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Principles and Practices for Fundraising by Majority World Seminaries

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every source of seminary income. Many seminaries have seen tuition income decline precipitously. (Even before the pandemic, tuition on average only met between a third and half of a school's financial needs (Smith 2015).) Other sources of income have also suffered during COVID-19. Many Majority World seminaries, especially those born from missions in the 19th and 20th centuries, have in the past relied on overseas funding. However, such historical reliance has made them increasingly vulnerable, and now the pandemic has shuttered overseas travel to visit international donors. The pandemic has also disrupted local economies, which impacts local fundraising and revenue-generating projects.

The economics of theological education have always been difficult. COVID's all-encompassing impact gives seminaries an opportunity to evaluate their fundraising methods, regroup, and forge ahead with more energy and intentionality.

Because most Majority World seminary presidents have not been trained in fundraising, they can be reluctant to fundraise[1]. Presidents may struggle to overcome the sense that they are "beggars" when they ask for money. While they are well-versed in the Biblical idea of good stewardship and possess a sound theology of money, some struggle to embrace what Henri Nouwen calls the "spirituality of fundraising" (Nouwen 2004). Even as courses and books have taught a Biblical philosophy of stewardship (Russell 2004), most presidents struggle to internalize this encouragement. And although some Western institutions, such as *ScholarLeaders*, ICETE, Overseas Council, Tearfund, and Lausanne, have sought to transfer fundraising practices from Western to Majority World contexts, seminaries struggle to create and effectively act on fundraising plans.

1 For this article, I will use the term "president" for the seminary's executive individual – "director," "rector," "vice chancellor," "provost," and "doyen" are synonyms in various contexts.)

Now more than ever, most Majority World seminaries need a revitalized philosophy of fundraising and repeatable fundraising practices that will improve their sustainability. During my time as President of Cape Town Baptist Seminary in South Africa, I saw this fact firsthand, and in this article I will share from my experiences. As I learned, seminary presidents must acknowledge that the burden for their schools' financial stability – and therefore their long-term ability to serve the Church – rests on them alone. Fundraising must be a priority.

Barriers & Encouragments for Fundraising

Most seminary presidents face barriers to fundraising that include:

- A theology of poverty that entrenches a "beggar mentality"
- Local cultural norms that may view fundraising as demeaning
- A potentially unhealthy ongoing dependency on overseas resources
- Weak local economies that keep people from having extra funds to give (and, in some cases, a weak philanthropic ethic)
- Denominational protocols that may impede seminaries' fundraising or cause them to compete with other denominational ministries for funding
- Training that has equipped school presidents as theologians but not as fundraisers

As a Majority World seminary president, I experienced these factors. I studied at Cape Town Baptist Seminary in South Africa and became a bivocational pastor. I returned to CTBS to assist the academic dean. Around that time, the denomination drastically changed its funding policy. A large part of CTBS's budget had come from the denomination, but the denomination was struggling financially. Denominational leaders evaluated their ministries and decided that two seminaries (one in Johannesburg as well as ours in Cape Town) were a luxury for such a small denomination. Yet they thought that shuttering one seminary would be harmful given South Africa's history and politics. For both seminaries to remain open, they needed an economically independent model. So the denomination decided to cut funding to both seminaries: this forced the seminaries to find their own financial support, creating a "sink-or-swim" scenario. This new challenge was so intense, in fact, that the then president of the seminary in Johannesburg resigned. He realized that he was not gifted for fundraising, that fundraising had become burdensome to him personally, and that he was not truly serving that seminary.

Facing the same circumstances in Cape Town, CTBS's board redirected the president's role to center on fundraising because CTBS could not afford a full-time fundraiser. I saw the president face this challenge first-hand, as I had stepped into the academic dean's role. As I assisted the president, I learned from him about relational fundraising (discussed below). When his term ended, I became president. CTBS's board also hired a part-time Christian fundraising specialist, just before my appointment, who came two mornings per week to guide my efforts. He established policies and processes for fundraising, and so much so that when he retired, he told me, "Now, you go and do fundraising, following the protocols I have designed."

