#SocialMedia, Advancement, and Fundraising in Education

by Cheryl Slover-Linett and Michael Stoner

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This white paper reports on findings from the fourth survey of social media in advancement, conducted in January and February, 2013, by Huron Education and mStoner in partnership with The Council for Advancement and Support of Education. Because the responses represent a demographic cross-section of CASE membership from secondary and higher education— fundraisers, institutional communicators (PR, media relations, marketing, publications, and periodicals), and alumni relations professionals— our results do not represent perspectives on the use of social media in learning and teaching or student recruitment and admissions. Published October 2013.

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) is a professional association serving educational institutions and the advancement professionals who work on their behalf in alumni relations, communications, development, marketing, and allied areas.

Huron Education works with colleges and universities to improve business performance across the enterprise. Its professionals draw from their experience working in the strategic, financial, operational, and regulatory aspects of higher education to develop and implement the most effective consulting and software solutions.

mStoner is a marketing communications agency that works with education institutions on brand strategy and development of websites, social media, brand, and print.

What's New This Year

This is our fourth annual exploration of the use of social media in institutional advancement in education and, while some things have remained stable over those four years, there have been changes, too. Some are significant.

One of the most important is that looking at the data in total, we see encouraging signs of sophistication in the way that many institutions are approaching social media—for example, a higher percentage of respondents who said they are "very successful" or "a model" for use of social media (28 percent, compared to 21 percent in 2012).

Also important is the growing use of social media in campaigns of all kinds, including those focused on raising money.

Last year, we asked about the use of social media in campaigns, which we defined as "a broader, planned campaign to achieve a specific goal," such as branding. In last year's white paper, we included case studies from six different institutions. This year, 54 percent of respondents said they have used social media in a campaign, and 29 percent of those said that they use social channels in three-quarters or more of their campaigns.

This year, we asked specifically about the role of social channels in fundraising and donor relations (see the following section for more detail).

Thirty-five percent of respondents said they use social media to raise money from donors—a solid figure in itself, but it's interesting to note that this figure is even higher (46 percent) for the number of institutions that consider their social media activities to be very successful. We believe that demonstrating to senior leaders that universities can raise money through the use of social channels will further demonstrate how powerful social media can be and legitimize it in the minds of senior leadership, justifying ongoing, perhaps increased, investment.

Table 1: Of the 54% of campaigns involving social media, here's what they focused on (Q 16; 382 respondents)

Alumni engagement	**81%**
Brand/Marketing	**65%**
Fundraising/Development	**59%**
Student engagement	**54%**
Admission	**41%**
Other	**6%**

> "The big news this year is that 59 percent said that their fundraising and development campaigns involved social media channels."

As noted, this year 54 percent of institutions reported that they incorporate social media into campaigns. This was up from 41 percent in 2012. Table 1 offers some insight into what kinds of campaigns incorporated social media.

The big news this year is that 59 percent of the 382 respondents who said they use social media in campaigns reported that their fundraising and development campaigns involved social media.

Social Media and Fundraising in EDU

In the past two years, we've heard about schools, colleges and universities that were integrating social channels into fundraising campaigns. In fact, one of the case studies in last year's white paper focused on a campaign with a fundraising goal (we reported on how Elizabethtown College and Messiah College turned an annual soccer match into a competition to see which college's alumni showed the greatest percentage increase in annual fund contributions). So this year, we included questions in the survey to determine exactly how schools, colleges and universities were using social media for fundraising—and how much money they were raising.

When asked whether their institution uses social media to raise money, 35 percent responded in the affirmative, and 41 percent said that their institution used social media to communicate with donors or for stewardship purposes.

When we probed further, though, we learned that although some institutions use social channels to solicit annual fund or capital campaign contributions, right now the primary use of social media in fundraising is to keep donors informed—and to a lesser extent for stewardship, as shown in Table 2.

A growing number of institutions are incorporating social channels—

Table 2: How respondents use social media in fundraising (Q 30; 320 respondents)

Keeping donors up to date on institution news	**77%**
Annual fund solicitations	**58%**
Thanking donors for their contributions	**52%**
Keeping donors up to date on campaign or fundraising news	**49%**
Inviting donors to donor events	**48%**
Annual fund follow-up reminders	**30%**
Referring to or reminding about solicitations received through non-social channels	**25%**
Capital campaign solicitations	**14%**
Other	**6%**

particularly Facebook and Twitter—into their campaigns, using them as ways to solicit fans and followers directly and also for reminders about campaigns and deadlines, as Columbia did in its highly successful Giving Day in 2012 (see the case study). Right now, institutions aren't raising much money through social channels—67 percent raised less than $10,000 (Table 3).
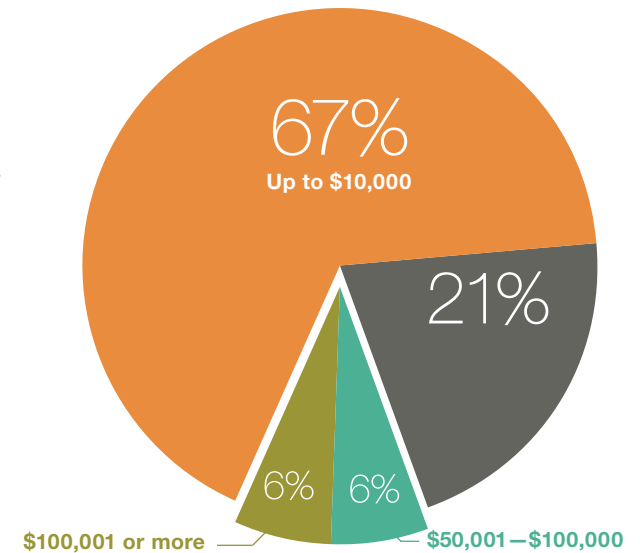

67%
Up to $10,000

21%

6%

6%

$100,001 or more

$50,001—$100,000

Table 3: Approximate amounts raised through social channels in FY 2012

(Q 32; n= 200)

But most fundraisers and other advancement staff still identify social media as channels for engagement, not solicitation. In fact, as shown in Table 4, donations are still not an important measure of outcomes of social media initiatives for many institutions.

Table 4: *Extent to which institutions use various outcome measures to evaluate social media initiatives. (Q 24; respondents asked to rank their use of these outcome measures on a 5-point scale; 616 respondents)*

OUTCOME MEASURES (TOTAL ANSWERING=633)	NOT AT ALL	NOT MUCH	SOMEWHAT	QUITE A BIT	EXTENSIVELY	MEAN
Number of active "friends," "likes," members, participants, people who post, or number of comments	5%	4%	19%	40%	32%	3.9
Volume of participation (unique person-counts)	10%	7%	29%	36%	19%	3.5
Number of "click-throughs" to your website	10%	10%	31%	34%	15%	3.3
Event participation	13%	14%	33%	29%	9%	3.1
Anecdotal success (or horror) stories	19%	17%	39%	21%	4%	2.8
Penetration measure of use among target audience	31%	20%	29%	15%	5%	2.4
Volume or proportion of complaints and negative comments	28%	27%	34%	9%	2%	2.3
Donations	35%	26%	24%	10%	4%	2.2
Surveys of target audiences	35%	33%	22%	7%	2%	2.1
Analysis of content/ number of mentions in blogs	44%	24%	21%	9%	2%	2.0
Number of applications for admission	54%	21%	15%	7%	3%	1.9

We also looked at what institutions that were successful at using social media in fundraising actually did, to see whether we could identify best practices among this group. Here are some insights:

» *Institutions that raise money using social media are more likely to use Facebook (97 percent of respondents said they use it the most): They've clearly mastered the primary social channel for higher ed.*

» *They are also more likely to use Instagram—and they are also more likely to use an ecommunity platform such as iModules. One reason this is important is that email is a key marketing channel and reminder channel for fundraising; community platforms incorporate email tools that are particularly valuable in a fundraising campaign. (And, in fact, our data show that institutions that use social media to raise money are more likely to use email to promote their events.)*

And not surprisingly, perhaps, institutions that excel at raising money also use social channels for the following activities more than other institutions do:

» *annual fund solicitations*

» *thanking donors*

» *inviting donors to events*

» *using social media for annual fund reminders*

» *reminding donors of offline activities.*

In other words, social media appears to be tightly interwoven into both solicitation and engagement at successful institutions.

