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Annual Giving: Recommended Practices for Universities Based on Current Literature, Conversations with Professionals, and Personal Experience

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The intended audience for this paper is students interested in beginning a career in development; volunteers and members of student giving societies; and annual fund officers at various institutions, including the University of Massachusetts Boston.

INTRODUCTION

Development, or fundraising, is essential to non-profit institutions. Hospitals, universities, and charity groups rely on the support of individuals, corporations, foundations, and government agencies to fund their endeavors. Educational fundraising has existed in America as long as the higher education system itself. Private institutions like Harvard College originally gained funding by sending solicitors from America to England. (Worth, 1993, p. 18) Throughout the years, departments that focus exclusively on development have been established in universities and non-profits, with subdivisions focused on various constituent segments. At educational institutions, alumni relations departments often form partnerships with development offices because of the similarities between the departments' goals. Alumni relations departments have existed since the mid-1800's, but have evolved to serve many purposes both independent of and linked with the goals of the development office. (Worth, 1993, p. 19) Alumni relations offices host networking events and reunions, as well as collaborate with the development office to solicit the alumni.

In this paper, I will provide an introduction to the development and discuss the role of the annual fund and current annual fund solicitation channels. I then will share the results of interviews with eight development professionals, and reflect on my experience in various development positions. Finally, I will provide suggestions, based on my research, interviews, and experience, on ways to increase annual fund participation at universities in general and at the University of Massachusetts Boston in particular.

Development Today

Modern development offices, sometimes known as advancement offices in an educational setting, are normally divided into the following subdivisions: donor (advancement) services; stewardship; corporate and foundation giving; planned giving; alumni relations; major gifts; and annual fund. The advancement services department conducts research on prospective donors, processes gifts that funnel in, and develops a budget for the development department. The stewardship department shows appreciation to alumni who give to the university at any level. Many stewardship programs will thank donors on a ladder system, with more personalized letters and visual images of the donor's impact awarded to higher-level donors. The corporate and foundation giving department searches for opportunities for the university to be sponsored by a corporation or foundation whose endeavors match the goals of the university. Grant-writing is an essential skill for these professionals to have, as navigating the competitive grant application process used by corporations and foundations is key to being awarded funding. Planned giving officers solicit alumni who wish to give to the university through a bequest. Alumni relations departments may be housed within the development office (as it is at Harvard University) or act as a separate office with ties to the development office (which is the structure applied at University of Massachusetts Boston). Alumni relations professionals serve the dual function of acting as a liaison between the current school community and the alumni body, and hosting events to encourage alumni participation and grow affinity toward the university. Major gifts and the annual fund will be discussed in the next section, as annual giving is the focus of this paper.

CURRENT MECHANISMS USED TO PROMOTE ANNUAL GIVING

Major gifts and the annual fund are two traditional sources of funding for universities, but they are vastly different and fulfill different purposes. Development professionals known as either “major gifts officers” or “directors of development” will, in collaboration with the donor services department, identify wealthy alumni whose charitable interests match up to an endeavor of the university. The major gifts officers will then cultivate a relationship with these alumni through personal connections, including phone calls, one-on-one visits, and exclusive events. Major gifts officers are expected to maintain a portfolio of major gift prospects, and to maintain regular contact with them throughout the year. Major gift prospects are typically not solicited until a relationship has been established, so there can be years between when a major gift alumnus is first identified by the prospect research team and when said alumnus is asked to give to the university, during which the cultivation process occurs. The cultivation stage between the identification and the ask includes opportunities for the major gifts officer to learn more about the alum’s individual philanthropic interests, through special visits and events. This knowledge is then utilized in tailoring the ask to the alum, incorporating the alum’s genuine philanthropic vision and outlining the ways in which their contribution to the university would fulfill these interests. This process has the effect of building relationships, not only between the prospect and the major gifts officer but also between the prospect and the university. The payoff is lucrative; so much so, in fact, that 78% of a university’s funding source typically comes from just 14% of their donor base. (Woolbright, 2014) In other words, 14% of a university’s donors are major givers who provide 78% of the university’s funding. This leaves 22% of the university’s funding to be covered by other sources, from corporation and foundation funding, bequests, and annual fund donors.

In contrast, annual fund officers solicit the general alumni population, asking for unspecified gifts to be applied to the area of most need at the institution. Because a single major gift can be the dollar equivalent of hundreds of annual fund gifts, some have questioned why the annual fund is still necessary, but the annual fund fills many niches, and provides important diversification to funding, that major gifts would be unlikely to fill on their own.