Even with everything I had learned and this part-time assistance, various leaders within the denomination within which I served often made me feel as though CTBS was competing with other, more exciting ministries. Pastors sometimes told me, "Go fish in other ponds!" Overcoming these barriers was a gradual process. To embrace fundraising, I learned to understand that:

- I am not a beggar but rather a facilitator of an opportunity for people to invest in the expansion of God's Kingdom through trained bearers of the Good News
- I can be humble and respect sources of negativity (people's individual barriers, social norms, and denominational tensions)
- I can replace the desire for slick, sale-like presentations with my own voice giving an authentic, clear, Gospel-focused and missional call to support theological education as an integral part of the Great Commission
- I can recognize fundraising's intrinsically relational nature – "Fundraising is mostly friend-raising" (as many have said) – whether with individuals, churches, denominations, or foundations
- I can set an example as a life-long learner by reading about fundraising, attending seminars, and learning from experienced practitioners

Similarly, whatever the barriers you face, your attitude will be a key part of your "success" (I use the term cautiously) or failure. As seminary presidents, we need to see ourselves as embodying our institution's mission. We are not beggars; rather, our seminaries represent one of Christ's main gifts to the Church (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11). Stewarding Christ's gift through fundraising is a vital part of our role. We can passionately invite donors to partner with the seminary as we help them understand the seminary as a worthy Kingdom cause.

Being willing to be more than just an academic or pastoral leader, to accept the role of fundraiser wholeheartedly, is essential for presidents who want to see their seminaries grow. Even if a seminary is fortunate enough to be able to appoint a full-time fundraising officer, the president will have to work closely with that person. Recent research in the West shows that up to half of the president's time should go toward fundraising relationships (Miller et al, 2009, 21) – and my own experience supports this finding.

The president's energy for fundraising needs to be balanced by reliance on the Spirit. Though we may be able to express our seminary's story in compelling terms, we must trust the Spirit to move the donor to give. Those who give by the Spirit will be more likely to give again.

As CTBS's primary fundraiser, I discovered how beneficial fellowship with other Majority World seminary presidents could be. They encouraged me to embrace this role. Having friends (or even an outside coach) can help presidents stay motivated.

Principles for Fundraising: Reflections from Experience in South Africa

While I served as CTBS's president and fundraiser, I learned the principles below. Some of them may sound discouraging at first, but I hope to give you a realistic picture of what you will encounter as you fundraise so that, long-term, you can increase your school's financial health and its ability to carry out its mission to bless the Church.

Recognize that many of your investments of time and effort will likely only maintain funding.

As you begin your efforts, be realistic: Simply maintaining existing funding requires a great deal of time, strategy, and attention. However, your efforts will also probably provide opportunities for growth over the very long term.

At the beginning of my presidency, CTBS had approximately 320 donors (individuals and churches). When I became president, our donor list dipped below 300. A board member told me, "Those were the donors of the previous president. How do we replace them? With your friends!" So I embarked on a campaign to get my friends to become donors. Throughout my presidency, though, socioeconomic changes made the process of increasing the donor list difficult. The middle-range donors saw the most turnover, partly due to the global economic collapse in 2008: those middle-range donors were businesspeople and entrepreneurs who suddenly lost income. Within 2-3 years, the seminary suffered significant financial repercussions; in fact, to survive, we had to draw funds from our endowment.

To rebuild CTBS's donor base after I became president, I took the attitude that anyone could be a donor. My predecessor had developed a "Partners in the Harvest" program that encouraged ordinary people in the pew to give a few dollars: "What if you were to make a small monthly donation?" About 300 people and churches did this, so CTBS received gifts ranging from $10/month to $1,000/month (the $1,000 gifts were the top 1%; our average gift through this program was $150/month). Later, we transformed this program into the "Cheeseburger Challenge" to involve younger donors: "Will you sacrifice one cheeseburger a month for the seminary?" It saw some success, especially bringing new energy to the "Partners-in-the-Harvest" program.

Even as we added new donors, though, CTBS consistently lost donors – not only because of contextual upheavals like the economic collapse but also because of the normal cycle of life. Some donors, especially younger donors, would change focus – the "next best thing that tugs at heartstrings" would come along, and they would switch beneficiaries. Sometimes donors would encounter personal problems, such as job loss or international relocation. In those cases, we would still pray with them, praise them, and send them letters, but we knew that they would not give. Like some other Majority World seminaries, CTBS has an ageing donor database. Older donors would become part of our legacy fund program: very sensitively, during donor-focused dinners, we would invite them to take advantage of the opportunity to make a bequest to CTBS in their will. Eventually, when their estate was concluded after their death, those donations would come to us – but as soon as we received that money, we knew that we had to make up for the lost donor by adding a new donor. We were always working to recover from these setbacks. (And to keep our donor database up-to-date as people's circumstances changed!)