As for promoting and marketing their social initiatives, institutions that use social media to raise money are more likely to use email, market at events, use direct print mail, and have a blog that they are using for marketing purposes (Table 5). Again, this supports the importance of thinking of social channels as key channels for reaching constituents—channels that are closely connected to other channels, both online and offline."

Table 5: Outreach and marketing methods for social initiatives (Q 19), comparing institutions that are successful using social media (Q 20) and those that raise money using social media (Q 26).

		SUCCESS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA		RAISE MONEY	
	TOTAL	MOST SUCCESSFUL	MID TO LOW SUCCESS	YES	NO
Total answering	680	192	487	228	300
Website	90%	94%	88%	93%	89%
Email	88%	89%	87%	93%	84%
Social media	82%	93%	78%	87%	78%
Internal publications	61%	68%	59%	65%	59%
Outreach and marketing at events	54%	66%	49%	59%	48%
Direct print mail	49%	54%	47%	60%	45%
Blogging	24%	33%	21%	30%	20%
Search engine optimization or search engine marketing	22%	29%	19%	25%	22%
External publications (not your institution's own publications)	20%	26%	17%	21%	19%
Radio	6%	8%	6%	7%	6%
TV	4%	6%	3%	3%	5%
Other	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%

Finally, and again not surprisingly, perhaps, institutions that raise money via social channels are staffed for success. Respondents who described their programs as successful were less likely to say that "lacking relevant human resources in my unit" is a barrier to success than those who have not used social media in this way and were also less likely to say that they lack expertise to implement social media.

Other Findings

Staffing

Institutions reported devoting more work hours to social media than in 2012, but the overall number of employees working on social media remained unchanged, though the full-time equivalency (FTE) increased. In other words, institutions are increasing FTEs rather than increasing overall staffing, which is a more conservative way to grow

involvement in social media. The biggest area of increase was in the number of respondents who reported that their unit or institution had at least one person working on social media, but less than one FTE.

This year at the institution level, 34 percent of respondents reported having social media FTE above zero but less than one, up from 24 percent last year; the proportion with zero FTE fell to 5 percent, from 9 percent last year. At the unit level, 62 percent have social media FTE above zero but less than one, up from 45 percent last year. The proportion with zero FTE fell to 7 percent, from 17 percent last year.

Many respondents from institutions that haven't added FTEs to work on social media indicated that this shortfall hampers their success and that they could improve if they had staff members dedicated to that area. As one respondent explained, "Currently this responsibility is an add-on to current staff positions and responsibilities."

Many pointed out advantages to concentrating social media duties in fewer staff people with greater expertise and sense of the big picture:

"I think we could do more to collaborate with other campus departments. In addition, our small staff . . . does not allow for social media to be an explicit part of someone's job description. If someone was able to focus on it day in day out, we would be pretty amazing at it. As it stands now, we all collectively try to post when we can."

"We do not have in-house expertise to help establish strategic initiatives or to ensure our messages are consistent and aligned with other university messaging."

"At our level (a college within a large university) we have been very successful because we hired someone with solid social media experience who is in charge of all of our social media outlets. This person has set clear goals and has integrated social media into the majority of our campaigns."

Audiences and Channels

In general, institutions are using social media to connect with more audiences, suggesting that they are finding value in outreach through those media (see Table 6). Institutions are increasingly using social media to communicate with current students and their parents, prospective students and their parents, and faculty and staff. We note that all these audiences have grown in importance to institutions in general over the last few years, for a variety of reasons—and, as the awareness of the value of communicating with them has grown, institutions have recognized that social channels are powerful ways to reach them.

While social media cognoscenti are fond of identifying the next hot channel deserving of attention and development, Facebook still predominates and it plays a role in the social media outreach of 96% of institutions. Among the institutions most successful at social media, 98% said it's the top channel; these institutions ranked Twitter second and LinkedIn third.

Table 6: Target audiences for social media (Q 9 and Q 10)

	2013	GROWTH OR SHRINKAGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS
Alumni	97%	2
Current students	89%	20
Faculty and staff	86%	20
Friends and supporters	82%	1
Prospective students	74%	18
Donors	72%	2
Parents of current students	67%	16
Parents of prospective students	58%	13
Media	51%	−2
Employers	42%	2
High school guidance counselors	31%	8
Government organizations	25%	2

Metrics

We noted above that donations are not yet a primary outcome for many social media–based initiatives in higher ed. As shown in Table 4, the top metrics for measuring success are (still) the number of active "friends" or "likes," the volume of participation, and number of "click-throughs" to your website. Interestingly, the number of respondents agreeing with the statement "It is difficult to measure 'return on investment' from the use of social media" increased this year to 38 percent from 33 percent. We take this as a sign that as institutions are gaining experience with social media, expectations for measuring success are also growing.

This hypothesis is supported by

the finding that many who reported their social media initiatives have not been successful noted that metrics for them were lacking. In contrast, those who reported their social media use has been very successful also said they have robust tracking mechanisms. For example:

"We've created a weekly dashboard of target metrics for all of our social platforms and our main websites that shows changes and topics that resonated. This has greatly elevated awareness of our efforts among university leadership."

"We don't think, we know. Calculations and reports are submitted monthly on social media successes and returns, both subjective and objective. We've boosted ticket sales to events, recruited students, and increased awareness about many different things."

In addition, there's a recognition that simply counting "likes" or "followers" provides limited utility over time and that other measures of engagement, some of them hard to quantify, matter:

"Due to the changing nature of technology and the preferences for its use, goals for social media often feel like moving targets. What's important in terms of metrics one day, may not be the case the following day. For example, one of our department goals is related to direct engagement with posts. We've seen actual typed feedback fall away in favor of the one-click 'likes.' Is direct engagement via typed feedback becoming a thing of the past, or are there new methods/ suggestions (beyond open-ended questions) that truly prompt dialogue?"

"When students start using your page for their own conversations ... you know you've hit success!"

"In the last two years, social media has been overhauled from stagnant and sporadic event promotion to content planning with plenty of time for listening. It has really become a conversation—key for alumni relations."

Appendix: Demographics

We conducted this year's online survey among a random sample of 18,144 CASE members in the United States and abroad, receiving 1,080 responses across all types of institutions. Here's a breakdown of the demographics of our respondents.

