

## **The 1986, 1996, and 2006 “BenchMark” Conference History**

### **1986 – University of San Francisco**

The first conference in the field, held in November 1986, was hosted by the Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management at the University of San Francisco. Supported by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the convening was an invitation only conference of 50 attendees. Results were reproduced in a book coauthored by Michael O’Neill and Dennis Young (1988) titled *Educating Managers of Nonprofit Organizations*. The book contains the 10 articles written by individuals who were invited to prepare and present papers at the convening. Papers were developed and presented at the convening and they were discussed by participants as part of the conference design.

### **1996 – University of San Francisco**

The second conference, held a decade later in March 1996, was an open convening again organized by the Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management, and it attracted 125 participants. From this convening, a book was released coauthored by Michael O’Neill and Kathleen Fletcher (1998) titled *Nonprofit Management Education: U.S. and World Perspectives*, in which 10 of the 35 papers presented at the conference were included. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation provided financial support that made possible the conference and the book project.

### **2006 – Arizona State University**

“BenchMark 3: The Third Decennial Conference on Nonprofit and Philanthropic Studies,” was held March 16–19, 2006, in Tempe, Arizona. The BenchMark 3 conference was organized as a follow-up to the two previous conferences organized around the topic of nonprofit management as a field of study in higher education. The BenchMark 3 conference participants considered how far the field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies has come in the last 30 years, by exploring current conditions and from considering future trajectories. BenchMark 3 attracted more than 250 participants, who represented a variety of levels and types of programs within and beyond the United States and inside and outside academia. Attendees participated in four plenary gatherings and panel breakout sessions exploring a range of topics pertinent to historical perspectives, current status, and future trajectory of the field.

Given the growth of the field since 1986 it was inevitable that new and veteran educators, scholars, alumni, practitioners, and funders would stimulate support for a third, large-scale conference. Such was the case when leaders from the Arizona State University Center for Nonprofit Leadership and Management (today known as the ASU Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation) were asked by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to convene a small planning team to consider such an idea. Using the prior two conferences as building blocks and recognizing how the field has evolved to include nonprofit management education and philanthropic studies as a framework, the third decennial conference was organized.

Among a number of dissemination avenues that have occurred since BenchMark 3 is the special issue of *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* released in December 2007. Ten of the more than 70 papers

presented at the conference are included in the special issue. The NVSQ issue joins other publications previously mentioned as part of the field-building efforts that seeks to understand and advance nonprofit and philanthropic studies as a field in higher education. In comparing the content of chapters from the prior conference books to the articles selected for the special NVSQ issue, readers will find an increase in the number of articles offering international perspectives. This is acknowledgment of the global interest and growth of the field beyond U.S. perspectives. Additionally, the consideration of doctoral programs is greater in number as the field considers theoretical and practice concerns related to preparing future faculty members of university-based programs.

**2011 – Nonprofit Academic Centers Council**

The fourth conference on the development of nonprofit/nongovernmental management, voluntarism and philanthropy as a field of study in higher education will convene March 24-27, 2011 at the Hilton San Diego Resort and Spa in San Diego California. BenchMark 3.5 is presented by the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council and hosted by the University of San Diego School of Leadership and Education Services. The Arizona State University Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation is the lead sponsor for BenchMark 3.5.