So, despite all my efforts, during my presidency, CTBS plateaued around 320 donors. We lost a few and gained a few, but overall, our donor pool remained stable.

Pay close attention to successes and failures to determine what works in your context.

As you consider how to go about fundraising, pay careful attention to where you see the most fruit. If you devote energy to all areas equally, you will likely burn out. Instead, think about which groups (of people, organizations, churches, etc.) are most likely to give and focus your attention there. In my experience, trying new things, evaluating them, and changing course as warranted pays off. Not every activity will be fruitful, as I demonstrate below.

When I began to work alongside CTBS's president, we decided to focus on involving more congregations with CTBS. At that time, only 20% of the denomination's congregations consciously supported us; we felt we could increase that number to 50%. We devoted careful efforts to this area. For instance, I built a relationship with the pastor of a congregation. That congregation decided to hire a youth pastor who would be a seminary graduate, which was wonderful – but then they told us that they would cut their gift to the seminary entirely in order to be able to pay for the youth pastor. Similarly, we invited alumni to encourage people in their congregations to attend the seminary, and we asked alumni to promote the seminary to their congregational mission committees. Still, alumni told me, "Sorry, my church is going to cut its donation." So we had a sound plan for engaging churches, but that plan bore little fruit. As president, I never moved beyond 23% of our denominational congregations giving to CTBS; my labors only resulted in a 3% increase.

Given the amount of time and effort going into church relationships, CTBS was not seeing much fruit. Instead, we decided, the seminary had to look at where the greatest potential was. Wealthy individuals were more efficient than congregations. Thus, I began to cultivate personal relationships with very wealthy individuals. One woman consistently gave to CTBS while she was alive, and after her death, she left what was likely the largest single amount of cash to CTBS that any seminary in South Africa had received. That legacy gift funded us through the 2008 financial crisis. Another person, a businessman, replaced all of CTBS's roofs. He was not a Baptist, but he became interested in CTBS through our relationship. I knew that he was unwilling to make a donation in cash, so I showed him CTBS's project list, including the need for roof sheeting, and asked him if he would consider paying for a project. In addition to the roofs, he renovated an office and replaced our security fencing.

As these examples show, I had to learn what worked in my context in Cape Town. Cultivating congregations did not work, so I had to turn my attention to wealthy individuals. You may face very different factors in your own situation; try to find a balance that is most productive for you.

Above all, focus on context-driven relationship-building.

Focus on relationship-building appropriate to your context. Whether you decide to pursue denominations, congregations, lower- or middle-income donors, or a few wealthy individuals, seek donors who believe in your school's mission. As you do so, adopt an attitude that is willing to devote attention to every donor. As a seminary president in Africa wrote to me: "The time and energy you exert for some projects pays off 100 times more than you expect; some others, after a huge cost of labor, time, and thought, become simply barren. But one has to keep on trying. Personally, I do not ignore whatever small amount comes in. We receive each gift with due respect and sincere appreciation. My principle is Ecc. 11:1, 'Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days'."

As mentioned above, at CTBS, I quickly realized that major individual donors were a better, more efficient target than congregations. In fact, CTBS's single largest donor was not even a Baptist – nor did he live full-time in South Africa. Whenever he visited South Africa, I set aside time to talk through what was happening at CTBS. Thanks to so much time spent together, he invested in the seminary's mission.

CTBS's part-time fundraising consultant guided my efforts with wealthy individuals. He told me, "We need to find out who in the churches are people of means." We knew which congregations included those people, so we developed relationships with their pastors. Those pastor's churches counted CTBS donors as "friends." We invited them to a fancy dinner – to which they also invited the wealthy members of their congregations. These dinners hosted 30 to 50 people. (Pastors often pointed us to congregants of means as well.) A few CTBS students were at these dinners to assist with logistics, share testimonies, or sing; pastors were there, and in that relaxed setting, the seminary presented itself. However, we did not make any financial "asks." We only asked people to join the prayer and newsletter lists.

