

21ST CENTURY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE FOR PROVOSTS AND
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICERS 2009-2010 ACADEMIC YEAR

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Opening remarks: My name is Frank Pogue, Senior Consultant with Academic Search and President Emeritus of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. I have served as Interim President of Suny Cobleskill and recently completed a full year as Interim President of Chicago State University. I have served in higher education capacities for 45 years and held virtually every title one can hold, including Vice Chancellor of the Suny System for 10 years. Suny, with its 64 campuses, is considered to be the largest and most complex system in the United States. I have enjoyed working with alumni in every position I have held.

I believe that one of the best ways to measure the success of a university is to spend time examining the success of its products - its graduates. One of the best ways to determine how graduates feel about the institution - its faculty and overall experience while attending, is to look at their willingness to give back to the university. And, one of the best ways to understand why a president has enjoyed a successful tour as president is to examine the level of support he or she received from alumni.

I think the article you chose to read in preparation for this session was an excellent choice. It is important for the CEO to connect with alumni.

Quite frankly, I have never known a president who was successful for very long who did not have the support, respect and positive working relationship with the alumni association leadership. I have known a few who thought they could ignore or openly compete with the alumni leadership, only to learn that they had lost the battle.

These relationships with alumni begin long before students assume the alumni status - they begin from the moment there is interaction between prospective students through graduation and beyond. The importance of creating a student-centered campus community that is characterized as student-friendly, fair, civil, honest and collegial cannot be over-emphasized. I believe that only the president senior leaders, especially academic leaders, can provide this leadership.

Involving the alumni office, alumni association in the lives of currently enrolled students can connect graduates to the alumni years. The job of the alumni director is made easier when students graduate feeling good about the university.

At Chicago State, the alumni president, during his remarks at commencement, invited students to make a pledge to support the alumni association and the university, and a special alumni pin was created and presented by the president, along with the alumni president, as each walked across the stage.

At Edinboro University, currently enrolled students partnered with the alumni association to renovating the student center and placing a 17-foot statute of the Fighting Scot, the university's mascot, in front of it. This building would later become the Frank G. Pogue Student Center. Alumni took this action because they felt they were included in the life of the university.

It is obviously important to treat alumni with the utmost respect and involve them in as many ways as possible. Over the years, I have consciously included or invited the participation of alumni in virtually everything, including membership on university-wide committees, planning and search committees, homecoming parade activities, athletic events, presidential retreats, receptions, dinners, parents events, new student orientation and welcoming ceremonies, fall and spring convocations, founders day and to accompany me, the advancement officer and director of alumni affairs to visit alumni chapters, etc. While I was president, an Edinboro graduate gave the university its first \$1 million. During our capital campaign, alumni contributions increased by 80%.

It is also important to bring the senior officers, alumni leadership. Board of trustees, foundation board and student government leadership together. At Edinboro, as a part of our planning retreat, these groups were brought together to discuss university planning, budgeting, goals and objectives. It also provided an opportunity to discuss the role and expectations of each group, especially alumni.

The chief academic officer, student services, finance, advancement were asked to present their divisions to the alumni board during alumni meetings. This coming together would also reduce tensions because it provides an opportunity for the alumni leadership to hear and participate in the affairs of the university.

I have invited alumni to assist with:

- Creating an alumni sidewalk Hall of Fame
- Serve as university ambassadors to recruit students
- Assist with activities to enhance campus morale
- Assist with external community outreach

I have always instructed my secretary that I am always available to speak or meet with alumni leadership and have encouraged senior staff to invite alumni to activities.

The relationship with alumni should not be accidental - it should be planned. The enhancement with alumni should be one of the university-wide goal statements.

Bottom line: the academic leadership team gives legitimacy to the need to engage alumni in a variety of ways and builds a bridge between current and potential donors, the faculty and students. In fact, the academic officer, through the faculty, department chairs and deans gives the president the foundation on which to stand. When the president calls to ask you to join her at an alumni gathering, it is an opportunity to be ready to present the president's vision. The best advice about ways to approach donors, legislators, business and corporate leaders and community leaders is through the alumni leaders - whether locally or nationally.

A LITTLE ADVICE

Please keep in mind that alumni often resent being treated as "cash cows." They resent being courted or recognized only when there is a special need for scholarships or during a capital campaign.

There are certain individuals and groups that must always get the attention of the president and senior officers. The alumni executive is very much one of those. My secretary always knew that I was available for the alumni president.

The best advice about ways to approach donors, legislators, business and corporate leaders and community leaders is through the alumni leaders - whether locally or nationally.

At CSU, the alumni president was on campus almost every day.

While it is extremely important to cultivate positive relationships with alumni executives, a bit of caution is suggested. Some alumni leaders will attempt to manage the president and the campus. It is important to keep communication open but clear.

It is also important to avoid being caught between the president's vision and the alumni president's vision.

When interacting with alumni as academic officer, it is important to keep in mind that the alumni association is an external group, whose primary relationship is with the campus president. The president sets the tone.

I have urged new presidents and senior officers to make no changes in the organizational structure or personnel until they get to know the campus leadership culture. Be certain to include the alumni office and leadership in learning the culture.

Increasingly, larger numbers of alumni will be persons of color - fastest growing populations. It is not unusual for alumni offices and associations to be asked to create separate or special interest associations. This can become quite political.

Successful colleges and universities in the future will be best known for their ability to respond to the needs of the changing demographic, namely people in poverty, urban, central city, persons of color and those who have been traditionally denied equal access to higher education opportunities. University presidents, because they must, will rely almost totally on the academic leadership to provide the teaching, research and service to achieve this goal.

A FEW QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOURSELF

- Can you think of examples of the ways you are currently enhancing communication with the alumni leadership?
- How often are you invited to make presentations to the alumni board? How often are you invited to accompany the president and advancement staff when they meet with alumni chapters? What role do you play in speaking during alumni weekends? Are you invited to contact potential alumni donors during fund-raising activities?
- How do you involve alumni leadership and alumni officers in university planning?
- Can you give examples of the ways you and your university are encouraging currently enrolled students to give back to the university?

- How involved are you in the lives of students? Can you give examples of ways you enhance the creation of a student-centered learning environment? How often do you invite alumni to mentor students, advise faculty of current needs in their disciplines or open doors for employment opportunities for graduates?

Questions, comments from the audience.