NATIONAL ORIGIN	
United States/Canada	**89%**
International	**11%**

INSTITUTIONAL TYPE	
Private	**54%**
Public	**45%**

(U.S. ONLY) WHAT TYPE OF INSTITUTION DO YOU WORK AT?	
Doctoral/research university	**32%**
Baccalaureate (four-year) college	**23%**
Master's college or university	**17%**
Independent elementary/secondary school	**16%**
Associate's (two-year) college	**4%**
Other	**8%**

WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR UNIT (IMMEDIATE DEPARTMENT OR DIVISION)? PLEASE SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.	
Alumni Relations	**38%**
Development (including Annual Fund)	**36%**
Marketing	**26%**
Advancement Services	**22%**
Enrollment/Admissions	**4%**
Other	**10%**

Case Studies

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

A Day to Raise Millions

By Gareth Henderson

How can social media engagement help raise millions of dollars in one day? To some not familiar with online giving campaigns, this might seem like an unattainable goal. To Columbia University, it's reality.

In 2012, Columbia University developed an integrated marketing campaign that leveraged print, email, events, display banners, and—of course—social media to raise $6.8 million in a one-day event. Columbia's Giving Day had great support from leadership, staff, volunteers, and enthusiastic groups at the university's many professional schools. However, it took careful planning and persistence to pull off this impressive accomplishment.

CloEve Demmer, Columbia's executive director of development operations and programs, heard about the great success of a campaign called the "Great Minnesota Give Together." This 24-hour fundraising campaign raised $24 million from a total of 80,000 donors in 2009 and 2010 combined. Demmer believed Columbia could benefit from such an effort as well.

Demmer and her team partnered with Columbia's newly formed Marketing and Communications group and together they began the planning process. The campaign involved numerous volunteers as well as alumni and development teams across Columbia's schools and units, marketing and communications, and operations. The goal was to create a unified fundraising effort to engage the community and donors to benefit annual funds across the university. Campaign organizers also wanted to reactivate previous donors, attract new ones, and boost the number of donors who gave in the fall.

The first step was to get internal leadership on board. Demmer brought the idea to her direct supervisors and, with their blessing and support, she eventually achieved buy-in from other advancement leaders and the university trustees and president.

"It was a process of persistence," Demmer said. It was especially important to present good visuals and concrete examples of successful campaigns to the leadership. "There's nothing to hold and touch when you present this concept," she said.

From there, Demmer and her team worked to earn the buy-in of Columbia's professional schools, organize Giving Day challenges, and motivate donors and staff.

In addition to these steps, Gwynne Gauntlett, Marketing and Communications' director of digital strategy, and Demmer hired outside vendors Kimbia and Story Worldwide to assist with planning, social media strategy, and project management. Gauntlett said this assistance helped her team meet strategic goals and ensured successful planning and execution. Also, Demmer spoke with

"It was a process of persistence...There's nothing to hold and touch when you present this concept."

CloEve Demmer

planners of other successful 24-hour fundraising campaigns to learn tips on best practices and ways to avoid potential problems.

Early in the process, Demmer and Gauntlett worked to line up social media ambassadors to spread the word about the campaign and engage potential donors online. The Giving Day team worked with alumni leaders, faculty and staff across the university to identify alumni with strong social media connections to fulfill this role and serve on the Giving Day steering committee. A webinar was developed to train the ambassadors and walk them through the 24-hour plan for Giving Day. The webinar introduced the ambassadors to the campaign's content, the Giving Day website, the Facebook tab, and the campaign rollout plan.

Also during the planning phase, Columbia's various professional schools designated their own online ambassadors to spread the word about Giving Day. From the campaign's conception, the Giving Day team gave the schools the freedom to create their own content to market the campaign through their own channels. "The schools got involved and engaged their own audiences in the way they knew best," Gauntlett said.

The great anticipation of matching fund challenges involving the schools drove much of the excitement on campus, both before and during the

> ## "You have to give something to your audiences if you expect them to give back."
>
> *Gwynne Gauntlett*

campaign. Some challenges were based on donor money raised in specific time periods; others, on the number of donors gained in specific time periods.

In addition to the challenges, an overall content strategy behind the campaign made use of various tools, starting with the Giving Day website (givingday.columbia.edu) and a Facebook application that directly mirrored each other. The Giving Day team prepared an editorial package of Facebook posts, tweets, and images and a detailed content schedule for the month leading up to the campaign and continuing through the day after. About a month before Giving Day, staff from the professional schools were trained on how to customize this kit to fit the needs of their audiences, and the Columbia Alumni Association released most of the content to its audiences on Facebook and Twitter.

The strategy also included the creation and distribution of postcards and other print materials to complement the digital content.

Livestreams, which featured faculty, deans, and other key players in the campaign, helped engage audiences with events on campus during the 24-hour period.

"The livestreams were great from an inspirational perspective and to see what was going on at the university," Gauntlett said. "You have to give something to your audiences if you expect them to give back."

When Giving Day arrived on Oct. 24, 2012, the challenge-based competition between schools was intense, and this energy created great momentum throughout the day. Online leader boards showed who was winning the different challenges throughout the day, and these drove a lot of online traffic. Students, trustees, faculty, and numerous other groups checked the challenge results in real time throughout the campaign.

In any campaign, it's essential to thank your donors. Giving Day organizers planned for that as well: At midnight, as the event ended, donors received an email with a special thank-you video from the trustees.

The total money raised on Giving Day was $6.8 million, from 4,490 donors who made 5,380 gifts, both online and by phone. Some of the online gifts exceeded $100,000. The statistics revealed more good news: 40 percent of donors were new or reactivated, 50 percent of donors made their first online gifts to Columbia, and 40 percent of Giving Day referral traffic came from social media sources.

Moreover, university Facebook pages gained more than 8,000 new "likes," and the Columbia Alumni Association saw a 59 percent increase in Facebook likes during October. Forty percent of all referral traffic was generated from social media.

With this kind of momentum, it was only natural to plan a second Giving Day. This year's campaign is set for October 23, and several changes are in the works:

» *The Columbia Giving Day Facebook tab will be available to any school or program that wants to embed it in its own Facebook page.*

» *Planners will create more initiatives to engage students.*

» *The social media ambassador effort will grow and be more focused.*

Looking back, Gauntlett and Demmer said the integrated channel approach using social media, email, events, and print materials made the 2012 campaign highly effective. It was also important to measure the impact of these various marketing efforts, so that organizers know what works best for target audiences.

PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY

Engaging Young Alumni of an Independent School

By Gareth Henderson

Engaging young alumni these days is no easy task. They move often and lead busy lives, and, often, that makes it even more of a challenge to engage them as new donors.

But what do you do when many of your young alumni are still in college? This is the case at Phillips Exeter Academy, an independent residential school serving grades 9–12. At Exeter, several members of the Institutional Advancement office have a particular focus on young alumni engagement. Their overall goal is to foster strong relationships with this cohort and educate them about the importance of giving to Exeter.

This entire strategy starts before these students graduate. Michelle Curtin, assistant director of alumni and parent relations, said the first step is to build relationships with students and help them understand the impact that alumni giving has on their educational experience.

"Tuition does not cover the full cost of an Exeter experience," Curtin said. Fifty-two percent of the school's budget comes from the endowment and 9 percent from The Exeter Fund, both of which depend on gifts. Only 31 percent comes from tuition fees, with 8 percent from other nongift income. "It's important for students to know that they are all the beneficiaries of the generosity of Exonians who have gone before

The Big Red Dorm Challenge

Mike,

Thank you very much for your contribution to the 2012-13 Exeter Fund.

Today is the start of the 3rd Annual Big Red Dorm Challenge —a chance for you to team up with current seniors and other alumni from the classes of 1970-2012 to support The Exeter Fund and represent your dorm (and yes, day students count as a dorm!).

