

## Note from the Editor

I work as an adult educator for a local school district, and recently the faculty was asked to submit ideas for spending extra money. Yes, you read that correctly. In the midst of this ever-lengthening financial crisis, there are opportunities to be had. A spirited administrative team, a responsive staff, a mission of community service, and a willingness to compete aggressively with other schools for funding has brought recognition and extra money to our campus.

The process of thinking about how to utilize the additional funds has prompted a reevaluation of the ways in which instruction can be delivered. A multitude of new technologies offers many avenues for exploring content. The teachers have had to envision a classroom without limits, or at least without the limits we usually face.

The MESC Essentials program described in this issue of *EdLine* grapples with these same concerns—funding programs and delivering content. If my school experience is any guide, being competitive and thinking creatively are two ways that museum education departments can address the continuing economic slump.

—Gregory A. Dobie, Editor  
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## Pulling Museum Education's Purse Strings

*A budget and finance workshop for museum educators by Faith Raiguel*  
Saturday, February 27, 2010 • 9:00 a.m. • Pomona College, Claremont

Claremont Graduate University's Drucker School of Management hosted MESC's winter event, part of the MESC Essentials series. Faith Raiguel, chief financial officer of the Los Angeles Opera and an adjunct professor at the Drucker School, provided valuable insights on how museum education departments can work toward maximizing their budgets during these critical financial times.

Prior to the event, Raiguel requested that participants submit their own financial issues so that she could address them during the course of the program. She began the workshop with a lecture to outline the precarious position that many museum education departments find themselves in and concluded the program with a breakout session that focused on practical solutions.

According to Raiguel, the arts are dying in the public schools because of the downturn in the economy and the increased emphasis on standardized testing. So now not-for-profits are having to pick up the slack in this important area in students' education. However, in the middle of this financial crisis some issues have arisen at almost every institution:

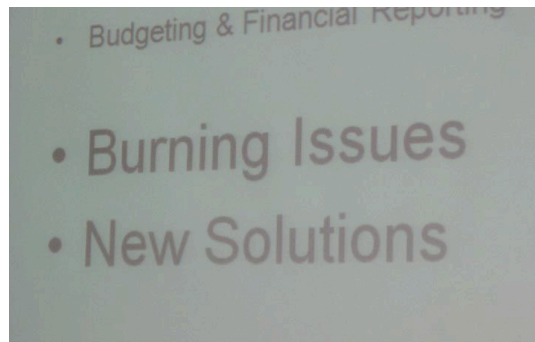
- ❖ how to maintain the integrity of the program when demand (and so cost) is up and endowments and contributions (and so budgets) are down
- ❖ how to respond to the emotional ties to stale programs when forced to cut things for budgetary reasons
- ❖ how to develop a big picture, or "forest," strategy when constantly dealing with the "trees"



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Raiguel pushed for practical and thoughtful responses to these issues. She emphasized the need for evaluation in meaningful and honest ways. But she cautioned institutions against using evaluation to chase funding. Even when the economy is good, this is an issue that is at the forefront of many departments' minds. Grants continue to be a major source of programmatic funding, but Raiguel has seen programs twisted to fit grant guidelines, leading to mission drift—losing the department's mission in the search for funds. She urged meeting attendees to walk away from funding that doesn't fit the program. Instead, leverage resources in a creative new way or rethink the mission. Look at how the department's mission fits into that of the larger organization. Raiguel asserted that although the education department is often seen as ancillary—not exhibition based or curatorial—it is often used by the larger institution to secure grant money. Education department budgets are small, compact, and discrete, whereas a curatorial budget is large and can be spread out over several fiscal years in order to fund exhibitions. This leads to the temptation on the part of the administration to cut education's budget in order to fund larger departments that are seen to be more central to the organization's mission. And, although the economy might bounce back in the next few years, it is unlikely that money taken from a budget now will ever be restored, so education departments must get used to working with smaller staffs and fewer supplies but with more demands and consistently higher expectations.

Raiguel then gave a brief accounting overview, focusing on how to create budgets that are timely, accurate, and clear. She urged participants to be a part of the budgeting process and to use accounting formats to make meaningful budgets. Budgets are useful communication tools but must be able to quickly and clearly demonstrate what the department is doing. A budget isn't meant to encapsulate the hopes and dreams of its creator but rather to show the nuts and bolts of the program. Timely and accurate financial reporting provides control over the department's destiny.



In the breakout session, the larger group was divided into four smaller groups, which were asked to discuss individual budgetary concerns and then brainstorm practical solutions. At the end of this session, the smaller groups recombined and created a list of the most pressing budgeting issues now facing museum education departments. Among this list were the following:

- ❖ how to plan for the future with uncertain budgetary amounts
- ❖ how to establish accountability over one's own world
- ❖ how to bridge the disconnect between education and financial departments
- ❖ how to maintain the integrity of budgetary documents as priorities shift in the face of shrinking budgets
- ❖ how to position the education department within the larger budgetary picture
- ❖ how to balance the "hedgehog" (holding close to the mission) and the "fox" (alluring new programs)
- ❖ how to maintain programs without proper infrastructure
- ❖ how to align programs with the institutional mission

The day concluded with a group discussion of these topics and the different strategies that education departments can use to deal with them.

—Mary Beth Carosello, Web Content Chair (mcarosello@gmail.com)