Fundamentals of the Nonprofit Sector

PUBM 586 – Fall Quarter 2008

Section I: Garrand 112. Wednesday evenings 6:00 to 8:40.
   9/24, 10/1, 10/8, 10/15, 10/22, 10/29, 11/5, 11/12, 11/19, 12/3

Section II: Pigott 307. Thursday evenings 6:00 to 8:40.
   9/25, 10/2, 10/9, 10/16, 10/23, 10/30, 11/6, 11/13, 11/20, 12/4

Overview

- PUBM 586 offers a broad review of the scope, character and functioning of nonprofits and their work in the United States as well as of the challenges and opportunities they face. It is one of several courses on topics related to nonprofits offered in the MPA and MFA programs. (They can be taken in any order.)
- Student teams create a profile of an imaginary organization derived from class materials and review of public information about operating nonprofits. Based on that research, each team contributes information and insights in activities throughout the quarter.
- We will also use written case studies as sources of data about problems that arise among nonprofits.

Outline

September 24 & 25 – Introducing the Topic
October 1 & 2 – Perceptions, Distinctions and Commonalities
October 8 & 9 – Logic Models & Functions
October 15 & 16 – NPOs as Business Enterprises
October 22 & 23 – Governance and Finances
October 29 & 30 – The Successful Nonprofit
November 5 & 6 – Roots and Transformations
November 12 & 13 – Accountability; Civil Society
November 19 & 20 – Essential Roles of NPOs and Approaches to Social Justice
December 3 & 4 – Challenges and Responses; The Future

Instructors

Putnam Barber (putnam.barber@gmail.com; 206-250-2268) is the public policy advisor to Executive Alliance (www.exec-alliance.org) and editor of the Nonprofit FAQ (www.nonprofits.org) for Action Without Borders / Idealist.org. He has taught about nonprofits in the IPS program for more than a decade and is a frequent speaker and commentator on nonprofits. He serves on the board of the Thomas C. Wales Foundation and is an advisor to the American Law Institute project to prepare for publication The Principles of the Law of Nonprofit Organizations.

Robbie Rohr (rkrohr@gmail.com; 206-419-6736) has been a leader in the nonprofit community for over 25 years in both paid and community positions. She is currently the principal of R K Rohr Consulting, assisting organizations to fully envision their potential and strategize to fulfill it. She has served as Executive Director of four nonprofits, the most recent being as founding Director of Executive Alliance, a membership association whose mission is to advance a powerful nonprofit sector supporting vibrant communities and economies. She has an MSW in administration and planning from the University of Washington. Robbie has held board leadership positions in the areas of social justice, domestic violence, mental health, GLBT organizing and currently serves on Seattle University’s MNPL Visiting Committee and as Treasurer of Hedgebrook, a women writer’s retreat.

Office hours by arrangement. Email is usually answered by the end of each working day.
Materials

Required Text:

Readings:
Electronic Hallway, “2V/ACT: Planning for Change and Determining Relevance” (case prepared by Beth L. Lovelady, The Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington). (Email)

Electronic Hallway, “The Bankruptcy of the San Antonio Symphony” (case prepared by Christopher G. Reddick, Department of Public Administration, The University of Texas at San Antonio). (Email)

Online readings are listed in “Resources and Background Materials.” Unless otherwise indicated, these online materials are required readings for the course.

Other
For the duration of the class, subscribe to the listserv called ARNOVA-L from the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. Monitor and, if desired, participate in the discussions. See www.arnova.org/?section=sections&subsection=listserve.

