

RUNNING HEAD: Division of University Advancement

Erickson University: Proposal for the Reorganization of the

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*Introduction*

Erickson University is categorized in the Carnegie classification scheme as a private, major research and doctoral institution. The university as a whole strives to provide quality education to both undergraduate and graduate students in the classroom, on the forefront of research, and through service to the community. Erickson University is fully committed to academic freedom and to the transmission, advancement, and preservation of knowledge for its own academic community and for the community at large. This proposal reorganizes the Division of University Advancement and its associated offices in order to better position the Division to support the University's mission and goals.

Reporting directly to the President, the Division of University Advancement (DUA) is made up of the Offices of Alumni Relations (OAR), Development (OD), and Public Affairs (OPA). Serving as the university's portal to alumni, friends and surrounding communities, the DUA is committed to the pursuit of excellence. A particularly compelling mission statement from DePaul University inspired the reworking of the DUA's mission as "the nexus between past, present and future; the criterion against which plans are formulated and major decisions made; the bond uniting faculty, students, staff, alumni and trustees as an academic community" (DePaul University Office of Advancement, 2008, p. 1).

The DUA at Erickson University provides many opportunities for both graduates and friends to participate meaningfully through both philanthropy and volunteerism. These contributions enable access to the institution for future students through scholarships, and provide quality resources through updating and maintaining campus facilities. Members of the

DUA work to maintain positive relationships among faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends of the university.

### *Rationale for the Proposed Organizational Structure*

While reviewing plans for reorganizing the DUA, a number of factors were taken into consideration. Primary among these factors was benchmarking organizational structures at peer institutions. Under the Carnegie classification of “doctoral research universities” are 84 different institutions, 56 of which are controlled privately. Erickson University closely aligns in mission, curriculum, and student body with Hofstra, Duquesne, American, Pepperdine, Seton Hall, and DePaul, and these institutions’ structures were analyzed and drawn from in the decision-making process.

Following a review of peer institutions, and in order to best position the DUA to support the overall institution’s goals, an intentional and conscious decision was made to separate the Office of Alumni Relations from the Office of Development and, in order to illustrate that alumni relations extend beyond just fundraising and annual giving. As Bolman and Deal (2008) point out, “an organization’s structure represents its best effort to align internal workings with outside concerns” (p. 97). Separating these two offices (OAR and OD) provides structural clarity for internal constituents, while adding symbolic weight for Erickson’s graduates. This key decision was made in the organizational structure based on the offices’ similar knowledge or skill, not established by the office’s constituents (Mintzberg, 1979, as cited by Bolman & Deal, 2008).

### *Office of Alumni Relations*

The Office of Alumni Relations (OAR) is one of three offices within the DUA. The mission of the OAR is to provide alumni with the opportunity to remain connected to the university, current students, and other alumni through service and leadership. The

responsibilities and functions of the OAR are many. To maintain the connection to alumni, the OAR provides career services including networking opportunities, career resources, workshops, job postings, and recruiting opportunities. The OAR also provides benefits to alumni including discounts, newsletters, library, computer lab, email, exercise facility and university club access. The OAR also offers opportunities for alumni to gather, such as chapter events and affinity groups. Alumni are also invited to provide internships, job shadowing, and mentoring for current students. Additionally, alumni are offered a number of volunteer opportunities, such as recruitment of future students and community service. The OAR also works with friends of the university, such as people who attended but did not graduate, parents of alumni, and people who feel an attachment to the university, to ensure they can be involved with services from and service to the university.

From Bolman and Deal's (2008) ideas on the symbolic frame, Erickson University, the DUA, and the OAR realize that it is important to both provide benefits and services to alumni and also to provide opportunities for alumni to give back to the institution. In these ways, alumni maintain their connection to the university. Because Erickson is a major private doctoral/research university with a multitude of academic areas, it is important to provide a plethora of diverse opportunities for alumni to stay connected to the university. As the institution is specialized into many distinct departments, it is important for alumni to be able to connect with the populations they most want to.

