Welcome to the presentation notes for Growing a Successful Fundraiser. At this session, we explored every aspect of fundraising from the mission of your organization to the relationship you develop with outside vendors.

Unfortunately, there is no perfect list of homerun fundraising ideas that you can pick from a list and start pulling in easy cash. If money trees were real, they would need quite a bit of work to produce. This is the metaphor that we will use throughout this presentation. The idea of growing a successful fundraiser starts long before you set up a table and ask for donations.

Hopefully you can walk away with some things to think about that will separate your organization from the “usual fundraisers” and start building a nice nest egg in your fundraising account.
We must start with the topic of vendors. Many times, when working with vendors, the most we interact with them is finding out how much something costs. When we do this, we are missing out on a great opportunity to create a great working relationship with them.

Vendors are concerned with two things. The first is quite obvious. Every for-profit company is looking for just that…profit. In order to create a relationship and work with your organization outside of their typical role as a vendor, they must either see immediate profits, or the prospect of increased future profits. It is your job to help them get there.

The other thing vendors are concerned with when working with your group is exposure. According to the policies and procedures of the university, outside vendors are not allowed to solicit on campus without approval. Aside from the vendor tables or Student Center Patio, there are almost no opportunities for vendors to expose themselves to the university community of over 5,000 people. It is largely an untapped market for them.

As an organization that can partner with vendors, you hold a great deal of power in this area. If you are doing the selling yourself, then you have an even greater power. To give an outside vendor access to the university community at no on campus labor cost to them is a huge bargaining chip. However, only through creative negotiation can you use this to your advantage.
Every vendor is different and you will have to tailor your negotiation strategy accordingly. However, having a good understanding of the bargaining power you possess is a very good step in the right direction.
In keeping the spirit of the money tree analogy alive, the first step to a successful fundraiser is figuring out exactly what to grow. In the plant world, you have many options. You can grow food for sustinence, flowers for looks, or trees for privacy. The possibilities are endless.

Much like the plant world, you must first figure out what goal you are trying to accomplish. A bake sale won’t get you to Florida.
Remember Your Roots

The lifeblood of any plant is its roots. They must be cared for and nourished and they are just as important, if not more important than the rest of the plant.

You too must take a long hard look at your roots. What is the mission of your organization? What are your guiding principles? As a group, what are your core values? These are all questions you must ask yourself before deciding what type of fundraiser will be successful for you. An impersonal fundraiser will not raise as much funds as one that is close to the heart of your organization.
We can look to non-profits for a lesson in telling a story. Many charities know how to pull at your heart strings. They break down the impact your donation will have. Whether its $.10 a day or a one time donation of a few dollars, you feel empowered when handing over your hard earned money to them and you know they appreciate it.

It is this emotional connection that will help you to raise funds. Why are you collecting money? What will this money go towards? An organization that can tell its story will have more success raising funds.
If you know what this picture is, then chances are you have been roped into the novelty of something different. Every time the corpse flower blooms in the greenhouse of the Science Building, people flock over to see it. These are people that would otherwise never make their way over to the greenhouse.

The novelty of something different is a powerful tool. When you do something different, you can always expect different results.
Pictured above is an aloe vera plant. It can be used for a variety of different things from food to medicine.

Much like an aloe vera plant, you must give your potential customers options when donating to your cause. Krispy Kreme sales are the best example of this. Some that want to give a sizeable donation can buy a box, those that only have a few dollars on them can buy a single doughnut. This is a great example of giving people options for the level of commitment they would like to make to your organization.
Much like deciding where a tree should be planted in your front yard, it is important for you to be strategic about picking your spot.

The Eastern Finance Association has come a long way with fundraising. They target the students and only students when holding fundraisers. Last year they held a fundraiser with gag gifts for April Fools day. This year it was a Halloween costume sale the end of October. Both fundraisers were a prime example of them knowing what students want and when they want it.
Again we can turn to our friends in the non-profit world to provide great examples of advertising. A lasting image that gets the message they want conveyed across. Recent studies right here at Eastern have shown that 80% of the time, students are finding out about events by reading flyers.

It is always great to think outside of the box and do something different. However, it is helpful to do what everyone else does and then go above and beyond with something creative.
Anytime I walk up to a fundraiser, I ask two questions.

1. What is your organization all about?
2. What are you fundraising for?

Perhaps a bit harsh, but if any student at the table can’t answer those questions, I tell them they need to do their homework before they try to sell people on donating to their organization. This must come from the top down. If you follow all of the steps discussed earlier and create a meaningful and impactful fundraiser, your members will have no choice but to be emotionally invested and ready to sell your fundraiser.
When planting, you must give careful consideration to what you are planting close to each other. Some plants get along, others don’t. While it may look like very separate and distinct space for these plants on the surface, below ground is telling a very different story.

You have many networks at Eastern. Whether it is other student groups, those in your major, professors, faculty, staff, or community partners, you must understand the dynamic of what is happening below the surface and how you can tap into these networks to get the most out of your fundraisers.
Table game dealers at casino’s are a perfect example of the idea of appreciation. If they are following their employee manual, they will say thank you every time a customer gives them a tip. With a typical week pulling in over $1 million in tips for dealers in CT casinos, they have it down to a science.

Showing appreciation for someone’s donation will not only make them feel good about giving you money, but will also encourage them to give in the future.
One of the most important steps in this process is to record your progress. If you are following the steps outlined in this presentation, a quality fundraiser is not an easy thing to facilitate. There is nothing worse than hard work that gets lost in the years to come because no one took the time to put the process or details down on paper.

In the world of fundraising for your organization, there is no $1 million idea that will make for a quick and successful event. Fundraisers must start with a carefully crafted idea that is planted, watered, nourished, and blooms to success.