This request had a twofold benefit. First, the newsletter often mentioned projects as prayer requests. Occasionally, wealthy individuals would meet one or two of those needs (like the businessman mentioned above). Second, these dinners allowed us to develop a list with wealthy individuals' names. Later, we pursued them one-on-one. CTBS's foundation members cold-called these wealthy individuals, inviting them to visit the seminary – for a dinner, founder's day event, famous speaker, prayer breakfast, etc. We simply said, "Come and see what's happening." (These foundation members comprised a fundraising body set up parallel to the board as the fundraising arm of the board.)

After they had come to an event, we reached out to these individuals again to ask for a personal visit. Sometimes I met with them alone; sometimes, a board/ foundation member accompanied me; many times our fundraiser made the request. During the meeting, we presented CTBS's vision and a proposal for funding a project. We always entered the meeting with small, medium, and large proposals. If the individual turned down the large proposal, we could offer the medium one.

All of these relationships were driven by a goal of hitting a fundraising target that the foundation in consultation with the board and I chose every year. I knew that every year, if I wanted CTBS to make that goal, I had to contact our major donors and explain our needs to them. I would ask, "Can you match your gift last year? Or increase it?" I always called donors around the same time of year, so they knew to expect our conversation.

As my experience demonstrates, fundraising is a matter of maintaining relationships – no matter your context. One major donor wanted me to walk him through every facet of the seminary's finances annually before he would give. The woman who left the record-breaking legacy bequest had spent many hours with me over the years: I drank tea with her, took her on personal campus tours, and answered all her questions.

So, in your context, what fundraising techniques will best build relationships with potential donors – alumni, churches, denominations, etc.? As theologians, we have often emphasized the need for theology that grows from its native soil. A flower cannot simply be transplanted to a new place and expected to flourish. Similarly, in fundraising, principles may be universal, but practices themselves must grow from each seminary's context. Presidents should recognize that they do not have to emulate Western practices but that they are free to develop practices that work for them in their specific situations – as happened in Paraguay, where a school's relationship with a rancher led him to give 100 head of cattle to the school. He raised them and, after selling them for slaughter, donated the proceeds.

Fundraising builds on relationships between president, board, school, donors, and potential donors. In fact, historically, funding for Majority World schools often came from the West in part because missionaries had relationships in the West. When school leadership transferred to a local president, the missionary usually took that president on a donor tour in the West. Over time, though, many of those donors faded away, partly because their relationships were with the missionary, not the school, and certainly not the new president. A seminary president from East Africa shared about how the seminary he led gradually lost relationships with Western missionaries: "[T]here was no one to guarantee that the funds would be used for the intended purposes" from the Westerners' point of view, which "negatively impacted a project that had been started in 2011." However, thankfully, "[T]he Lord enabled us to raise enough funds from elsewhere to complete phase one of the project." To avoid these situations, presidents must cultivate relationships, beginning locally whenever possible. Above all, we must always remember, "Fundraising is friend-raising."

Build transparency and trust into donor relationships and relationships at the seminary.

One key aspect of close donor relationships is transparency that leads to trust. In addition to being willing to discuss the seminary's financial health and projects openly with potential donors, you may also need to be up front about your personal plans. Your relationships with donors are key, but they must primarily believe in the school's mission – not just in you.

I saw this first-hand from CTBS's previous president. He adopted the philosophy that he needed to work himself out of a job, so while he was president, rather than clinging to his position, he consciously looked for a replacement. In fact, he often told me, "I would like someone from CTBS to take over, and you are one of the possibilities." He gave me opportunities to learn what it would be like to lead: when he went on a 6-month sabbatical, he asked the board to appoint me as acting president. He said, "Here is a test. You can learn whether you would be able to do this job if the opportunity arises." Similarly, for awhile, he led the Baptist Union, a role for which he frequently traveled. During that time, he asked the board to make me acting president again, and he told CTBS's other faculty what was happening. Thanks to his clear communication to the board and faculty, they accepted me as their leader, even though I was among the youngest faculty members. This transparency and acceptance later benefited my fundraising efforts.

In my turn, when I prepared to leave CTBS, I wanted to ensure that when I left, donors would not leave with me. Like my predecessor, I walked donors through a transition from myself to the next president, emphasizing that donors were not "mine" but the seminary's. As I met with donors, I made time to chat with them about our lives. During those conversations, I would note off-hand that I had made a 10-year commitment to CTBS and that after 10 years (it lasted 14 years), I would evaluate whether I was still benefiting the seminary (and vice versa). As part of my remarks, I told donors, "My hope is that when I move on, you will remain committed to CTBS's mission." So, in the year when I knew I would resign, as part of my normal annual emails to donors, I told them about my plan to step back. I said, "Next year, you will be communicating with a new president."

