

Toward Diverse & Inclusive Philanthropy

INTERVIEWS WITH NONPROFIT LEADERS CHAMPIONING DEI PHILANTHROPY



Marts&Lundy

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By Way of Introduction

Thoughts From the Study Authors

“One key observation we learned from this study is that there is an insatiable desire from fundraising professionals to learn.”

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in philanthropy has increasingly been at the forefront of conversations with clients. In response to recent calls for social justice, many nonprofits share a commitment to move towards more inclusive programming, operations and fundraising.

Institutions have been taking a critical look at their practices and making intentional efforts to better engage with constituents who do not fit a “traditional” donor profile of white, straight and born during the Civic or Boomer generations. Some are meaningfully engaging People of Color, Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+ and other communities in support of their missions. This mosaic of supporters will more accurately reflect our communities’ diversity and lived experiences.

At this pivotal time in our sector, our North American consultants have sought out opportunities to consolidate learnings across the United States and Canada and keep pushing for change – all while acknowledging the further work that needs to be done. Over the spring of 2021, we connected with 12 organizations that are leading in their efforts to engage and include non-traditional donors. Listening to and learning from these organizations was a humbling and inspiring experience. We hope our findings help move your endeavors forward. We will be using these lessons to better inform our work and engagement in our personal and professional lives.

Key Takeaways

Valuable Lessons Learned From our Discussions

At the outset of this study, we sought tactical examples of how organizations were engaging with diverse donors so that we could share success stories across the industry. What we found, however, was that successful programming centers on an ecosystem that encourages challenging but important conversations.

“We’re working to make connections with students in fundraising programs and with staff at these programs who can help identify Indigenous students. Indspire would create internship opportunities for them. We need more Indigenous fundraisers.”

Cindy Ball
Indspire

- 1. The commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) begins at the top.** Across participating organizations, staff and volunteer leaders are prioritizing DEI in their strategic plans. Some have formed board committees dedicated to advancing DEI. Several have created staff leadership positions, set accountability targets and developed educational opportunities for their teams. Interviewees agreed that advancing DEI is about more than “checking a box” and requires a proactive commitment from leadership.
- 2. DEI presents complex challenges that require a thoughtful investment of time and resources to gain the understanding needed for authentic engagement.** Building an effective program requires not only commitment from leadership, but also the investment of time and funding into research and community engagement. During our interviews, we learned how organizations have been on a journey to understand barriers or challenges faced by the people they serve – and this has evolved their programming. This has also led to more meaningful donor engagement in support of the DEI agenda.
- 3. Donors want to see themselves reflected in the organization – including staff and volunteers.** Organizations are adding a DEI lens to their hiring practices to better represent their communities. Organizations are rethinking how they recruit, assess and support staff to attract and retain development professionals from non-traditional backgrounds. One of the ways they are doing this is by hiring for mission alignment and providing development-specific

training. Many are committed to identifying and growing a diverse talent pool internally. In some cases, Development staff have worked creatively with Human Resources to ensure diverse candidates do not get lost in the automated hiring processes of the institution.

Some organizations are hiring cultural advisors and engaging volunteers from particular affinity groups to reach diverse audiences. Many boards are fostering authentic engagement with diverse leadership volunteers. Active listening and openness to change helps organizations follow the direction of these experts. This also demonstrates a commitment to DEI to donors.

4. Every person and every culture is unique. Giving is deeply personal and donors require custom engagement strategies. Donors have reminded organizations not to make assumptions based on what the organization deems to be their culture or who even fits into that distinct culture. Donors of diverse cultures have their own giving priorities, which the organization may not classify as a DEI initiative. Furthermore, it is important to cultivate and engage donors on an individual basis to ensure understanding of the philanthropic priorities of each donor, avoiding the assumption that based on a donor's racial, cultural or religious background, donors will choose to direct their philanthropy towards DEI initiatives.

5. Traditional engagement may not work with diverse donors. The pipeline of visibly diverse philanthropists is growing but many have had to overcome societal barriers, so wealth is often first or second generation. Some interviewees found that connecting these prospective donors to the impact as vividly and viscerally as possible helps inspire them to make a difference – more so than showcasing the institution's stature or achievements. For some, traditional tactics like presenting formal proposals were less effective than hearing from students or program recipients or seeing first-hand how a gift may inspire others in their community.

