

THE JOURNEY TO A FULFILLING CAREER IN FUNDRAISING

The background of the top half of the page is a dark blue field filled with a dense pattern of lighter blue leaves, creating a tree-like effect. At the bottom of this pattern, two hands are visible, palms facing each other, as if holding or supporting the base of the tree.

UCDAVIS

Continuing and Professional Education

A photograph of three people in professional attire shaking hands. On the left is a man with grey hair, wearing a dark pinstripe suit and a patterned tie. In the center is a woman with short white hair, wearing a dark textured jacket. On the right is a man with a beard, wearing a light-colored suit and a patterned tie. They are all smiling. The image has a blue tint and a dark overlay at the bottom.

FASCINATING. INSPIRING. FULFILLING.

That's how fundraising professionals describe their careers. But how did they get there? In talking with fund development experts from around the country, we found that while their journeys were different, they all shared a passion for a career that's all about making a difference.

We hope this career guide provides you with the information, insight and inspiration to help you take the next step toward a successful and meaningful career as a fundraising and development professional.

GARY FISHER

Director of Development and Alumni Relations, UC Davis

Gary Fisher has taken his career full circle—from the phone room as a student caller at his undergrad university to corporate sales and back to the world of philanthropy.



Q. How did you enter the fundraising field?

I started as a student caller in the Division of Development and Alumni Relations at the Pennsylvania State University. One day I asked an alumnus for a \$10,000 gift over-the-phone, and in one fell swoop, he forever changed the course of my career and my future. This single act of generosity turned my part-time college job into a very successful 20-year career in corporate sales and marketing—and, ultimately, served as a catalyst that brought me back to fundraising.

Several years ago, I saw a simple flyer on a wall that read “What’s your Legacy?” That caused me to dig deep, and I decided I wanted to get back to making a difference. I needed to do more than close deals, manage teams and improve the bottom line. Fundraising is a privilege, allowing me the chance to connect philanthropists to opportunities that change the world. Fortunately, five years ago, I was recruited by an old friend from Penn State for a fundraising position at UC Davis and am now the associate director of Regional Major Giving for the university.

Q. What was the biggest challenge you faced upon entering the field?

Deciding to leave a successful corporate VP of Sales and Business Development position to essentially start over in a more entry-level position in the nonprofit sector as a fundraising professional. Sure, the earning power wasn’t comparable, but the trade-off of career fulfillment is worth more than a paycheck to me—so I took the leap, and it was the best professional decision of my career.

Q. How did your background in sales prepare you to become a fundraiser?

Everything about my career in sales centered on building relationships—identifying motivations and connecting customers to the right opportunities. If clients have a good experience, they will not only buy, they will become loyal advocates for the organization who will also tell their friends, bringing value to the relationship and the network. It’s much the same in fundraising.

Q. What are the most important skills for someone considering a career in fundraising?

- Listening—you have to be able to listen for meaning and context if you are to successfully connect the dots to opportunities that will fit the donors
- Strong communication skills in general, both written and oral
- Confidence—you can’t be afraid to talk about money and ask for a gift
- Passion for the mission of the organization and a strong work ethic

Q. What is the best thing about your job?

I am a philanthropic advisor—I have no skin in the game. My job is service to society, and I do it by helping people to connect their philanthropic vision to opportunities to change the world and make a difference. When done right, both the donor and the person impacted by their generosity are completely changed by the experience. I would do this work for free.

Q. What are your aspirations for your career?

I’d like to spend more time helping to train, mentor and inspire others with a similar passion. I’d also love to close the largest gift in the university’s history!

Q. What 3 words would you use to describe your career?

Fun. Inspiring. Humbling.

Q. What advice would you give someone just entering the field?

Do your homework. You need to know why you are interested in an organization. You have to have passion for the organization and for what you’re doing. I have a deeply held belief in higher education and its ability to improve and impact people’s lives, so I’m well suited for my job at UC Davis.

Also, for career changers, learn how to translate your skills into the nonprofit world. For example, I did not talk about my skills in sales, I talked about my expertise in terms of relationship building, cultivation, solicitation and stewardship. You need to speak the language of the industry.

Q. Looking back, what would you have done differently to get to where you are today?

I wish I would have had the courage to take the leap into nonprofit fundraising sooner. When I was a student back in the late 80s, education and training in fundraising didn’t really exist, so it wasn’t on my career radar. I’m glad it exists now.

BRUCE KOSAVEACH

Philanthropy Manager, Lowell Observatory

Bruce Kosaveach happily retired after a 35-year career in sales. But after two years of playing golf, traveling and getting used to “retired life,” his passion for an observatory reignited his career.



Q. How did you enter the fundraising field?

I retired in 2014 after a 20-year career in sales at GE Capital and 15 years at Johnson & Johnson before that. With more free time, I began taking more trips to the Lowell Observatory, which isn't too far from my home in Phoenix, and became active with the Lowell Observatory Foundation. When a job posting for major gifts officer/philanthropy manager came in April [2016], I was approached and ultimately hired for the position. It felt like jumping on a train at 100 miles per hour!

