Successful Fundraising Strategies

Here are some general principles to consider when planning a fundraising strategy for your organization:

1. **Think Positively!** As you begin to plan, think big. Ask yourself, "If money were not an issue, what would the group do?" Dream a little and use your imagination. It is generally easier to scale down your organization's plans than to scale up in mid-year. After thinking big, your group can then begin to assess the possibilities of these goals in light of your resources. A dose of realism is necessary at this stage in your thinking, but be positive.

2. **Establish Financial Goals.** If you don't know where you are going, you will never know if you have arrived. Determine how much you need by establishing an annual budget. A budget should follow the establishment of your organization's positive, but realistic, goals for the year. (Trying to make the group's plan fit the budget rather than making the budget fit the plan is a common error characteristic of stifled organizations). Once a budget of proposed expenses is developed, it should be reviewed against existing resources. The specified dollar figure beyond existing resources that will be required to operate and complete the group's program for the year becomes the group's fundraising target.

3. **Explore Creative Funding Sources.** Successful organizations utilize multiple approaches to fundraising. So once you have established a financial target, identify all potential sources of funds and develop creative ways to tap these sources.

4. **Establish A Fundraising Plan.** Fundraising is like any other group project; it cannot happen successfully if left to chance. Successful fundraising requires careful planning. Answer the basic planning questions -- Who? What? When? Where? and Why? As you creatively explore approaches to fundraising, it is important to balance the costs or required expenditures of the organization with the risks involved in fundraising. Make sure the fundraising activities are going to be worth the effort. If the risks are greater than what the group wishes to assume, it may be time to go back and revise the organization's overall goals for the year to reflect a reduced financial base. Remember, think positively and creatively. Once a financial plan is developed, write it down.

5. **Organize the fundraising activities.** Obviously, when selling, giving away, or raffling an item, the less you spend on it, the more your group makes. Ask for donations and if you can not get it for nothing, get it for cost. Do not try to have one person do everything, but instead, get everyone in the group to participate by delegating tasks. Publicize the fundraiser, train members how to run the activity, and secure all donations well in advance of the event.

6. **Evaluate Fundraising Activities.** To determine your level of success, it is necessary to evaluate your fundraising activities. This evaluation should compare the dollar goal with the amount raised, seek feedback from members about their thoughts of the event, and include recommendations for future fundraising activities. Remember to say “Thank You” to all appropriate people and keep records of everything.

Information adapted from California State University - Chico, Office of Student Activities.
FUNDRAISING IDEAS

Used book sale
Guess # of beans in jar (or variation)
Student-faculty talent shows
Garage sale
Auctions
Student-faculty art show
Raffles
Ad/coupon book
Mum sales
Carnivals/circus
Calendar sale
Banquets/roasts
Singing messages
Sell buttons/t-shirts/bumper stickers
Birthday cake delivery
Finals week care packages
Holiday bazaar
Car washes
Garage/Rummage sale
Donuts & cider sale
Celebrity auctions (local celebrities)
Work day at faculty/staff homes
Service auction (time and effort)
Balloon sales
Plays/concerts
Art/poster sale
Fashion luncheon
Holiday plant sales

Roving dinner party
Lemon eating contest
Haunted house
Plant sale
Bagel/pretzel sale
Antique show/art fair
Marathons: run, walk, rock, eat, etc.
Seesaw competition
Bake sale
Tournaments
Catering
Flower sale
Balloon bouquet delivery
Recycling drive
Collect cans/bottles/papers
Sell candy
Sell unusual item with OU logo
Alumni donations
Merchant donation auction/sale
Benefit dances
Pledges
Bicycle-a-thon or any other “a-thon”
Contests where winners are decided by voting with pennies