This transparent process benefited the seminary long-term: During COVID lockdowns, my successor went to a particular donor and told him about CTBS's struggles. That donor actually gave more in response to my successor. Even if you are not in a situation like mine, careful transparency will build trust between yourself, the seminary, and donors. You can loop your seminary's financial staff into conversations with donors, for instance, so that donors can see that you are accountable to others.

Develop sacrificial solidarity for fundraising between yourself and others at the school.

Building such close, transparent relationships – whether with wealthy individuals, congregations, denominational leaders, etc., as appropriate to your context – will require sacrifices from you and others at the seminary.

As I mentioned above, thanks to my predecessor, CTBS's faculty willingly accepted me when I became president – which was a blessing because my primary role as fundraiser placed burdens on them as well as on me. To pursue fundraising intentionally, I had to take a reduced teaching load of no more than two subjects per semester (and even that was a lot; some semesters, I only taught one). Because I wanted to be available to donors who often dropped by the seminary midday, I only taught early in the morning or at night. This schedule required other faculty to pick up additional courses.

This schedule demonstrates my own sacrificial commitment to the seminary and its financial health. I wanted to teach more, to be in the classroom more often, but I simply could not do that and maintain my fundraising duties. My secretary had a list of key individual donors, and if one of them happened to come while I was teaching, the secretary would call me out of the classroom to meet with that person. Usually, though, these impromptu visits happened in the afternoon, so I knew to leave the afternoon hours available so that I could say hello, take donors around campus, share prayer requests, and so forth.

In addition, donor relationships frequently happened via events. I had to budget these events into my time. For example, I do not play golf, but golf is an important sport in South Africa. CTBS held an annual golf day; I marked that day on my calendar. I attended tee-off, greeting donors as they arrived, signing them up, and taking photographs. Then I went back to work or home for a few hours while they were on the course. At the end of the day, I returned for the two-hour prize-giving ceremony. Or, as another example, CTBS held a promotional month annually. For that whole month, faculty, students, board members, and myself visited a different congregation each Sunday, speaking about the seminary. (Even though we knew that many congregations would not become major donors, we still valued the opportunity.)

CTBS's board supported me by sacrificing time to enable me to fundraise. Every week, I spent two mornings with the board-appointed fundraiser who oversaw

CTBS's efforts. We discussed monthly targets, which churches and individuals needed to be contacted, which letters or emails needed to be written, etc. I also had the assistance of the bookkeeper and my secretary. This small but devoted team helped energize me.

Even if your institution is able to appoint a part-time professional (as CTBS did), a Vice President for Advancement, or a Development Officer, the president always plays a critical role in fundraising. Because funding follows vision and because the president more than anyone should embody the school's values, the president cannot outsource fundraising to an advancement team. Recognizing this fact, I had to maintain this intentionally minimal schedule, and I had to sacrifice my own academic ambitions and interests to participate in fundraising activities. You, too, may need to think about what practical steps you need to take to embrace fundraising as part of your calling as president. While you do, give thanks for and seek to cultivate this sacrificial solidarity with others at your school.

Engage the board with clear expectations.

As mentioned above, I met twice weekly with the fundraiser who oversaw CTBS's efforts. This disciplined dedication should also characterize your institution's board as you fundraise. You will likely need to set clear expectations with them. For many boards, this may require a new understanding of how they serve the school's mission and, perhaps, even a restructuring of their membership.

The board should not only or primarily be financial auditors or theological overseers. In the North American context, one study described this approach as one in which board members "see themselves as either monitors or cheerleaders for the school on behalf of its sponsoring religious body, rather than fiduciaries who accept a measure of personal responsibility for the financial welfare of the institution" (Miller et al, 2009, 6). Board members should recognize that they are co-laborers with you, consistently and enthusiastically building relationships that will benefit the seminary. Board members should actively recruit people who will give to the seminary. A finance committee from the board can oversee the seminary's books, but the board as a whole should function as co-laborers with the president in fundraising.

