

\$33 Million

# Vision 2011

THE CAMPAIGN FOR CHADRON STATE COLLEGE



SWANSON  HOUSE  
SIGNATURE FUNDRAISING SERIES



## Foundation

LOCATION: CHADRON, NE

FOUNDED: 1963

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$551,000

TOTAL ASSETS: \$22 MILLION

STAFF: 5 EMPLOYEES

## College

ENROLLMENT: 3,100

FOUNDED: 1911

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$30.5 MILLION

EMPLOYEES: 310

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On a sunny Saturday in September in 2015, the dedication of two signature facilities on the Chadron State College (CSC) campus was held. An unprecedented crowd of alumni and friends turned out. The dedications were met with enthusiastic applause, cheers, laughter and some happy tears.

"Faces were beaming with pride. There were endless smiles. There were tears of joy. Our alumni and friends were experiencing—as a family—the benefits of their charitable giving. It was amazing," recalls Connie Rasmussen, CEO of the Chadron State Foundation (Foundation).

Chadron State College was nearly 100 years old, and had never pursued a multi-million dollar campaign. Located in the sparsely populated panhandle of Nebraska, this fact was

not lost on its new president and its newly placed foundation director.

"Connie Rasmussen—a CSC graduate and our new foundation director—believed a campaign would be successful," says Dr. Janie Park. "As college president, I knew we had no choice but to make it a success."

"It was safe to say that Dr. Park and I were there already, mentally," shares Rasmussen. "We needed to do a comprehensive campaign. But we had to help our foundation board members reach that conclusion as well. Dr. Park called on a fundraising consultant she had worked with previously."

"Having served as President and CEO of a university foundation, and then as a consultant to hundreds of other organizations, I was familiar with the

challenges and opportunities that awaited the leadership of CSC," shares Robert Swanson, President & CEO of Swanson House, Inc. "Dr. Park, Connie and key board members helped others understand the need, and encouraged them to embrace the campaign as a positive step for the college."

The energy and skills of the Foundation CEO and College president became one of several linchpins for the campaign. "Connie, her staff and Dr. Park were all in," recalls Swanson. "A core group of ardent alumni and friends joined the team, and, together, they were fearless."

The Foundation had only a small donor base on which to build; they had even less history with planned gifts. What did exist was significant institutional knowledge of alumni and friends, and Rasmussen's well-earned "intuition" that potential supporters were ready for CSC's first-ever campaign.

"It was Connie's sense from day one that alumni and friends were ready for a multi-million dollar campaign," said Swanson. "Her instincts and her team's

desire to learn major gift development served them well."

The second linchpin for the campaign? Chadron's commitment to be professional, thoughtful fundraisers.

“We were committed to doing it the right way.”

major gift solicitation during this campaign than in the entire history of the Foundation," relays Rasmussen.

"With Robert's counsel, we evaluated each prospect individually and approached

—Randy Bauer, National Campaign Co-chair

"We were committed to doing it the right way," says Randy Bauer, National Campaign Co-chair. "Foundation staff, college administrators and volunteer leaders bought into the strategies, tools and philosophies that were being introduced by counsel."

Targeted and thoughtful major gift cultivation plans were developed for individual donors. Thoughtful and strategic major gift strategies were developed for individual prospects. "We probably did more face-to-face

each major donor on his or her own terms. There was no boiler plate message or approach to donors. We developed unique strategies for each—treating them like the individuals they are."

Two signature capital projects, a scholarship initiative for endowed funds and the annual fund initiative, created the three cornerstones of the campaign. The comprehensive approach allowed alumni and friends of every class and generation to participate in the campaign.

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# Axioms

Campaigns are vision statements.

Major Gift Work = Study. Plan. Practice. Present.

Cultivation proceeds solicitation.

Big gifts are created, not found.

Communication is the essence of appreciation.

## SWANSON HOUSE FUNDRAISING PROFESSIONALS

Swanson House, Inc. is a full-service nonprofit consulting firm committed to advancing the mission of nonprofit organization. Its consultants have served as successful development officers and nonprofit executives. Swanson House consultants have partnered with hundreds of organizations across America to plan and complete their multi-million dollar campaigns, incorporating capital, endowment and annual fund initiatives.

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Attitude served as another valuable cornerstone for the campaign. With less than 50,000 people living within a 90-mile radius, and alumni living in all 50 states, staff and volunteer leaders embraced the "road-warrior mentality." They identified, evaluated and then focused on donors regardless of their geography.



"All campaigns have ups and downs," explains Swanson. "Staff and volunteers who embrace their campaigns and have a positive, 'we-can-do-it' attitude go on to do great things.

"Successful major gifts officers and staffs have specific, identifiable attributes," says Swanson. "Effective fundraisers are typically extroverts. They are happy and have a sense of humor. They know they will receive more noes than yeses, and as such don't get down very often. They are positive people. They enjoy conversation and ask good questions. They are competitive, particularly with themselves. Most importantly, they have a passion for their work."

"Alumni and friends are willing to help if the institution is willing to invest time and energy in them," says Rasmussen. "In fact, working with alumni and friends reaffirmed to us over and over that CSC matters. We are making a lasting difference in the lives of students."

"It was obvious that the vast majority of alumni and friends were happy to see us and to hear from us," explains Karen Pope, Director of Development & Alumni. "We heard so many powerful personal and professional stories from graduates. They re-enforced that CSC has launched tens of thousands of personal journeys."

Early fears about the campaign centered on thoughts that Chadron State was "just that little teachers college in the Panhandle" or perhaps Chadron State didn't engender the devotion or allure of larger institutions. Some feared making donors angry for asking for too large a gift.

"Those fears proved false," relays Rasmussen. "We had a few donors chastising us saying 'it's about time [Chadron State did a major campaign].'"

"We have alumni in all 50 states and around the world," says Randy Bauer, National Campaign co-chair. "That Saturday in September 2015 reminded all of us who live in Chadron and the Panhandle that Chadron State College had been an important part of their lives, and they wanted others to benefit from that same CSC experience."

## Gifts Received

Gift Ranges	# of Gifts
\$1 Million & Above	4
\$250,000 to \$999,999	9
\$100,000 to \$249,000	12
\$50,000 to \$99,999	22
\$25,000 to \$49,999	30
\$10,000 to \$24,999	96
\$1 to \$9,999	5,200