MEMORANDUM

To: Alan Merten  
President, George Mason University  

From: Lloyd Griffiths  
Chair, Development Task Force  

Subject: Task Force Final Report  
Date: September 3, 2004  

The Development Task Force has completed its deliberations and prepared a draft final report shown on the following pages. As you will see from the report, the primary focus of the report is to provide suggestions that should be useful in improving communications between the university’s central development office and the development efforts conducted at the unit development level.

Should you so desire, the members of the Task Force are available to discuss these findings with you.
I: Introduction

The Development Task Force was put together at the request of President Merten on May 11, 2004. The President’s charge to the Task Force was:

Charge:
Assess the current state of the development activities of George Mason; describe the evolution of the roles and activities of central development and unit development activities over the past four years; compare our development activities and organization with those of other universities; propose short-term and mid-term structures, personnel requirements, responsibilities and relationships.

The Task Force consisted of the following individuals:

Membership:
Jack Censor, Professor and Chair, Department of History and Art History
Holly Davis, Development Officer, School of Management
Pete Farrell, CTGi, Director of Federal Operations
R. Rebecca Donatelli, CampaignSolutions.Com
Jeff Gorrell, Dean, College of Education and Human Development
Lloyd Griffiths, Dean, School of IT&Engineering, Task Force Chair
Una Murphy, Director of Special Projects and Gift Planning, University Development
Len Pomata, Member, Board of Visitors

In reviewing the development structures at both George Mason and other universities, as detailed in the sections that follow, it became clear to the Task Force that there are a variety of different structures and approaches to implementing university development functions. For those institutions that are relatively new to development and fund raising, there is generally greater weight on centralized development functions. As the process matures, however, the emphasis typically shifts to increasing responsibility and authority at the unit level. In all instances (including here at George Mason), the single defining characteristic of development structures in academia is that of change. There is no one defining model or “magic bullet” that can be used to define the “ideal” approach to university fund raising.

At George Mason, the Central Development Office is actively engaged in assisting individual academic units (schools, colleges, and institutes) with their fundraising processes. The office has helped units by providing manpower, advice, and guidance.

It is also evident that the overall structure that has evolved is not ideal. Individual units strive for increased independence but are hampered by a lack of funded positions. The central office is not always informed regarding unit-level functions and plans. In effect, there is a lack of communication between central and the units that appears to be widening. This is a potentially
harmful situation that, in the view of the Task Force, should be corrected immediately. In the sections that follow, we present a summary of our findings and conclude with a set of recommendations. The primary focus of our recommendations is to improve the overall level of communication between Mason’s Central Development Office and the evolving unit-level development offices.

II: Development Structure at George Mason

Over the past four to five years, the University Development operations have evolved to include a core capacity within central development as well as development officers supported by and located in each of the major academic units, many of whom carry responsibilities encompassing alumni affairs and/or communications. Central development provides expertise to counsel, solicit and provide closure on planned gifts, corporate relations, foundation relations, leadership gifts and endowment services. It also prepares university-level events and communications to cultivate and steward donors.

Prior to the start of the University’s first comprehensive campaign, development functions were mainly centralized, with central development officers responsible for unit-based programs as well as university-wide initiatives. At the start of the Campaign for George Mason University, the central staffing structure was reorganized and increased. In addition, specific units across campus made the investment in their own development staff by hiring directors of development. These units included the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of IT&Engineering, and the School of Law. Throughout the following years, more schools followed suit, with almost every school on campus currently employing at least a director of development (whose responsibilities often include alumni affairs and outreach). Some units, such as IT&E expanded its investment in development to include a staff with wider responsibilities. In the interim, central university “assigned” specific development officers to work on the fundraising programs for the units that did not have the development staff. These central staff members divided their time between school programs and university-wide initiatives. Currently, the only academic units without a director of development are the School of Public Policy, School of Computational Sciences and Krasnow Institute. These units have central development officers assigned to work with the deans on their fundraising projects as well as university priorities. Central development officers currently have responsibility for fundraising for university-wide priorities, as well as specific functions.