CTBS required each board member to be a donor and to introduce me to potential donors. Uniquely, CTBS had a separate board of foundation trustees who focused entirely on fundraising. Most Majority World seminary boards are not structured that way, though, so they likely do not have the luxury of an entire board devoted to fundraising. Instead, the board should establish policies that will give the president freedom to fundraise. When the board evaluates the president, they should understand that fundraising requires time, energy, and relationship-building. To show their care, they should ensure that the president is not overwhelmed with other duties (teaching, administration, etc.) so that you can allocate appropriate time for fundraising.

Board members themselves should give to the seminary as well, even if those contributions are small. Such gifts demonstrate their commitment to the school and its mission. Although board members might say that they donate their time, that does not help to pay for books, electricity, rent, or salaries. If the board is not setting an example, they cannot ask others to donate. I made calling board members as donors part of my regular annual fundraising schedule. I asked them to donate, and I often had to remind them to do so. We did invite major individual donors to join CTBS's board occasionally – but this practice can be complicated, as wealthy individuals may move or have other commitments.

Reporting on fundraising activities, assessing successes/shortfalls, and planning for the future should be a regular item on board meeting agendas.

Evaluate efforts realistically and move on when needed.

As you fundraise, you will inevitably encounter setbacks. At these moments, it is important to "cut bait and move on." You should be honest about failures or places where the needle is either not moving at all or not moving enough given the efforts you have made.

CTBS's experience with congregations versus wealthy individuals illustrates this; perhaps even more pointedly, CTBS's experience with third-stream income does so as well. Some Majority World seminaries have focused on third-stream projects to generate sustainable local funds. A school in Ethiopia developed rental space on their urban campuses; that income covers a significant part of faculty salaries. In Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and India, seminaries have built conference centers and hotels to generate income; in some cases, they have repurposed underutilized facilities. Other schools have embarked on farming projects (livestock, fish), bakeries, brick-making workshops, and grocery stores.

Yet these projects have their own risks and require considerable seed capital and sound management. While I was at CTBS, we tried a third-stream project that was only partly successful and that fell flat when I realized that it was taking too much of my time. This project was a charity shop. The women's ministry of our denomination had funded most of their work through a string of charity shops around South Africa that were quite successful, so CTBS decided to try that model as well.

As CTBS's fundraising leader, I effectively became manager of the charity shop (even though we hired someone to do so). We thought that I would only need to oversee it for a year and then that we could hire a more effective full-time manager, but the shop simply took too much time. It was also not ideally located in the community. It did make a profit but not enough to balance the investment of my time. Eventually, we decided to move ownership of the shop to our denomination's old age home. (They resolved the problems CTBS encountered by relocating the shop altogether.) Illustrating the importance of context, though: Our sister seminary in Johannesburg also opened a charity shop, and it has become quite successful because of its location.

While you are fundraising, then, evaluate your efforts honestly. Examine your context and how much benefit the seminary is seeing from each specific avenue you are pursuing. Ask not just, “Is it profitable?” but “Is it profitable enough?”, and be prepared to change course.

Establish protocols for managing funds as they come in.

When you do succeed, your seminary should be prepared to receive gifts as they come. Establish wise financial protocols to maintain transparency and good stewardship of funds.

When that record-breaking legacy gift came to CTBS, we were surprised by its size, but we were not surprised by its arrival: that person had been among my relationships for years. Knowing that she would likely give generously, we had set up protocols for what to do with such a legacy. Of course, donors (especially major donors like this woman) can tell the seminary how to use their gift. In our case, this woman’s wishes aligned to CTBS’s policy, thanks to the relationship we had developed.

Our policy requires large donations to be invested so that CTBS can use the interest alone without touching the initial gift. When a big donation comes, most of the money goes into this endowment. However, 10% of the money goes immediately to CTBS as a tithe to be used however the seminary needs (to fill a hole in the budget, pay for a special project, etc.). As the donation produces interest, one-third of the interest comes to CTBS if we need it. Two-thirds of the interest goes back into the fund, increasing the amount of the endowment and, therefore, the next year’s interest. If CTBS does not need that initial one-third, we save it – a savings that has helped the seminary weather financial hardships. In extraordinary circumstances (like the 2008 financial crisis), after a certain length of time has passed in crisis, CTBS can draw larger amounts out of the capital investment (as dictated by policy).

Because of CTBS’s South African context, its policies are unique. Consider what policies in your context would help your seminary steward the fruits of your fundraising.

