Overview

In this chapter we begin with the assumption that teaching at a distance can be successful and it is something we are committed to doing. Our attention can then turn to the question of how do we secure resources to support such an initiative? Recognizing the commitment of existing resources to “traditional” methods of educational delivery, the investment in distance education requires either a reallocation of funds or a significant new effort to secure external funding - or both.

When seeking resources it is important to begin with an assessment of institutional need. When presenting the case for resources, either new or reallocated, it is essential to translate institutional needs into benefits that will be realized by investing in this system of distance education. Our attention gets focused on a) what are we going to look for, b) where are we going to look, and c) what are the strategies that will be successful for securing financial support?

In almost every case, it is not what the institution needs, it is how the realization of these institutional needs will benefit students, employers and citizens. In order to be successful, distance education must be perceived as providing distinct benefits and added value to the overall instructional repertoire - rather than merely seeking a “trophy” for the sake of keeping pace with the competition or with technology.

Key Questions for this Chapter

Prior to seeking funding for the implementation of a distance education program, it is important to have both considered and developed an institutional consensus regarding the following:

- What are the most powerful arguments in support of distance education?
- What are the challenges surrounding the full implementation of distance education? Which of these challenges can be met through the allocation of new resources?
- What are the benefits to students and employers of a dynamic distance education program?
- What resources are available for distance education funding?
- What strategies must be implemented to successfully acquire funds?
What resources are necessary to insure a viable and demonstrably effective distance education program?

**Needs Assessment**

When seeking external investment in a program of distance education it is not what the college needs but rather the benefits or results of distance education that are important. Maintaining this perspective is a continuing challenge for those who seek external resources. Too often there is a strong tendency to focus on institutional needs for survival/development and give too little attention to the results that will accrue to students and the community. The need cannot be founded on an institutionally self-serving emphasis. The need must be systematically connected to the institution’s capacity to deliver on promised benefits to students and the community.

Institutions must be clear about the reasons for embarking on distance education. Creating a distance education program because it is a trend or it is assumed that it will provide a more economical means of educational delivery are the least compelling reasons. More important in the long run and for sustainability are the likely benefits to participants. From a resource development perspective, it is also useful to have the distance education effort supported by and involving faculty and the full range of student support services.

The most compelling basis for introducing this alternative method of teaching and learning is learner needs. Determining whether distance education will meet the needs of students not currently being served or provide a new option for an existing student population on campus is essential in developing the overall rationale for investing in distance education.

“Universities are feeling the pressure to control costs, improve quality, focus directly on customer needs, and respond to competitive pressures. Information technology (IT) has the potential to solve many of these problems. It can change the roles of students and faculty, facilitate more learner-centered, personalized education, save money through improved business processes and distance education, and expand the scope and content of the curriculum.” (Horgan, 1998, p.1)

In a recent study of benchmarks for quality distance education, National Education Association president Bob Chase indicated that, “Many of the benchmarks will sound like common sense” (Carnevale, 2000, p. A45). The results of the study point out “that distance learning can be quality learning only if colleges and universities recognize the needs of the students” (Carnevale, 2000, p. A45). Among the 24 benchmarks: a documented technology plan; minimum standards for course development, design and delivery; and student access to library resources. (Carnevale, 2000).

The evidence of inadequately researched student needs makes headlines. Consider the much-ballyhooed Western Governor’s University, a multi-million dollar investment involving 40 colleges and universities from 22 states that has failed to meet any of its enrollment goals and still lacks accreditation. Likewise, the California Virtual University never launched more than a website.

A needs assessment - preferably conducted by an agency not affiliated with the college or university considering the distance education program - should be undertaken to determine the target market in terms of:

- student demographics and geography,
- course and program interests,
education and employment goals, 
desire for prior learning credit,  
service and support needs and 
propensity to enroll.

A comprehensive needs assessment study of this nature will cost time and money up front but be well worth the investment in providing evidence for the need to commit college or university resources - and to offer an appropriate rationale to prospective external funding sources. Needs assessments can also help to determine the level of technical sophistication of the audience and provide guidance in selecting the most appropriate technologies to serve them. The regional capacity for connectivity to the “backbone” that will make Internet connections possible must also be investigated.

An added benefit of such a comprehensive study of needs is the use of this information in developing highly targeted promotion and recruiting efforts to an audience that will be most receptive to the offering of distance education.

