Table Topic 9
Telling our Story: Working with Advancement
Co-Facilitators: Kent Clark & Brenda Flannery

Participants: 12 (six each session)

Key Discussion Points:

A. Two Principles of Working with Advancement
   1. Advancement isn’t free.
   2. Advancement is about communication. Specifically, telling the story of vision, opportunities, and impact.

B. Staff and faculty all across campus have dreams, initiatives, and projects they want to advance. As such, the first step is to articulate that idea. All participants shared their ideas with many focused on the engagement of the broad university community, including current students and alumni. A number of project ideas included creating networks of alumni to support specific student cohorts (e.g., international students and student employees).

C. There is a maturity curve for donors and their gifts. MSU is positioned to begin to move from “transactional” gifts from donors (e.g., individual scholarships) to “transformational” gifts (e.g., endowed chairs). Donors are increasingly seeing their gifts as investments and as such, expect a return on investment that includes impact outcomes/deliverables, especially the impact on student learning and development.

D. There is an advancement cycle that includes the important activities associated with stewardship. All gifts (including those of time) need to be recognized and celebrated with individuals wanting to see the impact of their gifts.

E. Putting ourselves in the “eyes of the viewer” (e.g., the donor) is important. A table case study emerged (i.e., Campus Beautification) and was used to discuss the dynamics and opportunities associated with the annual spring flower planting event.

F. Advancement initiatives are a wonderful opportunity to support, connect, and create community.

Recommended Actions or Next Steps: When working with Advancement:
a. Begin the advancement partnership with the understanding that it will require an investment of your unit’s time and resources.

b. Begin the advancement partnership with an articulated dream, initiative, or project.