

On the Road to Creating Safer, Healthier, More Educated Communities

Kevin Matheny

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GHC Conversations

Annually, Gary Hubbell Consulting convenes and hosts a small hand-picked group of social sector professionals for three days of intense dialogue and critical thinking. We strive to create a thought-provoking, mind-opening, and stimulating conversation about the social sector, philanthropy, and leadership. This deep exploration of the nature and challenges of the environment is intended to engage, inform, and inspire senior leaders to be catalysts for change in their own organizations and communities of influence. With each GHC Conversation, we seek to establish the seeds of a continuing and enriching network that nourishes us as individuals and helps each of us change how we converse, inspire, and seek new dimensions of impact.



Participant Bio

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Kevin Matheny has worked in all phases of resource development since joining the field in 1986. He is a veteran of the secondary and higher education, as well as the health care, sectors.

Kevin is currently Chief Development Officer for the Concordia University Foundation in Portland, Oregon. He holds a Master of Arts degree in Philanthropy and Development from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. He is designated as a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE).

Formerly an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Administration at Portland State University, Kevin taught in PSU's Institute for Non-Profit Management for 15 years. Kevin currently teaches in the Master of Arts in International Development and Service program at Concordia University.

This is Kevin's third GHC *Conversation*.

On the Road to Creating Safer, Healthier, More Educated Communities

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I have been reading a new book for the last couple of months. Its title is *The Generosity Network*, by Jennifer McCrea and Jeffrey Walker. I am so excited about this book that I gave it to my entire staff to read, sort of a Christmas gift. Now I have my fundraising class at Concordia University reading the book. I'd suggest to our President that our Council of Trustees read it but I don't think they are quite ready for that experience yet. (Although it just occurred to me that I should give it to the President to read.) Why am I so enamored of this book?

I have been coming to this place that McCrea and Walker describe for what seems like many years now. The authors have invited us to a place where generosity is an act that shapes our life. McCrea knows exactly when the game changed for her. She tells a story of working aimlessly while on a visit with benefactors in Manhattan on behalf of the university she served. Tired and discouraged, McCrea chose, instead of once again describing the college's latest exploits or newest programs, to shake things up and ask the alum sitting across the table from her how he wanted to make a difference with his life. The ensuing response and conversation that followed moved the focus from one of transaction to one of relationship. McCrea describes a place where two people sit down and hold a conversation about what they can do together that might be unique and compelling for all concerned, not just the institution. It moves fund-raising away from being transactional and about money and to a place where dreams are touched and felt and more often than not, organizations are changed. It is a place where philanthropists are bound together by their innate desire to share passion and wonder and to carry out their expressed intent to do good in the world. Going forward, McCrea has declared this the space from which she will collaborate with all donors. To that end she has been incredibly successful.

My introduction to McCrea and Walker has been most timely. Nearly four years ago I came to Concordia University to serve as its Chief Development Officer. At the time, my charge was fairly straight ahead: lead the staff, grow the annual fund to \$1m a year within five years, and conduct a \$7.5m campaign to build a new athletic stadium. The annual fund goes to \$1m next year and the stadium opened two years ago. I like my staff a lot.

About three weeks after I joined the team at Concordia University, I attended a meeting in our library that not only included the President's cabinet but leadership from Portland Public Schools as well. Turned out that we had a pre K through 8 school directly across the street from us that we had been involved with for several years. PPS officials wanted to talk with us about their plans for the school's future.

The plans that PPS leadership described were truly unique. Faced with aging facilities

across the district, PPS intended to float a bond measure out to the voters that would include Faubion School and that would allow them to completely rebuild the school. Faubion is a school that draws from the largest catchment area in the school district (On paper it looks like the state of California). Eighty-one percent of its students are part of the free and reduced lunch program and thus rely on the school to provide breakfast and lunch five days a week. Approximately 20 percent of the students are classified as homeless.