Because you contributed earlier this year, your participation is already included in your dorm's total. So what else can you do to help your dorm win? Encourage your fellow dorm-mates to participate and help your dorm achieve 100% participation. We'll keep you updated on the competition throughout the week.

See which dorm has the early lead based on giving to date.

Once again, you have our sincere thanks for your gift this year. Stay tuned for updates on the Big Red Dorm Challenge!

Best regards,

The Exeter Fund Office

What is the Big Red Dorm Challenge?

The Big Red Dorm Challenge is a dorm-versus-dorm competition, and day students count as a dorm.

Senior day students will join you and all other day student alumni from the classes of 1970-2012 to try generating the highest percentage of participation in this year's Exeter Fund.

On March 3, if day students have the highest percentage of participation for the year, they'll win bragging rights for the alumni and a BBQ party just for current day students.

(Our records indicate that you were a day student. If that is not correct, please update your profile.)

"Students connect with alumni organically on Facebook and LinkedIn, Typically, it's when they're doing a research project and are seeking alumni input or feedback."

Mike Nagel

them. We also want to keep them connected to each other and to the campus. Once they graduate, their connection to Exeter will be through those relationships they build while they were here."

Social media is an important part of this process. At Exeter, students communicate and share information on Facebook groups for their individual classes.

"They use those to communicate about and advertise club events," said Mike Nagel, associate director of advancement communications.

Students also start to make connections with young alumni on social networks.

"Students connect with alumni organically on Facebook and LinkedIn," Nagel said. "Typically, it's when they're doing a research project and are seeking alumni input or feedback."

In addition, Nagel, Curtin, and Assistant Director of The Exeter Fund Lee Frank said it's also important to make in-person connections with students, alongside digital communications. For example, Frank and Curtin visit the dorms to introduce themselves when the

students first arrive on campus. The advancement team also connects with students at social events throughout the year, and works with them on projects such as the alumni induction ceremony and the senior class gift.

Frank emphasized that these relationships require consistent and focused work on the school's part. "You can't ignore them for 20 years and then attempt to swoop in and rekindle a long-dormant relationship with the school in the hopes of receiving a major gift from them," Frank said. "Maintaining an ongoing, authentic relationship is the only way to have a chance down the road."

Throughout that relationship continuum, social media plays a vital role in keeping young Exeter alumni connected, especially when it comes to planning regional alumni events. Also, to keep young alumni involved, Nagel said, it's essential to have a team assigned specifically to that task.

At Exeter, Curtin and Frank focus on young alumni together. The young alumni program includes the current senior class through alumni celebrating their 15th reunion. Curtin handles the engagement and programming efforts with these classes, and Frank focuses specifically on fundraising. Exeter's young alumni program is about 10 years old, but the program has matured in the past several years. "We've just in the last three to five years started

to formulate best practices and a concentrated young alumni program, including current students," Curtin said.

A major part of the program includes events that are focused on young alumni, such as events on college campuses, social events in major metropolitan areas, and mentoring or career development events. Local alumni have often taken the lead in getting the word out for regional alumni events, and the Exeter team fosters this engagement on social media as well.

"If we are trying to build attendance for the New York City regional reception, for example, we might send a message to all those who are part of the New York City Facebook group, reminding them to register for the reception and maybe sharing a little more about the program or speaker," Curtin explained. "We also encourage our alumni volunteers in a region to help build attendance for events by contacting their classmates or sending messages, and Facebook is usually a popular way to do that."

Exeter has also implemented fundraising efforts geared toward young alumni. A notable example is the annual Big Red Dorm Challenge, which harnesses the deep connections many Exeter alumni and current seniors have with their dorms and turns that energy into donations for the Exeter Fund.

This year's Challenge, a one-week event from February 25 to March 3, was the third, and involved alumni from the classes of 1970 through 2012 and the current 2013 seniors. Before the 2013 Challenge, Frank and his colleagues mobilized 300 of Exeter's class agents and other alumni to encourage their classmates across the country to donate to the Exeter Fund. The Senior Class Gift Committee was also instrumental in spreading the word.

On the week of the Challenge, the primary objective was to drive traffic to the online giving form on Exeter's website using social media. From the first hour of the first day, class agents and other volunteers started to engage their fellow alumni through Facebook posts, though email is still the most important marketing channel. Twitter comes in a distant third, yielding very few clickthroughs to the BRDC pages. Regular score updates on Facebook helped keep alumni and students engaged, and the event was highly competitive throughout.

During the week of February 25 to March 3, 29 percent of all visitors to the Exeter alumni site went to the Big Red Dorm Challenge landing page (www.exeter.edu/dormchallenge). Eight percent of that web traffic went to the giving form. In one week, Exeter received 275 gifts from the classes of 1970–2012 and 192 gifts from the current senior class. During that same week, the Class of 2013 went from less than 10 percent participation in giving to over 55 percent. The Exeter Alumni Facebook page saw a significant increase in traffic during the event.

For next year, Nagel said, part of the plan is to make the Exeter giving form more shareable on social media. The most important point is to keep these events simple, he added. "If you can't explain it in 10 seconds, then it's almost not worth doing," Nagel said.

Another example of early engagement is the Giving Thanks Club, a student-led club whose mission is to thank donors and

"Their one-on-one outreach is, quite frankly, more effective than our institution reaching out as the 'voice from on high' to encourage giving."

Mike Nagel

support stewardship of the Exeter Fund. This club gives current students a deep understanding of what giving means to the school, and it helps grow the connections that keep students involved after graduation.

The Giving Thanks Club started Thank-a-Donor Day, which first took place on Feb. 7, 2012. The goal was to educate the campus community about the importance of giving to the Exeter Fund. The club set up thank-you stations around campus with notecards ready to fill out. With the help of previous announcements about the event, the club and its volunteers collected more than 1,000 notes from students and staff.

For this year's Thank-a-Donor Day on February 19, Exeter's advancement team took the thank-you notes from 2012 and posted them as one large graphic on the Tumblr page exetersaysthanks.tumblr.com. They also posted 6- to 25-second videos on YouTube, which featured students delivering verbal thank-you messages. In one week, these videos grabbed a combined 1,800 views. That included over 700 in one day. The video message from one student was, "Thanks for making my dream come true."

"Because you can see her while she's saying it, it's super-authentic," Nagel said.

Another benefit of Thank-a-Donor Day was that its media content

had relevance throughout the year. Namely, it had good student stories.

"This year, we took the best of the notes from Thank-a-Donor Day and published them daily on Facebook during the final two-weeks of the giving year to regularly remind our audience who their gifts directly affected," Nagel said.

Nagel and Curtin emphasized that, with young alumni, the focus is less on dollars raised and more on participation rate. And the results are not instantaneous. It takes time and effort to form strong relationships with young alumni and the seniors who are about to become young alumni. A major point for Exeter's Advancement team is to be familiar with the student experience on campus. For students to participate in advancement-related events and eventually become donors, it's crucial to show that you understand their life at Exeter and the challenges they face.

These early efforts lead to those key connections that keep groups of alumni engaged over the long-term. As a result of this work, Exeter has 600 "class agents" throughout the country. Class agents help keep their fellow alumni from their individual classes involved, and these contacts help promote fundraisers like the Big Red Dorm Challenge.

"We promote all of our giving challenges through social media and encourage our class agents to do the

same," Nagel said. "Their one-on-one outreach is, quite frankly, more effective than our institution reaching out as the 'voice from on high' to encourage giving."

Still, Nagel said his team's social media and email reminders during challenges and pivotal parts of the giving year are still effective and help drive young alumni engagement.

