

## Fundraiser Education in the United States

*Analysis of Existing University-Based Programs and Unique Training Needs*

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### Abstract

Fundraising is critical to the success of nonprofit organizations and a particularly unique area of nonprofit management education. Improvements to fundraiser education can echo throughout the sector, and more effective fundraisers will raise more charitable dollars for pro-social missions. However, little is known about fundraiser education. In this article, we identify the number and type of fundraiser education programs in the United States, analyze the scope of these fundraiser education programs, and identify and provide recommendations regarding the unique training needs of fundraisers. Specifically, we recommend fundraising training programs be accessible to practitioners, be holistic in nature, be attentive to the development of soft skills, and engender a desire for leadership—a desire to help donors and nonprofit organizations solve some of the world's most intractable problems.

**Keywords:** fundraiser education; nonprofit management education; fundraising; philanthropy

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The nonprofit sector in the United States consists of more than 1.4 million nonprofits. It is responsible for 9.2% of all wages and salaries and contributes \$905.9 billion to the U.S. economy, 5.4% of the gross domestic product (McKeever, 2015). Nonprofit organizations include hospitals, universities, animal shelters, museums, and many other community-based institutions. Despite the long history of the nonprofit sector in this nation, only in the past 30 years has nonprofit management and nonprofit management education (NME) emerged as a scholarly discipline.

NME in the United States has proliferated in recent years. The most recent census of NME programs, published in 2007, reported 426 NME programs at 238 institutions (Mirabella, 2007). Additional programs have been created since this time. These programs are generally housed in schools of Arts and Sciences, Business, Public Administration or Public Affairs, or Social Work. The location of NME programs in a specific school influences the curriculum offered; however, NME programs generally address a variety of nonprofit management topics, including human resources, finance, board leadership, legal issues, strategic planning, marketing and public relations, advocacy, and fundraising.

Fundraising is a particularly unique area of NME. Each year, fundraisers raise nearly \$390 billion annually in support of nonprofit organizations (*Giving USA*, 2017). These funds are donated by individuals and corporations. Experts have debated whether fundraising is a distinct profession (see Carpenter, 2017); meanwhile, scholars have been amassing hundreds of empirical articles about fundraising and philanthropy (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011). The breadth and depth of these articles suggest that philanthropy and the related art of fundraising form a complex, complicated process, and one worthy of serious study. This increase in scholarly articles has tracked with general public perceptions. The term *fundraising* has gained respect since the 1990s, when the term was associated with bake sales (Levy, 2004). However, little is known about fundraiser education. Improvements to fundraiser education can have an echo effect throughout the sector, and more effective fundraisers will raise more charitable dollars for pro-social missions.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to (a) identify the number and type of fundraiser education programs in the United States, (b) analyze the scope of these fundraiser education programs, and (c) discuss and make recommendations regarding the unique training needs of fundraisers.

## Literature Review

Fundraising is integral to the success of nonprofits. In recent years, the demand for knowledgeable fundraising professionals in the nonprofit sector has steadily increased. As such, the demand for training and educational programs of fundraisers has also increased.

### Fundraising and Fundraiser Education

The practice of fundraising is interdisciplinary by nature. Fundraisers incorporate principles from multiple disciplines including psychology, communications, public relations, business, nonprofit management, and more. There is currently a debate among scholars as to what discipline is the most appropriate academic home for fundraisers (Mack, Kelly, & Wilson, 2016). Currently, academic fundraising courses are nested in

disciplines such as public relations, nonprofit management, higher education administration, and marketing.

Fundraising requires a wide variety of skill sets. Shaker and Nathan (2017) categorized the professional skills of fundraisers into the categories of donor engagement, stewardship, cultivation, prospective donor identification, and the fundraising cycle. Planned giving, annual giving, and campaign management are skills nested under the fundraising programs and strategies skill set, while other areas of professional knowledge include maintaining a professional outlook by staying informed of industry information, keeping up to date on institutional knowledge, as well as being able to communicate effectively across all mediums. Additionally, an understanding of organizational functions regarding internal administration, finance, marketing, and volunteer management is another critical skill for professional fundraisers.