“I believe that giving is inherently diverse. We need to start by doing a better job of learning and accepting all of the ways generosity is expressed.”

**Krishan Mehta
Ryerson University**



“We didn’t want to start talking about giving right away, but rather our relationship and how far we have come and what we can still do together.”

Tom Morse
North House Folk School

“Advancement at universities has been so effective, efficient and professionalized that we cannot afford to just tear down and rebuild what we are doing. There has to be a concerted effort to augment institutions’ advancement strategies to incorporate DEI.”

Erik Thurman
University of St. Thomas

- 6. Trusted relationships come before solicitations.** For a solicitation to be successful, significant engagement and reciprocal relationship-building need to occur. Donors and communities want to feel appreciated and understood by an organization before they invest, and the donations may not come in traditional five-year pledges. Leaders reminded us that there needs to be space for conversations that may not result in a gift. Building effective engagement takes patience, dedication, strategy and authenticity.
- 7. Stakeholders want to see how the organization is actively moving the DEI needle – and how they can participate.** Philanthropy can be a demonstration of activism and individuals are looking for channels to make a difference. Organizations are adapting their case for support and ensuring they have clear, meaningful DEI-related priorities articulated. Supporting DEI is a priority for traditional and new philanthropists. Organizations are making it clear, easy and accessible to support these priorities.
- 8. Mistakes are part of the journey, and everyone needs to be open to learning, pivoting and adapting.** Despite the best of intentions, the impact may not always reflect the desired outcome. People will make errors, so it is essential to approach this work with humility. Some organizations have established a safe and supportive space for staff to learn and engage in dialogue.
- 9. DEI is a long-term commitment and, as a sector, we need to hold each other accountable.** Organizations need to commit to tangible goals that are sufficiently resourced and measured through KPIs or other qualitative and quantitative metrics. Donors want to invest in meaningful change and organizations need to demonstrate their commitment to DEI, beginning with their own operations. The commitment to DEI cannot be a flash-in-the-pan while it has caught the public’s attention. This work must endure to create long-term systemic impact.

Case Studies

Forging Change Through Creative Solutions





Chicago State Foundation

Chicago, Illinois

Over the past two years, Chicago State University (CSU), a Predominantly Black Institution, has relaunched their Foundation. With equity as their guiding principle and the strategic plan as the springboard, they are examining everything through the DEI lens – from events to investment strategy to communication with alumni and students. For instance, when it comes to hiring, the Foundation goes beyond posting on standard job sites, intentionally reaching out through new networks and expanding their idea of relatable experience and qualifications. Management reviews every single application so that great potential doesn't slip through the cracks of standard HR processes.

Since the relaunch of the Foundation, CSU's donor base has been growing and includes donors from many backgrounds. Successful engagement of donors of color has often been as a result of conversations that demonstrate the impact of a gift as precisely and vividly as possible. Fundraisers have learned that it's especially important to paint a humanized, emotional picture of what will be possible for students – simply presenting a prospectus often misses the mark if it's not brought to life.

“For donors who look like me, it's more emotional when we see ourselves in the institution. Showing the direct impact on real students is often more effective than citing facts about the excellence of the institution.”

Darrious Hilmon
Chicago State Foundation



Florida International University (FIU) Foundation

Miami, Florida

Following nationwide outcries against systemic racism in the summer of 2020, FIU amplified its longstanding commitment to dismantling social injustice at the University, in the community and in areas within its spheres of influence, and formed the University's Division of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Knowing philanthropy can bolster the important work taking place at the institutional level inspired the FIU Foundation to reimagine its intentionality and implement solutions. In 2021, the FIU Foundation created the Office of Inclusive Philanthropy (FOIP).

Through internal and external collaborations, the Office identifies biases within historical philanthropy to educate advancement officers; critically examines relationships with its stakeholders; strategizes how to integrate People of Color and other communities into philanthropy; and plays a key role in developing the Foundation's strategic plan and case for support.

The Office is also instrumental in identifying DEI priorities where donor investment can make an impact, such as programming to reverse the trend of declining Black male enrollment. Representative development leads



are championing engagement and fundraising around the initiatives, including projects for Black males, women, Hispanic, Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ communities. Over \$10 million has been raised for DEI initiatives and FIU recently received a \$40 million unrestricted gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott.

