

Role of alumni in university advancement

Alumni are the past graduates of the University, College or Schools University Advancement is the bonding relationships between the university and affinity groups including the alumni that contribute to the University's vision and mission – positive relationship building aligned with the university's strategy. It is a relatively new concept in Africa and yet we have no choice but to embrace it considering the changing landscape of higher education in Africa.

According to Dr. Max Price, Vice-Chancellor, University of Cape Town and Prof. Cheryl de la Rey, Vice-Chancellor, University of Pretoria, many things are changing in the higher education sector in Africa and hence the need for new strategies. There is decline in government funding in many African countries and hence reliance on students fees as source of income which is not sustainable and hence the need for multiple sources of funds. Another feature is the rate of economic growth which is creating new wealth and the result is massification of higher education in Africa as a key driver to social and economic development thus putting pressure on the available resources and leaving little time for innovation. There is also the new scramble for Africa by China among others, because of the new discoveries of oil, reduced conflict and military action and hence there is high hope and optimism for Africa. This has created new opportunities for higher education in Africa and hence the need to craft strategies that enable



Waiting for new responsibilities after graduation

universities take advantage of the opportunities.

World Class Universities Endowment Fund

The University Endowment Fund is the best investment that Alumni can ever make for the University. Endowment Funds provide steady financial support for the university's academic programmes and other needs. Endowment funds are invested for the long-term, and earnings from those investments help support outstanding faculty, innovative programs and student scholarships. A university's endowment is essential to sustaining academic quality because it provides

a guaranteed, never-ending source of income to support professorships, student scholarships, innovative programs and learning opportunities. Donors don't support institutions that have needs but those that meet needs! Donors who contribute to the endowment do so because they want to support the university and positively impact students and academic programmes 25, 50 or 100 years from now.

An ancient Chinese proverb says "If you want 1 year of prosperity, grow grain. If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees. If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people."

Compare and contrast the following Top Ten List of colleges and universities in the United States by endowment (2005-2011) and see what we can learn from them, majority being Ivy League Universities.

	Institution	Universities/Colleges Endowment Fund in USA						
		(2005) billion USD	(2006) billion USD	(2007) billion USD	(2008) billion USD	(2009) billion USD	(2010) billion USD	(2011) billion USD
1	Harvard University	\$25.47	\$28.92	\$34.64	\$36.56	\$25.662	\$27.557	\$31.728
2	Stanford University	\$12.20	\$14.09	\$17.17	\$17.200	\$12.619	\$13.851	\$19.700
3	Yale University	\$15.22	\$18.03	\$22.53	\$22.870	\$16.327	\$16.652	\$19.374
4	University of Texas System (system-wide)	\$11.61	\$13.24	\$15.61	\$16.111	\$12.163	\$14.052	\$17.149
5	Princeton University	\$11.21	\$13.05	\$15.79	\$16.349	\$12.614	\$14.391	\$17.110
6	MIT	\$6.71	\$8.37	\$9.98	\$10.069	\$7.982	\$8.317	\$9.713
7	University of Michigan	\$4.93	\$5.65	\$7.09	\$7.572	\$6.001	\$6.564	\$7.835
8	Columbia University	\$5.19	\$5.94	\$7.15	\$7.15	\$5.893	\$6.517	\$7.790
9	Northwestern University	\$4.22	\$5.14	\$6.50	\$7.244	\$5.445	\$5.945	\$7.183
10	Texas A&M University System (system-wide)	\$4.96	\$5.64	\$6.59	\$6.659	\$5.084	\$5.738	\$7.000