Nagaraj (2015) suggests that in addition to using hard skills associated with the profession, the ideal fundraiser operate as a sort of “curious chameleon,” exhibiting (a) behavioral and linguistic flexibility, (b) intellectual and social curiosity, (c) the ability to synthesize and distill information, and (d) the ability to be strategic in donor solicitation. These learned skills stem from personal attributes of fundraisers including high emotional intelligence, being achievement oriented and mission focused, possessing high ethical standards, and being intellectually adept (Shaker & Nathan, 2017).

### **Fundraising as a Career**

Fundraising can be a lucrative and steady career. While compensation varies by type and size of organization as well as duties, the median salary is \$73,000 (CASE Research, 2016), and the average fundraiser at higher education institutions earns \$97,932 (Shaker & Nathan, 2017). There is a consistent turnover and demand for high-quality fundraisers (Duronio & Tempel, 1997; Flandez, 2012). Higher education fundraisers stay in their positions for an average of 4 years (Shaker & Nathan, 2017). This tenure may not be long enough to secure large and transformational gifts. Additionally, turnover can decrease donor satisfaction and lead to missed fundraising opportunities. It is estimated that the direct and indirect costs of fundraiser turnover can be as high as \$127,650 (Flandez, 2012).

Fundraising varies by size and type of organization. At large organizations such as universities or national companies, the fundraising staff may include several hundred individuals, each with a highly specialized function and/or geographical area. Specialized functions can include annual giving, major gifts, planned gifts, campaign giving, prospect research, grantmaking, communications, marketing, and foundation or corporate relations. Staff at larger organizations are often highly trained, and such organizations provide in-house opportunities for professional development. Smaller organizations, however, may have one or two paid fundraisers or a fundraising team comprised of volunteers. These individuals may or may not have any formal training in fundraising. It is also common that they have bachelor's degrees in related areas such as psychology or marketing. These smaller organizations offer virtually unlimited opportunities for entrepreneurial fundraisers.

### **Beyond the Fundraiser: A Holistic Approach**

While professional fundraisers are generally the primary audience of fundraiser training programs, fundraising as an activity is not limited to people who serve in

that role. Executive directors, board members, and mid-level managers frequently engage in fundraising activities and interact with donors. In fact, fundraising has been identified as a core training need for nonprofit executives. A survey of more than 600 nonprofit administrators revealed fundraising to be the number one area in which they need training (Dolan, 2002). Grant writing, a function of fundraising, was the number two area. Line-staff who interact with the general public also have an opportunity to engage in marketing that could potentially lead to financial gifts. It can behoove an organization to invest in fundraising training for all staff.

In addition to nonprofit leaders, fundraisers must extend their expertise beyond fundraising and into the more general area of nonprofit management. For example, members of the board of directors are typically some of the organization's largest donors. Fundraisers must understand the functions and nuances of board governance to effectively steward these individual donors. Additionally, fundraisers should consider volunteers as potential donors and work closely with the volunteer administrator to identify and cultivate prospects. Fundraisers should also have a strong understanding of program design and evaluation, as these elements are essential to grant writing, proposal development, and conveying impact to donors. In this way, fundraisers must be experts in multiple organizational domains.

In short, the best fundraising practices—and, by extension, the best fundraising training programs—are systemic and holistic (Boguch, 1994), integrating multiple actors and aspects of the nonprofit organization.

### **The Demand for Training**

The constant turnover in fundraising positions suggests a strong and ever present demand for fundraiser training. While the need for training seems apparent, it is not clear what forms of training would be most popular. Higher education fundraisers, for example, learn most of their skills through on-the-job training such as workshops and mentoring programs (Shaker & Nathan, 2017). Only 30% of about 600 nonprofit administrators sought training through academic institutions (Dolan, 2002) and only 17% of about 500 fundraisers learned fundraising through academic institutions (Shaker & Nathan, 2017). Indeed, practitioners appear to prefer professional development-style offerings such as seminars or luncheon-style trainings.