The OAR is closely connected with the OD in order to assist alumni that wish to stay connected to the university and its students through financial gifts. The OAR is also closely connected to the OPA in order to keep alumni connected to the university through email and

newsletters. The OPA not only sends information to alumni but also distributes information on behalf of alumni, in the form of career and life updates.

### *Office of Development*

The Office of Development (OD) is the second of the offices in the DUA and plays a key role in the ongoing financial health of the University. As such, it is loosely coupled with several other offices both within and outside of the DUA. The OD supports the mission of the DUA through the management of official fundraising activities and the financial management of the University endowment. The OD is responsible for the annual fund, for developing relationships with potential donors and enabling individuals to feel comfortable with giving their money to the University. This is a highly specialized job and reflects Birnbaum's (1988) observation that as institutions become more complex they become more specialized. The success of the OD transforming graduates into givers and university friends into fundraisers determines a lot about the financial health of the institution.

In order to make those conversions the OD relies heavily on the symbolic frame, as described by Bolman and Deal (2008). The symbolic frame deals with an institution's culture, its rituals, and its story. Development officers seek to make a bond with a potential or recurring donor that makes that person feel like a part of something bigger than them self. And in giving to Erickson University, that donor directly affects the institution's ability to offer a world class education. It is in the stories of the institution that the OD finds itself loosely coupled with a variety of other entities on campus, from academic units, to research labs, to the marching band and the athletic director. Development officers must have a strong understanding of the scholarship, services, and activities provided by the institution in order to draw effectively from these resources.

The OD is more tightly coupled with the other offices within the DUA, as both the OAR and the OPA offer a vast pool of potential donors. Working strategically with these two offices is in the best interest of the DUA and can greatly benefit the institution as a whole. The proposed organizational structure positions the OD for success in their endeavors.

### *Office of Public Affairs*

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) is the third office in the DUA and supports the mission of the DUA. By promoting the University and numerous University events, as well as serving as the contact point for the media. The OPA provides many services to the University community such as: media and community relations, marketing, publications, web and digital communications, internal, external and presidential communications.

The OPA is connected with the OD in order to assist with the publications and marketing materials provided to donors. The OPA is connected with the OAR in order to build off of their relationships with individuals within the community to maintain a positive relationship with the surrounding community members. The University's image and community relations are very important to an institution like Erickson University, as a major private doctoral/research university.

The symbolic frame from Bolman and Deal (2008) stresses the importance of managing impressions in order to be a successful organization. The OPA manages the impressions of Erickson University to donors, alumni and friends of the university, as well as the surrounding community. Erickson University also uses specialized language that is consistent with the institution's mission and is managed through the OPA (Bolman & Deal, 2008). "Every group develops words, phrases, and metaphors unique to its circumstances. A specialized language both reflects and shapes a group's culture. Shared language allows team members to communicate

easily, with minimal misunderstanding” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 284). The OPA has two important roles in managing impressions and constructing and maintaining the specialized language used at the university, in order to ensure the impressions and language are consistent with Erickson University’s mission.

### *Conclusion*

Bolman and Deal (2008) state that “Getting things done in an organization involves working through a complex network of individuals and groups. Friends and allies make things a lot easier. Kotter (1982) found that a key difference between more and less successful senior managers was attentiveness to building and cultivating ties with friends and allies” (p.204). This proposed reorganization of the Division of University Advancement builds on this idea by aligning three related offices and cultivating the ties between them for the good of the institution.

Following an intentional and deliberative research process during which other institutional structures were examined, peer institutions’ missions were reviewed, and the best available organizational effectiveness literature was consulted, it was determined that the alignment of the Offices of Alumni Relations, Development, and Public Affairs is the best fit for the Division of University Advancement at Erickson University.

## REFERENCES

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