Grading

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<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Participation in class discussions and activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Project #1 (Definition of “nonprofit” and notes)</td>
<td>9/24 or 9/25</td>
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<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Project #2 (Popular impressions)</td>
<td>10/1 or 10/2</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>Project #3 (Presentation on public goods)</td>
<td>10/8 or 10/9</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>Project #4 (Description using logic model)</td>
<td>10/8 or 10/9</td>
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<td>Project #5 (YNPO logic model)</td>
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<td>Project #6 (Exploring of an operating function)</td>
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<td>Project #7 (Operating function challenges)</td>
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<td>50</td>
<td>Project #8 (Methods of being accountable)</td>
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<td>Project #9 (Accountability of an organization)</td>
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<td>Project #10 (Final paper)</td>
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An ‘A’ represents quality professional work, providing information and presented in a style one would associate with a professional. One could rely on this work not only to understand a topic, but make decisions based on it. A grade in the ‘B’ range represents work at the graduate student level. Shortcomings in content or presentation
distinguish such work from ‘A’ level work. ‘C’ work is not at the graduate level. Whether for reasons of content or presentation, such work demonstrates serious shortcomings.

Notes

Academic Honesty:
Seattle University is committed to the principle that academic honesty and integrity are important values in the educational process. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense against the academic community. Acts of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to the Academic Honesty Policy.

Attendance Policy:
From the IPS Program Handbook: “As a general rule, students are required to attend at least 80% of scheduled class sessions to receive credit for an MPA course. At their discretion, and as indicated in a course’s syllabus, faculty may require a higher rate of attendance or may permit absences only for particular reasons. Under extenuating circumstances and upon request, the instructor of a course may waive the 80% rule for an individual student. As an option to denying credit or reducing the grade for excessive absence, instructors may choose to offer the student the option of completing additional work to compensate for missed classes.”

For PUBM 586, students are expected to attend and participate in all classes. A student who is unable to do so because of an unavoidable conflict must contact the instructors as soon as possible with a suggestion of how to make up the learning and participation that will be missed. Note also that it will be impossible to award full credit for in-class team participation to a student who is not present.

ADA Statement:
If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an ‘invisible disability’ such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100, (206) 296-5740. Disability-based adjustments to course expectations can be arranged only through this process.

Projects

Project #1 (individual project): (Definition of “nonprofit” and notes) Using reference texts or online resources, search for a clear and useful definition of the term “nonprofit”. Transcribe the definition (and its source or sources) for use during class. Also explore NonprofitSpeak 101 and some or all of the other online materials listed in Class #1 (on page 5). Make notes of any questions you have and of interesting or curious things for reference during class discussion. One or two typewritten pages with the transcription of the definition and your notes of questions and observations is to be handed to the instructor at the end of class.

Project #2 (individual project): (Popular impressions) Write a report on popular impressions of nonprofit organizations based on conversations with people not directly connected to nonprofits or their work. Interview at least three people in different circumstances about their responses to words like “nonprofit,” “nonprofit organization,” “foundation,” and “charitable organization” or “a charity”. Prepare and bring to class a written report of two or more pages describing what you heard and be prepared to contribute to in-class discussion with examples of the more interesting comments and perceptions. Due in Class #2 (see page 6).

Project #3 (team project): (Presentation on public goods) Present in class an oral report on the services performed by YNPO¹. For each service, describe the benefits it delivers, distinguishing between “private” and

¹ “YNPO” is an acronym for “Your Nonprofit Organization”. It is used throughout the course to refer to the imaginary nonprofits developed by small groups (or “teams”) based on information provided by the instructors or research by the members of the team.
“public” goods. Conclude with a discussion of the overall impact of YNPO’s work describing clearly the public benefit it produces. This report should last no more than 10 minutes. To be presented in Class #2 (see page 6).

**Project #4 (individual project):** (Description of NPOs using the logic model) Using the topics for a logic model (to be distributed) as an outline, research three organizations with similar missions and services to those of YNPO (online, through interviews or by reviewing written materials) and summarize their work in outline form. Hand in one typewritten page for each organization at the end of Class #3 (see page 6).

**Project #5 (team project):** (YNPO Logic Model) During class, YNPO teams will develop and present a logic model for YNPO. The report should last no more than 10 minutes. Obviously, the description of YNPO cannot be based on facts; it must nevertheless be plausible and have a clear relationship to the actual organizations reviewed in the research part of this project. To be presented in Class #3 (see page 6).