Based on the partnership we had built with the school and the district over the previous few years, one that included our providing student teachers, mentors, aides in the classroom, reading partners, and playground supervision, the district invited us to partner with them in building the new school. Among other things, they envisioned that Concordia University would co-locate its college of education in the new school. For a college that is land-locked in a residential neighborhood, the opportunity to expand the campus seemed like an incredible turn of good fortune.

In the fall of 2012, PPS successfully undertook the bond campaign. A new Faubion would open in September of 2017. Concordia, which began planning in the summer of 2012, conducted a capacity assessment among 37 local, regional, and national key informants concurrently with the bond campaign. Though the ideas shared by the university were unformed, there was enough merit in the presentation that respondents suggested that the university bring its plans back to them when the scope of the project had firmed. There was real interest.

Several important recommendations were gathered from the responses including:

- The project needed to reflect opportunity for replication in other schools and districts;
- The project must be more than new buildings for the school and the university;
- The project must impact the opportunity gap for underserved children;
- The notion of shared programs, leadership and a continuum of pre-K to graduate level education, carried out in a public/private partnership held strong appeal;
- There was sufficient interest that \$6-7.5m could be raised for the project from among the respondents.

With the passage of the bond and with its capacity assessment in hand, Concordia University began the process of developing its strategy for what quickly became known as 3 to Ph.D.

As the project and all of its ambitions began to be shaped, it was clear that the project could have huge collective impact if structured strategically and innovatively. One of the first inclinations was to gather a network of support services in order to assure a level playing field for the children to be served. Services would include mental health care, grocery and nutrition services, arts organizations, family resources, and health and wellness, among others. While a breadth of wrap-around services was essential to the success of the project, Concordia University knew it did not have the band-width to manage this essential component alone. The university found it imperative to secure a qualified partner to lead this. Thus, we have reached out and secured Trillium Family Services, the largest mental health provider in the state as our partner in providing these services. Further, we have engaged the "I Have A Dream" Foundation as an advisory partner because of their success in building an innovative series of partnerships in establishing the Earl Boyles School.

I have maintained from the outset that this project can move the university closer to a

realization of its mission than has ever been possible before. The university's mission is to prepare leaders for the transformation of society. Currently, the university places upwards of 300 students each semester in servant leader roles at Faubion. (The university also places many other undergraduate students at other sites throughout Portland.) Having the opportunity to actually work in the field is critical to realizing the mission. The hands-on experience can only occur through deployment in the field. Concordia University can and will bring a variety of resources to bear in this project – fundraising, management, innovative educational ideas and practices, other partners, among others – but it is the servant leadership effect that no else can offer. It is the university's "secret sauce" and incredibly is a resource of which the university has in abundance.

Why is this so important? Because it speaks to the breadth and the depth of the project. This is not something being built narrowly to only serve the School of Education at Concordia University and the children at Faubion School in their work together to demonstrate better classroom performance. On the contrary, 3 to Ph.D. demands that the entire community be engaged because it will take that much to build a safer, healthier, more educated community. So much more is required to position students for a successful classroom experience. Children will learn so much better if they aren't hungry, if they have a place to sleep, if they are receiving medical care and mental health service. We believe we have captured what is necessary to achieve our mission of a safer, healthier, more educated community. Now, in much the same way as Jennifer McCrea, we have set about finding others who want to make a difference with their life.

As our ideas have taken shape and been molded through our Theory of Change model, the project has become clearer. Now, instead of us seeking conversations, conversations are starting to come to us. The substance that was required a year ago is arriving through the development of our model and through the partners we have invited to join us. People readily get it about what it is we are trying to accomplish. The diagrams and the text convey what we are seeking to impart.

As partners join us, we are building capacity within the philanthropy sector. This capacity is being built through collective impact that, as the catalyst question suggests, "rallies teams from many organizations." We have long-believed that if our project is substantial, the money will follow. We have \$15.5m to raise for the capital side of 3 to Ph.D. Such an amount is as large as any the university has ever attempted to raise for a single project. What those dollars will build is only relevant if the buildings provide a home for the ability to create a safer, healthier, more educated community. We will be successful in raising the money to the extent that the project reflects the desire of potential philanthropists to make a difference with their lives. On that our future rests.



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