Vice President for Development
Assessment Report, Fiscal Year 2014

Expected Outcomes: Attain philanthropic targets
The Office of Development will engage the university’s alumni, friends, and other philanthropic investors in meaningful ways to position the university to propose and secure gifts of philanthropic investment.

Assessment method: Analyze fundraising data and outcomes

Method: Intentional review of prospect portfolios and productivity goals for development officers
Each university fundraiser (development officer) is assigned annual financial and process goals relative to the portfolio of their respective college, school, or other campus unit (constituency), with specific targets for significant donor engagement and solicitations. The development officers are accountable for these goals and meet monthly with the associate vice president for constituent development to review progress to-date and to strategize on closing gifts. The associate vice president for constituent development and the vice president for development review progress toward goals on a monthly basis; the Auburn University Foundation Board of Directors reviews this progress on a quarterly basis.

Findings:
Preliminary data indicates that FY14 charitable giving to Auburn University represented a record-setting level of private philanthropic support, with gifts and pledges totaling $148,628,733 — an increase of 0.66% over FY13 fundraising efforts ($147,647,085).

Final booking and verification of all FY14 gifts and commitments will be completed by December, 2014.

How did you use findings for improvement?
Intentional focus by development officers on their top-tier prospects and portfolios, combined with increased accountability by development officers to meet metrics, has helped ensure that annual philanthropic targets for Auburn University are strategic, ambitious, and achievable.

Additional comments:
none

Expected Outcomes: Maintain and increase alumni participation through fundraising
The Office of Development will seek to maintain and increase the percentage of university alumni who make a philanthropic gift to the institution during the calendar year.

Assessment method

Method: Benchmark alumni participation in fundraising
Auburn University participates in the Council for Aid to Education (CAE) annual Voluntary Support of Education (VSE) Survey, which is the authoritative national source of information on private giving to higher education and private K-12, and consistently captures about 85% of the total voluntary support to U.S. colleges and universities. Participation in the annual data-collection effort provides Auburn and other institutions common metrics upon which to benchmark activity from year to year, and against industry standards.
Findings:
Preliminary data indicates that Auburn University received charitable gifts from 10.95% (21,086 donors) of its 192,509 contactable alumni of record. This represents an increase of 1.07% over FY13 alumni participation rates (9.88%, or 21,732 donors from among 219,918 contactable alumni of record) and the highest level of alumni participation since the rate of 11.04% experienced in FY09. FY14 alumni participation was 0.46% higher than the five-year average and 0.1% below the 10-year average. Within that same 10-year period, average per-donor gift values peaked at their highest level in FY14 with an average gift of $1,661.82, which was $336.78 and $477.68 more than the five-year and 10-year averages, respectively.

Final FY14 alumni participation data will be reported officially to the Council for the Aid to Education in December, 2014.

How did you use findings for improvement?
During FY14, the Office of Development engaged an outside consultant to enhance the university’s online giving presence, through which the Office of Development identified an abandonment rate for online gifts that exceeded industry standards. Efforts to refine the online giving experience — coupled with finalizing in FY14 the addition of an electronic communications database module to be implemented in FY15, engaging in FY14 a campaign communications firm to consult on enhanced communications strategies to be implemented in conjunction with the launch of the university’s comprehensive campaign in FY15, and launching in FY14 a new consecutive-year giving society (Foy Society) — are expected to further bolster the alumni participation rate as well as enhance overall Annual Giving program and major-gift efforts.

Additional comments:
During FY14, the Auburn Alumni Association Board of Directors made a change in its bylaws — based on peer best practices and in consultation with the Office of Development — to count a portion of its members’ annual and lifetime membership dues as charitable gifts to Auburn University. This decision, resulting from an internal study to determine the percentage of members’ dues that had philanthropic outcomes benefitting Auburn, is credited partially with the increase in Auburn’s alumni participation rate.

Auburn’s decentralized development model allows individual constituencies to develop, customize and execute the alumni relations and fundraising tactics they employ with their respective target audiences. Monthly Development Officer Forums allow fundraising staff to share best practices, success stories, and tactics with colleagues as a means of improving general fundraising strategies and specifically alumni participation.

Expected Outcomes: Engage and support an independent board
Established as a separate legal entity to receive charitable gifts in support of Auburn University, the Auburn University Foundation is governed by a volunteer board of directors that manages all foundation affairs, investment of the endowment, business, and property holdings. The board includes as staff representatives the vice president for development, who serves on the board as its president, and other staff members who support of a variety of administrative and fiduciary board functions.

Method: Track and benchmark board member satisfaction
Disseminate an annual Foundation Report Card to elicit information regarding board members’ perceptions of and satisfaction with their board awareness, participation, and charitable support.
Findings:
One-hundred percent (100%) of 2014 board members continuing their term of service on the AUF board into 2015 completed the annual Foundation Report Card. One hundred percent of board directors indicated they were “very familiar” or “familiar” with the board’s history, and 100% indicated the same regarding their familiarity with their obligations and responsibilities as board members. A majority of board members indicated they had direct involvement in identifying, cultivating, and stewarding donors. A majority of board members also indicated their satisfaction with foundation activities (i.e., New Director Orientation), programs (i.e., Soaring Eagles staff recognition program), and communications (i.e., Monthly Key Performance Indicators Dashboard). A majority (83%) of respondents indicated their willingness serve through the board’s new-director mentoring program. Most board members also indicated they had provided individuals or firms with information about Auburn, how to make a gift to Auburn, and specific university programs. Most also had sought information about Auburn for their own benefit. More than half of respondents had hosted an Auburn event at their homes, clubs, or some other venue, and 95% had made the effort to thank a faculty member, staff member, or volunteer for excellent work.

How did you use the findings?
The findings will allow board and staff leadership to enhance the board’s comprehensive orientation program for new foundation directors. Findings also allow the board’s Directorship Committee to articulate with clarity the expectations regarding the role of the foundation directors, including the fact that they are expected to help staff identify major gift prospects, connect staff to those prospects, and make their own philanthropic commitment.

Additional comments:
none