**Project #6 (individual project):** (Exploring an operating function) For the function chosen in Class #3 (1/8 or 10/9; see page 6) write a summary of several useful articles, webpages or texts that offer “how to” advice or interesting discussions for nonprofit managers. Identify four things about this function that are particularly challenging for NPOs and, drawing on the sources you found as much as possible, suggest one or two possible ways to address them. Use for the discussion in Project #7 and turn in to the instructor at the end of Class #4 (see page 7).

**Project #7 (in class exercise):** (Operating function challenges) In a small group with others who researched the same function, prepare a brief presentation on top three to four challenges/opportunities and ways to address. Present in Class #4 (see page7).

**Project #8 (individual project):** (Methods of being accountable) Prepare an annotated outline in two or three typewritten pages listing and explaining at least five ways a nonprofit organization can be accountable. Use this outline as you and the members of your team prepare the report for Project #9. Due at Class #8 (see page 10).

**Project #9 (team project):** (Accountability of an organization) Working with your team, present in class an oral report on the ways YNPO is accountable. Include the results of online research and review of similar organizations’ public documents, Form 990, etc. Include the team’s comments and reactions on the character and effectiveness of the way those organizations appear and present themselves. This report should last no more than 10 minutes. Present in Class #8 (see page 10).

**Project #10 (individual project):** (Final paper) Starting with the categories and analysis in Lester Solomon’s chapter “The Resilient Sector” (see the reading for Class #1 on page 5), discuss what you consider the most serious challenges and the greatest opportunities facing America’s nonprofits in general today. (Do not limit your discussion to the fiscal challenge, which is often described as having effects of one sort or another for nearly every operating nonprofit.) Are there other challenges and opportunities (related to nonprofit status) that are also important for nonprofits in general, across the full range of such organizations? How do these challenges correspond to the issues discussed for ‘successful nonprofits’ in Class #6 (see page 8).

Then consider how the challenges and opportunities you have identified as generally important could be reflected in the specific conditions affecting YNPO. What could be the most important challenges and opportunities this organizations faces? Refer to discussions and examples gathered during the quarter.

This paper is to be typed and have no more than 15 pages. All sources must be cited using standard academic form. A single page outline is due in Class #9 (11/19 or 11/20; see page 10); sending by email before the start of class will make it easier for the instructors to provide timely feedback. The finished paper is due in the IPS office by the end of the business day December 8; may be submitted earlier online.
Class #1 (9/24 & 9/25): INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

How the course is organized and key concepts
Perspectives of the two instructors
Meanings of key terms
Overview of the size and scope of services of the nonprofit sector in the US
Sources of data and further information

Resources and Background Materials
Read:
   Lester Salamon, “The Resilient Sector: The State of Nonprofit America” (chapter summary); online at snipurl.com/3l1jj

Explore and come to class with notes of interesting discoveries and/or questions:

And one or more of:
   The Nonprofit Sector in Brief: Findings from the 2007 Nonprofit Almanac; online at www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311373_nonprofit_sector.pdf
   National Center for Charitable Statistics “Frequently Asked Questions”; online at nccs.urban.org/resources/faq.cfm
   Searchable databases of nonprofits at www.ideal.org and www.guidestar.org
   The Nonprofit FAQ (a service of Idealist.org); online at www.nonprofits.org

Activities before the class
Prepare report described in Project #1 (see page 3)

Objectives
   • Become familiar with the range of subjects that will be covered in the class
   • Review and discuss various definitions of “nonprofit”
   • List and consider the core concepts related to nonprofit organizations
   • Take note of the scope, and the limits, of the statistical and others sorts of information about nonprofits
   • Review key terms that are used in discussions of and research on NPOs; investigate any that are unfamiliar
   • Explore the basics of how nonprofits are organized and operated
   • Gain introductory knowledge and perspective on ‘public goods”

