matters
 - Lead Your Board
 - Use Technology
 - Begin with Students

- Alumni relations work today is more important than ever. What I have shared with you today are mere thoughts and observations.

- Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today, and for all that you do for your institutions and for higher education in America.