Development and Alumni Relations Activities

Policy Type: Administrative  
Responsible Office: Office of Development and Alumni Relations  
Initial Policy Approved: 11/26/2018  
Current Revision Approved: New

Policy Statement and Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to acknowledge the shared relationships necessary within the university’s centralized decentralized structure and to provide transparency in governance and clarity of roles and responsibilities regarding university development and alumni activities. The framework outlined herein establishes oversight for assurances and accountability required when undertaking development initiatives.

The Office of Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) supports the mission and future of Virginia Commonwealth University and VCU Health. DAR, as VCU’s centralized fundraising operation (central DAR), supports lifelong relationships with alumni, friends and organizations that result in volunteer engagement and philanthropic support for the university and its health system. All DAR is charged with raising private support to meet institutional needs, as identified by the university. Accordingly, there exists shared accountability with and between central DAR and individual units and an expected mutuality of respect and collaborative spirit. Budgetary support is also pertinent in considering operational and performance evaluation responsibilities.

To this end, central DAR has formed a philanthropic partnership with the decentralized development offices within the schools and units (unit-based DAR) that aligns responsibility for universitywide fundraising and alumni relations endeavors. Essential to this partnership is building trust and transparent communication, emphasizing the establishment of clear expectations aimed at achieving maximum success in fundraising and alumni relations efforts. Central DAR provides leadership and fundraising services to support the university’s comprehensive fundraising and alumni relations programs. Unit-based DAR programs ensure close connections between academic priorities and fundraising and alumni initiatives. Centralized DAR fundraising and alumni relations functions provide economies of scale and ensure coordinated donor access through a prospect management system and standardized policies and procedures, reinforcing integrity across the university and focusing all efforts in a donor-centric way.

Central DAR is responsible for the overall leadership and management of fundraising and alumni relations at VCU, in collaboration with individual schools, centers and units (collectively, “units”) across the university. Any and all unit based DAR activities must be coordinated through central DAR to maintain oversight, best practices and quality assurances. All unit-based and central DAR employees must adhere
to policies and procedures that are developed, maintained and hosted by central DAR and deans and implemented by lead development officers (LDOs).

The senior-most personnel responsible for development and alumni engagement in VCU units serve as LDOs. The LDO directs the unit’s comprehensive fundraising, alumni and prospect engagement programs, with the support and partnership of central DAR. The LDO’s primary emphasis is on major and principal-level gifts. Every LDO at VCU reports jointly to their unit and to the Office of the Vice President for DAR. All development and alumni relations staff in the units either report to or are coordinated by the responsible LDO.

Because VCU-affiliated foundations are separate legal entities from VCU, this policy does not direct or guide those operations nor does it replace the existing memorandums of agreement between VCU and VCU-affiliated foundations. Fundraising and alumni relations activities organized and managed by the foundations are governed by each individual memorandum of understanding.

Noncompliance with this policy could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. VCU supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

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Who Should Know This Policy

All university employees engaged in activities related to development and alumni relations are responsible for knowing this policy and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.
Definitions

Annual Giving
A division of central DAR responsible for solicitation and acquisition of cash gifts under $25,000 that are restricted or unrestricted, usually in response to an annual organized appeal.

Campaign
An organized philanthropic effort with a specific goal over a specific period of time, distinctive from annual fundraising.

Development
The process of organizational or institutional fundraising that includes frontline solicitation, marketing and stewardship as well as the operations to support philanthropic and engagement strategies.

Donor Relations
A division of central DAR responsible for the donor experience through acknowledgement, recognition and stewardship.

Institutionally related foundations (VCU-affiliated)
Separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations dedicated to the support of a college, university system, school district or teaching hospital. Their primary purpose is to raise and/or manage private support for the institution with which they are affiliated.

Online Services
A division of central DAR responsible for the management of online giving, forms, payments, event registrations and e-communications systems and landing pages, including alumni websites and portals.

Contacts

Central DAR and the deans/directors of each school/college/unit collectively interpret this policy. Central DAR, in collaboration with deans/directors of each college/school/unit, is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures through the appropriate governance structures. Please direct policy questions to the vice president for DAR and/or the respective dean/director.

Policy Specifics and Procedures

The vice president for DAR is the university authority on all VCU development practices and reports to the president. It is recognized that, to function optimally, there will be overlap between central DAR and unit responsibilities. Integrative leadership principles of shared governance, mutuality of responsibilities and
skillful management of matrixed leadership roles will guide the management of this dynamic to a point of balanced leadership.

1. Shared Responsibilities

All unit-based and central DAR employees must use the central DAR system of record for tracking any and all fundraising and engagement strategies.