Activities during class
   • List a variety of NPOs that have affected the lives of the people in the room
   • Discuss Project #1 (see page 3)
   • Form teams and discuss YNPOs
   • Develop preliminary description of YNPO based on tagline
   • Discuss outline of a logic model (handout) and clarify assignment for class #3
   • Clarify assignment for Class #2

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2 See footnote 1 on page 3.
Class #2 (10/1 & 10/2): PERCEPTIONS, DISTINCTIONS AND COMMONALITIES

Popular Perceptions of NPOs
Distinctive features
Legal framework
Political activities
Public goods

Resources and Background Materials
Wikipedia: “Public Good” at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_good

Activities before the class
Collect and summarize popular perceptions of NPOs as described in Project #2 (see page 3); prepare to give the report described in Project #3 (see page 3)

Objectives
- Understanding of public perceptions of NPOs
- Explore the sense in which nonprofits represent a distinctive form of organization
- Identify and explore the distinctive features of NPOs as organizations, including:
  - Production of public goods
  - Tax exemptions
  - Limits on political activities
  - Public scrutiny

Activities during class
- Comparisons and contrasts between popular perceptions, the readings and research
- Discussion distinctive characteristics of nonprofits
- Legalisms
- Lobbying, electioneering and advocacy
- Project #3 (see page 3) team presentations

Class #3 (10/8 & 10/9): LOGIC MODELS & FUNCTIONS

Logic Models
Main organizing components of nonprofits (mission, goals, services....)
Listing of key operating functions of NPOs

Resources and Background Materials
JB: Chapter Two. Jon Van Til “Nonprofit Organizations and Social Institutions”
JB: Chapter Fifteen. Steven Rathgeb Smith, “Managing the Challenges of Government Contracts”
Activities before the class
Prepare the paper described in Project #4 (see page 3) to assist in developing the report described in Project #5 (see page 4).

Objectives
• Explore ‘logic models’ as essential tools for achieving mission, accountability and marketing
• Explore the basics of how nonprofits are organized and operated
• Discuss how these vary by various types and sizes of NPOs

Activities during class
• Discussion of logic models and organizing components of NPOs
• Choice of an operating function to research for Project #6 (see page 4): volunteer engagement, program evaluation, fund development, collaboration
• Small group work on understanding organizing components
• Project #4 (see page 4): Paper due at end of class
• Project #5 (see page 4): In class, team develop logic model for YNPO for class discussion

CLASS #4 (10/15 & 10/16): NPOs as Business Enterprises

Overview of differentiating and shared characteristics of nonprofits and for-profits
How NPOs run: operating functions
Bottom lines
Social Enterprise
Roles of competition and collaboration

Resources and Background Materials
Read:
JB: Chapter Twelve. Brenda Gainer, Mel S. Moyer, “Marketing for Nonprofit Managers”
JB: Chapter Thirteen (to page 320). Jeffrey L. Brudney, “Designing and Managing Volunteer Programs”
JB: Chapter Eleven, John Yankey and Carol Willen, “Strategic Alliances”
Carol Lukas and Rebecca Andrews, “Four Keys to Collaboration Success”.
www.fieldstonealliance.org/client/articles/Article-4_Key_Collab_Success.cfm

Activities before the class
Prepare the paper described in Project #6 (see page 3) to assist in developing the report described in Project #7 (see page 4).

Objectives
• Explore differences and similarities of operating nonprofit and for-profit businesses
• Understand the complexity of managing a nonprofit organization
• Discussion of key functions in NPO operations
• Explore issues related to the ‘business’ aspects of NPOs

Activities during class
• Project #6 (see page 4): Submit paper at end of class
• Small group work on understanding operating functions
• Project #7 (see page 4): Preparation and presentation of reports on operating functions
• Speaker or Panel on running a complex business