The mission of the young alumni and student program at Exeter is to educate current students and young alumni on the impact that philanthropy has on their Exeter experience and foster a life long connection to Exeter. Educating this cohort and providing meaningful opportunities for them to build, strengthen and maintain their Exeter connections is the focus of Exeter's team "We strive to communicate a shared vision, we need to share this vision with others then ask them to support it."

Case Study

3

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Turning Alumni Passion into Engagement

By Gareth Henderson

"Hoosier Hysteria." At Indiana University, it's everywhere. Especially in November when another basketball season is about to get under way.

The Indiana University Alumni Association recently figured out how to leverage that passion to raise money and grow alumni engagement. The IU Basketball Engagement Campaign of 2012–13 was a season-long effort, from Nov. 1, 2012, to April 1, 2013. During that time period, IUAA's total social media following grew by 5,500, and the campaign reached more than 1.2 million Facebook members through its use of social media graphics. IUAA also managed to reel in more than $26,000 in new revenue with a membership offer on Facebook.

IUAA already had a strong Facebook following, but this campaign ran on much more than Facebook fans. It all started with goals.

"We really wanted to incentivize alumni engagement and gain members," said Hannah Carroll, IUAA's web content specialist. "We

also wanted to grow our social media audiences and get more people involved in programs and attending more events."

It was also important to make sure these goals were measurable, so that social media and website metrics could inform the current campaign and future initiatives.

The engagement campaign's success came from effective planning. Fortunately, IUAA had a good idea

of what worked for their social media audiences. Its inspiration for this campaign came from engagement efforts during the 2011–12 season, when the Hoosiers basketball team found unexpected success and surged up through the national rankings. Later that season, the Hoosiers were poised to beat the University of Kentucky for the second consecutive time, and IUAA posted a Facebook graphic saying, "Keep Calm & Beat UK, Again."

"It took on a life of its own and went viral," said Carroll. "That really shaped this campaign."

Before they created a whole new series of social media graphics, association officials did their homework. IUAA Alumni Marketing Director Sarah Preuschl Anderson and her colleagues analyzed the association's web traffic patterns during the 2011–12 "surprise season" and examined how all the graphics trended online. They also looked at their Facebook audiences and their

behaviors on social media. Internal market research and audience studies played into the strategy as well. This research was foundational to IUAA's campaign planning efforts.

Matt Shoemaker, IUAA's graphic designer, said the association wanted to reach beyond the basketball fans and target a larger group of alumni. "We wanted to speak to people who were fans of the university in general," he said.

Another important aspect of the planning process was the creation of a theme that could resonate with key audiences and be used throughout the five-month campaign. The staff settled on the theme "Put your stripes on," playing off the Hoosiers' iconic red-and-white-striped warm-up pants. It's an image that resonates well beyond IU sports, Carroll pointed out. "A lot of people relate to it, even if they're not diehard basketball fans," she said.

Anderson said it was also important to involve partners early in the planning process. This didn't necessarily mean asking for permission to execute parts of the campaign, but it did mean early collaboration with other IU departments that could help with the planning. This helped achieve internal buy-in for the campaign, Anderson noted. And it turns out that discussions with the IU Licensing and Trademarks Office led to the campaign's eventual theme.

Based on IUAA's research into its audiences, the staff planned an exact social media schedule for all posts and graphics throughout the campaign's five months. Although most of the social media graphics lived on Facebook—IUAA's most popular social platform—content on the IUAA website, email and Twitter also proved pivotal during the campaign.

"Emails helped us set the tone, talk to people, and let them know where to go and what was happening," Carroll said. For example, IUAA sent emails to alumni to update them on the Hoosiers' progress and tell them the next city where the team would be playing.

Twitter made its mark on the campaign with "IUBB [Indiana University Basketball] ESPN Game Day Bingo," a social media bingo game to celebrate the Hoosiers' feature on ESPN Game Day. IUAA

housed the game on the website's IU Downloads page, where alumni would go to download and print bingo boards. Then, at the prescribed day and time, participants competed via Twitter. Prizes helped keep the IU fan base engaged. During bingo week, IUAA gained more than 100 Twitter followers and 280 Facebook fans. Furthermore, about 70 bingo-related tweets appeared, and 30 different people tweeted winning boards.

While these efforts were impressive, it was Facebook that brought in the new membership revenue during the campaign. The "IUBB Socks" membership drive was the most important Facebook initiative of the overall campaign. To make it happen, IUAA officials arranged a paid membership offer through Facebook. They used Facebook stats and internal

"It took on a life of its own and went viral, that really shaped this campaign."

Hannah Carroll

PUT YOUR STRIPES ON

propensity modeling to select those alumni who were most likely to become members, and they targeted the offer to those individuals by state. An IUAA email went out to those who claimed the offer, and the email gave them a special code to fulfill their new membership and redeem the offer. Once an individual completed the membership process, a pair of red-and-white-striped socks went out to the new member in a special package with a stripes-themed insert.

At first, IUAA limited claims to 500. On the first promotion of the socks offer on March 6, 2013, alumni claimed 500 offers within 48 hours. IUAA set the limit at 2,000 for the second promotion, on March 8, and participants claimed all of those within a week. For the third promotion, alumni claimed 171 offers, with a limit of 1,000. (The third iteration was ended early due to IU's loss in the Sweet Sixteen.)

Over all, the socks offer brought in $26,490 in revenue from new memberships, and IUAA gained 233 new members. The association spent $2,772 on the drive. A total of 218,635 people saw the offers posted on social media, and 175,717 people saw the offer via a particular Facebook post through paid promotion. Anderson said this was a strong validation of all the hard work IUAA had done on the engagement campaign.

"It showed the value of all the legwork we'd been doing," she said.

"We didn't do the membership offer until well into the campaign."

Over the life of the engagement campaign, IUAA's Facebook fans increased by 33 percent, and the association gained 1,200 Twitter followers. At the final tally, the social graphic element of the campaign had reached 1.2 million Facebook members from Nov. 1, 2012, to April 1, 2013. The IUAA's website traffic in March 2013 increased by 36,548 visits, or 84 percent, over March 2012. Also that month, the web traffic to IUAA's "Become a Member" section increased by 8 percent over March 2012.

IUAA gleaned some important lessons from the process that yielded these great results. For its 2013–14 campaign, the association will focus its social coverage on mainly the most important games. "We're going to look at high-interest games and peak times, rather than trying to be everywhere," Carroll said. IUAA will also look to include more paid advertising, given the success of paid promotion in its 2012–13 campaign. In addition, the association will do even more to underscore the brand identity, such as adding a website URL and possibly other new identifiers in its brand messaging for the next campaign.

UMASS AMHERST

Developing a Campus Culture of Philanthropy

By Justin Ware

Culture change is tough. Many great marketing plans, PR pushes, and fundraising campaigns have tried valiantly but failed to deliver a change in behavior that leads to more philanthropic support for an institution. That's why the development team and information technology pros at the University of Massachusetts Amherst were cautious not to overpromise in the months leading up to the first UMassGives online fundraising event.

"Our main goal was to increase the number of donors who gave to the University of Massachusetts Amherst," said Sarah Sligo, executive director of annual giving.

Increasing the number of donors to the annual fund during an online campaign is a safe bet. According to a recent Blackbaud study, online is the primary method for making a first-time gift to an institution among donors age 65 and younger. According to a more recent joint study from Georgetown University and Waggener Edstrom, social media is by far the No. 1 way digitally active people first learn of a cause.

