

Mike Urette's

National Humanities Conference Notes

November 8-11, 2018: New Orleans

STEWARDSHIP 101 (Neb; RI; Utah; NH):

Nebraska holds an annual "Governor's Lecture in the Humanities" and dinner which raises approx. \$100,000. A lot of pictures are taken, placed in customized (but inexpensive) frames and sent to participants by the Development Director with a letter thanking them for attending. A second letter is sent from the ED to sponsors. Attendance is 500+/- and location is alternated between Lincoln in the West and Omaha in the East.

Nebraska recognizes donors at the \$1000 level in the "Patron's Circle" which presently has 100 donors.

RI holds an annual "Celebration of the Humanities" event which makes awards to individuals who played significant roles during the past year. They also have Legacy donors who provide planned gifts (4-6 new members per year). Also donor testimonials are used in their Annual Report which is posted online and given to new members.

Both states work to recognize legislators to give them visibility, and invite them to regionally appropriate events.

PUTTING RELATIONSHIPS at the CENTER (Minnesota):

Minnesota has focused on developing relationships with other state agencies interested in WATER. Included organizations include Pollution Control, Health Dept, Univ of MN. The "connection" is made through stories about all aspects of water that affect everyone. The skill, knowledge, polish, and abilities of the young

(relatively) staffers was impressive. It was emphasized that having a physical exhibit as a defining project helped to unite all the participating groups/agencies.

DEVELOPMENT AND ADVOCACY IN YOUR STATE: MAKING THE CASE FOR STATE FUNDING (Wyoming):

Present “Humanities Matters Conference” supported by the Governor’s office and attended by the First Lady who has taken an interest in the program.

WY was effective in obtaining state funding by creating a combined task force to support the ask by: Forming partnerships; Stressing that it was ‘one-time funding’ (but annual); funds not supporting overhead---just programming; telling “the story” of how the programs reach all parts of the state (the hinterland); establishing the NEED and the URGENCY.

The Explanation of Request wording from the WY 2011-2012 Budget could be useful.

The entire WHC showed up for the budget hearing to help influence the outcome.

To help insure follow-up and accountability of program funding, the WHC withholds 10% of funding until completion. Should be able to demonstrate the impact of programs on constituents and the service to the communities, and be able to say what humanities programs are doing for the legislators.

NEW BOARD MEMBER ORIENTATION (NEH staff):

Copies of the slides used are available to the ED and would be good to supplement our own orientations. It is informing to read the 1965 NEH enabling legislation. NEH conducts webinars (which are also archived); next one is on December 6th. As a member of FHC, board members have FREE access to BOARD SOURCE, which can be very helpful in managing board activities.

When questioned, NEH staff stated that they have not done a good job in presenting quantifiable data, but they are working on improvements. Their Annual Report is on the website, as are videos of Jefferson Lecturers.

Comment that Chrmn Jon Peede is very interested in CIVICS education.

DONOR ACQUISITION and RETENTION (Wash, Md, Neb, Tx):

Tips to acquire donors: Get peer endorsements; Determine desired donor impact; Partner with donors; Provide appropriate donor recognition; Become a “trusted advisor and honest broker” as opposed to a fund raiser. Seek board members who are really serious about giving to the humanities.

Nebraska experience: Annual campaign seeks donors at \$100+ to enhance their base. They find that program attendees DO NOT support funding.

Maryland trains board members to raise money with the help of local development professionals. They have an “Adopt a classroom” project that helps fund education. Emphasized year-end giving with both direct mail and online campaign.

Washington runs a “more than a _____” campaign to create relationships and awareness of donors (fill in blank with educator, businessman, doctor, etc.). Also they are proactive regarding Governor’s appointees by meeting with the Governor’s secretary and explaining the needed characteristics for board members (locales, demographics, diversity, etc.).

Montana tries to give emphasis on donors at \$1,000+. This is their “Patron Circle” level. They also focus on smaller level donors with the objective of “growing them”. They don’t particularly focus on major philanthropists because they recognize that all the other non-profits are targeting them.

INDIVIDUAL GIVING (Oregon, Utah):

Oregon operates with a \$2.4M budget and raises approx.. \$250k per year. Use both online and direct mail extensively. Found that their giving levels had been set too low, raised them and reaped significant increases. Recommend mailing on Monday or Tuesday after Thanksgiving targeting the \$100 and \$500 levels for unrestricted funds. They do four online funding appeals in December and stress that all individual funding goes to programming, not to overhead support (they use NEH Standard Operating Grant money for support). Board gifting is handled on a 1-on-1 basis with the Chairman or ED with annual board member planning meetings which discuss areas of interest, leadership, and philanthropy. Acknowledgement of gifts is sent within 2-3 days. Large gift donors receive phone calls. Their “Oregon Humanities” magazine is important to development.

Utah has an online monthly and quarterly donation appeal program. They also emphasize planned gifts. They use NEH “Humanities” magazine as a marketing tool by relating articles contained therein to Utah initiatives and donor interests. This process is also used for “thank yous” to existing donors. They involve board members in writing thank yous for gifts and to invite to events.

MIKE’S THREE MAJOR TAKE-AWAYS:

1. FHC should have someone focused/dedicated on raising at least \$250k annually.
2. CIVICS and civility are areas of major interest to NEH and it would be an appropriate area for FHC emphasis and focus.
3. There appears to be significant leadership turn-over among state EDs. However, the younger staffers were impressive and passionate. They are successfully fighting above their weight, and compensation. I was proud of them and am optimistic for the future.