Donald Kunz mentioned, "Cranbrook President Prepares To Use Fund-Raising Experience"

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Cranbrook Educational Community in Bloomfield Hills hired its current president, Rick Nahm, last year largely because it thought his 28 years of fund-raising experience would help successfully carry the school into its largest campaign.

Nahm, 55, steered a $1.4 billion campaign to completion as senior vice president of the University of Pennsylvania and, as president, readied Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., for a successful $125 million campaign. As senior vice president of Colonial Williamsburg, he started a $500 million capital campaign that is still going on.

Cranbrook is embarking on a $200 million to $300 million campaign and announced last week that it had hired Richard Loewenstein, president of Gleaners Community Food Bank, to be its chief advancement officer. Loewenstein is the first of what could be 15-20 new staff members in the 35–person advancement unit at Cranbrook. Loewenstein will join Cranbrook on Jan. 2.

Fund-raising experience was critical in Nahm's hiring, said James Vlasic, an attorney with Sommers, Schwartz, Silver & Schwartz P.C. in Southfield. Vlasic was on the selection committee that chose Nahm to replace Bob Gavin, former president of Macalester College in Minnesota, after a national search.

Donald Kunz, a partner at Detroit-based Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn LLP, said Nahm is a seasoned executive who can be expected to keep the community's different entities from letting competing goals derail the larger effort. Cranbrook consists of the Brookside Lower School, Cranbrook Kingswood Middle School and the Upper School, in addition to the Institute of Science, the Museum of Art and the Academy of Art.

Critical to Cranbrook's fund-raising success is expanding its message beyond its traditional local donor base, said Nahm, who left Williamsburg to join Cranbrook in June 2001. Of Cranbrook's 8,500 alumni, only 3,500 live in Michigan.

"Previous efforts have focused on people who were right in this area or very close to Cranbrook by being on a board of some sort," Nahm said.

That base will be expanded to all alumni and anyone touched by the schools: parents and grandparents, corporations that employ Cranbrook grads and arts supporters.

It will be Loewenstein's task to help reach that wider audience.

During Loewenstein's five years at Gleaners, the fund-raising program increased dramatically, Nahm said. The endowment grew from nothing to almost $5 million, and the donor base grew to more than 10,000 annually.
Loewenstein is a Cranbrook graduate and serves on the Kingswood board of governors.

The second major challenge Cranbrook faces is developing a formal planned-giving program, Nahm said. Until now, Cranbrook depended on annual cash, capital or stock gifts. It hasn't targeted the long-term larger gifts such as estate plans, gift annuities or pooled income funds.

Another hurdle is the perception that Cranbrook is already rich. For Cranbrook, that's especially true because of the Booth family legacy.

George Booth and Ellen Scripps Booth, whose father founded the Evening News Association in 1887, donated the land that became Cranbrook in 1904. The couple started the Cranbrook Foundation in 1927 and left an endowment, but that wasn't intended to fund the 315-acre community forever, Nahm said. About $150 million of Cranbrook's $200 million endowment resulted from the Booths' gifts, Nahm said.

Doubling that endowment and the amount in the annual fund are two goals of the campaign. Others include about $100 million in capital improvements to buildings such as an art-museum expansion; upgrading school buildings, primarily in athletics; adding a wing to the science institute; and preserving and restoring buildings.