So attracting new donors was a reasonable expectation for the UMass Amherst team, but Sligo and her colleagues were focused on a bigger prize—significantly expanding the culture of philanthropy around the university. Specifically, they wanted to engage more student donors. And they did. During the 36-hour

UMassGives, held on April 29-30, 2013, 626 current students made a gift to the University. In all of 2012, 529 students made a gift.

With this, UMass Amherst took a significant step toward expanding its culture of philanthropy. Here's how it happened.
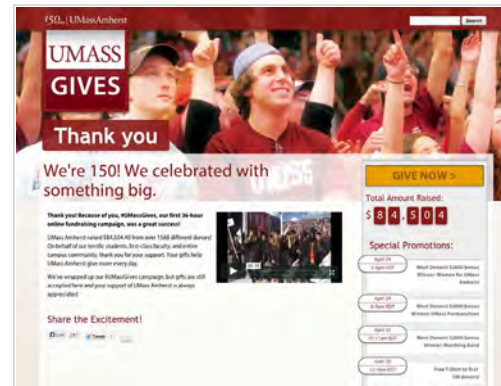
Planning UMassGives

To prepare for the campaign, the UMass Amherst development office teamed with Bentz Whaley Flessner to conduct a January 2013

online and social media strategy workshop—and in particular, to begin building an online ambassador program. A recent Bentz Whaley Flessner study of a handful of higher education institutions had found that in campaigns led by online ambassadors, 40 percent of those who gave were first-time donors. In that light, an ambassador-led approach seemed like the best bet to accomplish UMass Amherst's two campaign goals.

Online ambassadors are volunteer advocates who have a higher-than-average amount of activity and influence via social media networks. Specifically, they're individuals with social media savvy who are likely to want to support a cause by using their online clout to encourage others to join them—that is, by sharing content and fundraising asks via their Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, LinkedIn networks, and other social channels.

> "We had about eight laptops set up under a tent, and we had a lot of students and a lot of faculty and staff getting involved...It was very exciting for us."
>
> *Sarah Sligo*

Four months before the campaign, Sligo and her colleagues began the process of identifying and engaging online ambassadors for UMass Amherst. The goal was to nominate at least 100 potential online ambassadors before the UmassGives kickoff. The development office identified nearly 250 candidates, and roughly half that many agreed to participate in the program.

Once UMass Amherst had a group of ambassadors ready to drive traffic to the campaign, the university needed a website that would help move all those potential donors through the giving process. The campaign planners determined an effective campaign home or landing page would have the following characteristics:

Real-time campaign updates to keep donors apprised of the progress being made and encourage more donors to become involved.

A well-crafted appearance that fit the UMass Amherst brand.

A clear call to action or "Donate" button.

A brief message that reinforced the donor's intent to make a gift.

The UMass development staff teamed with the university's internal IT department, led by Nina Sossen, assistant director of web communication, to create the well-branded campaign homepage. Work began immediately, which allowed Sossen and her team ample time to test the campaign page—a crucial component to an online campaign's success. If a giving page is not working at the start of a campaign, any momentum the organization has heading into the effort will evaporate, and the likelihood of success is slim to none.

While the ambassadors were being engaged and the online infrastructure was being built, the development communications office was simultaneously working to produce a campaign communications plan. That meant a content strategy that included not just online postings, but

also production of videos with the chancellor to promote the campaign, and a variety of print pieces, such as posters and post cards that would be used to raise awareness of UMassGives before the event.

Specifically for the online ambassadors, the development team prepared social media updates that would be sent to ambassadors in the days leading up to and during the campaign. The prepackaged updates included text and links that were written so they could easily be inserted into Twitter or Facebook. Before and throughout the campaign, UMass Amherst would send the emails to ambassadors, who could then copy and paste the messages from their email directly into their preferred social network interface. This made it almost effortless for ambassadors to share messages that came directly from the UMass Amherst Foundation. It's a practice that is working for many organizations that have successful online fundraising campaigns.

UMassGives Exceeds Expectations

UMassGives kicked off on Founder's Day—a major campus event. "The date of UMassGives was our 150th anniversary, and there was a huge cookout on campus that day," said Sligo.

To leverage the excitement around the sesquicentennial cookout, Sligo and her colleagues set up mobile giving stations on campus to give any potential donors the ability to easily participate in UMassGives as they headed to other anniversary-related events.

"We had about eight laptops set up under a tent, and we had a lot of students and a lot of faculty and staff getting involved," said Sligo. "It was very exciting for us."

The laptops at the mobile giving stations were a big driver behind the student involvement. But it wasn't just the kids who were getting involved in giving for the first time. In addition to the 626 student gifts, hundreds more new donors gave to UMass Amherst for the first time during UMassGives.

"We ended up adding 1,056 donors to our database as a result of UMassGives," said Sligo.

In total, 1,588 donors participated in the inaugural UMassGives. With roughly two-thirds of those 1,588 donors making their first gifts, it's clear the campaign helped to expand the culture of philanthropy around UMass Amherst. The campaign was such a success, plans for the next UMassGives started almost immediately. The first order of business? Expand and strengthen the online ambassador program.

"The ambassador program is an ongoing process," said Sligo. "We want to keep them involved in the conversation in the months to come."

Ambassadors were highly active during the campaign, thanks in large part to the foundation's efforts at keeping them armed with content they could easily share to their social networks. That activity not only led to gifts during the campaign, but also created buzz around giving—a crucial component that helped accomplish the campaign goal of expanding the culture of philanthropy.

This was evident from the feedback Sligo and her colleagues received both during the campaign and in the days and weeks that followed, said Sligo. "Alumni were so excited to see the numbers going up. And once the campaign was over, I had so many emails from alumni saying 'Thank you for doing this.' They were excited that we had a successful campaign and were excited to have it happen again in the future."

A 24-Hour Challenge for Alumni Giving

By Gareth Henderson

The advancement team at Skidmore College had a tall order in 2012: Attract 501 donors in one day, using social media and email. The goal was to increase the number of donors to the college's annual fund by attracting more young donors to the cause.

Fortunately, this campaign concept had internal buy-in from the start. Lori Eastman, director of development at Skidmore, had heard about DePauw University's 24-Hour Challenge, which attracted gifts from more than 800 donors in one day. She talked with Skidmore's Collyer Vice President for Advancement Michael Casey, and, from there, the idea had the green light to move forward.

With the leadership quickly on board, logistics presented the biggest hurdle. Online Community Manager Daniella Nordin and Annual Fund Gift Officer Jennifer Castellani led the planning effort for what was to be Skidmore's first digital-only campaign.

Early on, Nordin and Castellani made the choice to base the campaign exclusively on social media and email. It was important to create a name that was easy to remember and that would play well on social media platforms. A group of generous donors agreed to give $50,000 if 501 alumni sent in annual fund donations in 24 hours on May 1, 2012. So the

team selected the name "501 on 5/01."

Before Skidmore's advancement team reached the heart of the planning stages, the fundamental first step was research. "It gave us a sense of what to do and how to plan," Nordin said.

Nordin wanted to find out which alumni were using social media and how to reach them. Data from the

> "It really laid the foundation for us to continue these promotional engagements."
>
> *Daniella Nordin*

Pew American Life Project showed that most people who use social media are college graduates between the ages of 18 and 29, and about 75 percent of these graduates are women. This was good news for the 24-Hour Challenge team. Most of Skidmore's alumni are women, because it was founded as an all-women's college. Also, as a result of this research, the team decided to use Facebook, Twitter, and email as the primary digital tools to market the campaign. The Skidmore team also

focused the campaign's marketing on graduates of the College's most recent 20 classes (1992-2011).