A comprehensive marketing survey will examine current distance education student profiles in comparable institutions, survey employers to determine their interest in promoting distance education among employees as well as their attitudes toward hiring those who have earned credit through distance education, determine the subjects (courses, programs) in which potential students are interested, the preferred scheduling of courses, and the types of information that will help students to make the enrollment decision.

The profile of distance education learners will be essential in developing programs, schedules, support services and promotional appeals to prospective enrollees. The value of needs assessments provides ample justification for the resources required to conduct them. Once completed and the survey data are analyzed, the report must be shared with faculty and administrators - anyone responsible for assisting in implementing distance education programs. As noted earlier, this information will be valuable in making the case for distance education among internal and external funding sources. Additionally, the earlier this information is shared with all interested parties the more likely there will be the needed “buy in” to develop institutional ownership for the program at all levels.

Fund raising professionals will attest that donors and funding agencies are more receptive when the case for support is based upon the benefits that will accrue to individuals, the labor force, and communities rather than a proposal that states a financial need and is otherwise void of the results - outcomes - of the proposed development of distance education programs.

For example benefits/outcomes of a distance education program that could impact the community might include:

- enhanced potential for community members to solve local problems
- general quality of life improvement through increased educational opportunity
- a better educated work force to better serve local employers
- the ability to draw new enterprises to the community

The list of benefits can be tailored to each community, region and funding source.

**The Costs of Distance Education**
The cost to create and maintain distance education programs is significant, as is the continuing investment to maintain currency in technology. Entering into distance education for the purpose of saving money on instruction will prove a disappointing premise. There are costs for infrastructure (computer lines, email and Internet capacity, video conference classrooms, cable, T1 lines,), equipment (CODEC units, cameras, monitors, microphones, computers and continuous equipment replacement), teacher training and support (instructional design, faculty training, faculty stipends and/or release time) and ongoing operational expenses (outsourced services, cable and long distance charges, equipment maintenance, licensing of courseware, software, firmware, promotion and advertising materials).

While costs will vary by geographic region and system complexity, representative infrastructure and equipment costs for three typical distance education systems are outlined in Table 1 - Description, Cost and Advantages/Disadvantages of Distance Education Technologies.

The most successful distance education programs provide extensive teacher training components that include designing courses and providing support services for distance education. Some colleges and universities employ instructional designers who serve as resource experts on distance education teaching methodologies. Additionally, technicians and support staff are required to keep equipment running, troubleshoot the inevitable technological glitches, develop course schedules and support materials, and ensure that students at distance sites have all necessary student services.

Beyond the obvious hardware and course development issues are some institutional support benchmarks that have resource implications as well. “Quality On the Line,” is a March 2000 publication listing benchmarks for success in Internet-based distance education programs prepared by The Institute for Higher Education Policy and sponsored by Blackboard Inc. and the National Education Association. In the study, they attempted to validate benchmarks that have been published by various organizations and to specifically focus on Internet-based distance education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description, Cost and Advantages/Disadvantages of Distance Education Technologies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Voice Teleconferencing</th>
<th>PC-Based On-Line Internet</th>
<th>Compressed Video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Multiple sites connected via telephone/speaker phone, print material via mail/FAX</td>
<td>Multiple sites connected via computer/modem Synchronous or asynchronous</td>
<td>2-5 sites connected via 2 way interactive television, instructor and students able to see each other, multiple cameras to allow for selective transmitting of graphics/instructor image/class image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>Telephones/speaker phones Digital conference bridge</td>
<td>Multimedia PCS, modems, peripheral hardware as needed, software as needed</td>
<td>CODEC units, monitors, TV cameras, FAX availability, directional microphones, high quality communication line (fiber, T1, T3, ISDN, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td>Digital bridge: $4000/port Conferencing system: $1500 long distance charges</td>
<td>$1500-$3000/unit depending on hardware/software configurations, salary of part-time support person</td>
<td>$60-80,000 per classroom site, rental of communication lines (+/- $1000/month), salary of part time technician</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Advantages

- Real-time voice communication
- Low-tech approach
- Equipment readily available
- Capital investment
- Multiple locations are possible

### Disadvantages

- No visual component
- Potential incompatibility of PCs, need for on-call support system
- High initial costs, expensive support system, may be intrusive to learning climate

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1 Based on “Table 3.2: Open and Distance Learning Technologies” (Williams, Paprock and Covington, 1999).

