

## Commission for the Future of University Development Volunteers

Subgroup: Honora Chapman, Brad Fischer, Vida Samiian, Steve Spriggs, Darin Zuber

**Our subgroup's charge:** How can the University best welcome, use, support, and appreciate volunteer efforts on behalf of Fresno State?

**Fact gathering:** sent a survey to units that use volunteers to learn their best practices; asked them to forward it to the more appropriate person if necessary

Bulldog Foundation: Darin Zuber

Ag One: Alcidia Gomes

Auxiliaries/Foundation: Debbie Adishian-Astone

Alumni Assoc.: Brad Fischer, Peter Robertson

Development: Peter Smits

Each Dean of the Colleges/Schools/Library

### Survey questions:

- a) Do you use volunteers? [yes/no]
- b) If so, how do you encourage people to volunteer for you? [narrative box]
- c) If so, how do you use volunteers? [narrative box]
- d) How do you reward volunteers? [narrative box]
- e) How do you evaluate the value that volunteers provide? [narrative box]
- f) Would you be willing to talk with Honora Chapman by phone for 15 minutes regarding the use of volunteers? [yes/no]
- g) If so, which number and time of day is best for you to have this conversation? [narrative box]
- h) Please give us your name. [narrative box]

### Summary of findings:

Each unit (college/school/foundation) has its own arrangement for organizing and channeling the efforts of volunteers, but there are several features found commonly:

*Advisory Board*— This group comprises people who provide advice to a given unit, make substantial donations, and help recruit new members, who in turn will do the same. This group ideally meets with the administrator once a month.

Certain colleges/schools have more than one of these groups with different names, such as Community Council and Brick Committee (Kremen), even in addition to an Alumni group (see below); they engage in hosting fundraising events for the college or school.

*Community liaison*— Designated for the comprehensive campaign as a member of the Campaign Leadership Committee, this person connects a college/school/unit to the wider community. Ideally, the liaison generates community interest in programs and attracts donations; some are far more involved than others. The current list of

liaisons can be found at <https://www.supportfresnostate.com/campaign-leadership-committee.htm>.

*Alumni group*— In units with a strong sense of identity among alumni, such as Kremen with its educators who have so much in common professionally, an alumni board holds regular meetings, plans up to two fundraisers per year (e.g., wine tasting or golf tournaments), and provides scholarship money to current students.

*Recognition*— All units recognize their volunteers with receptions, luncheons, or at convocation at the end of the year. Deans/administrators send thank you letters and make phone calls to donors and volunteers.

*Evaluation of effectiveness*—No unit reports a formal evaluation process. Instead, they rely on their own and reported observations of a volunteer's commitment, enthusiasm, and positive impact on the University. Another measure used is the amount of money a volunteer has succeeded in raising.

*Caveat:* if volunteers discover that they are being formally evaluated, they may consider it demeaning and balk at future service. Volunteers who lack passion for supporting the university tend to stop showing up, and rarely do they cause trouble (except by their absence if in crucial roles). Boards might consider implementing term limits, with the possibility of renewal for effective members who truly participate; liaisons should be replaced if they prove ineffective or cannot devote enough time to the cause.

### **Recommendations:**

The Volunteer subgroup recommends that colleges/schools/other units have:

- advisory and possibly other boards that meet once a month (i.e., more than once or twice a year) with the administrator
- a highly functioning community liaison even after the comprehensive campaign is officially over
- an alumni group that meets regularly and raises money (normally to fund scholarships for students in that school or college)
- other boards and groups that also raise money for other purposes, such as a dean's discretionary fund.

Volunteers also deserve continuing recognition with written and/or oral thanks and a celebration of their efforts once a year (however is deemed appropriate). Also,

- in order to welcome these regular visitors to our campus (i.e., ones serve on boards that meet at least monthly), the university should provide them annual parking passes at no cost; obtaining and then communicating parking codes to volunteers is a nuisance, unless the code works all year long.

## **Principles of Utilizing Volunteers**

### ***Before:***

Decide...

- which tasks can be done by volunteers
- what the best practices are for given volunteer tasks and write them down
- which kinds of people would be best suited for the various tasks (besides given talents, the volunteers should reflect positively on and believe strongly in the organization)
- how long you would like volunteers to carry out the tasks
- who will take charge the individual responsibilities of: defining volunteers' tasks, and then soliciting, training, overseeing, evaluating, and thanking volunteers for their service

### ***During:***

- Personally contact each person you wish to have volunteer (whether on site or remotely)
- When contacting potential volunteers, clearly define the role you have in mind and explain the exact time commitment expected of them
- Determine whether the prospective volunteer truly believes in the mission of the organization and can act and communicate very positively on its behalf
- Train each person (either individually or as a group) for the particular volunteer role, providing written training materials outlining all expectations for duties and rules of comportment, and updating information (which must be accurate and truthful) over time if necessary
- Be reasonable in expectations of volunteers' time but also do ask enough of them
- When giving tasks to volunteers, provide brief, clear instructions and use their time efficiently (i.e., don't build in lots of wasted time)
- Allow for individual creativity and flexibility, which will allow diversity to flourish (within reason and while staying true to the mission at hand)
- Promote teamwork/camaraderie between staff (who are paid) and volunteers (who are not)
- Show respect to your volunteers individually and collectively
- Convey realistic optimism to all volunteers
- Have someone oversee each volunteer's work and provide feedback in order to encourage the volunteer and possibly improve performance
- Be available to provide support and answer questions at all times
- Keep scrupulous track of each volunteer's work over the time of service
- Keep it fun!

