



# Bringing Your Endowment to Life: Three Best Practices to Engage and Inspire Donors

The Power of Permanence: A Two-Part Endowment Series



# The Power of Permanence: A Two-Part Endowment Series

01

## Bringing Your Endowment Practice to Life

May 20, 2026

12:00 – 12:45 PM EST

02

## Who Gives to Endowment and Why

June 24, 2026

12:00 – 12:45 PM EST

# Today's Speaker



**Suzanne Eden**

Partner  
**CCS Fundraising**



# About CCS Fundraising

## A Trusted Strategic Fundraising Consulting Firm

### 75+ Years

Most recommended strategic fundraising consulting firm

### 800 Client Partners

We work with nearly 800 nonprofit organizations each year

### 600+ Professional Staff

Largest and most experienced staff among leading firms

### 15 Offices

Throughout the United States and across the globe

### 10x Return

Our client partners experience five to more than ten times return on their investment

### \$32.4B Campaign Goals

CCS manages over \$32.4B in cumulative campaign goals each year

## 8 Core Services

- Campaign Planning & Feasibility Studies
- Data Analytics Audits & Assessments
- Training & Leadership
- Campaign Management
- Strategic Planning & Development Projects
- Systems & Change Management
- Interim Development Management

# Today's Agenda

01

Polling & Why Endowment Storytelling Matters

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02

**Best Practice #1:** Center the Endowment Story in Mission, Not Mechanics

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03

**Best Practice #2:** Make Endowment Tangible Through Naming & Visibility

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04

**Best Practice #3:** Bring Endowment Impact into Everyday Donor Communications

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05

Key Takeaways and Q&A

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Bringing Your Endowment to Life

# Why Endowment Storytelling Matters

A quick **pulse check**...

# Common questions



"Why endowment?"

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"Why not just give to the annual fund?"

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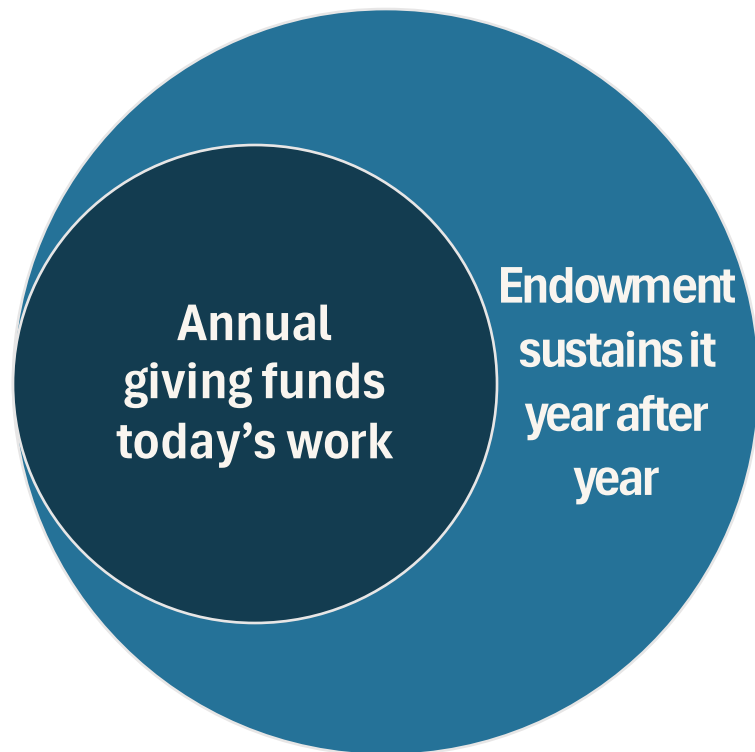


"Is that money just sitting around?"

Bringing Your Endowment to Life

# Best Practice #1: Center the Endowment Story in Mission, Not Mechanics

# Endowment doesn't compete with annual giving - it sustains it



## Deficit-based positioning

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Endowment is what keeps the organization running when conditions get hard — a bad economy, an unexpected budget gap, a tough fundraising year

## Asset-based positioning

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Endowment allows us to meet a greater need because we have more resources to deploy

# Which one moves you?



## Mechanics

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"Our endowment has a current valuation of \$25M and a 4.5% draw."



## Mission

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"Each gift of **\$1 million** to our endowment provides a **full scholarship** for a student who would otherwise not be able to experience all our college has to offer."

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"Our endowment ensures we can keep our museum open **6 days a week**, even during economic uncertainty."

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"Each year, **20%** of our operating expenses are covered through endowment, giving us the **freedom to be innovative.**"

# The story only works if donors can see themselves in it:



Show a story or a program, not a fund balance or draw rate



One image of a human recipient or beneficiary  
> a graph of endowment growth



Answer the “why endowment?” question  
before donors have to ask it

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# Best Practice #2: Make Endowment Tangible Through Naming & Visibility

# Naming is where visibility becomes meaning



**Step 1:**  
Gift



**Step 2:**  
Donor recognition\*



**Step 3:**  
Legacy

*\*In alignment with thoughtful policies, minimum thresholds, and rationale*

# Naming opportunities exist across every sector



# One school grew its endowment by ~70%.

## But how?

- 1** Spotlighted naming opportunities (e.g., named scholarships) in donor conversations
- 2** Shifted the framing: endowed gifts aren't just for estates, they're for now
- 3** Actively stewarded donors via student profiles



# Naming isn't just recognition, it's a cultivation tool:



Gives donors something tangible to point to



Gives donors a way to make something permanent



Makes the endowment feel like theirs

Bringing Your Endowment to Life

# Best Practice #3: Bring Endowment into Everyday Donor Communications

Do your donors currently  
receive any kind of  
**regular endowment  
update or mention?**

# Where does endowment live in your communications right now?

When endowment only lives in specialized materials, donors can assume it's separate from the work they love.



## Siloed

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Planned giving brochure only

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Buried in a website tab

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Board finance packet

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Specialized one-pager



## Integrated

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Annual report

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Donor letters

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Program updates

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Stewardship calls

# Endowment impact belongs in the communications you're already sending

Named faculty or staff positions

Program updates and newsletters

Campaign microsites and cases for support

Board and leadership communications

Donor letters and stewardship updates

Website "Impact" or "Future Vision" sections

***Endowment enables sustainability, flexibility, acceleration, and freedom***

# 3 habits that make endowment part of your everyday story

*Before you leave today, pick one:*



## One annual snapshot

A single image or short paragraph linking endowment to a specific outcome or person (not a financial summary)



## Light, recurring mentions

In leadership remarks or donor letters, let's normalize it: "Our endowment helps ensure stability year to year."



## One story

A brief program or donor story that makes the endowment human and tangible

Want to go deeper?

# Q&A



Thank You