In Defense of the Annual Fund

In a 1999 interview with *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Stephen Nill, the chief development officer at California State University at Fullerton, argued that focusing on the annual fund can have negative repercussions for a university. He argues that "most institutions…should direct their resources toward encouraging 'high end' planned giving, rather than running [an] annual fund" due to the fact that these gifts are likely to be much larger than any gift to the annual fund. (Monaghan, 1999) However, even Nill's colleague in planned giving argued that "such gifts can't drive an institution" (Monaghan, 1999). The annual fund serves a range of benefits within an institution. Annual fund participation is a key component that various rankings, such as U.S. News & World Report, use to measure alumni satisfaction. At Phonathon, student callers are taught that alumni satisfaction is partially measured by alumni giving percentages. The higher an institution's alumni satisfaction percentage is, the higher that institution is ranked. This, in turn, can improve chances of the institution being funded by private corporations, or being sponsored by prominent foundations. Investing in the annual fund is also considered a demonstration of confidence in the direction that the institution is taking. Not everyone can afford to make a major gift, and even those who commit to making a major gift may spread the funds out over several years. This is in contrast to the annual fund, where funds are received immediately and able to be put to use right away in the area of most need at the institution.

The annual fund can also work cohesively with the major gifts program. By giving a designated gift to the annual fund, alumni are able to express their interest in specific areas of the university; this knowledge will assist major gifts officers in future solicitation plans. The annual fund can thereby act as the start of a productive pipeline, transitioning annual givers to major givers in the future (Burdenski, n.d.).

Alumni participation is often a high priority within an advancement office, as it is directly linked not only to the success of the annual fund, but also to the rankings of the university on widely-read websites like that of U.S. News & World Report. If the media views a university positively, enrollment is apt to increase. Community members may then become inclined to contribute to the success of the university by participating in a fund, and the university will become more visible to corporations and foundations interested in fulfilling their endeavors. Increasing alumni participation can be accomplished in various ways: by creating programs directed specifically toward recent graduates; by creating affinity for the university through student giving societies, senior gift programs, and other student fundraisers; and by creatively updating traditional annual fund channels used to solicit donors.

Young Alumni (GOLD) Initiatives

Young alumni, usually segmented into the category of 'graduates of the last decade' (GOLD), have closer ties to the institution than any other donor segment, as they have been on the campus most recently, and are preparing to utilize their degrees from the university in the workforce. However, young alumni also present their own set of challenges for development professionals. Because the alumni have recently graduated, they may not yet have the funding to make a major or even a modest gift. Additionally, due to rampant unemployment, many alumni struggle to pay their student loans while searching for work, and may feel that as they are already devoting a large portion of their funds to their alma mater. To overcome these obstacles, young alumni should be taught the value of their gifts, regardless of size. To acquire participation from this group, it is essential that both the alumni relations office and the advancement office work together to come up with strategies to cultivate and solicit young alumni.

Alumni Relations staff play a pivotal role in the cultivation of young alumni. Many universities have alumni associations open to alumni who give at the participation level, which varies from school to school. (At UMass Boston, alumni can join the Association after making a $25 participation gift to the UMass Boston Fund.) Additionally, giving society ladders are often adjusted such that recent graduates can participate with smaller gift amounts than older alumni. As the years go on, the ladder is altered so the recent graduates are expected to give at the same rate as their older peers to remain members of the giving societies.

In terms of annual fund participation, annual giving teams must adjust their traditional strategies to reach this population. Phonathon programs can be successful with this demographic provided that the school has up-to-date contact information. The younger generation is more technology-savvy, and therefore, utilizing cell phone numbers, email solicitations, and social media campaigns are believed to be more successful with GOLD alumni than traditional direct mail.

Giving campaigns targeted specifically toward a young alumni population can also be created, with clear focus on the goal, purpose, and impact of the campaign. Outlining a designation for the funds will increase clarity for the campaign. Some donors may be unsure what a gift to an unrestricted fund means; explaining that funds will go toward the area of most need, and providing examples of previous impacts of the annual fund, can encourage alumni to participate. Incentives like challenge funds are often successful as well because there is increased impact with each individual gift. Development professionals are continuing to test out new strategies to see which methods have the highest return on investment within this population.

