



*During FEG's 2023 Investment Forum, Senior Vice President and Advisor Stephen Hodson moderated a panel discussion focused on trends in enrollment; name, image and likeness (NIL); and investment sourcing. The panelists represented a mix of higher education institutions from across the country. The session kicked off with a game-day-style tee-shirt toss!*

## **ENROLLMENT TRENDS**

The panelists identified several emerging trends in fundraising and enrollment, including an increase in recruitment, alumni gatherings, and collaborations with admissions offices; declining enrollment nationwide; and an emphasis on providing technology to students. Specifically, the theme of collaborative vs. competitive recruiting was raised, leading to a discussion on approaches that can lift regional institutions. Panelists discussed the aging donor population and the growing community of online learners who are less connected to a campus. One panelist also mentioned that younger alumni are more frequently directing their gifts toward specific programs rather than the institution as a whole.

*FEG services 45 higher education institutions,<sup>1</sup> creating a network that clients can tap into to share best practices.*

## **Name, Image and Likeness (NIL)**

Next the panelists discussed NIL. One of the most popular ways for institutions to make money under NIL is through social media endorsements. Panelists pointed out that a collective—an organization that allows college athletes to collectively manage and monetize their NIL rights—has the advantage of negotiating on behalf of the group, instead of requiring individual athletes to manage their own respective deals. In addition to providing better leverage, collectives have helped promote fairness and equity among athletes, especially in team sports where some players may have more significant NIL opportunities than others.

## **Sourcing**

One of the panelists highlighted the value of continuously networking with peers to share ideas. A university CIO mentioned the significance of finding newer strategies, including campus tech-transfer. Another CIO shared they often contact alumni to gain access to innovative investments and co-investments.

Other topics raised included: communication with boards and donors during periods of volatility; building strong internship programs; investing in a successful advisor partnership; using artificial intelligence; and managing cash.

## **Key Takeaways**

- Stick to your strategy and communicate well during volatile markets rather than make material changes.
- Provide donors with a creative menu of options to get engaged.
- Work with peer institutions more collaboratively rather than competitively so all can succeed.
- How an institution responds to trends determines whether the trends are challenges or evolutionary opportunities.

### DISCLOSURES:

<sup>1</sup>As of June 30, 2023

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