Nonacademic training opportunities are available to fundraisers through community-based and national sources. Community-based nonprofit management centers may offer fundraising training. This training is often limited in scope and varies by geographic region. At the national level, the Association of Fundraising Professionals is the leading professional association for fundraisers. This chapter-based organization provides professional development trainings, resources, and a mentoring program. It has developed a code of ethics and a widely respected certification program, the Certified Fund Raising Executive.

### **Complex Environments**

Fundraisers operate in complex environments both internally and externally. Internal to the organization, fundraisers must recognize the interplay between fundraising and the nonprofit's programs, human resources (including volunteer management), finance, and evaluation (Boguch, 1994). This requires that fundraisers see their role as larger than financial transactions with donors. External to the organization,

fundraisers must recognize that how they talk about their mission and clients shapes how donors think. For example, fundraising that offers pity-evoking images of clients can reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate paternalistic attitudes and behaviors (Bhati & Eikenberry, 2016). Thus, it is critical that fundraisers attend to cultural differences in how and when people give. Many scholars have suggested that the world of philanthropy is decidedly undemocratic: Those who give the most have the most influence in what sorts of initiatives are pursued (Mirabella, 2013). High-quality fundraisers, therefore, have an opportunity to provide high-level leadership to their organization, their donors, and the broader society by shaping how, when, and why people give. This approach is a marked shift from more traditional, transaction-based approaches that emphasize the mechanics of securing gifts.

Finally, the nature of fundraising may be shifting somewhat with an increased push toward social enterprise and social entrepreneurship (Jones & Donmoyer, 2015; Mirabella & Young, 2012), and academic programs will need to consider when and how to teach students to incorporate more market-based solutions. It is likely that foundations and donors will increasingly emphasize these sorts of concepts, and fundraisers must carefully consider their responses.

In short, fundraising is a complex activity conducted in complex environments. There is little research on fundraiser training, and this study is an important next step in understanding the current landscape and charting a path toward improving fundraiser education.

## Method

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the scope of university-based fundraiser education programs in the United States in 2017. We used a document analysis technique (Patton, 2002) to address the research questions.

### Sample

The sample for this study was all university-based fundraiser education programs in the United States. It was identified via two sources. First, we reviewed the NME program census conducted (and updated periodically) by Roseanne Mirabella at Seton Hall University (Mirabella, 1995). This is considered by nonprofit scholars to be the best single census source. Specifically, we reviewed all 343 schools listed, to identify fundraising-oriented programs. We then conducted a website search to confirm whether these programs were indeed still in existence. Five programs were identified as no longer active and removed from the sample. Second, after reviewing the NME database, we performed an Internet keyword search to identify programs that may have begun after the creation of the database. Internet keyword search terms included *fundraising certificate*, *fundraiser education*, *fundraiser training*, *fundraising degrees*, and *philanthropy degrees*. We identified 47 fundraising programs, 35 from the NME database and 12 from the Internet keyword search.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection took place in two phases. First, we collected descriptive data about the program including institution name, program type, department name, program name, program requirements (credits), cost, and course format (credit or noncredit). We also identified if there was an explicit connection between course learning objectives and the Certified Fund Raising Executive program. Findings are presented as descriptive data, as the goal was the development of a comprehensive overview of existing fundraising programs.

Second, we collected descriptive data about the curriculum of the program including required course names and course structure. These were analyzed thematically, and course names were coded into categories (see Findings section). The goal was the development of a comprehensive overview of the focus of the programs identifying patterns, variation, and opportunities for strategic positioning.

## Findings

The findings are separated into four key areas. First, we describe the number and type of fundraiser education programs. Second, we provide a cost analysis for fundraising programs. Third, we describe the scope and content of curriculum required of these fundraising programs. Last, we provide a more in-depth investigation of the identified fundraising certificate programs.

### Part I: Number and Type of Fundraiser Education Programs

This study identified 47 fundraiser education programs in the United States. Fifteen of these are located in the Midwest, 13 in the South, 13 in the Northeast, and 6 in the West (Table 1).