Create a fundraising plan.

Seminaries are often involved intuitively in fundraising, but they need to set meaningful, achievable fundraising goals. Such goals should be grounded in existing needs. By this I do not mean that seminaries should remain in the "poverty" or "just-getting-by" mentality that only keeps the lights on. (Examples include doing scant maintenance on buildings that results in major problems over time, or maintaining low salaries that eventually cause faculty attrition, or not consistently adding resources to the library.) Instead, answer the question, "What do we need right now financially to achieve our mission?" with a perspective that looks toward sustainable growth. The least expensive programs in the short-term may not be the best long-term for helping the seminary serve the Church. Goals should be grounded in looking to the future. As Emmanuel Bellon suggests, fundraising should allow the school "to meet the needs of this present generation without having to compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (2017). Seminaries need to create fundraising plans that provide for such continuity.

A fundraising plan will help the school stop being reactive and become proactive in seeking to address its funding needs. It will help you build confidence by providing evidence for what works and what does not. Even when a planned approach to fundraising is initially unsuccessful, afterward, if it has been tracked, it can be evaluated (through tangible results or clear lack thereof) and improved.

While a fundraising plan may sound intimidating, this need not be the case. A good starting point for a fundraising plan is a simple list of the school's efforts over the past year: What mailings have gone out, and to whom? Which donors have been called or emailed? What donor events have been hosted? Talk to your team – staff, board, even faculty – to help you compile this list.

Next, define what you mean by "succeeded" and "failed" for each activity. "Success" may look different for a monthly newsletter than it does for an annual gala. Not every communication results in direct donations, but communicating vision is key to maintaining connections to the school's ministry so that donors will continue to give. Again, work with your team to define these terms in ways that are appropriate for your school and activities. "Success" for a gala might mean a certain number of dollars raised or new contacts added to the mailing list; "success" for an emailed newsletter might mean a certain number of "clicks" without any expectations for money coming in; "success" for a phone call to a long-term donor might mean a slightly larger check or a new connection to one of their friends.

After defining terms, you can evaluate the items on the list: What went well? What didn't? Why did a particular newsletter, phone call, or event "succeed"? Or fail? (Remember to use your definitions; you may need to shift them as you go.) Once more, work with your team. Others may see successes of which you are not aware.

You should also consider your donor base. Who are your school's donors? Where do they come from? Are they alumni or members of a certain denomination? How do they hear about the school? Might there be others like them nearby who haven't heard about the school yet?

After this exercise, you and your team can use this list to create an annual fundraising plan. Focus on activities that "succeeded" (again, as defined for your situation). A fundraising plan usually has the following features:

- Activity: An opportunity that generates funds (third-stream business, donor mailing, phone call, event (gala/dinner/concert), speaking engagement, etc.)
- Audience: What specific donor group will this activity target (alumni, denomination, local church, general public, etc.)?
- Goal: Based on previous years' experience, what do you expect from this activity this year? (Consider building in an increase that is reasonable for your situation for this year if it is a repeated activity, or gauge what the goal should be for a first-time activity based on your knowledge of your context.).
- Strategies: What actual steps will you have to take to get this activity off the ground? How will you approach the targeted existing or prospective donors?
- Timeframe with actual dates: How long will the activity take? (You can transfer this to the seminary's administrative calendar to keep everyone on the team in the loop.)
- Costs: How much will this activity cost in relation to effort? (In other words, what is the net gain? In addition, how much does the activity cost in time and personnel? Do you have the right people to manage it?)

Regarding costs, you should evaluate how productive an activity actually is in relation to how much it costs the school. This evaluation is especially necessary for third stream projects. If a bakery raises $15,000 in revenue but costs the school $13,000, is it really that effective as an income source? A bakery requires bakers and managers; hotels require staff; all activities will likely require attention from you. Is the final return worth the extra time, staff, and attention?

