

Fundraising for Graduate Education

CGS 2025



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Today's Presentation

- Brief History of Fundraising Approach at The Graduate School at UNC-Chapel Hill – Lessons Learned
- A sneak preview of upcoming campaign:
Pitching to Board of Trustees and Major Donors
- Three challenges and potential solutions

Brief History of Fundraising Approach

Prior to 2022

- Long established Graduate Education Advisory Board
 - No by-laws
 - No term limits
 - Need for a refresh

2023-2024

- Hired a new Lead Development Officer, at the Associate Dean level.
- Sun-setted the GEAB and started a new Graduate Advocacy and Development Board
 - By-laws and 3-yr (renewable) term limits
 - 3 year timeline to fill board seats (goal of ~ 25 members)
 - Members to include
 - Alumni (but not all alumni)
 - Careers in the academy, industry, NGO, government
 - Those with capacity to give and/or deep rolodex relevant to our needs
 - Board meetings in-person 2x yearly
 - Fall -- aligned with 3MT and UNC Research Week
 - Spring -- aligned with Graduate Appreciation Week
 - Always with some social time, and interactive agenda including student engagement

Brief History of Fundraising Approach

2025

- University (Central) Development Office, with support of the Chancellor:
 - Unit lead development officers report centrally (salary split 50/50)
 - All other unit development staff stay in unit (including TGS)
 - Anticipated benefits
 - Increased consistency in messaging
 - Increased consistency in quality of development activities
 - Increased opportunities for collaboration across academic units

Whatever your administrative structure, if you do not have graduate school-focused fundraiser, advocate to get one!

Next set of slides: All units underwent a months-long process to develop slide decks to relay fundraising priorities for the next capital campaign.

CAMPAIGN VISION & PRIORITIES

The Graduate School

Beth Mayer-Davis

Dean, The Graduate School

Kate Moser

Chief Development Officer, The Graduate School

April 25, 2025



**THE GRADUATE
SCHOOL**





OUR PRIORITIES

The Graduate School

STUDENT JOURNEY

RECRUIT

Enrolling
Excellence

SUPPORT

Student
Success

EQUIP

Real-World
Readiness

PRIORITY ONE ENROLLING EXCELLENCE

Expand fellowships to attract and support top master's and doctoral students to advance research and tackle local and global challenges.

FUNDRAISING NEED: \$\$ millions



SUCCESS IN ACTION

SOLVE the world's most critical challenges and **IMPLEMENT** solutions.



PRIORITY TWO STUDENT SUCCESS

Ensure academic excellence and comprehensive support for student wellbeing.

FUNDRAISING NEED: \$\$ millions





SUCCESS IN ACTION

INCREASE retention and
student satisfaction.

DECREASE time to degree

PRIORITY THREE REAL-WORLD READINESS

Offer expanded professional development and hands-on learning opportunities to translate academic expertise into meaningful real-world impact.

FUNDRAISING NEED: \$\$ millions



SUCCESS IN ACTION

INCREASE confirmed path at graduation from 70% to 90%, making real-world impact.

Three Challenges and Potential Solutions

Challenge #1: The Trope

“Alumni only give to their undergraduate institution”

Potential Solution: Who made that up and why do we believe it?

- Challenge this trope head-on.
The fastest growing jobs (in NC) require graduate degrees
The world’s most vexing problems require new knowledge and skilled professional to implement those new solutions, all requiring graduate education
- Engage with alumni of doctoral programs who have cool jobs and connect them with current students
- Provide education as to role of The Graduate School and how we support student success

Three Challenges and Potential Solutions

Challenge #2: Development Officer incentive structures that disincentivize collaboration

Unit level development officers may be unwilling to connect a prospective donor with a big idea for fear of “losing” that donor to another unit (like The Graduate School).

Potential Solution: The Greater Good

- Dean can work with university leaders to fix this unintentional barrier to large gifts
- Hire development officer(s) who are personally committed to collaboration for the greater good for students (who need us to bring in large gifts).
- Look for “donor-centric” focus

Three Challenges and Potential Solutions

Challenge #3: Getting Started – “Will anyone come to my party?”

If you don't have a history of success with a donor event....

Potential Solution: Be brave and tag onto an existing event

- Tie to a well-established event that showcases students (e.g., 3MT)
- Tie to a university-wide event (e.g., UNC Research Week)
- Have the chancellor/president or provost give welcoming remarks
- Highlight current students: choose 1 or 2 to share (depending on the event)
- Better to have a room that is a bit too small than too big (go bigger the next year)
- Have a plan for who YOU and your development team need to talk to specifically

Most important: Relax and have fun! Your students really are amazing and deserve all your support.

Thank you!