### ***After (or even/ year if a long-term effort):***

- Acknowledge the work of all volunteers both personally and collectively (via handwritten notes, certificates, phone calls, e-mails, newsletters/annual reports, or recognition events)
- Evaluate the success of the year's volunteer efforts, both collectively and individually

***University volunteer tasks:***

- Board/Leadership Council (which involves required financial gifts; *n.b.*: there should be term limits for board members, with possibility of renewal for another term as long as terms aren't too long)
- "Circle" of donors (with a minimum gift threshold) and holding small functions with student, faculty, and up to 10-12 (potential) donors to explain the effect of gifts
- Alumni board—planning and executing special events (which build spirit/raise money)
- Fundraising: direct mail/telephone fundraising/corporate appeals/major gift appeals/grant writing/capital and endowment campaigns/planned giving efforts
- Sending notes or calling to convey thanks for gifts
- Others?

**Survey results: 5 written responses (Chris Ffiorentino, Richter; Andrew Hoff, HHS; Darin Zuber, BDF; Alcidia Gomes, Ag One; Xuanning Fu, Soc Sci); 2 by phone**

a) Do you use volunteers?

- all: yes

b) If so, how do you encourage people to volunteer for you?

- Through outreach to students via multiple sources, including in-person presentations, word of mouth/direct referral, Facebook, email and outreach to specific individuals.
- By making clear the connection they have with the cause or purpose of the initiative as well as explaining how they are needed.
- We need people that believe in our cause. Many do it to know what is going on from an insider's view.
- Current volunteers identify others to serve on committees, board, etc. Staff identifies possible volunteers when coming in contact.
- The College has an advisory board known as the Dean's Leadership Circle (DLC). These volunteers are tasked with assisting with development efforts.

c) If so, how do you use volunteers?

- We use volunteers in numerous ways, including, but not limited to: - Serving on student committees planning volunteer events. - Assisting with and/or lead service events. - Serving as Richter Ambassadors.
- As links to potential donors and prospects, as people who can introduce us to others, as hosts for lunches or similar development activities
- To solicit money and help plan and execute events.
- Serve on board, committees, open doors to others, as donors themselves.
- The Dean convenes meetings with the DLC once or twice each academic year. At those meetings development opportunities are discussed.

d) How do you reward volunteers?

- Depending on the event or program they are working with, there are a variety of ways we reward volunteers. Rewards/recognitions can be as formal as an appointment and thank you letter from the President and Provost, to as informal as free pizza during meetings. Certificates and celebratory events such as lunches are also used.
- Personal notes, invitations to university events such as the Centennial Gala, a concert in the SMC, sometimes with tickets to games, plus personal contact, notes of appreciation and small gifts of olive oil or something similar, plus recognition at events where appropriate.
- Access to an insider's view of the program.
- Farm products, university logo items, insider's information via college dean,
- The Dean has formally recognized significant volunteer efforts by sending letters of thanks and recognition at COSS events, such as Convocation.

- e) How do you evaluate the value that volunteers provide?
- Typically, evaluations center on specific events, not on the volunteers involved. In some cases, such as when volunteers come from internship courses, we use evaluation forms provided by the instructor.
  - Rather informally, we have few volunteers but all are proving worthwhile in connecting us with potential donors or similar contacts.
  - How much money they raise or if they are helping out.
  - Level of engagement.
  - We haven't systematically done this yet, but assume these efforts could be evaluated by looking at the dollars generated by the DLC. At this moment, our college development director Kent Karsevar's impression is that volunteers haven't had substantial help in generating returns. This impression might be unique to Social Sciences so that we may not want to generalize it as a common outcome to all volunteers in all fields.

***Key comments by phone:***

- Community liaisons for the Campaign have aided in the success of certain colleges in raising money [Dennis Woods in A&H mentioned]—this should continue this after the Campaign is officially over
- Community council can raise money [Grizzlies event for Kremen] > Advisory boards provide advice and also donations; recruit new members, who donate
- Alumni groups raise money for scholarships—norm is two fundraisers/year [wine tasting, golf, etc.]
- Receptions/luncheons for volunteers at end of year; letters and calls of thanks
- Parking—more than one interviewee suggested providing annual passes to volunteers who come to campus at least once a month for their service to the University, since it makes them feel welcome and appreciated

*Chris Fiorentino: Center for Community Engagement and Service*

Make it easier for volunteers by having a more generous parking policy

*Alcidia Gomes: Ag*

Ag One board members used to get annual parking passes, but as of two years ago, they don't; story; a board member gave \$50K to both Fresno State and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo—only Cal Poly sent a thank you *with an annual parking pass enclosed*

*Paul Beare: Dean of Kremen School of Education*

Dean's Cmte (along with ad hoc ones)—for advice only

Community Council—two fundraisers per year (one raised \$40K this year; special connection with the Grizzlies)

Alumni Group—meet every month; sponsor scholarships

Brick Committee—raised about \$100K (\$50-60K/year from Beth D. of EECU) after—

Thanks them

Go to a retired faculty house with a reception at end of year

UHS's volunteer program is amazing—three times as many parents as necessary, all in DB; use listserv to send messages to get volunteers

*Bob Harper: Dean of Craig School of Business*

\*\*\*Campaign liaison who is a community person—very active in cultivating to practically invisible [CSB's fell in the middle]—outside person is *so* important; doesn't have a vested interest so prospective donors are more open to this person

Advisory Board, plus others for separate institutes [recruit]

Alumni Board-2 fundraising events [winetasting, golf]

Business Associates get annual luncheon; otherwise letters and calls

e-mails to Soc Sci,  
still waiting on: Engin, S&Math