“The pandemic and increased racial violence really showed that systems of supremacy and lack of human equity could no longer remain the status quo. This was the time that we really needed to recalibrate and be intentionally inclusive in our philanthropic work as we support the institution, our students, alumni, community and our stakeholders.”

Maia McGill
Florida International University

To learn more about FIU Foundation's Office of Inclusive Philanthropy: news.fiu.edu/2021/fiu-foundation-brings-together-diverse-voices-to-guide-new-office-of-inclusive-philanthropy

Indspire

Toronto, Ontario

As a charity committed to educating, connecting and investing in Indigenous people in Canada, Indspire is Indigenous-led, including the majority of the board and staff. It has a strong internal mandate about ongoing professional development around Indigenous cultural competencies. As part of annual goal-setting, all employees must make a commitment to this through a combination of self-directed learning and opportunities offered internally.

When it comes to its donors, 4% have self-identified as Indigenous, and that number is growing. The organization has a large pool of alumni – past bursary recipients and program participants – who are starting to give back. Indspire is developing a strategy focused on respectful relationship-building and information-sharing with alumni before asking for donations. They ran focus groups with Indigenous people to get feedback on what they're doing, and they've fielded a survey to gain a better understanding of how many donors are Indigenous and their preferences.

Working with Indigenous donors, Indspire has found that having the reach and flexibility to create scholarships or designate funds to students in a specific geography or field of study have allowed them to offer the types of opportunities that truly match the motivation of these donors.

“You have to listen and be respectful, do your research and truly understand the motivation so that you can provide the right giving opportunity. You have to be flexible.”

Cindy Ball, Indspire



North House Folk School

Grand Marais, Minnesota

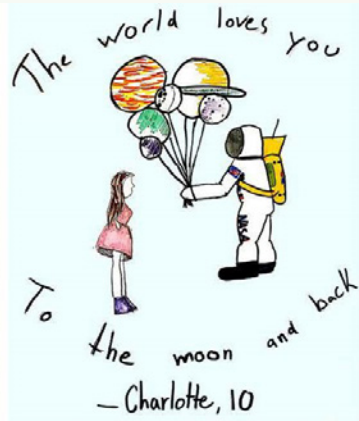
When a unique donor opportunity arose with a local Indigenous Group in Grant Portage, North House Folk School knew they had to think more broadly about their mission. Instead of using a typical proposal or donor strategy, the donor led the discussion. Rather than speaking about North House's immediate needs, the Development staff focused on building and strengthening the relationship that has now flourished with this Indigenous Group in Grand Portage. With the support of the donor, North Folk was able to expand their Indigenous craft program, through more instructors and higher enrollment of students. With DEI, we have an opportunity and obligation to listen to donor's interests and by listening to donors who may not have had their voices heard, this may help influence institutional priorities.

Seeing this success, other donors have been motivated to give to North House. What began with one donor supporting an increase in Indigenous craft programming at the school has led to the most donations and interest the school has ever seen.

“We have recognized that if we don't think about progress on DEI initiatives, we are going to lose out on donors and grant funding, and it is going to be even harder. As we focus on diversity in all aspects of our programs, and those pieces get built, the donor community as a whole will broaden.”

Tom Morse, North House Folk School





North York General Hospital Foundation

North York, Ontario

North York General Hospital Foundation decided to be very specific in its approach to diversifying donor engagement. By looking closely at the makeup of the community, including patient demographics, they identified that the Chinese community was dominant in the region. To build connections with one influential group in the community, the Foundation hired a Chinese Community Engagement Officer who knows the community and speaks the language. The Foundation found that diversity among current fundraising professionals was insufficient, so they prioritized hiring someone with deep community understanding and connections.

In the last year, they have focused on building the NYGHF brand in the community, specifically around Chinese events and holidays such as Lunar New Year. They have also tailored a direct mailing request with a Chinese donor story translated in traditional Chinese; launched a website in both traditional and simplified Chinese with donation pages. In August 2021, NYGHF piloted a Radiothon, which was a huge success, raising \$210,000 and building more brand awareness of the hospital in the community. This plan will be a model as the Foundation looks to other communities.