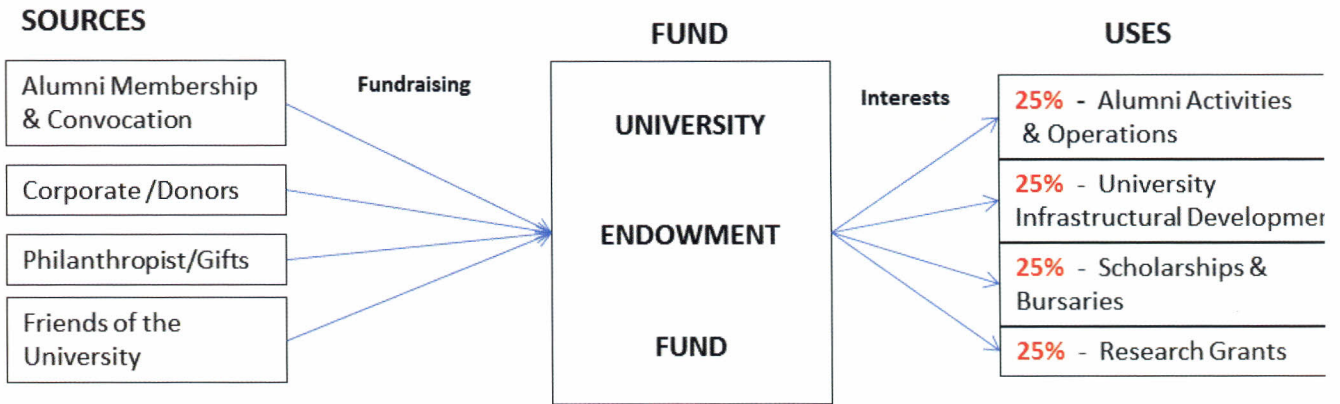
Source: Wikipedia

As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "If America is to remain a first class nation; it cannot afford to have second class citizens" conversely, if the University of Nairobi is to become a world class university, it cannot afford not to have an endowment". The inference is that, there is a direct correlation between the university endowment and world class distinction status because a university is able to meet its needs in terms of research, infrastructure and investment in its students' welfare.

Role of Alumni in Advancement

Because the government funding and students schools fees are not sustainable methods for advancing higher education in Africa, there is need to cultivate a third stream of income given that higher education will be a key driver towards social-economic development in the Emerging Africa. This is where University Advancement comes in. Advancement includes alumni relations, fundraisings, public relations,

communications and marketing. The University of Nairobi Alumni Association (UONAA) hopes to be a key strategic player in the University Advancement by mobilizing resources from the alumni membership and convocation fees, corporate and donors' funds, philanthropists and gifts from friends of the University. However, we must invest in our current students (future alumni) apart from the academic credentials with skills, values and virtues that will enable them to clinch top notch jobs,



align their careers with realities in the job markets, invest in psychometric and assessment centres to help them discover their passion and potential while still in the University, carry out leadership assessments, develop them and provide them with opportunities to deploy their passion, skills and competence in terms of internship and industrial attachments. We want our graduates to be the best and most sought after in the global market.

Conclusion

The following is a simple model of how we intend to raise the funds, invest it in a University Endowment Fund and use its interests to finance the alumni activities and operations, help in the infrastructural development (including the Alumni Centre), scholarships and bursaries and research grants, all aligned to the University’s strategy.

Our mission in the next 1-2 years will be to mobilize Kshs 1 billion as seed capital towards this Fund. If 1000 CEOs, who are alumni/friends of the University of Nairobi investing only Kshs 1 million towards this University

Endowment Fund from their CSR kitty, that will give us a billion shillings as seed capital, is a good investment for any company to make. If we endow this money at 15% annually, that will yield shs 150 million annually in perpetuity, thus allocating Kshs 37.5 million (25%) to spend in alumni and fundraising activities and operations, and similar portions for infrastructural

development, scholarship and bursaries and research grants respectively. The UONAA focus in the next 1-2 years will be to ask from all our stakeholders (alumni, corporates, foundations, donors, philanthropists and friends of the University) and ask them rightly in order to grow this fund that will help us grow our people and ultimately help us achieve our Vision 2030.

- “In any moment of decision, the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing and the worst thing you can do is nothing” president theodore roosevelt.
- “Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve. Thoughts are things! And powerful things at that, when mixed with definiteness of purpose, and burning desire, they can be translated into riches” napoleon hill

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