

12 Resolutions For Savvy Foundations from four of SECF's most respected veterans

One of the most talked-about sessions at the 2010 Annual Meeting was a leadership discussion among foundation leaders Dr. Karl Stauber, Danville Regional Foundation; Dr. Sherry Magill, Jessie Ball duPont Fund; Dr. Sherece West, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation; and Gene Cochrane, The Duke Endowment. To capitalize even more on the collective wisdom of this venerable panel, we asked what advice they would give to foundations for 2011.

1 Think more clearly about the careers of our staff. How do we adequately prepare mid-level people to be ready for even more responsible positions, especially as it often means being closer to trustees and their needs?

2 Think about younger staff. Philanthropy will be very different in 10 years than it is today. For example, will foundations share program officers that have deep experience in one area? How will foundations keep the experiences for younger staff changing every several years?

3 Learn to communicate better to trustees about their role in assisting staff in the development and execution of policy, especially when it takes the foundation in new, more public areas and issues.

4 Become an advocate and agent for significant change in an area that is important to your community. Commit your foundation to working in partnership to invest in and see change over time – no matter how challenging.

5 Resolve to listen to grantees and stakeholders and developing programs and strategies relevant to their change agenda.

6 Understand the local political players, local philanthropic players, local business players, and play the role of bringing folks together around the tough, huge, systemic issues facing a community, such as job creation or economic stability. Be willing to pool resources and bring those to the table as the source of incubation money, etc., in an effort to jumpstart some things that we must do.

7 Be prepared to advocate for the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors, knowing full well that an assault no doubt is coming, particularly from local governments and state governments looking to trim budgets and raise capital.

8 Share your lessons and the work of grantees – good and bad – with your community and philanthropy.

9 Invite peers from around the country to learn about your work and you learn about theirs. Be intentional about learning from and growing

with others in the country who are steeped in similar challenges and opportunities.

10 Get better at explaining the differences between philanthropy (growing prosperity) and charity (reducing suffering). They are both important, related, but are different standards for our work – and most people don't understand the difference.

11 Explore new ideas and ways to help people, families and communities get beyond mere survival or subsistence to prosperity. What are the new routes to progress? The old ones no longer seem to work for many. What's our role in helping to create those routes? How can we help create new ones that helps lift hard working families and individuals out of poverty and into the middle class.

12 Remember that credibility is earned, not purchased. That often does not mean doing what is popular, but it does mean doing what makes a real difference.



Karl Stauber



Sherry Magill



Sherece West



Gene Cochrane