Among the top institutional support benchmarks cited by the study of six exemplary Internet-based distance education programs in the U.S. was the existence and implementation of a documented technology plan. Student support benchmarks included adequate “virtual library” access to information through electronic databases, interlibrary loans, and other sources. The costs of distance education must be fully considered and understood - including the costs to provide traditional services like library resources, academic advising, and faculty office hours - to students at a distance.

The opportunity to enlist resource partners in the distance education venture - K-12 schools, other colleges and universities, businesses/employers, compatible non-profit organizations and the like - offers the potential to optimize the use of distance education infrastructure while sharing its costs among organizations.

Armed with documentation supporting the creation of a distance education program from a qualified needs assessment and a reliable projection of infrastructure, equipment and operational budget needs, a goal for the level of service and the funding required to provide it can be established. This up-front process can take 12-24 months of diligent effort and research and it must be led philosophically by the president of the college or university and endorsed by the governing body. Table 2 presents the variety of steps needed in developing a viable fund raising initiative to support a new distance education program.

The president must state the vision for and support of distance education publicly and consistently - and commit resources to the effort. This commitment of resources includes the appointment of a distance education project team - including a distance education resource person, a writer, a fund raiser, a faculty member - to develop a program, facilities, equipment and operational (business) plan for the distance education venture. If educational or business partners are to be considered in the funding equation, the strategy team can benefit from the input of partner representatives.

Distance education will ultimately face the same pressures as other forms of higher education. It will require the full range of funding strategies including endowments, third party payments and at least some level of government support.

### Systematic Acquisition of Distance Education Financial Resources

Although a case statement is usually associated with a fund raising campaign, it is a good way to get everyone “on board” and bring together the results of the needs assessment in a commonly agreed upon document. (See Fund Raising Campaign section for a more complete discussion of
In the area of grants, the case statement must be adapted to conform to the requirements of the funding agency.

### Table 2

**Distance Education Fund Raising Time Line**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>College/university conducts needs assessment to determine feasibility of DE delivery systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Feasibility affirmed; trustees adopt goal to expand degree options via DE in response to community need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Internal DE Team formed to design the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>DE Team reports findings to president</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>President assigns work teams to pursue equipment, facilities and financial needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fund raising feasibility study conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Decision to proceed with fund raising; goal established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fund raising campaign begins; requests for proposals sent to equipment suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>DE system work designed and bid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>DE system work begins; program planning continues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Identifying the financial resources for distance education is not for the faint of heart. It requires passion for the cause and persistence in the field, knowing where to look for funding, the ability to articulate the benefits of distance education, the organizational commitment to be accountable for results and a team approach.

When the distance education project team completes its strategy formulation and the financial needs for the distance education system are known, the organization should conduct a feasibility study to determine how much could be raised from private sources. The answer to this question will help determine the overall strategy for seeking funds from all possible sources: government, project partners, foundations, corporations and individuals.

Assuming a positive outcome from the fund raising feasibility study, the college or university must move swiftly to establish a fund raising goal from private sources and organize a fund raising team.

**Table 3**

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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fund raising goal achieved; program marketing begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>DE system completed; equipment tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Fund Raising Team
- President - provides the vision, serves as chief spokesperson and fund raiser for the cause

- Fund raising staff - provide the strategy, coordination, training and support for fund raising; participate in fund raising

- Faculty - provide pedagogical expertise and testimony to the benefits of distance education, suggest donor prospects, participate strategically in fund raising,

- Distance education resource expert - provide technical expertise in the program design and with technically-literate donor prospects, suggest donor prospects

- Partner representatives - represent the interests of their organizations in the project, suggest donor prospects, participate strategically in fund raising,

- Volunteers - serve as community and constituent “champions” for the distance education campaign, suggest donor prospects, participate strategically in fund raising, host cultivation events, assist with donor recognition

The team should be led by and composed primarily of community or alumni volunteers along with the college/university president, fund raising staff, faculty and staff connected to the distance education program and partners. Regular meetings of the team and clearly identifying milestones to be achieved will be effective in moving the initiative along in a timely fashion.

