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Liberty University

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Development unveils Vision 2020

December 01, 2008 | Ron Brown

Liberty University is launching a comprehensive fundraising campaign to help the school meet its financial needs over the next decade.

The “Vision 2020” project identifies about \$407 million in potential naming opportunities for existing and planned projects on LU’s Lynchburg, Va., campus.

Most of the school’s dormitories and many of its athletic facilities lack donor names.

“We need people to support those and come alongside us,” said Roy Jones, LU’s Director of Development. “It is really exciting. There are real opportunities. It gives us a chance to expand the university’s donor base.”

The initiative will attempt to involve administrators, students, alumni and other friends of Liberty, and fundraising will touch all of the university’s 11 schools.

“We want to put champions for Christ in each of those areas,” Jones said. “We are expanding the new opportunities for people to become involved at Liberty.”

The primary focus of the campaign is the building of university facilities and endowment.

“We went to every dean in the university system,” Jones said. “We asked them one key question: ‘What is your department going to look like in the year 2020?’”

The deans met with faculty and staff to evaluate their school’s needs over the next 12 years.

“They had discussions that laid out the resources they needed to reach their enrollment projections by 2020,” Jones said. “It’s a gargantuan task for us. The great thing about what we are doing is that we are changing the mindset of people.”

In other words, the development department is getting members of the campus community directly involved in fundraising efforts that will dictate the school’s future.

Liberty was founded by the late Dr. Jerry Falwell and Dr. Elmer Towns in 1971. The school now has 11,330 residential students and about 24,500 students enrolled in its online instruction programs. Falwell set a goal for Liberty to have 25,000 residential students one day.

“Prior to now, Dr. Falwell did all the fundraising,” Jones said. “The deans didn’t have to be involved in that process and were actually not encouraged to get involved in fundraising. Now, we are doing exactly the opposite. It’s time for every dean and every alum to step up and do their part.”

Jones said fundraising techniques are likely to change.

“Years ago, the point of spear was direct mail,” Jones said. “We will continue to do direct mail, but the tone has changed dramatically.”

Before, the ministry made a lot of crisis-like appeals when operational money was in short supply.

“We are now reaching out to donors with critical needs and long-term objectives,” Jones said.

The shift to anticipatory financial planning will allow university fundraisers to focus on major gifts development, fundraising events and working with donors from corporations and foundations.

“It becomes a much bigger task that uses a broader array of techniques that we haven’t used in the past,” Jones said. “Before, you had a donor base that was primarily friends of Liberty. They were people who saw the ministry on television and were supporters of Dr. Falwell.”

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