Coordinating the effort was simplified by the fact that most of the staff members involved knew each other already. Skidmore's Office of Advancement housed 13 departments that would all play roles in the 24-Hour Challenge, including Alumni Affairs, Annual Fund, Donor Relations, and Communications. On the other hand, Nordin and Castellani had to make sure all the department leaders were on the same page and knew who was doing what.

"We pulled together all the directors of staff who would be involved, and we discussed and divided up the roles and responsibilities," Castellani said.

From there, it was all about the planning. Castellani and her colleagues prepared the Facebook posts, tweets, and emails that would go out to alumni on May 1, 2012. This gave the team room to adjust these messages and updates during the campaign. Most of Skidmore's Facebook posts about the 24-Hour Challenge went up on the alumni Facebook page, and the college's Twitter account used the hashtag #Skidmore501 to drive engagement. Emails about the campaign included a link to its webpage, skidmore.edu/challenge.

This campaign also ran on a great deal of volunteer support. Between

annual fund volunteers and alumni, nearly 140 people volunteered to spread the word about the Challenge. These online ambassadors encouraged many alumni to donate on May 1 and were essential to the campaign's overall success. Castellani held several conference calls with volunteers before the event, to make sure they were fully informed.

When the day of the 24-Hour Challenge arrived, the campaign already had plenty of momentum. Giving started early, and dozens of alumni posts on Facebook and Twitter encouraged others to donate. The Skidmore team continued to send out social media posts, links to special video updates, and occasional emails to alumni.

The advancement team included some of the most memorable alumni posts in the official email updates. Here's one of their favorites: "Dear @SkidmoreCollege, no donation amount could match my love for you! Proud to give what I can!"

By 2 p.m., the 24-Hour Challenge had surpassed its original goal of 501 donors. So the advancement team decided to aim higher. With a little scrambling between 1 and 2 p.m., they were able to secure another gift and announce a new goal of 750 donors. This added $25,000 to the Challenge amount for a total of $75,000. Alumni retweeted the news: "Go Skiddies go! Heart swelling with college pride."

Skidmore College Alumni · 993 like this
May 1 at 11:06am near Saratoga Springs, NY ·

Thank you to the 750 members of the Skidmore community who have donated to the Challenge so far! What are some of the reasons you gave today?

Like · Comment

Matthew Sherring, Michael Spicer and 9 others like this.   Top Comments ▾

Jackie Saltzman Kon I just gave!
1 · May 1 at 1:07pm

Skidmore College Alumni Thank you Jackie!
May 1 at 1:09pm

Michael Spicer Skidmore students and faculty need our help. It's not about how much we give, it's the action of giving!
1 · May 1 at 12:37pm

Skidmore College Alumni Well said!
May 1 at 12:41pm

Lisa Craig Financial aid! Because Skidmore should be accessible to the students who will really make the most of their time on campus, not just to the students who can afford it.
3 · May 1 at 12:45pm

Craig Hyland Because Skidmore is awesome! And, I miss spring days on the green.
3 · May 1 at 11:48am via mobile

Jenny Herdman Lando Paul Budlong made me. :)
2 · May 1 at 11:35am

Andrew Kirshenbaum I gave because Skidmore asked. And because what counts is not how much you give but simply that you give.
1 · May 1 at 1:38pm

Elizabeth Low Bertoni I want future students to have the same wonderful experience i had at skidmore, if not better!
1 · May 1 at 12:19pm

Amylou Porter Because you asked!
1 · May 1 at 11:36am

Jennifer Regan Williams Skidmore has given me a lifetime of opportunities. 😊
1 · May 1 at 11:28am

Gail Reich I ♥ Skidmore!
1 · May 1 at 11:21am

Kirstin O'Rielly Drabek I couldn't resist being part of the fun and momentum!
May 1 at 6:34pm via mobile

As the campaign closed in on that goal, Castellani, Nordin, and their colleagues kept alumni updated, and the momentum stayed high. Alumni were also excited about "pub nights" that the Skidmore's Alumni Affairs Department had arranged in Boston, New York City, and Saratoga Springs. These in-person events kept the momentum going in the evening hours.

At about 8:30 p.m., the Skidmore team announced that the campaign had passed the 750-donor mark. Then, the move was on to reach 1,000 donors and a new Challenge total of $100,000 in the next 3.5 hours.

By midnight, Skidmore had more than 1,000 donors and raised

$72,000, not including the challengers' $100,000. The breakdown of the donors was as follows: 65 percent had given in 2011; 18 percent had given before 2011; 4 percent were lapsed donors; 6 percent were first-time donors; and 7 percent had already given in 2012.

The young alumni came out in force: 59 percent of all gifts came from donors who had graduated within the last decade. Skidmore's Facebook fans tripled, and the college gained 102 new Twitter followers during the 24-Hour Challenge.

"It really laid the foundation for us to continue these promotional engagements," Nordin said.

In fact, Skidmore's advancement team unveiled a second 24-Hour Challenge for May 1, 2013. And they saw even greater success. The second 24-Hour Challenge started with a goal of 1,000 donors for $100,000. The campaign attracted 1,500 donors, raised $150,000 in challenger money, and also raised $190,000 in donations in addition to that pledged sum.

For the 2013 Challenge, the advancement team expanded the campaign's focus beyond the most recent 20 classes and included Skidmore graduates of all ages. Additions to the campaign included

two faculty webinars, raffles for a faculty book, and a postcard that went out to the older alumni about a week before the campaign. These elements gave alumni new ways to engage with the campaign.

Given the success of the Challenge, the staff expects it to become an annual event. For future Challenges, the advancement team might organize special events on campus for the campaign or include livestreams of student performances, Nordin speculated.

"You have to keep it fresh," said Castellani.
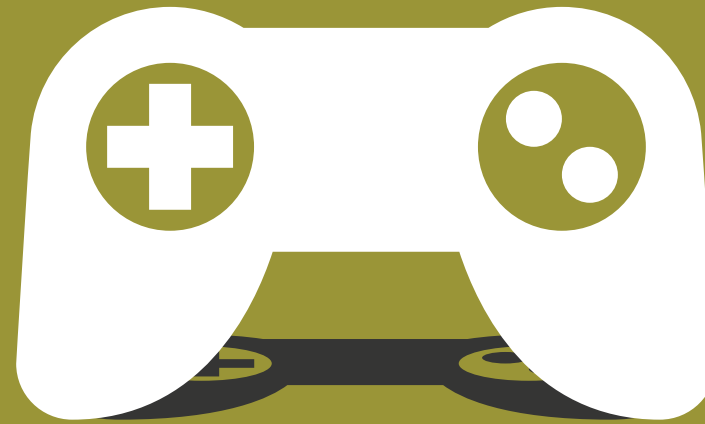
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Making Giving a Game

