Creating a Philanthropic Strategy for Departments and Centers

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Background

The Department of Biostatistics and Informatics in the Colorado School of Public Health and its partner research and resource center, the Center for Innovative Design and Analysis (CIDA) are still relatively new in their development. These units lacked a vision for philanthropy and strong connections with the School's and Campus' fund-raising (i.e. advancement) offices.

Objectives

1. Develop new communication skills around advancement.
2. Develop relationships with key University advancement officers.
3. Work in collaboration with them to develop a visioning document for use in philanthropic endeavors.
4. Participate in a "pitch" session with a donor.

Approach

✓ Interviews with Vice-Chancellor for Advancement and many meetings with Colorado School of Public Health Advancement Officer.
✓ CU practices donor centric giving. I read several books on the topic.
✓ CU Advancement has a toolkit for developing visioning and a vision document.
✓ Attended an introductory meeting with a foundation interested in "data".

There are several key components I applied when building the visioning document (German, 2020; Panas 2018; Panas 2014):

1. Create a clear, compelling, and inspiring vision;
2. Use language non-researchers can understand;
3. Focus on what is of interest to the donor;
4. Build credibility;
5. Determine how much money is really needed;
6. Create a communication plan and materials.

Biggest lesson learned - how to story tell and not be so scientific in my thinking. This was hard.

What's in your data?

Investing in an idea whose time has come.
An interdisciplinary, state-of-the-art, health data analytics enterprise.
Accelerating the transformation of your health data into discovery and improved care.

The Right Idea:
Imagine your favorite aunt: she has been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML), a blood cancer. She is at the doctor's office hearing her treatment options. The doctor is telling her about a new treatment, Venetoclax, that increases her chance of remission from 20% to 70%. Stop for a moment. Think about the numbers. Increases her chance of remission from 20% to 70%. Where did those numbers come from? Who produced those numbers? Can they be trusted?

We might be thinking about the doctor, Dr. Daniel Pollyea, who had an idea, ran a study, and made this treatment discovery. But, right now I want us to think about Dr. Diana Abbott, the woman who actually computed those numbers. The numbers used to transform your aunt's clinical care. Without Dr. Diana Abbott, there is no discovery, there is no new treatment, and your aunt's life is not saved. Dr. Abbott is a numbers expert: a biostatistician. She is part of the faculty of the Colorado School of Public Health in the Department of Biostatistics and Informatics and has been crunching numbers and making medical discovery possible for over a decade.

Why am I asking us to think about numbers and Dr. Abbott? We live in a data-driven world. Through our personal devices, internet usage, and electronic health records, each of us individually generates more data than ever before. In research, it is now feasible to genotype the entire genome on millions of individuals. That is over a trillion pieces of data. Through new imaging technology we can generate hundreds of features on each cell in a tissue and we can sequence our microbiome to detect thousands of bacteria that live on and within us.

Thanks to the extraordinary commitment by School and campus leadership and the vision brought to life by Drs. Debashis Ghosh and Nichole Carlson, we are transforming the way our campus turns data into improved health and lives saved through our Department of Biostatistics and Informatics (B&I) and its companion Center, the Center for Innovative Design and Analysis (CIDA). These two units are working towards transforming health through using data. They are closing the gap between the amount of data and the number of data experts so that no piece of information our researchers and clinicians collect goes unmined for new discovery to improve care and population health. The units are educating an ever-larger number of diverse, talented data experts and recruiting and retaining more exceptional faculty talent like Dr. Abbott.

Our interdisciplinary analytic teams are transforming discovery and health care for patients across a broad spectrum:
- Patients with COVID-19
- Patients with cancer
- Patients with Alzheimer's
- Patients with lung disease
- Patients with mental health conditions
- Pregnant women and women trying to get pregnant
- Native Americans and Alaska Natives with chronic health conditions
- Patients with opioid addiction

The Right Place:
CU Anschutz is the premier academic medical center in the Rocky Mountain West, and a recognized leader in team-based multidisciplinary health research.

Outcomes

✓ Participated in pitch session. This led to follow up with clinical collaborators.
✓ Worked with school executive committee member to provide an implementation plan for the advancement objective in the school's strategic plan.
✓ Developed budget for what can be done with philanthropy. $18M budget developed to fund a dozen different smaller initiatives.
✓ I can speak more clearly to what we need and the cost of that need.
  – We need to recruit and retain top talent in faculty.
  – We need resources to innovate.
  – We need a diverse and talented student body.
✓ Developed visioning document (the first page is shown at center)

Next Steps

An important realization was the medicine centric messaging chosen by the campus advancement office. The CU toolkit is based on transforming patient care and saving "a" life. Although it is critical to align with the main campus messaging, it will be important to also have a public health focused vision. **Public health is also saving lives but millions at a time.** Biostatistics sits at a sweet spot between public health and medicine. Thus, we can create visioning relevant to both areas of focus.

In additional work, I plan to create a visioning document with a public health focused message. We have an exceptional COVID modeling team providing guidance to the Governor's office. It presents an opportunity to elevate the conversation around public health and tap the reemergence of public health as a critical national resource.

Collaborators

1. Lisa Vandetty, Colorado School of Public Health Advancement Officer.
2. Debashis Ghosh, Professor and Chair Biostatistics and Informatics.
3. Jonathan M Samet, Professor and Dean Colorado School of Public Health

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