



**By Pat McLaughlin
Founder & President**

As we assist College, University and Seminary clients, we almost always address these six issues, lovingly referred to as Dragons. Not all of them breathe fire but we know the need to address them in our consulting relationships. This dragon strategy has an impact on our K-12 education clients as well. Five of the six dragons fit every client, all 1,655 that we have been privileged to serve. You may not need to slay them their first time through but you do need to address them. We have been told by a famous "Dragon Slayer" if you whack them in the knees enough times they will eventually go down! Four of these were dragons that Mart Green, President Wilson and the Trustees slew over a period of years at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa. It takes courage! If you have it then read on...

Dragon Number 1: DREAM DIFFUSION

Connecting with the original vision to make it clear, concise and functional. Many organizations cannot clearly define their mission statement, their vision statement or their core values. Reconnecting with the founder's dream, the original vision, is critical to taking on this first dragon. It is often a ministry planning endeavor. Plan your work and then work your plan.

Dragon Number 2: DEBT

This will eventually impact your organization. Short term, long term, construction loan, bridge financing, hedging your bet, all fancy names for using someone else's money. Slay this one and purpose in your organizational heart and soul to never do this again. Use your own internal finances and make it work.

Dragon Number 3: DEFICIT SPENDING

This is a tough dragon to slay. It is so easy to spend tuition dollars during those summer slump months. Then comes second semester and you are in a bind! This dragon will take some time but it is critical to the long term health of your organization.

Dragon Number 4: DEFERRED MAINTENANCE

This dragon is one that will die slowly but must be addressed. Here is the famous line, “yes, we need to replace the roof on Haas Hall but we can wait until next year, we have controlled the leaks with lots of buckets.” It’s the old Fram Oil commercial - you can pay now or pay later, but eventually you will need to pay. Build a plan to address your physical plant, you will reap dividends in the long run.

Dragon Number 5: DECLINING ENROLLMENT

Once again this is a money dragon. Invest the right dollars, in the right plan and the right people and hold everyone accountable for ROI and “Voila!” Your recruitment numbers and retention numbers begin to go up. We all know the secret of running an educational institution is Students and Dollars. Bodies and Bucks! This is another dragon that will need to be addressed slowly with some patience, persistence, prayer and passion for attracting and retaining students.

Dragon Number 6: DONOR INVOLVEMENT

Did we mention Bodies and Bucks? This dragon can be addressed and slain the fastest. We are rapidly approaching \$400 billion in gift income annually in America. Lots of opportunities to share your story and invite donors to give and BTW, give now. It will take a comprehensive plan but start with identifying individuals who have capacity and who need to hear your story. Donors measure your commitment to them with these 2 words: **time** invested in them and **love**. How do you show your appreciation for each ministry partner?

Dragon-Slaying Tips: Are you ready to identify those dragons and put together a plan of attack? Dragons have a fairly long life expectancy, so they will not die of old age. You will need to clearly identify them, get your team organized and get after them. Clean up your Kingdom! It’s time to go Dragon Hunting!!

Which dragons will you slay first?