

Mission Driven Fundraising

July 2009

The goal of this project was to provide for the ongoing financial health of Calvin Christian School by directly relating financial needs to the mission and strategic objectives of the school. This goal was accomplished through the following strategies: use of new vocabulary to describe areas of financial need that connected with the school's mission and strategic objectives, compilation of needs and fundraisers into clear categories with specific monetary goals, and increased communication.

The results of the project were mixed with some successes and some significant challenges. The successes included: all of Calvin's fundraising goals for the 2008-2009 school year were successfully compiled, summarized, and communicated in an easily recognizable, one page format; The board, administration, and development staff were unified on a common set of goals for fundraising; the overall fundraising goals were concisely and accurately communicated to faculty and staff; nearly 100% of board, faculty, and staff participated in leadership giving; and overall fundraising goals were clearly communicated to constituents resulting in increased levels of giving. Some of the challenges included: the project was undertaken in September 2008, near the beginning of the current economic downturn; the focus remained on *Present Needs* for most of the year, leaving the *Campus Needs* largely unmet; although solicited, large gifts from foundations remained elusive; and a consumer mindset, of paying tuition and giving very little beyond tuition, remained strong among some Calvin parents.

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Calvin Christian School has provided Christian education from a reformed perspective in South Suburban Chicagoland for nearly 100 years. The school was founded by first and second-generation Dutch immigrants, but has expanded to include a student population that is now over sixty percent African-American. Calvin currently has 230 students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade.

A greater diversity of constituents at Calvin has brought incredible blessings, but has also resulted in a diminished understanding of the way the school is funded. The concept of Mission Driven Fundraising (as presented at the *Van Lunen Center for Executive Management in Christian Schools* by Dr. David Hahn of Long Island Lutheran School) was seen as a viable way to integrate and communicate the overall fundraising goals. The financial sustainability of Calvin Christian School is dependent on a variety of fundraising activities, but these activities were formerly undertaken independently with very little time spent communicating the overall school needs. *The goal of this project was to provide for the ongoing financial health of Calvin Christian School by directly relating financial needs to the mission and strategic objectives of the school.* This was accomplished through the following strategies:

- Use of new vocabulary to describe areas of financial need that connected with the school's mission and strategic objectives.
- Compilation of needs into clear categories with specific monetary goals.
- The connection of fundraisers to these specific categories to help parents and broader constituents to better understand the specific area(s) that benefit from their donations.
- Communication, communication, communication.

The concept was to create a *Summary of Ministry Needs* that would, in an easily recognizable, one page format, give parents and other potential donors a clear picture of operational, capital, and endowment needs for the current school year (Please see Appendix One. This specific summary represents the progress of the campaign in February 2009, approximately half way through the fiscal year.). In order to create the *Summary of Ministry Needs*, the following steps were taken:

- A board retreat was conducted in September 2008 to discuss the concept of mission driven fundraising and to determine appropriate fundraising goals for the current fiscal year.
- The vocabulary of *Present Needs, Campus Needs, and Future Needs* was adopted at this retreat. These three areas were designed to represent the operational, capital, and endowment needs of the school. The overall concept of a *Summary of Ministry Needs* was also adopted to communicate the big picture to donors in a way that recognized the ministry focus of Calvin Christian School.
- The concept of leadership giving was embraced and promoted. Board, faculty, and staff were all challenged to give generously.
- The *Summary of Ministry Needs* was published and utilized throughout the school year in school newsletters and the annual report.

Interestingly, the original idea for this project was to use the 2008 - 2009 school year to plan for the implementation of a *Summary of Ministry Needs* for the 2009 - 2010 school year. Yet, when Calvin's development staff heard about the idea in late July 2008, they were excited to implement it immediately for the 2008 - 2009 school year. In light of the ever-pressing need to raise funds, the Board of Directors was willing to

accommodate this idea by approving this plan after the fiscal year was already underway.

There was much enthusiasm at the beginning of the project and high hopes that donors would respond positively to the increased level of communication. In the end, the project resulted in a mix of successes and challenges. The successes were in the following areas:

- All of Calvin's fundraising goals for the 2008 - 2009 school year were successfully compiled, summarized, and communicated in an easily recognizable, one page format.
- The Board, Administration, and Development Staff were unified on a common set of goals for fundraising.
- Overall fundraising goals were concisely and accurately communicated to faculty and staff.
- Nearly 100% of Board, Faculty, and Staff participated in leadership giving.
- Overall fundraising goals were clearly communicated to constituents resulting in increased levels of giving.

The project also met some significant challenges. Some of these challenges were unique to this particular fiscal year, but other challenges will need to be addressed in order for Calvin Christian School to raise the funds that are needed to maintain the health of the school. The challenges that were faced include the following:

- The project was undertaken in September 2008, near the beginning of the current economic downturn.

- The focus remained on *Present Needs* for most of the year, leaving the *Campus Needs* largely unmet.
- Although significant time was invested in soliciting gifts from private foundations, large gifts from foundations remained entirely elusive.
- A consumer mindset, of paying tuition and giving very little beyond tuition, remained strong among some Calvin parents.

In conclusion, the process of thinking more deeply about overall fundraising goals was a blessing to Calvin Christian School. Creating consensus between board, administration, and development staff on the overall fundraising goals put all of those responsible for fundraising on the same page. The *Summary of Ministry Needs* helped parents of current students to understand the relatively large amount of funds that need to be raised outside of tuition. For donors in the broader constituency, the *Summary of Ministry Needs* helped donors to see how their donations fit into the big picture of annual fundraising needs. This project has led to a variety of brainstorms on how to improve Calvin's funding model for long-term sustainability. One brainstorm is to spend less time chasing private foundations and spend more time connecting with alumni. Since the school has been in existence for almost 100 years, the pool of alumni provides a large group of potential donors. Another brainstorm is to have more mandatory fundraisers to impress upon current parents the importance of giving above and beyond their tuition. For example, there could be a minimum expectation for annual fundraisers like the walk-a-thon requiring that each student raise a certain amount. Calvin Christian School will utilize a *Summary of Ministry Needs* in the years ahead and will continue to reap the benefits of the results of this project.

CALVIN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Increasing Faith and Knowledge, One Child at a Time

A campaign to support the present and future ministry of Calvin Christian School

Calvin Christian School exists to provide an excellent Christ-centered education to children of believers. In support of parents and in cooperation with Christian churches, Calvin will provide this education from a Reformed perspective. Meaning, we help such children see God’s creation through the perspective of God’s Word, understand God’s redemptive and providential work throughout history, and live lives of Christian service that exemplify love for God and for their neighbors.

Summary of Ministry Needs 2008-2009

Our Present

Tuition Assistance.....	\$20,000
Commitment to Academic Excellence.....	\$262,000
Increased Role of Technology.....	\$18,000
Recruitment and Development.....	\$70,000 ^(pledged)

Total 08-09 Present Needs: \$370,000

Pledged or Received to date: \$225,049

Remaining: \$144,951

Our Campus

General Facilities Improvements.....	\$15,000
Facilities Renewal (Capital Campaign)	
• Replace roof over main building and boiler.....	\$110,000
• Replace ceiling and hallway tiles.....	\$10,600
• Update main office.....	\$3,400
• Gymnasium air conditioning and heat.....	\$35,000

Total 08-09 Campus Needs: \$174,000

Pledged or Received to date: \$1,150

Remaining: \$172,850

Our Future

Foundation.....	\$30,000
• Investments in sustaining the mission of CCS	

Total 08-09 Future Needs: \$30,000

Pledged or Received to date: \$19,184

Remaining: \$10,816