Recruitment
- Establish and maintain professional qualifications, responsibilities and titles for unit-based and central DAR job families.
- All LDO, frontline solicitation and alumni engagement positions are established and filled with a candidate mutually acceptable to the dean/director of the unit and the vice president for DAR. Initial compensation and/or any special recruitment terms should be mutually acceptable to dean/director of the unit and the VP.

Operating plans
- The individual unit leader sets customized goals in partnership with the vice president for DAR, or the VP’s designee, using best practices, industry standards and assessment of portfolio capacity. The unit goals and metrics, adjusted based on additional responsibilities assigned to unit-based DAR employees, are outlined in an annual operating and evaluation plan. These plans are vetted and established by the unit and central DAR.
- Central DAR provides reporting tools to assist in metric tracking toward meeting previously established goals at the unit level and for central DAR employees.

Performance evaluation
- Performance issues can be raised by either the unit or central DAR and are resolved mutually. There should be transparency of performance data for both central DAR and each unit, shared reciprocally.
- Central DAR provides input regarding best practices and adjusts expectations, goals and metrics based on resources allocated by the unit.
- Bonuses and raises for unit-based LDOs and frontline solicitation personnel are mutually evaluated, determined and agreed upon by the unit and central DAR. This provides consistency and equity, aligned with university talent management best practices.

2. Central DAR responsibilities

- Campaign leadership and overall strategic direction of campaign planning and implementation.
- Principal gift-level prospect and regional philanthropy strategies.
- Annual Giving operations support, including direct mail, telemarketing services, crowdfunding and email interactions universitywide.
- Universitywide alumni engagement strategies and program support. Central DAR collaborates with units for school- or program-based alumni engagement.
- Prospect development and research, including prospect management, portfolios and briefings.
● DAR communications and online services that are coordinated and branded to reflect the university’s mission and strategic priorities.
● Corporate and foundation fundraising, including proposal coordination, writing and solicitation strategy.
● Gift planning support, including strategy, coordination and solicitation.
● Universitywide donor relations programs, including recognition, events, reporting and communications.
● Alumni, donor, constituent and prospect record integrity.
● Processing, recording and receipting gift transactions, in accordance with university policy and IRS regulations.
● Skills-based training, professional development and team-effectiveness training for individuals engaged in DAR activities across the university.
● Database management and information systems maintenance.

3. Unit and unit-based DAR employee responsibilities

● Unit fundraisers are the first point of contact and ongoing source for all fundraising and engagement efforts within those units and serve as the subject matter experts for their unit. Such practices should be permissive and encouraging of donor cultivation and engagement.
● Upon agreement of the VP for DAR and dean/director/unit leaders for individual units, central DAR delegates some or all fundraising responsibilities to the individual units, e.g. for alumni relations, annual giving, regional engagement, planned and principal giving, research, etc. In the event of such, units will accept budgetary responsibility for these activities.
● In keeping with the goals of efficiency and effectiveness, units must collaborate and coordinate when delegated with authority and accountability for central DAR responsibilities.
● Unit fundraisers are responsible for coordination with faculty, staff and students on non-fundraising efforts (e.g. research, polls, surveys, events, announcements) that would require access to or information from the database of record.
● Units, in consultation with school/college dean and the vice president for DAR, commit a fiscal year budget to support the approved operating plans, based on best practices scaled to the capacity and commitment of the unit.
● Units must provide office space, equipment and furnishings required to meet the goals of the unit’s DAR operating plan.

Forms

1. Operating plan
   (https://staff.oda.vcu.edu/intranet/media/ADVSRV/dar/files/FY18OpPlanTemplate.pdf)
Related Documents

1. VCU DAR Administrative and Local policies
   Policy categories include: annual giving, central DAR policies, communications, corporate and foundation relations, donor relations, gifts and records management, IT and support services, and online services.
2. DAR Code of Ethics
3. DAR Staff Core Competencies

Revision History

This policy supersedes the following archived policies:

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FAQ

1. My unit has a memorandum of agreement with central DAR that governs how my unit conducts fundraising at VCU. Does this policy supersede/replace that agreement?

   Yes, this policy supersedes all such agreements between schools/colleges, centers and units and central DAR. On the effective date of this policy, all DAR activities by any unit across the university must be conducted in accordance with this policy.

2. What is the DAR system of record?

   The DAR system of record is the central database application owned and maintained by the university to manage constituent information and donor-centered relationships. All data within this application is the property of the university.

3. What if my unit has its own alumni programs?

   Central DAR is responsible for the coordination and delivery of universitywide alumni programs. In some cases, VCU Alumni delegates to and partners with units that have established practices.