Throughout the years, some responsibilities have remained centrally located in George Mason University’s Office of University Development. These include corporate and foundation relations, planned giving, annual giving, donor relations and communications, scholarship administration and development services including donor research and gifts and records processing. The detailed structure at George Mason includes the following elements:

1. Central Development

The mission of the Central Development Office is to maximize private giving to George Mason University’s identified priorities by developing lasting relationships and partnerships with individuals and organizations, and supporting the fundraising efforts of the Mason community, including school and department –based efforts.
Central development’s efforts on behalf of the University include coordination of the following:

- Development Services (including prospect identification and research, gift processing and records maintenance)
- Alumni Affairs (including coordination with units on chapter organization, events, communications and outreach to alumni)
- Development coordination and support (including annual fund, corporate and foundation management, planned giving, grant writing and stewardship activities)
- Donor publications
- Prospect management (coordination of prospects)
- Providing support to understaffed units
- Coordination of message and overall strategic planning

2. School/College Level Development
   a) College of Education and Human Development

The Department level fundraising builds upon the infrastructure supplied by the central development office. The development program for the college is directed by the College Director of Development who is in charge of fundraising activities, alumni outreach, stewardship, communication and outreach and working in coordination with central; development. For example, the Director of Development coordinates with the central development office on such areas as

- Annual fund
- Prospect and donor research
- Database maintenance
- Reporting and gift processing and stewardship

The Director of Development is responsible for college-specific development activities such as

- Major gifts fundraising (including identifying, cultivation and soliciting donors)
- Recruit and staff CEHD Advisory Board
- Alumni Outreach Efforts (including chapter development, department alumni website and alumni newsletter)
- Stewardship (including producing acknowledgment letters from the Dean and Director of Development)
- Communication and Outreach Initiatives (including the website, e-mail, newsletter and personal communication initiatives)

b) History Department

Members of George Mason University’s Department of History take an active role in raising funds for their department and programs within. Individual faculty members propose areas that they wish to pursue. The Department Chair, CAS Dean, and Central Development staff
assist in developing funding for these and other projects and the CAS Director of
Development provides direct support to members of the faculty. Fundraising may be project
based or to raise general funds.

For project-based fundraising, the CAS Dean, Chair of the Department and Center Director will

• Create efforts to locate private support for infrastructure of the Center.
• Jointly develop proposals and contact donors.
• Jointly define naming opportunities.
• Create an advisory board that may assist in pursuing/providing funds
• Work with CAS Director of Development who provides direct support and interfaces
  with Central Development for coordination

For general support from alumni and friends:

• Annual newsletter with assistance from the School-based Development Office.
• Department acknowledges all gifts above $100.
• Department names alumnus of the year—providing an excellent opportunity for fundraising.
• Chair and other faculty with good contacts talk directly with alumni capable of providing significant donations.

(c) School of IT&Engineering

The Office of Development and Alumni Relations in the School of IT& Engineering is a cohesive unit working collectively with other departments within the School, including the Dean’s Office, the Office of Undergraduate Student Services and the Office of Graduate Research. The internally funded development positions within the School consist of three individuals with the following responsibilities

Director of Development

The School’s Director of Development, Jennifer Lamb, is a member of the Dean’s Senior Management Team and serves as a liaison to the Central Development Office. She is the second director of development for the School. She works closely with the Dean on identifying, cultivating, soliciting and stewarding both corporate and individual prospects. Her office also helps coordinate all alumni relations activities, as well as works closely with IT&E Student Services and the Dean’s office to plan and coordinate activities related to internships, student recruitment, scholarships and special events. 2005 marks the 20th anniversary for the School and she will oversee/coordinate the School’s first mini fund-raising campaign. The campaign will require further collaboration with department chairs, the Dean’s office, graduate admissions, student services and administrators across campus.

Development Assistant

The Development Assistant, Jo Boukhira, has been with the School for more than three years. Her job is to expand alumni giving through creating and building long-term relationships. She also solicits corporate sponsorships for the annual IT&E Spring
Awards Banquet. Jo handles a myriad of administrative requirements that vitally support IT&E fund-raising efforts and the Dean’s office.

**Director of Graduate Admissions**

This is a new position for the School. Stephanie Galloway, Director of Graduate Admissions, collaborates with other offices, such as the IT& Engineering Office of Development and Alumni Relations and the University’s Career Services and Alumni Relations to actively recruit alumni and other prospective graduate students. Her efforts are accomplished through attendance at graduate fairs, planning of information sessions and development of on-line recruitment activities. In addition, she works in partnership with local industry to identify hi-tech employees who want to further their professional development through graduate study. As employees in these companies complete their graduate programs, they become active members of the IT&E alumni community, strengthening the relationship between admissions and the development office.

In summary, the School of IT&Engineering takes a “Manage Within” approach to its daily operation/structure. In other words, we look for internal collaborations with departments/people and how we can share opportunities to better promote our School, our programs and our University.

**III: Other Universities**

The task force examined the development structure of four Commonwealth of Virginia universities: Virginia Polytechnic Institution and State University (Virginia Tech), Virginia Commonwealth University, William and Mary University, and Old Dominion University. The task force also obtained information about the University of South Florida and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We obtained the data through a brief survey asked of unit development officers or deans at each institution. All the universities except the University of South Florida are currently engaged in capital campaigns.