“Some of our Chinese supporters have been very upfront with us that they want to work with a Chinese staff member at the Foundation. Some donors are also quick to remind us that we should not pigeonhole them by working with a Chinese Community Engagement Officer, so we are mindful of balancing our approach.”

Rea Ganesh
North York General
Hospital Foundation

Ryerson University

Toronto, Ontario

Ryerson’s Development office puts DEI at the heart of their operations. This means publicly grappling with the history of its namesake and the current commitment to value equity and inclusion. The University had been named after Egerton Ryerson, who is considered one of the primary architects of Canada’s residential school system but in recent years staff and students have been calling for the removal of his statue and for the University to change its name.

Ryerson’s commitment to DEI is evident through their fundraising efforts, governance practices, policy development and engagement with students. In early 2021, they launched an online series of panel discussions called “Generous Futures” that uncover stories of generosity from diverse perspectives. Because charities often unintentionally give very little credence to the diverse ways people express generosity, this program includes discussions about Indigenous ways of giving and decolonization; Anti-Black racism and the role of philanthropy in confronting it; philanthropic support from women of color; and LGBTQ2S+ communities’ participation in the charitable sector.



“Generous Futures” is unique in the way it engages philanthropists in the conversation. It gave a platform and a voice to people living through various challenges in their neighborhoods and institutions. It illustrated some of the fundamental challenges that diverse communities encounter within charities and highlighted the need for charities to reexamine their mission to achieve true equity and inclusion.

To learn more about Ryerson’s “Generous Futures”:
www.ryerson.ca/alumni/lifelong-learning/generous-futures

“As a sector, we need to create and commit to developing a pipeline of diverse professionals.”

Krishan Mehta
Ryerson University



Seneca College

Toronto, Ontario

Diversity has always been a part of the long-term plan at Seneca. But since COVID hit, they have been thinking more intentionally about how they can do more to advance their EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion) strategy. In 2021, Seneca established The Jane Fund, an endowed \$12 million fund to support EDI initiatives. The name The Jane Fund reflects Seneca's historic association with the communities along North York's Jane Street, including the longstanding Yorkgate Campus serving the Jane-Finch community. This fund will expand student financial aid, increase diverse programming, create additional student support groups, and establish more culturally appropriate positions for student counsellors so that students will see themselves reflected in the College's staff team.

An equitable Seneca is one of the biggest goals for the College. This includes maintaining accessibility and looking at systemic racism at the institution and what they can do to address these issues. When setting up the Jane Fund, Seneca established an advisory group that could best identify the areas of financial need and guide the investment strategy. External consultation, community outreach and research about lived experience and cultural barriers have helped ensure The Jane Fund will have the most substantial impact.

“[EDI] is really important to us, and we are very passionate to make this happen with the investment we have now made.”

Dean Hughes
Seneca College

UC Davis

Davis, California

Honoring the deeply personal nature of giving, UC Davis is evolving their approach to build relationships with diverse audiences. UC Davis cultivates and engages its donors on an individual basis to ensure they understand the philanthropic priorities of each donor, avoiding the assumption that based on a donor's racial, cultural or religious background, donors will choose to direct their philanthropy towards DEI initiatives.

There has been a modest increase in philanthropic support from traditional philanthropists to support diversity but not as much as might have been expected. UC Davis occasionally receives an influx of niche giving – for example, there was a lot of support for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students when the last federal administration was challenging the program.



“Donors want to see themselves represented in the staff who are coming to speak to them.”

Shaun Keister
UC Davis



UC Riverside

Riverside, California

UC Riverside has a diverse student and alumni body, and the institution has had success building a strong culture of belonging which contributes to high graduation rates across identity groups. There are various campus offices such as the Women’s Resource Center, LGBT Resource Center, Middle Eastern Student Center and many more that foster inclusivity and affinity to campus.

Through rich, layered conversations with donors who graduated in the early days of UCR, advancement staff found that alumni see that UCR represents the physical manifestation of the values they hold dear: that everyone deserves a shot at success and to live the American dream. Donors recognize and want to help people that are held back by systemic barriers. Often, donors of color want to help current students build a stronger connection and sense of belonging on campus than they had during their days as a student.