Q. What made you want to become a fundraiser?

My passion for the observatory. My wife and I had been going up there frequently and really developed a love for it. Lowell Observatory is the only independent observatory left in the country, so it doesn't have the ability to fall back on a university or other institution for funding. I wanted to help and be a part of its growth.

Q. How did your background in sales prepare you to become a fundraiser?

It fully prepared me. You're developing relationships with donors, and once that trust has been built, then you ask about their possible support. If they like you, trust you and feel you have a good "product," then they will usually "buy" from you.

Q. What are the most important skills for someone considering a career in fundraising?

Be a people person and have good conversational skills, but even more importantly, have good listening skills. In donor fundraising, you're talking about everything, not just your organization. You're getting to know people's likes and dislikes, what they want, what they want to change.

Q. What 3 words would you use to describe your career?

Relationships. Passion. Goal Oriented.

Q. What is the best thing about your job?

I like the fact that I'm meeting a cross-section of America—people with all different professions, backgrounds, ideals. And the people, by and large, are just nice, good people. I often become friends with people who started as a client or customer. In an 8-5 office job, you don't get the opportunity to develop these kinds of relationships.

DID YOU KNOW...

Top Philanthropic Corporations and Corporate Foundations in the Sacramento Region

\$3.17 million	Wells Fargo Foundation
\$3.09 million	Intel Foundation
\$1.63 million	Sierra Health Foundation
\$1.18 million	Bank of America
\$1.15 million	Raley's Inc.
\$874,253	Western Health Advantage
\$795,000	U.S. Bancorp Foundation
\$601,962	The Golden 1 Credit Union
\$397,605	The Niello Co. and Subsidiaries
\$337,500	SAFE Credit Union
\$325,000	The Sleep Train Inc.
\$221,000	The McClatchy Foundation
\$188,000	Consolidated Communications Foundation
\$169,900	Umpqua Bank
\$156,543	Big Hairy Dog Information Systems
\$123,522	SAR Charitable Foundation
\$85,800	River Cats Foundation Inc.
\$69,620	Roebbelen Contracting Inc.
\$67,500	American River Bank Foundation
\$61,624	Weintraub Tobin

2014 Cash Contributions to local organizations

RENÉE J. FERGUSON

Fundraising Consultant

Renée Ferguson fell into a fundraising career...and developed a love for truly making a difference.



Q. How did you enter the fundraising field?

My background had been in advertising and promotions. An opportunity came my way to join a nonprofit marketing agency in a position developing appeals and messages to raise funds for various campaigns. Five years later, a large international humanitarian nonprofit near me in Richmond, VA, was looking for someone with marketing and fundraising skills. I was hired as a marketing specialist and fundraising campaign manager, responsible for developing middle donor strategy programs. So I was blessed to kind of fall into fundraising.

Q. How did your background in marketing prepare you to become a fundraiser?

For those doing the creative collateral development aspects of fundraising like me, marketing is almost the same. The main difference is you're no longer selling the features and benefits of a product or service. In fundraising, you are selling a cause. You're promoting the importance of donor support for that cause with messaging that taps into the donors' innate desire to help others.

Q. What was the biggest challenge you faced upon entering the field?

Expectations. Sometimes nonprofits—especially the smaller organizations—have unrealistic expectations about what their fundraising team can do. But as more schools provide education in fundraising and development, nonprofits will learn to have clearer and more realistic expectations, be better able to achieve their revenue goals, as well as accomplish their mission.

Q. What is the best thing about your job?

The idea of knowing something I did will help a child's future or enable a donor to connect to his or her desire to help. It's also very fulfilling to hit your targeted goals because you know you'll help the organization achieve more.

Q. What are your aspirations for your career?

My experience is in developing high-level appeals campaigns, but I'd like to learn more about the face-to-face cultivation of major donors. I'm always looking to continue my education and learn more. It's never too late to go back. I earned my MBA 30 years after getting my bachelor's degree!

Q. What 3 words would you use to describe your career?

Fast-paced. Meaningful. Fulfilling.

Q. What advice would you give someone just entering the field?

There are a lot of ways a person can branch out into fundraising. They should first do some research to find the areas that would best match their strengths and be most meaningful to them. I'd recommend they do some volunteer work in the kind of organization they would hope to join—museums, hospitals, universities, shelters—so they can dip their toe in the field.

Q. Looking back, what would you have done differently to get to where you are today?

It would have been great to discover my love for nonprofit fundraising sooner in my career. But perhaps having my career evolve as it did has helped me appreciate it more.



Renée Ferguson during a ChildFund International humanitarian trip to Brazil

DID YOU KNOW...