**Table 1**

#### *Fundraising Programs by Region*

Region	# of programs	States included
West	6	AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY
Midwest	15	IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI
South	13	AL, AR, DC, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV
Northeast	13	CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT

The majority of the 47 fundraising programs were offered as certificate programs. Specifically, 34 were certificate programs, 6 were master's degrees, 3 were undergraduate minors, 2 were undergraduate majors, and 2 were undergraduate certificates (Table 2). Of the 47 fundraising programs, 14 connected coursework with the Certified Fund Raising Executive program competencies outlined by the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

**Table 2***Fundraising Programs by Type*

Type of program	# of programs	CFRE coursework
Certificate	34	12
Master's Degree	6	2
Undergraduate Minor	3	0
Undergraduate Major	2	0
Undergraduate Certificate	2	0

*Note.* CFRE = Certified Fund Raising Executive.

**Program format.** The majority of fundraising programs offered in-person courses. In-person learning formats were offered for 25 programs, or 53% of all identified fundraising programs. Online programs were offered in 17% of programs, and an option between in-person or online was extended to students in 19% of programs. Four programs offered a hybrid learning model, and one program did not list the learning format of the program.

**Credit/noncredit.** Fundraising programs offered credit or noncredit formats. Specifically, 21 programs were credit earning, 24 were noncredit, 1 offered a choice, and 1 did not provide the information.

### Part II: Cost Analysis of Fundraising Programs

To better understand the costs of certificate programs, we separated certificate programs into traditional and nontraditional certificate programs. A traditional certificate program operates on the traditional semester course schedule, similar to a traditional degree program. A nontraditional certificate program does not operate on a traditional semester schedule. For example, some programs offered completion of the certificate program after attendance of 1 week of all-day courses.

Costs for all fundraising programs varied, ranging from \$650 to \$33,000. The average cost for all programs was \$7,694; for certificate programs was \$3,656; and for traditional certificate programs was \$7,361. The average cost, median cost, and range of costs for fundraising programs, certificate fundraising programs, traditional certificate programs, and nontraditional certificate programs appear in Table 3. The total cost of some programs varied based on the specific courses chosen by the student. In those cases, an average cost was calculated.

### Part III: Scope and Content Analysis of Fundraising Program Curriculum

We analyzed the titles of all 265 courses to determine the scope of the 47 fundraiser education programs in the sample. Programs that included only fundraising courses were categorized as “isolated,” and those that required additional NME courses were categorized “holistic.” The sample included 27 isolated and 16 holistic programs. Four programs offered students the opportunity to customize their education from a list of courses and were classified as “student choice.”

Next, we looked specifically at the content of certificate programs in the sample. We categorized the required courses into the core content areas of introduction to the

nonprofit and philanthropic sector, fundraising strategies, general nonprofit management, leadership, donors and relationships, communication and marketing, career preparation, and other (Table 4). This analysis was conducted for the fundraising certificate programs with required courses ( $n = 30$ ). Four fundraising certificate programs were not included in this analysis because they did not have predetermined required courses for program completion. Instead, they gave students the freedom to select from an approved list of courses that satisfy program requirements. Table 5 provides examples of course names for each content area.

**Table 3***Fundraising Program Cost Analysis*

Type of program	# of programs ( <i>n</i> )	Mean	Median	Minimum	Maximum
Fundraising Certificate <sup>a</sup>	46	\$7,694	\$3,458	\$650	\$33,000
Traditional Certificate <sup>a</sup>	33	\$3,656	\$2,500	\$650	\$11,500
Nontraditional Certificate	7	\$7,361	\$8,530	\$2,150	\$11,500
	26	\$2,658	\$1,910	\$650	\$10,992

<sup>a</sup>Cost for one of the traditional certificate programs was unavailable and was excluded from this analysis.

