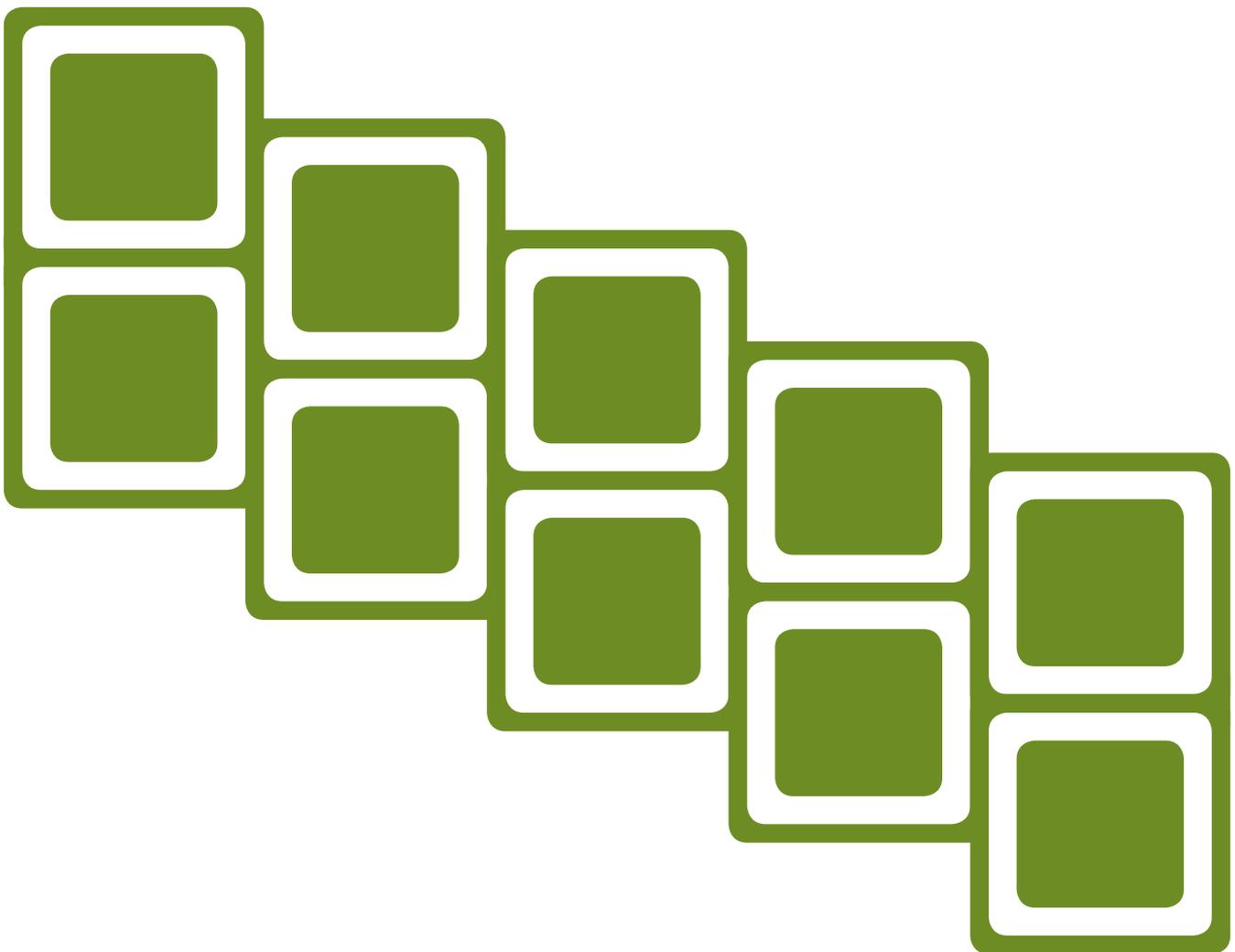


Summer Academe  
**Best Practices**

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# *Finding the Money*

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## **Abstract**

This paper highlights strategies used by University of Alaska Fairbanks Summer Sessions & Life-long Learning, a self-support unit, to find funding through on- and off-campus relationships. Five strategies/guidelines for action are outlined: identifying vested interests, finding market niches, expanding on current successes, and arranging trade-outs, and taking bold and audacious actions.

Financial solvency within university and college summer sessions is always a challenge. Across the nation, summer sessions tend to be self-support units within their institutions, and many are expected to generate additional funds to return to the university. New program ideas are fairly easy to identify and develop, but where do you find the funds to implement them? Summer Sessions & Lifelong Learning (SSL) at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) is a self-support unit that reports to the provost. Each summer 250–300 courses are offered to approximately 2,000 students. In addition to offering credit and non-credit courses, SSL hosts 19 day camps for school-age children and 42 free evening public events. During the academic year SSL hosts a weekend college, a WINTERmester program, an international travel program, and the UAF Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. SSL does its own marketing and annually provides over 100 three-credit tuition awards to summer undergraduate and graduate students.

