

Nurturing Your Culture of Philanthropy

Every school/university has a 'culture of philanthropy' (CoP). What you do or don't do, how you do it and recognise it (or not), when you do things and how many donors (not just how much you raise) all speak volumes about your CoP.

Trees are the perfect analogy of educational philanthropy. Leaves represent one-off 'small' annual gifts, the trunk represents campaigns; with the rings being pledges laid down over years; and the various sizes of roots represent bequests securing the future. The continual process of identifying, cultivating, communicating, asking and thanking are 'seasons'.

Each organisation's CoP is invisible but, just like the air, its effects can be seen and felt everywhere by the community. What does it mean for your organisation when the 'sun shines' and donations are plentiful and when/how do you celebrate and thank appropriately? How is it handled when the 'rain comes'

and things don't go to plan? What is your soil's pH like on the spectrum alkaline, neutral through to acidic (no view, a long-term view or just a focus on bankings this year?). How do you use the manure to best advantage because it's inevitable and essential to growth!

The following are a few suggestions built around working with The Gregory Terrace Foundation and the new approach to nurturing St Joseph's College, Gregory Terrace (Brisbane, QLD) CoP.

Start with 'Why?'

Philanthropy should be an enjoyable experience for all - including you, so start by reading Simon Sinek's 'Start with why' and invest a few minutes thinking about why you do the job you do, what is your underlying drive to raise funds for your organisation?

Become the 'CEO of the CoP'

Accept that, while the Principal and

Board members are leading the institution, they need you to be the 'CEO' of this aspect, the expert and advisor to help their decisions align with the desired culture (which is usually growth in donations to help achieve their vision).

Fundraising - not a dirty word

Ensure that every aspect is a transparent, positive experience (regardless of outcome) and provide regular feedback to the whole community on what "we" have achieved for "our" school to eliminate the taboo and build momentum. When faced with sayings like 'hitting people up', consider responding with "Our culture is to ask everyone to consider their own personal best gift because we believe our students are a great thing to support - that's why I'm a donor". This helps re-frame people's thinking.

Check the dashboard

Develop a 'Dashboard' with the Board so everyone is on the same page regarding





Top: The Gregory Terrace Foundation Board 2017 (College Principal, Dr Michael Carroll absent); The new 'Student Well-Being Centre' about to begin construction (digital image).

short, medium and long-term priorities and results. For example an annual pledge of \$1,000 for 8 years is an \$8,000 pledge generated this year but may not start until June next year. A 'gift flow' shows the pledge is due in those years, and everyone can monitor the banking of the pledges and see that they are not 'empty promises'. This will ensure transparency of outcomes and give everyone the confidence to proceed.

Align perceptions to reality

The faster you address the truth, the faster things change. Most alumni think you don't need their gift because 'every other Old Boy gives big gifts', so have the courage to print an article sincerely thanking and naming the (for example) "37 non-current parent Old Boys who gave \$4,625 last year". Experience shows they will be shocked and more likely to do something about it. We informed the Terrace Family that a small number of donors were carrying all 19 bursary boys, and we now have over 70 donors to ensure sustainability.

Galvanise rather than divide

One campaign with options, for example building, bursary, Australian Sports Foundation, is the key. Why divide and conquer your own efforts? Leverage a major gift and double its impact by publicly acknowledging the donor to inspire others to 'do their best too'. One family put up a 'challenge' by matching all new pledges dollar-for-dollar up to \$300,000. Every 'small' donor saw their gift making double the difference.

The Terrace Foundation Board, which includes the College Principal, Dr Michael Carroll, decided to remove the Foundation interview with incoming parents to secure a pledge, instead introducing small 'Principal's Receptions' after families are immersed in the heartbeat of the school. The invitation states that there is a fundraising aspect where information will be provided to take away and consider how they might 'join the journey' through Foundation support.

The ambitious 'Join the Journey' campaign was launched in March 2017 and just over \$1.6 million in gifts and pledges has been secured, putting Terrace in a tremendous position today, and for generations to come. This approach aligns with the 'Terrace way' along the lines of "I'm benefiting from the shade of trees planted by others, now it's time for me to plant some trees" (unknown).

Happy gardening.



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