**Table 4***Fundraising Certificate Programs: Course Content Requirements by Program Type*

Content area	Nontraditional certificate programs <i>n</i> = 23	Traditional certificate programs <i>n</i> = 7
	%	%
Introduction to the Nonprofit and Philanthropic Sector	100	86
General Nonprofit Management	48	43
General Fundraising	43	57
Leadership	35	57
Donors and Relationships	35	14
Communication and Marketing	17	14
Career Preparation	13	14
Other	30	0
Electives Required	9	57



**Table 5***Fundraising Certificate Programs: Sample of Course Names by Content Area*

<b>Content area</b>	<b>Sample of course names</b>
Introduction to the Nonprofit and Philanthropic Sector	Introduction to Philanthropic Studies; Philanthropy and the Nonprofit Sector: History and Ethics; Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector; Contemporary Trends in the Nonprofit Sector
Fundraising Strategies	Annual Giving, Capital Campaigns, Major Giving, Making the Ask, Introduction to Grant Writing, Event Planning, Creating a Corporate Sponsorship Program
Communication and Marketing	Introduction to Professional Writing, Key Communication and Presentation Skills, Principles of Strategic Communication, Persuasive Writing
General Nonprofit Management	Foundations of Nonprofit Management, Human Resources in Organizations, Theory and Practice of Nonprofits, Accounting and Financing, Board Governance
Leadership	Leading Change in Nonprofit Organizations, Leadership Skills, Critical Thinking, Civic Engagement and Community Decision-Making, Effective Nonprofit Leadership Approaches
Donors and Relationships	Identifying Prospective Donors, Building Relationships With Individual Donors, Stewardship, Prospect Research and Analysis, Understanding the Planned Giving Donor Perspective, Donor Motivation
Practicum and Internship	Capstone, Internship, Practicum, Careers in Fundraising, Fundraising Career and Philanthropy
Other	Outcome Measures; Measurement and Evaluation for Fundraising Success and Social Impact; Fundraising Analytics: Leveraging the Power of Data; Social Enterprise and Innovation; Studies in Applied Research Methods

**Part IV: Certificate Programs**

Certificate programs are particularly interesting as they are most likely to attract the attention of working professionals. The programs in this sample included eight traditional certificate programs and 26 nontraditional certificate programs.

**Traditional certificate programs.** The eight traditional certificate programs were located at universities around the country (Table 1). Seven were credit based. The average number of credits required at traditional certificate programs was 14.125 credits.

Six of these programs followed an isolated curriculum model, while two, both located in Massachusetts, followed a holistic curriculum model. One program was conducted entirely online. Three programs were conducted entirely in person. The remainder were unlisted or operated in hybrid fashion. See Table 6.

**Table 6***Overview of Traditional Certificate Programs*

State	Credits	Structure	Cost	Format	Credit type
MA1	15	Holistic	Unlisted	Unlisted	Credit
MA2	16	Holistic	\$10,800	In-Person	Credit
IN1	12	Isolated	\$4,224	In-Person	Credit
IL1	15	Isolated	\$11,500	Hybrid	Credit
PA1	10	Isolated	\$8,530	Online	Credit
FL1	12	Isolated	\$2,150	In-Person	Noncredit
FL2	18	Isolated	\$5,187	Online	Credit
TN1	15	Isolated	\$9,135	Hybrid	Credit

**Nontraditional certificate programs.** Nontraditional certificate programs may be more appealing to working professionals because of their flexible program structure. A program was classified as a nontraditional certificate program when classes were offered outside of the traditional university semester schedule. For example, some programs offered completion of the certificate program after attendance of 1 week of all-day courses or through completion of four classes, each of which takes 1 week for completion.

Twenty-six nontraditional certificate programs were identified. These programs were geographically dispersed throughout the continental United States. The majority of these programs were isolated and noncredit programs (Table 7). Fifteen programs were conducted in person, five used an online teaching format, three offered both online and in-person formats, and the remaining offered a hybrid format.

## Discussion

This study identified the size and scope of fundraising programs in the United States. Specifically, we identified 47 fundraising programs. The majority (72%) of these were certificate programs, only eight of which operated as a traditional semester-long academic programs. Approximately half of all identified programs were conducted in person (53%), as opposed to online or blended learning platforms. Six of the eight traditional certificate programs followed an isolated model, focusing curriculum on fundraising skill sets only. Results also indicate that the base cost of fundraising education certificate programs ranged from \$650 to \$11,500, with an average cost of \$3,656. In the next section, we integrate findings from the literature review with findings from the study to identify recommendations and considerations for the development of future fundraising education programs.