SSL depends on the goodwill and cooperation of every department on campus to participate in offering academic classes and to help create and sustain new initiatives with the potential to add to the bottom line. Our motto is “Everyone on campus is our friend”; our mission is to serve the community in which we live. These relationships have provided inroads to the funding that is critical to the success of the SSL programs, and the unit has pursued five strategies to help generate these funds.

## Finding the Money

When considering where to look for financial resources for new program development, it is important to consider whether the money will be used for scholarships, new programs, or special events. How the money is used helps determine the strategy to adopt in finding the needed resources. When looking for funds there are five interrelated potential funding sources and questions to consider:

- Vested interests—Who has a vested interest in the goal or project?
- Market niches—Will the program fill a niche on the campus or in the community?
- Current successes—What is summer sessions currently doing that is successful and makes money?
- Trade-outs—Is a trade-out with a community organization or company possible?
- Bold and audacious actions—What kind of event(s) would be considered a “coup” for the campus and/or community?

## Vested Interests

The first question we ask is, who, on campus or in the community, has a vested interest in the project? When thinking about summer scholarship money, four sources have been rewarding:

- deans interested in graduation rates
- university departments interested in being part of summer sessions marketing
- scholarship endowers who would like more visibility
- administrative and academic units willing to collaborate

Deans have strong vested interests in seeing students graduate on time and often have discretionary scholarship or tuition award funds available. At UAF, summer sessions is a trailer for Pell Grants.<sup>1</sup> At UAF Pell Grants are disbursed in the Fall for the academic year, and there is rarely any money left over for summer. Consequently, there are many students who do not have the resources to go to school in the summer. To address this situation, summer sessions distributes 88 tuition awards to undergraduate students and 20 to graduate students who have run out of money by the end of the academic year. Since “Stay on Track” is a mantra on the UAF campus, where the average student graduates in six years, the deans have been willing to assist with this program by transferring some financial resources to students who are majors within their colleges and taking summer courses.

Some departments have a vested interest in the power of summer sessions marketing, and they have been willing to contribute financial resources toward tuition awards in exchange for participating in our marketing strategies. Each year SSSL is approached by departments or campus units asking to advertise in the summer community booklet, a publication resembling a TV guide. It contains information about all 42 community events, plus camps and credit and non-credit courses that may be of interest to community members. The booklet is inserted into the local newspaper and has become a staple in the local community as “the bible” of summer activities and courses that are held at the UAF campus.

Little-known scholarships are another source of revenue. UAF has scholarships that are unused because students do not know they exist. The endowers of scholarships and the university have a vested interest in seeing their scholarships used. Some of the unused (or infrequently used) scholarships are transferred to summer sessions, and their availability is marketed to students and the community. For example, ever since a little-accessed scholarship endowed by a family for many years has been included in all summer sessions marketing materials, there have been dozens of applicants each year. The family selects the winning applicant, and it is a satisfying outcome for the student, summer sessions, and the family.

SSLL also collaborates with eLearning, the administrative unit for online classes, to offer the Sweet Summer Deal. Students who take up to 14 credits pay for only 10 if they pass all courses with a C, or better. Students can take face-to-face or online courses, or a combination of both. The cost of credits beyond 10 is shared between summer sessions and eLearning. Both units want more students that this program provides and yet want to mitigate the costs entailed in providing it.

## Market Niches

When thinking about support for new events and new programs, consider niche areas on campus or in the community with an interest in the idea and reach out to collaborate with them. UAF considers three possible opportunities:

- units within the university with similar missions
- other departments within the university with an outreach mission
- private and/or public sector organizations with a similar mission

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<sup>1</sup> A U.S. government program that provides money for students who need it to pay for college. Eligible students receive a specified amount each year under this program, and the grant does not have to be repaid.

The annual Legacy Lecture was created to honor an alumnus who has had a positive impact in the community, state, nation, or world. To support that project, the UAF Alumni Association, which represents a niche area with an interest in promoting one of their own, was an obvious revenue source. The lecture itself is an interview, à la Charlie Rose, with a professional journalist who has studied the background material on the honoree. This lecture series has expanded and now includes a documentary film, shot in the home of the individual being honored. It is shown publicly on the first Monday evening in June and is scheduled for future showings on our local PBS station. The last two honorees could not attend due to illness, but the evening still honored them, and the university has a wonderful record of these distinguished alumni. The film can be seen on the summer sessions website and is archived in the UAF library.