Table 4

Sample Meeting Agendas for Fund Raising Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Meeting Agenda for Fund Raising Team</th>
<th>Meeting #1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Welcome and introductions - Campaign Chair</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Campaign goal and theme - Campaign Chair</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Case statement review - Development Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Discussion of plan of campaign - Development Officer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Prospect suggestion forms - Campaign Chair</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Date for volunteer training - Development Officer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Campaign video viewing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Questions/Answers - All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Next steps - campaign chair</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Meeting Agenda for Fund Raising Team
Meeting #2

1. Welcome - Campaign Chair
2. Prospect lists and date for prospect review session - Development Officer
3. Subcommittee reports
   - Foundation gifts
   - Corporate gifts
   - Individual gifts--cultivation events
   - Donor recognition
   - Publicity/PR
4. Review of campaign timeline - Campaign Chair
5. Questions/Answers - All
6. Next steps - Campaign Chair

Sample Meeting Agenda for Fund Raising Team
Meeting #3

1. Welcome – Campaign Chair
2. Report of donations to date - All
3. Subcommittee reports - All
   - Foundation gifts
   - Corporate gifts
   - Individual gifts--cultivation events
   - Donor recognition
   - Publicity/PR
4. Upcoming cultivation events - Development Officer
5. Campaign PR report - Publicity Committee Chair
6. Questions/Answers - All
7. Next steps – Campaign Chair

Pursuing Grant Funds

Resources for distance education programs must be creatively pursued from public sources (grants, partnerships) and private sources (individual, corporate and foundation donors). As is shown in Figure 1, the rule of thumb among grant seekers says that if a successful quest for funds equaled 100 points, 70 of them would be focused on formulating a well-conceived project idea. Twenty points represent the researching of the prospects and 10 points represent the actual writing of the proposal. Much work has to be accomplished up front before beginning to seek the actual external funding. Once completed, however, finding and securing the resources becomes much more do-able and the effort potentially much more successful.
Helpful resources are available to those seeking government, corporation or foundation grants. Knowing where to look for the best match between your proposal and their dollars is important. Excellent resources are Grants for Technology (Mudd, 2001) and The Distance Learning Funding Sourcebook (Krebs, 1999). They contain a wealth of information about funding sources and approaches to seeking funding, including extensive listings of foundation and corporate giving programs and government grant programs and the types of distance education initiatives they support. Every issue of the Chronicle of Higher Education contains a section on distance education projects that have received funding and a listing of upcoming grant possibilities. An on-line foundation resource is the Foundation Center.

Unless there is a dramatic reversal in trends, it is clear that governmental sources will not be sufficient to underwrite the investments needed to produce flexible, adaptable, up-to-date distance education programming. In order to be successful, those responsible for distance education programs must attract private individual investment. Distance education programs will need to attract endowments. It will be important to be able to attract unrestricted resources that permit timely acquisition of new technology and new courseware.
Raising money from individuals means capturing the attention of a population embedded in the larger society - visionaries who see beyond libraries and laboratories to the frontier of nontraditional educational delivery systems of what might be considered traditional content - at the right time and the right place.

The Fund Raising Campaign

Armed with the results of a bonafide needs assessment and a carefully designed distance education program, fund raising can begin. Elements of a fund raising campaign that taps government, foundation, corporate and individual sources include the case statement, the plan of campaign, donor prospects, cultivation and solicitation, and donor recognition.

Case Statement

The case statement is a reasonably brief, 3-6 page, document that explains to prospective donors why you are asking for their support. Experienced fund raiser Henry Rosso describes the language of fund raising as “the gentle art of persuasion” (in Greenfield, 1999, p. 56) The case statement is an opportunity to persuade the donor audience of your organization’s worthiness, urgent and compelling plans for the future, and the benefits that will accrue to students, employers and communities as a result.

According to Greenfield (1999) the case should include the following elements:

1. The problem (or opportunity) to be addressed  
2. Trends affecting the problem (or opportunity)  
3. Your response to the problem (or opportunity)  
4. Role of the prospective donor  
5. Your mission  
6. Your history, track record, and marketplace position  
7. Goals, strategies and objectives  
8. Organizational resources  
9. Accountability and evaluation  
10. Future organization plans  
(Greenfield, 1999, p. 57)

The case statement provides the basis for all future fund raising campaign communications - speeches, grant proposals, videos, brochures. Once the case is written, usually by the development officer or a consultant, and approved by the president, then all future uses of it, or elements thereof, do not require additional approvals.