Demand is Growing Across Sectors

Nonprofit Organizations that Will Create New Positions

Health	56%
Human services	53%
Environment and animals	52%
Religion related	40%
Education	34%

—2015 Nonprofit Employment Trends Survey

STEPHEN HORTON

Director of Development and Marketing, United Cerebral Palsy of Sacramento/Northern California

Stephen Horton parlayed his calling as a church pastor into a fulfilling career as a senior executive at a large nonprofit.



Q. How did you enter the fundraising field?

I got my degree in theology and began my career as a church pastor. I loved the interaction with people, but after many years of pastoring, I was looking for a change. I figured out how to transition my skills into a new career path and was fortunate to be hired as a regional vice president with the Canadian Cancer Society.

After 15 years there, I accepted a position as development director for United Cerebral Palsy of Sacramento/Northern California, an organization that provides programs, services and resources to children and adults with autism, cerebral palsy and other developmental disabilities. Everything we do is about breaking down walls. I'm responsible for all aspects of fundraising initiatives, grant programs, events and individual donor cultivation.

Q. What made you want to become a fundraiser?

There are so many needs in the community, and I wanted to be a part of meeting those needs and be as much on the "preventive" side as possible.

Q. What was the biggest challenge you faced upon entering the field?

My own self-doubt about what skills I had and how they would fit. I had a colleague help me rewrite my resume to show how my background in theology and skills in public speaking aligned with a nonprofit executive position.

Q. How did your background in ministry prepare you for your current position?

The administrative side, community engagement and relationship-building skills I learned through running a church were ideal training for my career in fundraising.

Q. What are the most important skills for someone considering a career in fundraising?

- An interest in people and an ability to relate to them
- Be mission focused
- Be versatile—you have to be willing to take on what needs to be done and be able to prioritize

Q. What is the best thing about your job?

The interaction with people, as well as being able to help people and connect them to the resources they need.

Q. Looking back, what would you have done differently to get to where you are today?

I should have taken Continuing and Professional Education courses earlier to learn how to raise revenue for a nonprofit. I struggled trying to figure out what worked and how to make money for the organization. If I had received training earlier on, it would have given me much more confidence in what I was doing.

Q. What 3 words would you use to describe your career?

Fascinating. Challenging. Fulfilling.

Q. What advice would you give someone just entering the field?

Learn the mission of the organization inside and out, and go visit the programs so you can be informed when you talk to clients.

DID YOU KNOW...

Top 5 Personality Traits of Successful Fundraisers

MODESTY: You can't be egocentric.

RESPONSIVENESS Do what you say you're going to do.

GOAL ORIENTATION Become good at not only setting and achieving goals, but also at measuring your performance in comparison to those goals.

CURIOSITY Be curious about all kinds of thing so that you become an interesting person to talk to.

POSITIVITY AND LACK OF DISCOURAGEMENT Don't take it personally when someone says no.

*Adapted from "Seven Personality Traits of Top Salespeople," written by Steve W. Martin for Case Consulting Services, Inc.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Charitable giving is rebounding as the economy continues to improve. Yet there is a shortage of qualified fundraising professionals to help organizations connect their needs with potential donors. UC Davis' online program in Fundraising and Development is designed to meet the rising demand for trained fundraising professionals.

Real-World Education

Gain the knowledge and skills to join this dynamic field or advance your career in fundraising and development. This fully online program provides a comprehensive foundation in the development lifecycle, prospect identification and assessment, and best practices in the instruments of giving—from annual giving to major and principal gifts. Apply your learning through hands-on assignments covering an array of real-world deliverables. You'll finish the program with a portfolio that demonstrates your ability to bring value to any organization's fundraising mission.

Learn from the Experts

The program was developed and is taught by senior and executive members of the award-winning development team at UC Davis, who have over 120 years of combined experience as fundraising professionals. Under their leadership, the university's first comprehensive fundraising initiative raised over \$1.1 billion from nearly 110,000 supporters. Our faculty offer quality learning experiences and the professional insights to prepare you for success in the field.



HOW ONE OF OUR STUDENTS TURNED HER PASSION INTO A CAREER

"I initially heard about UC Davis CPE's Fundraising and Development program from an article in the *Sacramento Bee*. As I read about this program, I was excited to explore opportunities for a professional career. My passion for giving back to the community started in high school when I volunteered at several nonprofit organizations. I've continued to participate and help coordinate events for many local nonprofit organizations. And after completing three classes in this program, I was able to start my career as a development analyst in Development and Alumni Relations at UC Davis. These courses have provided me with the right tools I needed to be successful in my new position, and I'm excited to have this opportunity where I can make an impact!"

—Angela Nubla, Development Analyst, UC Davis Office Of Development

LET'S HAVE A CONVERSATION

Ready to learn more about how UC Davis Continuing and Professional Education can help you start a career in fundraising?

Call Program Representative **Elizabeth Price** at (530) 757-8895 or email her at fundraising@ucdavis.edu.

cpe.ucdavis.edu/fundraising

