Succeeding in Today’s Economic Uncertainty

The economy is on everyone’s mind these days. What will the market do today, this week or six months from now? The contagion that started with sub-prime loans has expanded into a crisis of confidence in the financial markets. The government take-over of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the collapse of Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch’s sale to Bank of America and the restructuring of AIG have contributed to the overall turmoil.

What does this mean to the UCM Foundation? It means that we need to continue our emphasis on prudent and conservative management of the portfolio. Since the last Advancing UCM newsletter, we have employed a number of strategies to lessen the negative impact of the financial markets: decreasing the equity or stock allocation, increasing cash reserves, enhancing the quality of the fixed income or bond portfolio and reducing our exposure to international equities.

Not only will we continue our vigilance over the portfolio’s investment performance, but we will use this period to increase our outreach. From strategic and exciting alumni events, to our newly redesigned and deservedly praised magazine format of Today, to a comprehensive undertaking to better manage our relations with key corporations and foundations, and to increased personal visits with alumni and friends across the region and the country, the entire University Advancement team is working for the benefit of the foundation and for the students, faculty, staff and programs that make this university so special.

While the economic outlook may not look all that promising, we should bear in mind that in 2002, following the attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent market chaos, charitable contributions dropped only slightly: 1.2% according to the Chronicle of Philanthropy’s annual survey of the 400 non-profits that received the most private support and only .5% according to the American Association of Fundraising Counsel Trust for Philanthropy.

I believe the University of Central Missouri and the UCM Foundation are well positioned to continue our great work. We have a wonderful story to tell — a story of increasing academic strength and reputation, of continued value, and of exciting and relevant programs of study. It is this story that will encourage our donors to continue their support and inspire our future donors to make the university and foundation a part of their philanthropy.

Annual Fund & Alumni Activities for Fall

The first direct mail piece of the academic year went out in September, encouraging alumni to become part of the university vision by making a gift to the Central Annual Fund. Alumni, also being called via the fall phonathon, are commenting about the economy, especially since the Dow Jones plummet. At the end of September, $40,736 had been received for the Central Annual Fund, compared to $25,175 collected by this same time a year ago.

Scott Alvested, a 1997 communications alumnus, has been named manager of the annual fund. He and Emily Bergsieker, event coordinator, are working to launch a new Senior Class Gift Program soliciting graduating seniors to make a gift that the class will then present to the university. Another new donor initiative is a Parents Program. It targets parents of current students and is focused on getting parent volunteers to assist with increasing involvement and fund-raising efforts.

The office is working on a plan to improve contact information on international alumni in preparation for an international reunion during Homecoming 2009. In addition, Dave Hoffman has been hired as a support systems specialist to assist with ongoing data clean up and updates.

We have started planning the 2009 Presidents Society Gala, scheduled for April 24. Ideas are flying to make this event, which will feature a western theme, even more successful than 2008. Look for a save the date postcard later this fall to this members-only event.
Marks Being Registered, Gardner to Visit

After closing out a record-breaking year in royalties, the licensing office is completing the process to acquire federal registration for the new marks involved with the university name change and the new logo designs developed by University Relations.

This process began shortly after the name change and is a lengthy one, including a national appeal procedure that can slow approvals even more. Lathrop and Gage law offices assisted the university in this matter, and certificates of registration should be received in early November.

A great inspirational speaker is coming to campus for the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Freedom Scholarship Dinner, scheduled Jan. 20, 2009. Chris Gardner’s amazing story was portrayed by Will Smith in the movie, The Pursuit of Happyness. We are currently seeking corporate sponsors for gifts that range from $50 to $2,000, all of which come with varying levels of tickets and recognition.

KMOS Loses One of Their Best

Fred Hunt, KMOS-TV’s operations manager for the master control room, died of a heart attack Sept. 10, 2008. Hunt was instrumental in the transition from analog to digital broadcasting and for developing written procedures for students to follow to ensure programs were being broadcast at the proper time. He provided quality leadership to literally thousands of student assistants for more than 26 years. His absence from our broadcasting team will be missed.

Despite a turbulent economic climate, KMOS’ fall pledge drive managed to do quite well, bringing in $17,542. The station traditionally conducts drives in March, August and December but moved its August campaign to September because of the Olympics and political conventions.

Yet another successful event was 90.9 The Bridge’s annual wine-tasting at Selmo Park. Students from Karen Breshears’ Quantity Foods class teamed with food professionals from Sodexho to cook and serve the hors d’oeuvres.

New Web Sites, Targeted Messages Advance Recruitment

New web sites for Harmon College of Business and The Honors College, along with individualized printed and electronic mail, are part of an expanded undergraduate recruitment strategy being developed by University Relations in collaboration with the Office of Admissions.

The new sites are the most robust ones ever created for the university, with more writing and design expertise applied to their development. Focused primarily on prospective students, the new sites feature expanded graphic identities for both colleges, student and faculty profiles and action-oriented quick links. A prominent “At a Glance” visual area sets off the “Why Choose” section, which portrays the top reasons students should pick UCM. Next in line are new sites for the colleges of Health and Human Services, Education, and Science and Technology.

Yet other recruitment projects University Relations is helping to produce are personalized direct mail and email communications. Students who request to send their ACT scores to UCM are receiving a thank-you postcard with their name, high school and graduation year. Another new strategy is a series of email communications highlighting opportunities that UCM offers to high-achieving students. The email introduces the admissions representatives and provides them the opportunity to guide students through the admissions process. The targeted campaigns reflect the creativity of writer Heather Hickerson, a December 2007 Kansas State University graduate, who joined the office this summer. She also is behind a new Facebook profile for Mo the Mule, which has become one of the site’s hottest profiles with more than 50 new friends a week.

Yet another new initiative to promote UCM pride and awareness will be seen on Warrensburg streets — including Clark, South, Holden, Houx and for the first time, Maguire — when 90 new banners go up on light poles this month. The banners feature either the fighting mulehead or academic crest.