While the organization of these institutions varied, in general they were headed by a vice president for institutional advancement whose responsibilities often included public relations and publications as well as development and alumni relations. At each institution the development function was a hybrid model with some functions (including data base management, research, alumni relations, gift processing, planned giving, corporate and foundation relations) handled in a central university office while direct responsibility for fund raising was located at the constituent schools and institutes. Funding for the unit officers varied. At some institutions they were paid by the unit, others by the central university and at some schools the positions were jointly funded. Reporting relationships were most often direct reports to the deans of the schools which the directors of development represented. However, at some institutions, the unit directors of development had joint reporting requirements to both central development and the unit.

We also noted that as the development function at a university matured the decentralized aspect of school based fund raising increased. Schools assumed greater responsibility for alumni relations, special events and fund raising with the requisite increase in staff. Leadership gifts, even at the most mature institutions, remained with the central development office.

**IV: Recommendations**
Our survey of development operations at some other universities indicates that a mixed model of centralization and decentralization remains quite common and apparently effective, even for well-established, large development offices. George Mason has evolved its own version of a mixed model, which incorporates a balance of centralized and decentralized functions. The current model serves the needs of units (colleges, institutes, etc.) that are at different points in their own construction of viable development operations, requiring varying levels or types of support from the central office.

Some development functions are best thought of as being permanently centralized because they serve broadly the needs of a university. Those include the following:

**A Centralized Functional Responsibilities**

1. Identifying and researching potential donors and provide results to units
2. Coordinating the assignment of potential donors to individual units or the central development office
3. Coordinating campaign goal setting for the university and individual units
4. General marketing, development of a consistent theme
5. Broadly-based alumni relations
6. Managing a centralized database and records system
7. Providing expertise in various areas such as annual fund and planned giving.

Because units will have more knowledge about their needs and about those who may be approached concerning those needs, some other functions are best placed at the unit level. Those functions include the following:

**B Unit-Level Functional Responsibilities**

1. Hiring and evaluating individual units’ development staff
2. Identifying potential donors
3. Seeking individual and foundation gifts for the unit itself
4. Developing unit-level alumni relations
5. Developing advisory boards and councils specific to unit needs
6. Conducting special events and/or campaigns to generate unit-level support.
7. Working directly with faculty and others who possess potential to attract support

Some functions that ultimately may be placed at the individual unit level may need to be supported centrally until an individual unit is able to take it on. Recognizing this, we recommend that many of the development operations at George Mason be thought of as being similar to a scaffold erected to construct a building. The scaffolding exists primarily as temporary support that can be adjusted or removed as the building itself takes shape. Thus, the central development office should provide just enough support, where needed, for units to move toward greater independence, where appropriate, in their operations.

In a mixed model of development, the central office and the individual offices must communicate effectively. We recommend that development offices at both levels, individual and central, concentrate their efforts in the coming months on enhancing [improving] the relationship, especially in the area of communication, between the central office and the units.
The following are some recommendations of specifics designed to create new avenues of communication:

C  Central Communication Responsibilities

1. A central website for internal use (units, individual faculty, etc.) that has general help and an FAQ section. Users should be able to post questions on the site.
2. Central should distribute a quarterly newsletter to units that describes internal processes. Not for external distribution, this newsletter would indicate what central and individual units are doing to advance their development activities.
3. A town hall meeting should be held (twice per year) to give interested parties a chance to interact with Central at a collaborative level. This should not just be a "report" from central to the internal community but should be an opportunity for a productive mutual discussion.
4. Teams should be formed consisting of Central, unit, and possibly outside members to address specific issues such as communication.
5. Agendas for Central meetings should be distributed well in advance together with a call for topics at these meetings.
6. Bring in outside professionals to discuss topics that are relevant to both central and unit-level development issues.
7. Central staff personnel might be organized in part to mirror the organization of the university in order to give systematic, timely support to individual units.

D  Local Communication Responsibilities

1. Individual units (schools, colleges, institutes, etc) provide "activity reports" regularly to the central office.
2. Deans schedule a regular meeting with the central office to provide activity discussion and feedback.
3. Individual units regularly invite a central representative to team meetings where development activities are discussed.
4. Individual units should consider ways that they can communicate more effectively within their own operations, applying the principle that communication should be open at all levels.
5. Units should consider how to encourage faculty and staff to respond to the aforementioned sources of information (website, newsletter, town hall meeting, etc.) in positive and productive fashions.