Building a Student Giving Program

While creating affinity amongst the recent graduate community is the most apparent way of generating increased alumni participation, creating affinity within the student community can have multiple benefits as well. However, it can be difficult for non-traditional schools like commuter campuses or community colleges to be able to build the same affinity for their university that more traditional schools can generate. At traditional universities with dormitories, students live on campus and develop communities. Upon graduation, the students anticipate attending reunions and meeting old friends, or visiting familiar campus spots. This contrasts with the commuter campus experience, which traditionally involve older students who have part-time or full-time jobs and therefore do not develop the same links to the physical campus. This can have repercussions on the alumni participation rate as well, so commuter campuses should pay specific attention to creating student participation programs in order to connect to the student population and create this sense of affiliation. Additionally, with college tuition rates skyrocketing in a tumultuous economy, it can be difficult for students to rationalize why they should donate their pocket change to a senior gift when they are already paying student loans. Educating students on the annual fund and why their participation is essential to the future success of the university is vital to building participation.

To be successful, the student participation program must have a clear-cut structure. Some schools create student giving societies who solicit their peers for student gifts; others create societies who interact with the alumni community, building a sense of pride and mutually-beneficial networking opportunities. Other universities combine both of these methods into a cohesive program. These vital programs will be most successful if they involve cohesive interaction with the advancement office and the alumni relations office at the university, and encourage open communication and shared goals.

At the outset of a student giving campaign, advancement professionals and students involved in the student giving program should begin by defining the reward, purpose, and impact of the campaign for both their own personal knowledge and for use in marketing materials. The ‘reward’ component explains the incentives that the students will earn if they participate in the campaign. An example is the ability to vote for the designation of the money generated through the campaign. A designation can be anything from a scholarship fund to supporting study abroad initiatives. Next, the campaign must have an official ‘purpose’ for clarity to students. The ‘purpose’ in most student giving campaigns is simply to raise money for the annual fund; later, this money is designated through a student vote. Finally, the campaign must have a visible ‘impact’. (Woolbright, 2014) The ‘impact’ is the results of the outcome of the campaign, and focusing on impact is key to running a successful and productive student giving committee. This impact can be presented to students at the close of the campaign, through a letter of stewardship describing to student donors what their money is supporting.

To maximize visibility and, in turn, participation, the campaign must be visible on campus. Advertising through posters, flyers, email, social media, and at events can increase this visibility and lead to a successful campaign. Managing volunteers involved with the campaign is also essential. The volunteers can be students, advancement professionals, or members of the alumni community. Regardless of their backgrounds, these volunteers must first be recruited, then trained to understand the goals of the campaign, and finally motivated to create positive change on campus by soliciting gifts for the campaign. Students involved in the Phonathon programs at universities are ideal candidates to become the volunteers involved with student giving campaigns, because these students possess the knowledge about the impact of giving, and they can convey that knowledge to other students through peer-to-peer solicitations. (Woolbright, 2014)

Constructing a solid program structure can ensure the continued success of the giving program for semesters to come. Challenge funds are an excellent incentive to encourage student giving. With challenge funds, alumni community members commit to matching the dollars raised by the students at a predetermined rate. As not every class will give at the same level, it is important to keep track of individual class giving habits, for use in future solicitation plans and in setting goals for the class's future giving campaigns. This can have the additional benefit of being able to customize a solicitation plan for the young alumni whose giving habits have already been measured from the time when they were students participating in a senior or student giving campaign.

Creative Approaches to Traditional Annual Fund Channels

Major gift cultivation, planned gift solicitations, and grant proposals are time-consuming and do not always yield immediate results, although the results may prove to be exceptionally rewarding when they do occur. By contrast, annual funds are ingrained with a sense of urgency and immediacy. While major gift officers dedicate their time to cultivation and stewardship to ensure transformational gifts for the university, annual fund officers work diligently to solicit their donors through various channels throughout the year. With this constant solicitation comes the necessity of creatively reiterating components of these familiar channels. It is essential that the university inspires its alumni to participate in the fund year after year by providing creative approaches to phone programs, parent giving programs, and direct mail initiatives.

Phone Programs

Phone programs, often nicknamed "Phonathons" at institutes of higher education, hire student callers or train alumni volunteers to solicit alumni through the telephone. Although some constituents may dislike telephone solicitations due to the stigma of telemarketing, phone programs have many positive components as well. (Worth, 1993, p. 80) Callers are able to interact with the alumni, mutually sharing experiences about the university and even networking. Callers are also able to ensure that the university continues to have the most up-to-date demographic information on the alumni. If the donor makes a gift over the phone via a credit or debit card, the university is able to put their funds to use immediately in the area of greatest need. If the alum makes a pledge to give during the fiscal year, the university can count their pledge towards the alumni participation percentage. Annual fund professional Jason Fisher explains that "While the dollars that are raised from phonathons are usually considered to be modest in comparison with other methods of annual giving solicitation, the personal connection made via the telephone can result in significant upgraded pledges, donor education, and stewardship." (Fisher)

