Northwest University
Teaching and Learning

Institutional Strengths, Fundraising Appeal Messages, and Private Giving in Tier One Research Universities: A Multiple Case Study

Presented by: Donald G. Doty
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% Change in $, 2003-2005

- Most Successful: 432%
- Average: 340%
- Population Average: 0%
Model of communication as a theoretical framework

Source: Shannon-Weaver. (1948). Mathematical Model of Communication
Key Insight

“I think that you’ll find that the key for any university (in fundraising) is to really understand what their unique strengths are, and to work with them, rather than trying to make something happen that isn’t there.

Each university, I think, will have different and diverse strengths, distinct history and systems, and key people that you need to understand and work with.”
Findings
Importance of strengths

“If you look at what funds people have given, they are related to particular programs that they believe in. Giving reflects the strengths that we have communicated.”

University one

“I think that there is a direct correlation between what we are good at and what donors are willing to give to.”

University two

“Strengths are where gifts are made.”

University three
## Cross-Case Analysis of University Strengths*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength Themes</th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Sentence Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student development</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of programs</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Innovation</strong></td>
<td>1, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of faculty</td>
<td>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* distinctive competencies that an institution defines and communicates (Kotler & Fox, 1995) to contribute to university niche and image.
“Another big area (i.e., strength) is our undergraduate programs, this really resonates with donors.

The purpose of this university is not just to do research but to educate people. And the quality of that education is important in developing the leaders of tomorrow.”
# Cross-Case Analysis of Strength Themes in Messages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sentence Counts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strength success stories with</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constituent testimonials</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative, interdisciplinary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solutions to big, complex problems</td>
<td>555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credible, leading faculty or program</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University-donor relationship</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strength Theme Exemplars: Quality of life

“We must also nurture a concern for the welfare of others and a commitment to improve the world. Through our education, research and creative expression, the university relates to an unusual extent to the world beyond our campus.

Our activities have impact by creating knowledge, improving the quality of life, enhancing culture, and advancing economic and environmental sustainability.

For example, the $ million donation from the late philanthropist U will support part of the work of faculty member W, who focuses on technology that can restore sight to the blind.” University Six
Innovative, interdisciplinary solutions to big, complex problems

“You identify areas with strength and show how they are highly relevant to the world.

For example, security and terrorism is a big deal in the world right now, and we are good at solving problems in those arenas.

If one of the world’s big problems happens to fit with one of our capabilities our strengths, then a team will get together to solve that problem.” University six
Conceptual Model: University-donor relationship

University
- honor, commemoration
- feeling of pride, loyalty
- donor centric or relevant
- relationship with donor, listening
- recognition, gratitude

Fundraising Appeal Message

Ongoing relationship

Donor
Conceptual Model: Communicating strengths for effective fundraising

Institutional Strengths
- Student development
- Quality of programs
- Innovation
- Interdisciplinary
- Quality of faculty

Strength Message Themes
- Quality of life
- Strength success stories with constituent testimonials
- Innovative, interdisciplinary solutions to big, complex problems
- Credible, leading faculty or program

Fundraising Appeal

Appeal Channels
- Letters
- Publications
- Web-based

Donor

$ Contributions
Gratitude

Thank you very much for making this day necessary

Yogi Berra
Future Research Streams

- Conduct quantitative studies to assess the relationship of strength theme (e.g., student development) or strength message theme (e.g., quality of life) variables to fundraising outcomes.

- Explore and validate attributes of university-donor relationship (i.e., donor relevant) and effects upon fundraising outcomes using qualitatively and/or quantitatively based approaches.

- Replicate this study on another population sample of research universities, or on a different population type (e.g., hospital or school), to enhance generalizability of findings.
Scholar Practitioner Model

- **Scholarship** - AERA annual meeting proposal reviewer, Management Communication (Bell & Smith) reviewer. S & M Case Study, Methods conference.

- **Service** - Department chair of business management, $3.3 million, 180 students, 26 FT and PT faculty. Business consulting.

- **Teaching** - recommended for tenure, top adjunct professor based on student evaluations averaged over 3 years, chosen to lead faculty training events.