



## The Role of the Board of Directors

The success of any significant development campaign; be it capital, endowment or annual, weighs heavily upon leadership from the governing board. The motivating factor for others to participate actively in a campaign is the highly visible and unanimous commitment of each board member to the campaign and its objectives. *Board members set an example for others.* It is essential that, from the very beginning, they roll up their sleeves and commit to success. They must recruit others, maintain knowledge of and enthusiasm for the institution and the project, and make generous and appropriate gifts in the initial stages of the campaign. An involved, committed and passionate board of directors virtually guarantees a campaign's success.

- ❖ **If it is a capital campaign, evaluate the results of a capital development study and adopt a campaign concept and plan.** A board's finance and development committees are usually the first to review, approve and provide input regarding a capital campaign concept. Once this approval is granted, the concept is referred to the full board for approval, often with supporting information provided through a development or feasibility study.
- ❖ **Set an example by giving.** Board members and the foundations and firms they control often make contributions that total from 20 percent to more than 50 percent of the overall campaign goal. It is encouraging to other donors to see 100 percent participation of the board. This defines a healthy institution in which the people who know it best – the governing board members – have the utmost faith, confidence and enthusiasm in it and its endeavors.

Among the first committees to be organized in a campaign is the one responsible for board leadership gifts. Its job is to cultivate the support of the board, evaluate gift capacity, ask each board member for a commitment through personal, face-to-face solicitations and secure 100 percent participation. In a capital campaign, 100 percent participation is a powerful signal to other prospects that the institution has the vitality, vigor,

confidence and enthusiasm of its governing board — the very people who should know the institution better than anyone.

- ❖ **Accept leadership roles.** Every board member should be responsible for some part of the campaign. Ideally, all members of the board should be in leadership positions and should have groups of non-board solicitors working for them and with them. Board members should be engaged in identifying and enlisting campaign committee members, especially those with past or present involvement with the institution. Presumably, each board member will have useful contacts in the community that might be brought in to the campaign as donors and volunteers.
- ❖ **Identify, cultivate and solicit major gift prospects.** Board members should enthusiastically work to identify and prioritize potential donors, cultivate support and ask for the most significant gifts. Their participation will add to the significance of fundraising calls. Board members are especially helpful in calling on people they know or on people of similar standing in the community or in the corporate world.
- ❖ **See that the contributions are used well.** Directors are responsible for ensuring that funds generously contributed by donors are well-managed, properly accounted for, used in accordance with the donors' wishes and that fundraising and management costs are kept as low as possible.
- ❖ **Thank donors and stay in touch.** The execution of a letter of intent or other gift commitment should not mark the end of a donor's relation with an institution, but the beginning! Board members should acknowledge donors, keep them informed of the campaign's status, project plans, and generally remain in touch.
- ❖ **Evaluate the success of the campaign.** Even the most successful campaigns should be carefully evaluated to determine institutional strengths, areas of improvement and the effectiveness of board policies and decisions. Candid and thoughtful evaluation by the board can only lead to greater insight and improved governance.