Plan of Campaign

The plan of campaign is a step-by-step outline and time-line for the fund raising campaign. It includes a description of the dollar goal and theme of the campaign, the volunteer structure and job descriptions, the types of collateral materials that will be needed (brochures, videos, pledge cards, etc.), the anticipated number and amount of gifts necessary to achieve the goal, a description of the cultivation-solicitation process, a list of named gift or donor recognition opportunities and a master campaign calendar.

The plan of campaign should be prepared by the development officer or a consultant and reviewed, understood and endorsed by staff and volunteers.
**Donor Prospects**  A comprehensive list of donor prospects should be compiled by the development office based upon suggestions and input from everyone involved in the development of the distance education program as well as from the roster of current donors to the organization. Donor prospects should include vendors, foundations and corporations, individuals, government sources, individuals, alumni, faculty and staff.

Once the donor prospect lists are compiled, each name on the list should be ranked by anticipated level of interest and capacity to give. Also helpful in the ranking process is determining who the best person(s) is to call on the prospective donor. An axiom of fund raising is that people give to people, not to causes, so identifying the right person to do the asking often spells the difference between getting a gift or walking away empty-handed.

**Cultivation and Solicitation** This is the deliberate and methodical process of story telling, relationship building and asking for contributions. Cultivating means developing a relationship with the donor prospect through information sharing, visits to the college or university, and meetings with people who have a passion for the distance education project. Sometimes this takes just one meeting but more typically the time it takes to move a prospect from the initial meeting through completion of a gift can span weeks or even months.

Through this relationship building, the donor prospect gains an understanding for and appreciation of the benefits of the proposed project and the people who are connected to it (faculty, administrators, the development officer, volunteers, etc.). Cultivation can be done one-on-one or in groups. Cultivation events are typical in major fund raising campaigns, often hosted by members of the volunteer fund raising committee. Events range from meetings over breakfast, lunch or dinner, to evening receptions. They can be conducted in private homes, at restaurants or at the project site.

The list of prospects to invite to cultivation events begins with the largest potential donors first. Invitation lists to these events are typically small by design and usually include no more than 20 people. More individual attention can be paid when the number of guests is limited, and the follow-up that is necessary afterward by staff and volunteers is more manageable.

It is a good rule of thumb to follow up with donor prospects in one week or less after they have attended a cultivation event. The follow up, in person or by telephone, is to answer any questions the prospect may have about the project and to ask for the gift. If the solicitor senses that the donor prospect is not yet ready to give, then an appropriate set of follow-up measures should be noted between the solicitor and campaign organizers and assigned.

The cultivation and solicitation process continues until all prospects have been contacted. Maintaining the momentum and energy of a capital campaign is challenging, and, depending on the goal, should not last more than two years. That is why campaigns of this nature should be undertaken only with the full support and participation of the president, adequate development staff or consultants and volunteer commitment.

**Donor Recognition** Prior to starting the campaign, a process should be in place to recognize donors. Timely individual acknowledgement letters and personal notes from the president, the development staff and the volunteer should be standard operating procedure. Usually two business days is ideal. Other forms of recognition will depend on donor preference and the
college or university’s policy on donor recognition. Typical forms of recognition include news releases, signage on rooms and buildings and celebration events - dedications, grand opening ceremonies, campaign galas. Every “thank-you” is accompanied by an implied “please,” and it is important to recognize that the acknowledgement and recognition process are the beginning of cultivation for future gifts. Timeliness and sensitivity to donor wishes (including confidentiality, if requested) is essential.

**Conclusion**

Seeking resources for distance education is a process that requires documentation of need and benefits, a well-planned program to create and sustain the distance education effort, and president and board commitment. Partnerships with other education providers or organizations can optimize the use of the distance education infrastructure while sharing its costs.

Raising money for distance education requires capturing the attention of a population embedded in the larger society - visionaries - who see beyond libraries and laboratories to the frontier of nontraditional delivery systems.

The real challenge facing the future success of distance education will be to employ strategies that bring the significant resources from individual donors to the effort - endowments, major gifts, planned/estate gifts. People who become passionate about the benefits of distance education for the sake of learners and educational innovation can do for distance education what previous generations have done for bricks and mortar.

**References**