**Table 7***Overview of Nontraditional Certificate Programs*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Credit type</b>
AZ1	4 classes	Isolated	\$1,499.00	Online	Noncredit
AZ2	4 classes	Holistic	\$1,260.00	Both	Noncredit
AZ3	3 classes	Isolated	\$999.00	Online	Noncredit
FL3	8 weeks	Holistic	\$3,495.00	Online	Noncredit
FL4	8 weeks	Holistic	\$3,495.00	Online	Noncredit
GA1	5-day program	Isolated	\$1,945.00	In-Person	Noncredit
IL2	4 classes	Isolated	\$3,420.00	In-Person	Noncredit
IL3	4 classes	Student Choice	\$3,420.00	In-Person	Noncredit
IN2	4 classes	Isolated	\$7,500.00	Both	Noncredit
MA3	12-week online	Isolated	\$2,495.00	Both	Noncredit
ME1	1 week class	Isolated	\$1,080.00	In-Person	Noncredit
MN1	9 sessions	Isolated	\$1,755.00	In-Person	Noncredit
MO1	4 classes	Isolated	\$1,600.00	In-Person	Both
NE1	6 classes	Isolated	\$1,674.00	In-Person	Noncredit
NY1	5 days, 32 hours	Isolated	\$2,500.00	In-Person	Noncredit
NY2	4 classes	Isolated	\$3,000.00	Hybrid	Unlisted
OR1	Weekly classes for 9 months	Isolated	\$3,200.00	In-Person	Noncredit
PA2	9 full-day classes	Isolated	\$1,180.00	Hybrid	Noncredit
PA3	6 classes	Isolated	\$1,032.00	In-Person	Noncredit
TX1	Class sessions meet on predetermined dates over 2 semesters	Isolated	\$2,500.00	In-Person	Noncredit
TX2	4 sessions each lasting one week	Isolated	\$650.00	In-Person	Noncredit
TX3	6 all-day classes plus capstone	Isolated	\$3,345.00	Online	Noncredit
VA1	1-week class	Isolated	\$1,875.00	In-Person	Noncredit
VA2	1-week class	Isolated	\$1,650.00	In-Person	Noncredit
VA3	1-week class	Isolated	\$1,550.00	In-Person	Noncredit
WA1	15 credits	Isolated	\$10,992.00	Hybrid	Credit

Fundraising is a unique endeavor in part because there is no simple answer to why people give. By 2011, there were more than 500 empirical articles on the subject (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011), a fact that points to the complexity of the philanthropic decision-making process. It would be a mistake to assume that teaching fundraising was as simple as teaching someone to write a strong fundraising appeal letter or to use the “right” words. A high-quality fundraising program, therefore, should go beyond what may be thought of as the traditional skills of fundraising and, instead, include a broader range of competencies. It should also be accessible to practitioners. Based on the findings and on the literature reviewed, we have identified four elements for consideration in the development of university-based fundraiser training programs: logistics, curriculum integration, soft skills, and leadership.

### Logistics

**Traditional vs. nontraditional.** Fundraisers have numerous barriers that make traditional academic cycles difficult. For example, their workload varies by season. Some seasons—such as the end of the year or the time leading up to a special event—are very busy, while other seasons may pass at a more moderate tempo. Fundraisers cannot reasonably be expected to be consistent students throughout an academic semester if one of their busy seasons occurs during that semester. This is likely one reason our study found that nontraditional certificate programs were more popular than traditional programs.

**Cost.** While fundraisers in general earn a healthy salary (median salary is around \$73,000; CASE Research, 2016), it is likely that seasoned fundraisers receive significantly higher salaries than newer, more junior fundraisers. The junior fundraisers, however, are typically the best candidates for fundraising education programs. Additionally, some personal costs associated with fundraising may not be associated with the programmatic aspects of nonprofit management. For example, fundraisers who work with high net worth donors may feel the need to purchase higher quality clothes and shoes, drive a more expensive car, or spend extra money on personal grooming. It is easy to dismiss these decisions as individual-level choice, but some research demonstrates that a “good looking” fundraiser is more successful (Raihani & Smith, 2015). From a realist perspective, these personal investments may be a factor in the fundraiser’s success and may also affect how much money they have available for training.

