

Chapter 13

Rebirth of a Program via Community, Industry, and Philanthropic Support

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ABSTRACT

In 2002, Lake Region State College closed their “Agricultural Farm Business Management” program, due to low enrollment and lack of interest. However considering that agriculture is one of the leading economic developers in North Dakota, Lake Region State College (LRSC) leaders and the community felt this might have been a premature closing, and decided to look at other agriculture workforce initiatives, considering ways to revitalize the agriculture workforce and its needs. This was an ambitious goal considering how rural LRSC is, with roughly 2000 in student matriculation in a given year. Before looking at reinventing, or “rebirthing” the ag program, challenges and steps needed to be addressed and employed. The following chapter will provide a case study on how LRSC leaders, its community, and the alignment of philanthropic support was able to revitalize or “rebirth” the agriculture program to the new cutting edge of Precision Agriculture.

INTRODUCTION

The fiscal relationship between higher education and its respective state has been eroding for a number of years. In fact, according to Mortenson (2004) there have been huge cuts with state appropriated funding for higher education in the last two and a half decades. In FY 2004, states appropriated \$60.3 billion for operations, and this was down from FY2003 at \$61.5 billion, and down from FY 2002 at \$62.8 billion (p. 3). In fact, since 1978, state appropriated funding has declined by 40%. There are many factors that contribute to this nationwide decline for state funding, the biggest factor has been contributed to the economic recessions noted in the last 25 years, and two-year institutions are not immune to this decline in funding (Weerts & Ronca, 2006, p. 936).

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The first and oldest community college was Joliet Junior College, founded in 1901 in Illinois. Community colleges then flourished nationally in the 1960's with 457 active campuses. Community colleges historically focused on liberal arts, however, during the depression took a more pragmatic turn, offering job-training programs in order to offset widespread unemployment (Community Colleges Past and Present, 2015). Two-year institutions are known to be 'open enrollment' and serve a range of students (Thelin, 2004). Local funds primarily funded and supported two-year institutions at 94 percent, however was soon to be insufficient, and other revenue streams were mainstreamed- state revenue, tuition and fees, federal funds, and gifts and grants. In the 70's came the awareness that public funding was not going to be sufficient for community colleges to meet their missions (Strauss, 2001).

Today, community colleges enroll nearly half the nation's undergraduate students (Worth & Smith, 1993) and funded primarily from state, local government, and student fees (p. 347). When it comes to fundraising, rarely see the "megagifts" at the two-year institution that four-year institutions have come to know and count on for philanthropic giving. However, reported by the "\$70 Million Gift to Help California Students" (cited in Ramano, Gallagher, & Shugart, 2010) in 2008 a \$70 million donation was presented to a community college system, to assist scholarships for California's 109 two-year colleges. However the gift was focused on scholarships, and as reported by Gose (cited in Ramano, Gallagher, & Shugart, 2010), "most community college donations are earmarked for scholarships" (p. 59). Additionally, in the 2014 CASE Survey of Community College Foundations (Paradise, 2015) reported that when it comes to a comprehensive or capital campaign, 80 percent of surveyed participants cited scholarships as the top destination (p. 27).

Two-year institutions are divided and recognized by three different types of demographics, categorized by the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher EducationTM. Carnegie defines community colleges by *service areas*; rural, suburban, and urban. This type of classification was set in place to demonstrate that nearly all public community colleges are place-based institutions, with geographic service delivery areas defined by state statute, regulation, or custom (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007, p.6). The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (as cited from Hardy & Katsinas, 2007) defined that *serving*, whether the student is from an urban, suburban, or rural areas, depends on the physical location of that campus.

When it comes to fundraising, two-year institutions are not viewed the same, despite what service area they serve, and rural community colleges face the greatest budgetary strain. In fact, according to one study provided by Katsinas, Tollefson, & Reamey (2007), reported "rural community colleges lacked access to a good stream of local support" (p.4). For example when it comes to alumni and future support, students who attend two-year and matriculate to a four-year institution transfer their alumni loyalties, and later become donors to that four-year institution (Worth & Smith, 1993). Additionally, Worth and Smith (1993) further reported that since two-year institutions are program based and not research focused have constraints on where and what kinds of foundations and donors to solicit. In fact, a survey provided by The Marts & Lundy reported to *The Chronical for Philanthropy* (Daniels, 2015) that fifty-one percent of the large gifts to higher education went to university hospital centers and health programs, up from 41 percent in 2013. John Cash, Marts & Lundy's chairman said that "Instead of being driven by a sense of loyalty to their alma mater, Mr. Cash said, many of his clients prefer to give to institutions that are on the cusp of big breakthroughs."..."Donors are giving their big gifts to support research," he says. "They're much more opportunistic. They're not building buildings and creating monuments to themselves" (Daniels, 2015; <https://philanthropy.com/article/Mega-Gifts-on-the-Rise-at/227955>). Comparing prestigious and well-known four year agricultural institutions, such as Purdue where gifts are provided by the Bill

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