Fundraising Best Practices & Scholarship Sustainability Models

Insights From the Greater Orlando Chapter

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We encourage every chapter to consider establishing an account with Zeffy to process all financial transactions.

1. Recurring Giving Program ("1887 Giving")

- Establish a recurring donor program.
- Members are encouraged to contribute either:
  - $18.87 per month, or
  - $1,000 annually.
- Contributions are designated specifically for scholarships.
- Provides predictable, year-round scholarship funding.
- Goal: 25 members contributing a recurring $18.87 per month through Zeffy, generating $5,661 annually.

2. Memorial Scholarship Giving

A. Planned Giving & Estate Planning

- Host financial planners and estate-planning professionals at chapter meetings.
- Educate members on:
  - Including the chapter in their wills and estate plans.
  - Establishing scholarship endowments in their name.
  - Designating gifts for scholarships, operations, or other chapter priorities.
- Encourage intentional conversations before major life events.

B. Memorial Scholarships

- Leadership proactively engages the families of deceased alumni.
- Discuss opportunities to establish a memorial scholarship.
- A typical memorial gift request may begin around $1,000.
- The chapter initiates the conversation rather than waiting for the family to inquire.
- The family has final approval of scholarship recipients.
- Families maintain their own Zeffy account and can share it with friends and family by email or text.

This year, we awarded $33,000 from our memorial scholarship funds — 100% donated by the families.

3. Scholarship Endowment Model

- We established our endowment account in 2019 with a five-year goal of reaching $100,000.
- Use corporate matching funds to build the account quickly.
- Student scholarships are funded from the annual earnings (3.5%) on our current $165,000 account balance.
- Creates a sustainable scholarship funding source rather than relying solely on annual fundraising.
- Allows chapters to build endowment funds without competing with annual fundraising campaigns.

- Creates long-term scholarship sustainability through investment earnings.

4. Dedicated Endowment Fundraising Activities

- Conduct separate fundraising efforts designated specifically for endowment growth.
- Communicate endowment goals and impact clearly to members.
- Avoid competition with annual scholarship and operational fundraising needs.

5. Signature Event Revenue Allocation

Establish clear policies regarding the allocation of event proceeds.

Example Allocation Model (applied consistently)

- Orange Blossom Classic ticket sales — 100% to Operating account
- Playing Card Fundraiser — 100% to Operating account
- Jazz Brunches — 100% net to Scholarship account
- Golf Tournaments — 100% net to Scholarship account
- Football Watch Parties (Tom's Watch Bar) — 5% of our annual food-and-beverage spend, with 100% of that amount donated to the Scholarship account
- Restaurant Socials — 5% of our food-and-beverage spend, with 100% going to the Operating account
- BE OUT DAY ORLANDO — 100% to Scholarship (contract under negotiation with promoters)
- Individual Donations — 100% to Scholarship
- Required Minimum Distribution donations — 100% to Scholarship account

Benefits

- Transparency for members and sponsors.
- A consistent budgeting process.
- Clear expectations regarding each event's impact.

6. Annual Giving Night

- Recognizes that many alumni may not attend chapter meetings but will attend social events.
- Our endowment's annual fundraising meeting is scheduled for the first Thursday of April.

Approach

- Sponsors provide food and beverage.
- Request donations.
- Direct all proceeds to the endowment fund.
- Use data collected from previous events to personally invite donors.

7. Event Profitability and Sponsorship Strategy

Our fundraising events rely on three revenue streams: sponsorships, ticket sales, and vendors.

Best Practice

- Ticket sales should ideally cover event expenses.
- Sponsorships become the primary source of profit.
- Vendors enhance the attendee experience and provide supplemental revenue.

Venue Considerations

- Consider event centers and community venues instead of hotels when feasible.
- Lower facility costs increase net fundraising proceeds.
- Community venues often offer friendlier contract language.

8. Scholarship Award Structure Considerations

This year, our chapter awarded over $60,000 in scholarships — up from $4,000 annually when our administration began in 2024.

Important Distinction

- Our chapter awards both single-year and multi-year scholarships of $1,000.
- Examples:
  - A student receives a $1,000 scholarship.
  - A transfer student (from community college) receives $2,000 over a two-year period. A 2.5 GPA is required to renew, with no exceptions.
  - A student receives a $4,000 scholarship commitment distributed over four years ($1,000 per year). A 2.5 GPA is required to renew each year, with no exceptions.
- The entire $4,000 is set aside in the bank; funds for years two, three, and four are deposited into a CD or high-yield savings account.
- Creates a larger scholarship impact and stronger student support while maintaining annual funding predictability.

9. Increased Membership

In the 2024–2025 fiscal year, we led the NAA in membership-growth percentage.

- The NAA provided us with a list of members who had been inactive over the past five years.
- We reviewed the list with our executive board to identify anyone who had a personal relationship with an inactive member.
- We assigned the list and held three call nights, resulting in the largest membership in our chapter's history.

10. Chapter Ambassador Position

Two years ago, we created an appointed Chapter Ambassador role focused on building relationships with corporate sponsors, foundations, and major donors.

- Building these relationships takes time.
- The potential is unlimited.
- The role is ideal for a retired member.