### Curriculum Integration

**Holistic vs. isolated.** Boguch (1994) advocated for a systemic and holistic approach to fundraiser training. This approach would encourage the fundraiser to work closely with staff throughout the agency in a way that satisfies mutual self-interest. However, our study found that most fundraiser training programs were isolated in nature, focusing only on fundraising. We believe this is shortsighted and recommend future training programs include opportunities for fundraisers to deepen their knowledge of other aspects of nonprofit management. Additionally, we recommend training programs be accessible and marketed to more than current fundraisers. For example, we would include executive directors, senior program leaders, middle managers, and board members as potential secondary target markets. The integration of these peers—particularly if training programs include multiple participants from the same organization—can engender a more holistic, synergistic understanding of fundraising across an agency.

**Academic home.** While there has been some debate as to the best academic home, we agree with scholars who argue fundraising is interdisciplinary by nature and, therefore, is best located in an interdisciplinary academic home (Mack et al., 2016). The challenge, of course, is there are few truly interdisciplinary nonprofit programs. Therefore, we recommend that those who create such programs take care to engage faculty from a variety of disciplines and to thoughtfully consider the underpinnings of their curriculum.

### **Soft Skills**

It is clear from our study that fundraising programs are focusing their attention on the key fundraising strategies. This, of course, is important and should continue. However, we also recognize that fundraising is a complex activity and there are numerous soft skills necessary to be successful in fundraising. These soft skills include critical thinking (Bonine, Reid, & Dalzen, 2003), creativity (Breeze, 2017a, 2017b), and self-motivation (Farwell, Gaughan, & Handy, 2017). Critical thinking and creativity are necessary for fundraisers to craft a giving opportunity and stewardship plan that maximizes the overlay between donor interest and organizational need. Self-motivation is needed for fundraisers to continue to learn and to persevere even after hearing “no” repeatedly.

Additionally, it is important for donors to understand the cultural differences in giving. Cultural awareness and adaptation is a critical skill set that can allow fundraisers to understand motivations of donors and their philanthropic activities (Wagner & Hall-Russell, 1999). This requires at least some cross-cultural awareness and the ability to work well with multiple populations. We recommend those developing fundraiser training programs create opportunities for participants to learn these and other soft skills.

### **Leadership**

Finally, we conclude with a word about leadership. Harvard scholar Ronald Heifetz (1994) suggested leadership is “mobilizing people to tackle tough problems” (p. 15). The nonprofit sector is a place where we solve some of the world’s most complex problems, problems that are seemingly intractable and that exist on a massive scale. The role of the fundraiser, we believe, is to mobilize donors to join nonprofit organizations in this effort. This role requires that fundraisers mediate between donor and organization, educate the donor about the mission and the organization, identify and address issues of power and democracy, and identify potential opportunities (including new programmatic opportunities) that connect the donor’s interest and the organization’s priorities. This role is transformational in nature. We cannot prepare fundraisers for this level of work just by training them in the giving cycle or by presenting the latest research on annual campaign fundraising. Instead, a high-quality program must help fundraisers to reconceptualize and embody their role in the largest frame possible (see also Jones & Castillo, 2017; Jones & Daniel, 2018; Mirabella & Wish, 2000).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, fundraising is an interdisciplinary high-touch skill, and there appears to be an ever present need for well-trained fundraisers. The career itself offers job security (in the form of a strong salary and availability of work) and opportunities for growth (in the form of new opportunities and professional development). It is unlikely

that the current education options are meeting the demand. However, it is also unlikely that a traditional academic format without accommodations would be appealing to most potential students. We recommend university-based fundraising training programs be accessible to the practitioner, be holistic in nature, be attentive to the development of soft skills, and engender a desire for leadership—a desire to help donors and nonprofit organizations solve some of the world's most intractable problems.

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