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In recent years athletics fundraising totals among the intercollegiate athletics programs of the six major Division I conferences have soared to record levels according to a recent survey by the Chronicle of Higher Education (October 5, 2007). It reported that these institutions raised in excess of \$1.2 billion in 2006-7 for operations and scholarships and between 2002 and 2007 they had raised more than \$3.9 billion dollars for capital expenditures alone. Six institutions indicated they had between 14 and 20 full-time athletics fundraisers on their respective staffs (20,19,18,16,15,14). Clearly, these dramatic increases in contributions and staffing are being driven by the facilities “arms race,” the rapidly escalating coaching salaries and the increasing costs of travel. These are impressive fundraising totals but there might be a “down side” for university fundraising.

According to an article in the April, 2007 issue of the Journal of Sport Management, gifts to athletics as a percentage of total giving to the university had increased from 14.7 percent in 1998 to 26.0 percent in 2003 while overall giving to the universities stayed relatively flat. This was from the fundraising data reported by the 119 NCAA Division I-A institutions to the Council for Aid to Education as analyzed by the article’s authors, Jeffrey Stinson and Dennis Howard. This information has people in academia

concerned that many donors have a finite amount to give to the university or college and that if they are increasing the percentage allocation to athletics it means a resultant decrease in their academic gift. As one can imagine people are lining up on both sides of this issue with considerable fervor. Some in athletics are saying that the academic fundraisers need to get more aggressive while some academic fundraisers believe intercollegiate athletics competition generates such a strong emotional “hook” that they are put at a distinct disadvantage. Both of those arguments miss the point, in my opinion.

As stated before in this forum, the only way we can justify the existence of a big-time intercollegiate athletics program in a higher education setting is if the athletics program is a legitimate part of the greater academic mission of the university. As Donna Lopiano, the founder of SMR, consistently states, “the model athletics program should be an integrated co-curricular asset of the larger educational institution.” So what this means for the future is that at each individual institution everyone in fundraising needs to be working together to do what’s best for the entire university. The athletics fundraising staff and academics fundraising staff need to cooperate and not compete. When championships and bowl victories are won, the athletics department needs to consider giving some of the “windfall” revenues to the academic program as is happening at the writer’s institution. High profile coaches can help in major solicitations for academic gifts as Rick Pitino, the Louisville Head Men’s Basketball Coach has done recently according to the above mentioned article in the Chronicle of Higher Education.

The information reported in the articles in the Chronicle and JSM is an alarm. This is a serious issue that most institutions need to deal with now to avoid later problems. The key is coordination and cooperation, not competition and the push to get it done has to be from the CEO of the institution. We can’t afford to let our academic programs be diminished. To paraphrase Butler University President Bobby Fong, athletics fame is fleeting but education is forever. We have no choice. We must work together.

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