UCR’s advancement team also reflects diversity seen across the U.S. Recruiting from a national pool, UCR hires staff focusing on mission alignment and providing role-specific training for skills and abilities.

UC Riverside is also dedicated to diversifying the Alumni Association and Foundation boards as part of their commitment to uphold the values of the institution. Despite the challenge of balancing the requirement for board members to make major gifts with the relatively young alumni body, leadership members know that if the boards do not reflect the growing diversity, they will lose credibility with prospective donors.

To learn more about how UCR has built a more inclusive and diverse internal culture: www.philanthropy.com/article/diversity-is-not-enough-in-fundraising-offices



“We recruit staff from a national pool, so we want to be reflective of that demographic. I believe in hiring people for mission alignment – if they believe in the mission, we can train them to do the job well.”

**Peter Hayashida
UC Riverside**



“What is happening is Institutions aren’t fully committing all the way up to the top on DEI. They are not augmenting their current plans and they are not affectively resourcing that plan. Until we all start to do that, all these one-off things are just shallow commitments by the institution.”

Erik Thurman
University of St. Thomas

University of St. Thomas

Saint Paul, Minnesota

Over the last few years, the University of St. Thomas has made significant commitments as an institution to DEI. In 2020, one major milestone was creating the position of Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence, who reports directly to the President and sits on the leadership team. This person works with all of the departments across the University to develop unit-specific DEI strategic plans that will roll into a university-wide DEI plan with metrics for the institution.

One of Advancement’s key strategies is to develop goals, with clear KPIs and metrics around DEI. This was a priority when planning for their newest campaign that launched in July 2021. Not only do they seek to build an inclusive team that is welcoming to all and to diversify the University Advancement team, but they are also in the process of growing staffing for the campaign, with the focus on seeking diversity within these roles.

Additionally, University of St. Thomas set a campaign goal to diversify the donor base. Another campaign goal is to develop and understand the motivators and cultural drivers of diverse philanthropy. To achieve these goals, they are educating their team on the different cultures of philanthropy and will build cultural competencies from there.

To learn more about University of St. Thomas’ commitment to DEI: www.stthomas.edu/about/diversity-equity-inclusion/



VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation

Vancouver, British Columbia

The VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation Asian strategy initiative continues to grow and thrive because it creates a tailored approach for every individual prospect. They began the program by focusing on the Chinese population in Vancouver but have since expanded the program to connect with populations from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China and South Korea. Being able to connect with each culture in a specific way, as well as donors being able to identify and connect with staff at VGH, has been the key to building and maintaining these long-term relationships.

VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation has recently expanded their strategy to reach the next generation of donors through their Youth Leadership Program. This program was established to introduce the Foundation to the parents and their 2nd generation who would be the future leaders.

To learn more about VGH & UBC's Youth Leadership Program: vghfoundation.ca/vgh-youth-leadership-program/



“It is crucial for donors to relate to the person [from the foundation]. Language is essential.”

Kitty Cheung
VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation





William Osler Health Foundation

Brampton, Ontario

There is a long-term, flexible strategy at the William Osler Health System Foundation to incorporate diverse giving. The goals go beyond raising funds, focusing on mutually beneficial relationship-building as the heart of an engagement strategy. Recognizing that this requires cultural competence, they have built a diverse team of staff and volunteers who have a deep understanding of the cultures and languages in the community, with skills in various dialects. This approach helps establish trust and credibility that is meaningful and lasting. Even if the work does not result in a gift, it raises awareness, deepens connections, and prompts learning.

The Indo-Canadian Friends of Osler, working with Foundation staff, found a project that aligned with the donors' framework for wellness and a way to honor a well-known yogi. Over several years, the community raised \$1 million for the Peel Memorial Integrated Health and Wellness Centre. They did this primarily through events and activities that would not be considered traditional fundraising methods. To honor this gift a plaque to recognize the religious community was mounted in the hospital atrium in 2017 – it tells the story of why this community came together to support their hospital. Since then, other communities have been inspired and some have raised more than \$1 million.

“Building an inclusive organization is a commitment of culture, rather than a tactic or a strategy. This cannot be done off the side of someone’s desk. It’s also not something that can be changed by hiring a person and making it one person’s responsibility.”

Ken Mayhew
William Osler
Health Foundation



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