

# Why Weaponize When You Can Disarm?

Creating Alliances  
for Compliance(s)

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# Agenda



- Intro: My background and experience
- Learning about you
- Who do we serve?
- Building and repairing relationships
- Getting Support and Resources



# Introduction: My Point of Entry



Why Weaponize When You Can Disarm?

My professional experience informs me—

- 3 states: California, Oregon, Wisconsin
- 2 regions: WASFAA, MASFAA
- Sectors—public, private, grad/professional, CC
- Resource constraints and opportunities
- Enrollment—400-48,000
- Student populations: “traditional” and otherwise

My values guide me—

- Education as critical engine of economic opportunity
- Students are my #1 priority

# Your turn!

What is your role in the aid office?



What brings you to this session?



Are there specific questions you're hoping to get answers to here?



# Know Thyself

WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?



# Develop Your Brand

- ▶ Personal Branding, Office Branding
  - ▶ It's not a logo—it's how others perceive you.
  - ▶ Manage public perception intentionally
  - ▶ Social media—all the world's a stage, and everything is forever
  - ▶ Authenticity
  - ▶ Consistency
  - ▶ Story-telling
  - ▶ Who do you admire and why? What is their brand? How is it expressed?



# Who do we serve?

Many competing priorities—  
what resonates most broadly?



Why Weaponize When You Can Disarm?



2023

7



Who we  
serve--  
prioritize

ED/FSA

Our institution, leadership

Enrollment Management

Our financial aid office team

Campus colleagues

Donors

Students

Parents and other student supporters



DEVELOP, SUSTAIN,  
AND REPAIR

# Building Relationships

# Small Group Discussion

- ▶ Share a challenge you've experienced that would have benefitted from better relationships with campus colleagues.
  - ▶ What went wrong?
  - ▶ Were you able to recover?
  - ▶ Were there long-term issues?
  - ▶ What did you learn?
  - ▶ What questions remain?
- ▶ Share something you've done to successfully repair/rebuild your relationships on campus.
  - ▶ What went wrong?
  - ▶ How did you address the issue?
  - ▶ How did you reach a positive result?
  - ▶ What fears/doubts did you combat?
  - ▶ What was gained?



# Building your campus network

## Barriers

- ▶ Introversion
- ▶ Shyness
- ▶ “I’m too busy”
- ▶ Others’ perceptions of our offices

## Benefits

- ▶ Build your office’s public profile
- ▶ Create allies and proponents
- ▶ Be included in key conversations
- ▶ Get more resources!

# Focus on points of resonance

## What can we all agree on?

- ▶ Students! (hopefully)
  - ▶ Supporting success
  - ▶ Reducing debt burden
- ▶ Institutional points of pride
  - ▶ Mission, vision, values
  - ▶ Shared goals
  - ▶ Community values

## Communicate to connect

- ▶ Listen, be curious, learn, share
- ▶ Be positive; assume good intent
- ▶ Understand motivations, values
- ▶ Be solution-oriented
- ▶ Explain complex concepts simply
- ▶ Use storytelling
- ▶ Invite questions, answer thoughtfully



# Getting & Staying Connected Socially

## Settings

- ▶ Campus events—commencement, gatherings for faculty and staff
- ▶ Governance committees
- ▶ Hiring committees
- ▶ Campus leadership initiatives
- ▶ Sportsketball
- ▶ Student performances/shows

## Activities

- ▶ Volunteer (yay for structure!)
- ▶ Committee work
- ▶ Create a structure for social activities:
  - ▶ Coffee
  - ▶ Lunches
  - ▶ Happy hour
  - ▶ Walking/biking/running, etc.

# Share Your Expertise, Instill Confidence

- ▶ Campus forums, conferences, in-services, poster sessions
  - ▶ Present on topics of broad interest:
    - ▶ Financial aid basics
    - ▶ SAP
    - ▶ Loan debt, default, repayment, forgiveness
- ▶ Connect with the academic enterprise
  - ▶ Look for opportunities for research-practice conversations and collaboration
- ▶ Offer stand-alone financial aid learning opportunities
- ▶ Invite colleagues outside of your office to financial aid trainings/webinars



# What Not to Say—Know Your Audience!

- ▶ **Don't complain** about workload
  - ▶ Instead, how do avoidable burdens impact your ability to serve **students**?
- ▶ Avoid politics—**never assume** you know others' views
  - ▶ Don't lose your audience, practice **pivoting**
- ▶ **Avoid financial aid-ese**—don't be a financial aid Vulcan
- ▶ **Don't denigrate** anyone
- ▶ **"No"** and point to **rules, staffing**
  - ▶ Try "Yes, under these conditions" or "here are some alternatives"
- ▶ **I told you so**

# Rebuild and Repair

Sometimes things don't go well! We're human.

- ▶ Make it right—if you messed up, offer a sincere, unqualified apology.
- ▶ If you've been wronged, take it upon yourself to start the conversation.
- ▶ Be proactive in seeking opportunities to rebuild trust and collaborate.



# Getting Support and Resources

- ▶ Construct an argument focused on the intended outcome
- ▶ Focus on how your ask benefits students
- ▶ Use storytelling
- ▶ Offer multiple 'price points' and outcomes
- ▶ Tie the envisioned outcome to strategic priorities
- ▶ Customize the message to your audience
- ▶ Leverage relationships for support
- ▶ Be intentional in demonstrating success with resources allocated

# Never Let A Good Crisis Go To Waste!

Find a silver lining in every situation—highlight office needs & contributions

- ▶ COVID/HEERF
- ▶ Program Review
- ▶ Audit Finding
- ▶ Default Rate
- ▶ Negative Press



# Discussion: Problem-Solving

- ▶ Share your success stories and best practices!
- ▶ Share challenging situations you'd like to workshop

# Reflections and Thanks

Additional questions & thoughts?

What will you take back to your office?

Who will you connect with?

I hope you'll share your successes!

Reach out anytime—

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LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.