CLASS #5 (10/22 & 10/23): GOVERNANCE AND FINANCES

Patterns of NPO operations and finances
Legal role of board of directors

Resources and Background Materials

Read:
  Ryan, William P., Richard P. Chait, and Barbara E. Taylor, “Problem Boards or Board Problems?”
  Nonprofit Quarterly, 10:2, Summer 2003; online at www.nonprofitquarterly.org/content/view/36/28/
  Miller, Clara, “The Looking-Glass World of Nonprofit Money: Managing in For-Profits’ Shadow Universe?” Nonprofit Quarterly, 12:1, Spring 2005; online at www.nonprofitquarterly.org/content/view/32/28/
  Electronic Hallway: “The Bankruptcy of the San Antonio Symphony” (to be provided by email)

Objectives
• Relate expectations for board performance to the challenges of nonprofit operations
• Identify key features of nonprofit financial management and discuss sources of financial difficulties

Activities during class
• Explore the options facing the San Antonio Symphony
• Anecdotes and discussion of NPO board meeting experiences
• Midway evaluations & feedback

CLASS #6 (10/29 & 10/30): THE SUCCESSFUL NONPROFIT

Evolving perspectives on ‘successful’ NPOs
Tools for achieving and measuring success: strategic planning and agency evaluation
New ways of thinking
Cross-sector collaborations
Embracing change, adaptability and innovation

Resources and Background Materials

Read:
• Heather McLeod Grant and Leslie R. Crutchfield. “Creating High Impact Nonprofits”. Online at foundationcenter.org/pnd/ssir/ssir_item.jhtml?id=189500041
• JB: Chapter Fourteen. Vic Murray, “Evaluating the Effectiveness of Nonprofit Organizations”
  Seattle Foundation, “A Healthy Community: What You Need to Know to Give Strategically”. To be distributed.
• Social Inventions Group, “Unleashing the Power of Social Invention” (first three introductory paragraphs). Online at socialinvention.net/default.aspx
• Social Inventions Group, “Nine Organizing Principles and Insights from Complexity Science.” Online at socialinvention.net/Principles.aspx
Keith McCandless & Jim Smith, “Surprise & Serendipity At Work: Managing the Unknowable Future.” Online at snipurl.com/3qj1s [socialinvention_net]

Electronic Hallway, “2V/ACT: Planning for Change and Determining Relevance” (to be provided by email)

Objectives
- Gain exposure to the evolving perspectives and theories of a ‘successful NPO’
- Understand the importance to NPOs of being open to new ways of thinking and doing
- Consider the roles and methods of conducting strategic planning and agency evaluation

Activities during class
- Team exercise on opportunities for YNPO to engage in cross-sector collaboration
- Speaker on “Tools for Success”
- Discussion of Case Study on 2V/ACT

CLASS #7 (11/5 & 11/6): ROOTS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

What are the roots of the present status and roles of NPOs
How has the role of NPOs in the US changed over time?
Statistical profiles of the roles of NPOs

Resources and Background Materials

Read:
- JB: Chapter One. Peter Dobkin Hall, “Historical Perspectives on Nonprofit Organizations in the United States”
- de Toqueville, Alexis, Democracy in America, Book II, §29 "Of the Use Which the Americans Make of Public Associations in Civil Life" (1835); online at snipurl.com/tocq [etext_lib_virginia_edu]
- Nonprofits in Washington 2008 Update at tools.evans.washington.edu/research/nbec/resources.php

Review:
- National Taxonomy of Exempt Organizations (NTEE); see nccsdatalweb.urban.org/PubApps/nteeSearch.php?gQry=all-core&codeType=NPC

Objectives
- Identify several key points about the history of NPOs in the US
- Explore the continuities and disjunctions in the development of the modern role of NPOs
- Examine the statistical profiles and other generalizations about contemporary NPOs in the US and highlight puzzling and noteworthy patterns
- Reflect on how YNPO would fit into these patterns and on the connections between YNPO and the overall framework of nonprofits in America

Activities during class
- Assess the scope and impact of community services provided by NPOs
- Match services provided by YNPO with the aggregate information on similar organizations in Nonprofits in Washington and at NCCS
CLASS #8 (11/12 & 11/13): ACCOUNTABILITY; CIVIL SOCIETY

Accountability concepts and practices
Civil society and the nonprofit sector

Resources and Background Materials

Read:
- Light, Paul C., “‘Nonprofit-like’ Tongue Twister or Aspiration?” Nonprofit Quarterly, 8:2 (Summer 2001); online at www.nonprofitquarterly.org/content/view/123/28/

Explore:
- ECFA “Standards” and one or more of the “watchdogs” mentioned in “Rating the Raters.”

