Editorial

International Journal of Educational Advancement (2007) 7, 169–170.
doi:10.1057/palgrave.ijea.2150068

With knowledge about fundraising and philanthropy growing exponentially and numerous specialties and techniques cropping up everyday, there is no shortage of topics to discuss, especially in the education sector. Whether it is major gifts, alumni giving, email solicitations, or leadership development, every issue is critical and becomes another important tool for the advancement department.

But in the end, all the knowledge, skills, and tools come down to one thing: creating relationships and partnerships with our donors, who are the heart of philanthropy. All the courses, conferences, and presentations in the world won't help us raise funds if we don't understand our donors: their perspectives, their preferences, and their values.

Understanding donors is one of the key themes of this issue of the *International Journal of Education Advancement*. And it couldn't be more timely, given the dramatic changes we're seeing in the demographics of donors across all sectors of philanthropy. In fact, when it comes to donors, the only constant seems to be change. The image of the middle-aged white male as the stereotypical donor is slowly but surely disappearing. Donors are becoming more diverse in terms of age, race, culture, and ethnicity, to name just a few factors.

That diversity brings new outlooks and perspectives on philanthropy and charitable giving. Some expectations

about fundraising and giving may be different. New groups of donors may need or want different ways of interacting with an organization. They also may need more exposure to different types of giving options and information about how an organization operates.

Despite these differences, there is one area where expectations remain the same regardless of the demographics of the donor: ethics, including accountability and transparency. Regardless of culture, race, or any other factor, donors all share the same concerns about how charities function, how contributed funds are used, and how effective and efficient organizations are.

This concern about ethics is underscored when you examine fundraising codes around the world. While you might think that ethics are culture-specific and there is no agreement between societies on what constitutes ethical behavior, the opposite is true. There is a high degree of agreement across nations and cultures on the principles of ethical behavior that form the basis of trust—principles such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and respect. The differences tend to be primarily on the specifics of behavior, and these tend to change over time.

Donors are united on the issues of ethics, accountability, and transparency, and we must be sensitive to their concerns. Charitable giving is

an expression of values, and we must be careful to ensure that donors don't feel like that self-expression is being taken away or abused. We must continue to be stewards of not only the public's money, but its trust as well.

So even as donor demographics changes and we learn more about bequests to educational institutions, donor preferences and giving, and married couples and their giving trends

(all of which you'll find in this issue, plus more), the lesson is clear. Some things, such as the public's focus on ethical behavior by charities, don't change, and perhaps that is the key to understanding our donors.

Paulette V. Maheara
President and CEO,

Association of Fundraising Professionals