Health care education for the public is a specialized niche market that has found a home in the UAF Cooperative Extension Service. It funds the Healthy Living Lecture Series, a set of free weekly lectures addressing health issues in an effort to better educate the general public in how to advocate for their own health and care. Summer sessions created this series with the assistance of Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. The director of the Cooperative Extension Service is also the vice provost of outreach, and this series was a natural fit for extension funding as outreach is within the mission of the unit. Each lecture is made into a YouTube video, which is posted on the SSSL website and linked to the websites of the Cooperative Extension Service and the hospital. In addition, the logos of Cooperative Extension Service and Fairbanks Memorial Hospital are included on every lecture series poster, publication, and webpage.

Over the years, summer sessions has created many special events, including live campus-based broadcasts of National Public Radio shows. SSSL also collaborates with the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau, and their programs give UAF exposure at a national level, which fulfills one of the university's missions.

## Current Successes

A third way money has been raised is by playing to current strengths—doing more of what already generates revenue. Ten years ago an international travel program was created that focused on the natural, political, and cultural history of the country being toured, unlike typical commercial travel tours. No other department at UAF was offering anything similar. The target audience was current and retired professionals, and the program was an immediate success. Since it began, SSSL groups have visited 10 different countries in 13 trips. Beginning with one trip, the program has expanded to three trips a year—all successful and profitable ventures.

Another successful program has been SSSL's involvement with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)<sup>2</sup> and ESL groups. Since SSSL is the administrative unit for the local OLLI program, an 11-day travel experience in Alaska was offered for inbound OLLI groups from other states. To date, five different OLLI groups have been hosted. Summer sessions has also hosted intensive ESL groups from China and Japan. The ESL programs include not only classroom instruction but

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2 Non-credit courses offered through universities and colleges in 49 U.S. states to adults over 50. The program was established in 2001 by philanthropist Bernard Osher and is funded by grants administered by OLLI.

also a cultural component. All of the travel programs have been profitable. For example in 2014 there were two inbound groups and two international trips that generated a combined profit of over \$92,000.

## Trade-outs

A fourth approach to finding money is trading with local businesses, an arrangement that can be better than receiving cash. One example is a long-standing, symbiotic relationship between UAF and Holland America–Princess. Summer sessions provides content training for the tour-bus drivers on varying topics such as the history of Fairbanks and Native peoples of Alaska. Up to eight lectures are offered each season. In exchange, the tour company provides buses at no cost to support summer sessions programming. The lectures cost \$100 each, but the bus time is valued in the many thousands of dollars. No money changes hands and everyone is pleased with the arrangement.

The local public radio station, KUAC, which is located on campus, has been a summer sessions media sponsor for some time. Throughout the year, the Fairbanks community hears about summer sessions through various PSAs and other announcements. In turn, KUAC's logo is on every summer sessions poster and publication. All SSSL special events throughout the year contribute to KUAC's outreach and public-service mission.

## Bold and Audacious Actions

SSSL is a platform for many programs and activities. This year, in response to a local elected official demanding that *Ms. Magazine* be removed from a local co-op market, Gloria Steinem was invited to speak at UAF. Although we had no resources in hand, a decision was made not to charge an admission fee so that no one would be denied the opportunity to attend the event. In addition, her talk was web streamed. The cost to offer this unique event was \$30,000. Where would the money come from? When word of the event got out, community organizations and campus departments asked to be part of this effort, including the UAF Department of Social Work, the Women's and Gender Studies Program, the Fabulous Feminist Fundraiser, and the Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Over 152 individuals made donations ranging from \$10 to \$1,000. The event, held on June 12, 2015, was a spectacular success, with over 1,500 people in attendance. The concert hall, which seats 900, plus the theater with a capacity of 445 and two classrooms with web-streamed viewing were full to capacity. No other single event had ever brought as many people to the UAF campus. The response was overwhelmingly positive, from those who worked on this project, attended the talk, or watched it via the web. "What a coup!" seemed to be the refrain at the end of the evening. This kind of bold and audacious activity can work, but it requires a very strong commitment and the involvement of stakeholders.

## Conclusion

In this era of shrinking budgets and sequestration, fiscal resources can be strained. To think about expansion, when just maintaining is a challenge, may seem ludicrous. Yet there are ways to find the money to expand existing programs and to generate new ones. By working with campus departments or deans who have a vested interest in what you want to do, by identifying and filling profitable niches, by expanding programs that already generate a profit, by arranging trade-outs with businesses, and by being bold and audacious, incredible things can happen. Campuses and communities vary across the country, but resources can be found.

## Biography

Michelle Bartlett is the director of Summer Sessions & Lifelong Learning at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Michelle's position has allowed her to be a force for change within the university. She holds an undergraduate degree in occupational therapy from Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, and a master's degree in special education from St. Louis University.