Activities before the class

Prepare the paper described in Project #8 (see page 4) and to give the report described in Project #9 (see page 4)

Objectives

- Consider the powers and the limitations of accountability as an instrument for achieving policy goals
- Explore the concept of accountability and current interest in expanding related NPO activities
- Examine the reports of “Watchdogs” and consider their utility
- Relate the idea of civil society to the concept of the nonprofit sector

Activities during class

- Discuss the connections between NPOs in general and YNPO in particular with the concept of civil society
- Project #8 (see page 4): Memo due by end of day
- Project #9 (see page 4): In class team presentation today

CLASS #9 (11/19 & 11/20): ESSENTIAL ROLES OF NPOS AND APPROACHES TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Importance of the nonprofit sector to thriving communities and economies
- Professional leadership – within the organization, the community and the sector
- Approaches to social change and social justice

Resources and Background Materials

Read:
- Lester Solomon, Nonprofits in America, “Civic Participation and Advocacy.” (Source to be provided)
Activities before the class
Prepare an outline of your Final Paper (see Project #10 on page 4)

Objectives
- Understand why nonprofits are essential to healthy communities and thriving economies
- Explore evolving expectations of professional leadership in NPOs
- Understand breadth of ways to promote social justice, and gain exposure to salient issues

Activities during class
- Panel of leaders on social change and social justice
- Turn in outline of Project #10 (see page 4)

CLASS #10 (12/3 & 12/4): CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES; THE FUTURE

Trends affecting the sector
Trends affecting nonprofit organizations
Tying it all together

Resources and Background Materials
Re-read:
Lester Solomon, “The Resilient Sector: The State of Nonprofit America” (chapter summary); online at snipurl.com/3l1jj (Same assignment as for Class #1)

Objectives
- Discussion of the challenges and opportunities faced by YNPO and by US nonprofits in general
- Compare and contrast the challenges and opportunities as presented by Lester Solomon with the conditions affecting the work of YNPO
- Review and Q&A on the content of the entire course

Activities during class
- In small groups, select and discuss one important challenge and one important opportunity for nonprofits in general.
- As a group, re-address the public perceptions of NPOs—how would you address them now?
- Class evaluations

Project #10: Final paper due December 8 (by email or in the IPS office). (See page 4)
Volunteering is an important component of the nonprofit sector: over two-fifths of public charities rely on volunteers. Using data from the Current Population Survey and the American Time Use Survey, this section discusses the distribution of average volunteer time by activity (figure 5) as well as the number of volunteers, the amount of hours volunteered, and the economic. The Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP) is the largest systematic effort ever undertaken to analyze the scope, structure, financing, and role of the private nonprofit sector in countries around the world in order to enrich our understanding of this sector, and to provide a sounder basis for both public and private action towards it. This revolution forced a reappraisal of the respective roles of the market and the state focused new attention on the role of private, nonprofit organizations; however, despite this growing importance, these organizations remained poorly understood almost everywhere, making it difficult to determine their capabilities or to attract attention to their challenges. By offering crucial insights on the fundamentals of nonprofit management, this book will help leaders equip their organizations to fire on all cylinders and unleash the full potential of the nonprofit sector. Selected Editorial Reviews. Bill Meehan and Kim Jonker have written a playbook for those who are not satisfied with doing some good, but want to do as much good as they can with their time and talents. This is a vital topic, and I'm excited to see how the next generation of nonprofit leaders applies the ideas and insights in this book. Cari Tuna, President, Good Ventures, and Managin