By Justin Ware

"Gamification"—turning fundraising into a competition—is a common tactic in online giving campaigns and, done right, can boost both participation and dollars raised. Development officers at Georgetown University took a creative approach to encouraging such competition in the higher education arena. Instead of pitting one institution against another, its 24-hour City Challenge online giving campaign enlisted Georgetown alumni groups from seven different cities in a lighthearted race to see which could encourage the most donors to give.
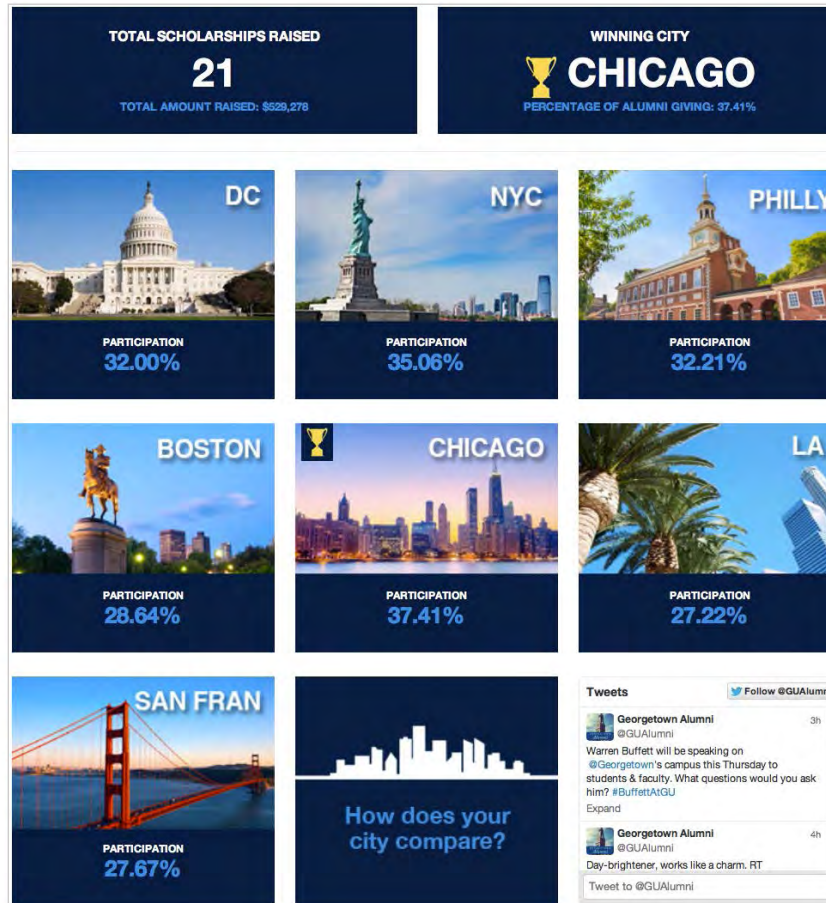
"Through the effort we generated 1,514 gifts from seven different markets," said Joannah Pickett, senior director for annual giving at Georgetown University. In just 27 hours (the three bonus hours came from the time change from East Coast to West Coast), Georgetown raised $529,000. Moreover, of the 1,514 donors, 898 were new donors for the fiscal year, which meant Georgetown took a huge step toward reaching its goal of raising its alumni giving participation rate from 28 percent to 35 percent.

For most donors, the driving reason to give is the desire to make a difference. But a number of other factors can contribute to philanthropic support, and one of those factors is competition. The communications plan for the City Challenge allowed for two complementary messages to be put out to the alumni base—one inspirational and philanthropic, the other competitive and fun—with the goal that one or both messages would appeal to all alumni.

"We were really proud of the individual design pieces created by our in-house Interactive Team for this, because they were fun and engaging," said Pickett. "There was a whole series of graphic elements that said things like 'I'm a Proud Boston

Hoya.' And then we also had graphic elements of individual students from each of the regional markets who lent us their special stories of their upbringing and their circumstances. For example, online posts, videos, and other content read something along the lines of 'I'm a student from Chicago and this is what the scholarship has meant for me at Georgetown. Rally around students like me, Chicagoans.' So we created

specifically in social media, have a relatively high degree of influence online, will act appropriately online and post mostly positive content about your organization or institution.

"Georgetown is really unusual, with such incredibly strong advocates in our volunteers, who are wonderful to work and partner with," said Pickett. "We were able to use some of

a social online ambassador for this particular project and I'm passionate about the cause.'"

In addition to preparing messages and identifying people willing to spread them, Georgetown needed an online base for the competition. Pickett engaged an outside company to help build a website that Georgetown's team envisioned, which would track the competition's progress in real time.

> "…they said 'sign me up, I want to be a social online ambassador for this particular project and I'm passionate about the cause.'"
>
> *Joannah Pickett*

these pieces, which were fun on the one side and inspirational on the other, in order to have them easily passed around on social media."

Of course, in order for all those smart, gamified graphics to reach new supporters, people have to share them online. To be sure that happened, Pickett and her team identified and worked with a team of volunteer online ambassadors. Online ambassadors, or peer-to-peer online fundraising advocates, have helped bring success to a number of digital fundraising campaigns. The key is finding a group of people who are passionate about your organization or cause, are highly active online,

those volunteers to get out a word-of-mouth marketing campaign. So you had authentic alumni talking in their own voices about the power of philanthropy and scholarships at Georgetown to other alumni."

Pickett tapped the volunteers she knew were active online and built the roster of online ambassadors from there. In the end, Georgetown had a core group of 63 ambassadors ready to do battle in the City Challenge. "Some of them are longtime volunteers for Georgetown; some of them, we've never engaged as volunteers before," said Pickett. "But they said 'sign me up, I want to be

"We could give immediate satisfaction to people by saying 'your gift is going to make a difference at Georgetown,' and then we had it represented immediately in front of them," Pickett said. "Having the real-time totals of incoming dollars and participation rates per regional market made the challenge thrilling to watch and generated momentum throughout the day. Additionally, representing the way the dollars added up to create scholarships enabled us to demonstrate in a very visual way that truly every donor and dollar was making an impact on Georgetown and our students."

With all these pieces in place, the next step was the campaign's execution. Although the City Challenge was a one-day online campaign, promotion extended across multiple media and started a month in advance. Online campaigns happen quickly, which means plenty of would-be donors might miss their chance to give if they're not aware of

the campaign in advance and psychologically ready to give.

"We added an insert to our direct mail pieces for those people who lived in these seven regional markets to signal 'the City Challenge is coming,'" said Pickett. "We also had phonathon students who were calling people in those markets deliver an additional message that said, 'This is an activity that's coming to your region, be on the lookout for it.' So we built on our traditional marketing messages to try to spread the word. The approaches work really nicely together, so we knew they would be a nice complement to an online and social media marketing strategy. We see an uptick in our online giving every time we send out a direct mail piece."

To be sure the opportunity wasn't missed meant working in tandem with the ambassadors who were driving the City Challenge—even if it meant having to miss a few hours of sleep during the campaign itself. On the day of the challenge, Pickett said, "I probably got home around midnight and actually ran a second campaign with the online ambassadors on the West Coast at about 1 o'clock in the morning."

That last-minute push occurred because Pickett was closely monitoring the campaign's progress online, and she noticed a lag in support coming from the West Coast markets. So she sent late-night messages out to her ambassadors on the West Coast, imploring them to drive more activity. "I explained to them, 'Here's what we're seeing, here's where we need to go, I need you all to start pushing your regions to give now.'"

And they did. "So when I woke up in the morning, the Los Angeles and San Francisco markets had jumped dramatically in participation from where they had been when I went to sleep," she said.

The City Challenge was tremendously successful because it was a combination of a smart concept (online competition among alumni groups), a sound strategy (a well-designed online giving page with campaign-related content that was driven by dedicated online ambassadors), the incorporation of traditional marketing mechanisms, and flawless execution. And it's a plan that can be easily replicated by any organization or institution that's willing to make the necessary investment in online giving campaigns. That's an investment that will pay not only short-term income in dollars raised, but perhaps more importantly, long-term dividends in an increased base of supporters.