

Vermont Tech Strategic Planning – Development Plan 2018-2023

Executive Summary

Development at Vermont Tech can be divided into two categories: 1) Government Grants & Sponsored Programs; and 2) Private/Corporate Gifts. These are referred to here as “grants” and “gifts” respectively. Soliciting and receiving grants and gifts is important to fill the gap in revenue left after tuition, fees, and government allocations. Grants and gifts currently represent between 0.8% and 1.5% of total revenue needed to meet expenses.

A grant is considered donated money for a very specific program or project, with clearly defined goals, and requiring highly detailed reporting. The majority of that funding comes from state and federal programs.

A gift may come from a private foundation, a corporation, alumni, or an individual with an interest in VTC. Sometimes this funding may be designated to a specific program or project, as is most frequent with foundation funds or some alumni who give to specific scholarships, but this is also the best source of unrestricted funds, such as gifts to the Annual Fund or major gifts from individuals.

Generally, colleges and universities experience a 10% to 20% success rate in development, meaning that 8 or 9 out of 10 solicitations are declined. Development at Vermont Tech is at least that effective, given our limited resources, but we could generate so much more revenue with more staff and improved strategies and tactics.

Current Assets

Currently, there are only two staff members working directly on Development at Vermont Tech: the Associate Dean of Resource Development spending 100% of the time on development and the Associate Dean of Administration at 25%. Other faculty and administrators are involved in proposal development and grants administration as time and resources allow.

Other human assets for Development include the college president, who has strong acumen and experience in economic development; the Associate Dean of Industry Relations, who has many connections in corporations and regional organizations; Marketing; Alumni Affairs; some faculty; the VSC Chancellor and senior staff; and the Vermont delegates in the US Congress, who can support and guide some federal funding.

Physical assets include the Raiser’s Edge donor database; the Grants Resource Center search tool; the Vermont Directory of Foundations online search tool; and access via a shared site in Montpelier to the national Foundation Directory Online donor database.

Currently, we solicit about 12 government grants per year with a success rate of 10%. We solicit approximately 20 foundation gifts per year, with a success rate of 20%. We have sent out just one alumni appeal last year, none the year prior, and have made very few personal visits to alumni and potential individual donors. We have met with at least 15 corporations to discuss giving, sponsorship, and employer partners.

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Tactics

- Staffing – the best improvement to Development would be to increase or free up the number of staff who can solicit and manage grants and gifts. Each person on the Development Team, up to four or five, would generate revenue at least two or three times her/his expense in salary & benefits. Even an Administrative Assistant & Data Entry position would take on tasks that would free up direct solicitors to make more asks and receive more donations. An ideal Development Team would be five people.
 - Associate Dean of Resource Development – 100%
 - Direct solicitation of Alumni, Individuals, and Corporations, involving personal visits, letters, phone calls, emails; some foundation research and solicitation. Designs content for appeals and Alumni Magazine. Responsible for the Raiser’s Edge database.
 - Associate Dean of Administration – 25%
 - Direct research and solicitation of state and federal grants. Responsible for reporting on grants.
 - Development Manager (answers to AD of Resource Development) – 100%
 - Handles the majority of foundation gift research and solicitation. Manages the Raiser’s Edge database. Executes direct appeals and monthly alumni e-newsletter; edits and publishes the Alumni Magazine. Manages a schedule of solicitations.
 - Grants Administrator (answers to AD of Administration) – 100%
 - Manages required reporting on grants and gifts, either creating directly or content delegated to Principal Investigators. Researches grant opportunities; creates and edits solicitation for grants.
- Fundraising
 - Create a regular donor discovery visit schedule, including regions outside Vermont where alumni are established, such as Boston and Connecticut.
 - Begin a major donor solicitation program to include research, personal visits, cultivation, asks, and stewardship.
 - Send two regular appeals per year - Summer and Year-End – to alumni, and send via both USPS and email.
 - Create at least one special appeal per year, outside of the Summer and Year-End, targeting specific alumni groups, such as lapsed donors or donors who have never given, or for a specific need (nursing, manufacturing, et cetera)
 - Create stewardship events and recognition opportunities.

Annual Goals by 2023

- Staff of four (3.25 FTE) in Development and Administration focusing on grants & Gifts (1 FTE is new; 2.25 currently exist)
- Continue with Raiser’s Edge database software

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- Add a subscription to Foundation Directory Online, and possibly Wealth Engine
- Ask for 24 grants, with a success rate of 20%, realizing \$500,000
- Ask for 45 foundation gifts, with a success rate of 25%, realizing \$400,000
- Identify 50 potential major donors (alumni and friends)
- Ask for 25 individual major gifts, with a success rate of 30%, realizing \$50,000
- Raise 5 major donor gifts of at least \$5,000 each year; another 20 at \$1,000.
- Boost alumni giving participation rate to 20%.
- Realize \$100,000 in unrestricted donations to the Annual Fund.
- Send two appeals to alumni, one after graduation and one at end-of-year.
- Send one special appeal, either to a specific donor group, for a specific department or project, or based upon a regional event or time of year.
- Create a “Giving Society” to recognize donors, such as pins to staff who give 1%, Dean’s Club and President’s Club pins to major donors of different categories, Employer Partner Badges, et cetera.
- Foster a “culture of grants” at VTC by introducing grants-related professional development opportunities, ranging from informal exercises like monthly luncheons to trainings geared toward specific aspects of proposal-writing and grants management.
- Explore, study, adapt and institute best practices in higher education for engaging faculty in grants-related activities.

Conclusion

A fully-staffed Development Office should be able to raise at least \$1,000,000 to \$1,250,000 a year in revenue, or 2.5% to 3.2% of the total budget, at a cost of \$410,000 in staffing expense and another \$65,000 in subscription, membership, and supply expenses.

None of the above details or numbers include any form of Capital Campaign. If and when we decide on the needs of a Capital Campaign, and embark on the three phases - Feasibility, Silent, and Public – that will be entirely independent of the suggestions and projections above, although a Capital Campaign is bound to have an effect on staffing and annual fundraising, which should be accommodated in campaign planning.

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