Below is an example of a basic fundraising plan:

Fundraising Plan Summary for BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY					
Activity	**Goals ($ and # of**	**Audience**	**Strategies**	**Timeframe**	**Costs**
Third Stream (bakery)	$ 15000	Community members	Daily sales	Entire calendar year	$
Direct Mail Appeals	$ 5,000 for 200 donors @ $25 each (excluding goal for 25 new donors)	Previous INDIVIDUAL donors and INDIVIDUAL Prospects	3 direct mail/ e-mail appeals: Follow-up by phone calls. (Include Annual Report). Promotional opportunities at church services to attract new donors. "Become a Seminary Partner" campaign.	March, August, November	$750
Personal Approaches	$20 000	Identified # Major Gifts Prospects (Major Individual donors/ business people and churches)	Personal cultivation and approaches by President, Board members and Staff Leadership (where appropriate) - An annual personal phone call or invite to special dinner/ visit to campus	Entire calendar year	$1 000
Annual Gospel music concert	$9 000	Past attendees, Major Donors by personal invite Prospects, Current Donors, and Church network	Invitation mailed: Follow-up phone calls, face-to-face invites, newsletter announcement, social media	January-May (Concert)	$2 000
Fundraising Dinner	$15,000 15 new major donors	New Prospects (non-donors), Lapsed donors (more than 3+ years)	Special mailings/ e-mail invitations: newsletter articles: personal invitations by president & board members.	six months prior (first invite); five months prior (follow up); Three months prior (confirmation); one month prior (reminder)	$3 000
Fundraising Target	$ 54000 (after expenses)				$10 000

Amounts are expressed in US dollars as a guide; costs vary from region to region.

A fundraising plan can be formulated in many ways, even as a basic Word document. Choose whatever format is simplest and clearest for you.

Mobilize support staff.

I have already discussed this point, so I will only mention it briefly here. Seminaries may need to find a staff member who can help the president and board by faithfully doing data entry, organizing events, and so forth. This person does not need to be a fundraiser. They just need to be an administrator. You do not even necessarily need to add a new full-time staff member. Perhaps a recent graduate who has a passion for the seminary could fill this position volunteer or with a small stipend. Perhaps a student's spouse would be willing to help. Or perhaps an existing staff member could designate time toward fundraising – for instance, the existing executive assistant. No matter whether the school asks an existing staff member to do this work, or finds a volunteer, or hires a whole department, whoever joins the fundraising team must support the president, not replace him.

Establish data management systems that facilitate fundraising.

Seminaries need to develop consistent data management systems for fundraising. Although this may sound onerous, it is essential for success. You need to know which donors have been asked for money, who has given, how much they gave, and when they gave it; you also need to know their preferences for communications and giving. Tracking allows you to plan, to reach out to new donors, and to follow up on consistent supporters without duplicating or confusing your efforts. Even a simple Excel spreadsheet can help a seminary track important donor information. This spreadsheet should include:

- Donor names (and family members' names if applicable)
- Addresses
- Phone numbers
- Emails
- Church affiliation
- Donation history

Find a system that works for you, even if you are only able to implement a paper-based system. You do not need to purchase a large software package (many of which do not integrate well with one another or with existing accounting software). Investment in donor management software should be done cautiously, because some only require a one-time purchase fee, while others come with monthly fees. CTBS was able to purchase an effective software package at a reasonable price. It suited our purposes given our local tax record requirements. We eventually replaced it with a package developed by one of our alumni who ran an IT support service for Christian nonprofits. However, we could simply have adapted an Excel spreadsheet to meet our need for donor engagement, and this may be the easiest, most cost-effective way for many seminaries.

Whatever donor management system you choose, be sure to keep it up-to-date. A donor management system is an essential tool to help you be intentional, but it can only do that if its information is accurate. (You can delegate this task to an assistant if necessary.) Similarly, be sure to keep the fundraising plan up-to-date. In both cases, intentionality on your part will keep donors engaged and happy to talk to you. Intentionality is the antidote for sporadic, ad-hoc, desperate fundraising that will only frustrate and discourage everyone.

Conclusion

While financial constraints are a constant reality in theological education, seminaries do not need to remain hamstrung due to lack of finances. We fundraise for the sake of Christ's Kingdom and to steward the resources He has given us. Even during the pandemic, the basic tenets of fundraising have been validated. Recently, a seminary president from Eastern Europe wrote to me:

> Fundraising during the pandemic has reinforced some knowledge I had regarding fundraising: First, people always want to be part of something bigger in their life; they want to be part of God's mission. This is still true in the pandemic. Second, people are motived to participate for two reasons – relationships and impact. People rarely want just to meet needs; they want to provide resources for impact, for making a difference.

These facts were true before the pandemic, and they are still true now. Ultimately, fundraising unites the body of Christ so that all its members grow in Him.

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