



GABE GRASS

RELATIONSHIP-FIRST BUSINESS DEVELOPER | PHILANTHROPY & NONPROFIT ADVISORY

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Business development leader with 20+ years cultivating major philanthropic partnerships, corporate relationships and grant portfolios across higher education and the nonprofit sector. Raised \$10M+ in private contributions at Florida State University, Flagler College and the University of North Florida. Co-Founder of Verdant Synergies Consulting, an active strategic advisory practice serving nonprofit and civic clients in Northeast Florida. Proven team builder, having led multifaceted teams of up to 15 across client-facing, operational and production functions. Recognized expert witness in alcohol service, bar hospitality and production brewing, with direct operational experience founding and leading a regional craft brewery. Finishing a Doctorate in Higher Education Leadership at UNF (expected Spring 2027).

CONSULTING & ENTREPRENEURSHIP EXPERIENCE

2025 - Present

CEO & Co-Founder

Verdant Synergies Consulting – Jacksonville, FL

- Co-lead an advisory consulting practice focused on nonprofit strategy, organizational growth and development planning
- Serve as an Expert Witness in alcohol service & compliance, bar & hospitality operations and production brewing & brewery operations
- Brokering and mediating philanthropic gifts and business-to-business partnerships/agreements
- Lead all business development activity including prospect cultivation, proposal development and relationship management



2014 - 2019

Founder & President

GrassLands Brewing Company – Tallahassee, FL

- Built and operated a community-focused craft brewery from launch to established brand over five years
- Led all business development, sales, account management and community relations for the company
- Managed a 15-person team across front-of-house, production/distribution and marketing functions
- Developed and executed operational plans, budgets and standard operating procedures



MAJOR GIFTS & DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE

2021 - 2025

Director, Corporate Relations & Major Gifts

University of North Florida – Jacksonville, FL

- Served as primary liaison between Jacksonville's corporate community and UNF, managing a portfolio of 100+ corporate and individual constituents
- Created and launched the Soaring Together Corporate Partnership Program, an innovative engagement model elevating corporate partner relationships with UNF students, faculty and alumni
- Raised \$4M+ in private contributions and university partnerships, with an 80/20 focus on corporate partnership growth and programmatic major giving across all colleges, first-gen scholarships and planned gifts



2019 - 2021

Director, Corporate & Foundation Relations

Flagler College – St. Augustine, FL

- Raised \$2M+ in grants, sponsorships and first-generation scholarships from an 80+ prospect portfolio
- Led monthly strategic development meetings with deans, department chairs and faculty to align fundraising with institutional priorities
- Coordinated reporting requirements across private, state and federal grants



MAJOR GIFTS & DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

2009 –
2014



Director, Corporate & Foundation Development FSU Foundation – Tallahassee, FL

- Raised \$4M+ from private, corporate and foundation donors as primary liaison for external partnerships to FSU Managed
- a portfolio of 80+ corporate and foundation prospects; cultivated and stewarded new and existing relationships Served
- on multiple oversight committees including gift acceptance policy and social/digital networking strategy

2006 –
2009



Communications Coordinator FSU Foundation – Tallahassee, FL

- Wrote proposals, solicitations, gift agreements and organizational policies for the Office of Corporate and Foundation Development
- Conducted professional writing and communication seminars for Foundation, Alumni Association and university faculty

Earlier

Earlier experience includes grants and program analysis at Partnership for Children's Health (Nemours) and graduate research at Virginia Tech funded by the U.S. Department of Defense.

EDUCATION



2027* Ed.D., Higher Education Leadership & Administration University of North Florida

*Expected Spring 2027 – Dissertation: First-Generation Student Success



2010 Ed.S., Education Policy & Program Evaluation Florida State University



2005 M.S., Human Development Virginia Tech

Concentration: Special Needs across Child and Adolescent Development & Community Agencies



2004 B.S., Psychology University of North Florida

CERTIFICATIONS

- TIPS (Training for Intervention ProcedureS) On-Premises Alcohol Service
- ServSafe Alcohol Program
- Beer Judge Certificate Program

*References and speaking engagements available upon request

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Foundation Chair, Association of Fundraising Professionals – North Florida Chapter
- Member, Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce
- Member, Grant Professionals Association