Phone programs themselves have existed for years, and universities are applying new strategies to ensure that the programs remain successful. Some may argue that phone programs are becoming obsolete, due to the fact that alumni can screen phone calls and ignore the university if they so choose, and the overall decline of owning house phones. Although some alumni may deliberately ignore the university's calls, others may be given the opportunity to learn about the university through the calls. Some universities cannot afford to send mail solicitations to their entire alumni body, so the alumni may be given their first opportunity to learn about the annual fund through the phone program. Additionally, upon learning what the annual fund represents and the different designations one can specify for their gift, alumni may begin to make specified gifts, which could lead to major gifts in the future. Alumni can also make their gifts over the phone via credit card, which will save the university money. To compensate for the lack of owning house phones, particularly among the younger population, advancement services teams have begun obtaining alumni cell phone numbers through prospect research, so it is easier to reach the actual alumnus instead of their parents. To make phone programs more efficient for the university's budget, many universities are switching from manual programs to automated programs. Manual programs use paper forms, while automated programs utilize computer systems, which save printing costs and time through automatic dialing.

Parent Giving Programs

To increase participation in the annual fund, as well as to explore a new segment of prospective donors, many universities implement parent giving programs. Typically, parents are only affiliated with the university while their child is attending the school, so a sense of immediacy must be incorporated into parent giving campaigns to ensure their success.

To cultivate parent interest, universities can apply various strategies. These strategies range from traditional solicitation channels like direct mail to more tailored approaches. For example, Northeastern University offers opportunities for parents to participate in the campus community, including allowing parents to serve as guest speakers or host on-campus events.

(Woolbright, 2014) Similar to student strategies, parent giving societies or programs can be implemented, integrating benefits as incentives for increased parent participation at higher levels. The program can retain focus on the annual giving component by encouraging members of the parent giving society to support the annual fund in addition to making a restricted gift.

When constructing a specified parent giving society, it is important to define the society's initiatives, just as it is with student giving programs. These initiatives can range from promoting philanthropy on campus to performing peer-to-peer solicitations. Once the society's goals are defined, the advancement officers must work with the society to fulfill the university's initiatives. Solicitations can be performed via mailings, the phone program, or peer-to-peer interactions, with parent volunteers explaining the impact of donor support to other parents at the university. Parent giving programs are dynamic and creative approaches to reaching this non-traditional constituent base.

Direct Mail

Direct mail is the most traditional method of solicitation and has many advantages, such as the amount of alumni that a mailing can reach, and the relatively low cost. (Worth, 1993, p. 78) However, direct mail also has negative aspects, such as a low return rate and the fact that a mass-produced letter can feel impersonal. Direct mail campaigns lack the immediacy and intimacy that a phone program can bring. It takes time for mail to be delivered, and there is less guilt involved if one chooses to throw a mail piece away, as compared to hanging up when speaking with a student solicitor.

Today, direct mail has evolved to encompass email appeals. Email appeals have various benefits that direct mail cannot cover. With Internet access, sending an email is free for the institution, and software is available to assist development professionals in viewing how many alumni viewed the email appeal. Email solicitations are also ingrained with the same sense of urgency that a Phonathon and the annual fund both demonstrate. A brief, compelling story with a link to the university's giving webpage can stress the relevance of the campaign and the benefits of instant fulfillment.

However, direct mail has not yet outlived its potential. While email solicitations contain a sense of urgency that may propel donors to give immediately, email is also apt to be ignored or lost in a sea of emails from other sources. It is also more difficult to capture attention for a long period of time through an email. Therefore, an email cannot build the argument as to why gifts are important to the same extensive and comprehensive level that a mailing piece can. Direct mail also encompasses a creative approach to solicitations. Interesting mail pieces, stressing the importance of impact with photographs or colorful graphs, can be more attention-grabbing than a compelling email subject line. (Levison, n.d.)

Combining direct mail and email solicitations can lead to increased success for annual funds. A Harvard Business Review article in 2012 cited a study done by a retailer with 105,000 loyalty club members. The retailer divided the members into three equal portions and solicited one-third through email, one-third through mail, and one-third through a combination. The results found that while 23% of individuals responded to email-only solicitations and 24% responded to mail-only solicitations, 25% of individuals responded when solicited through both channels (Hughes, 2012). These findings have significance to the annual fund as well, where even an increase of 1% participation can be significant. Reaching more individuals and securing more gifts to increase participation is key to universities like UMass Boston, whose participation rate among alumni is at below 6%. While direct mail is more costly and by default has a lower return on investment than email, I believe that it is still important to utilize this channel to reach alumni who may be accustomed to giving this way, to continue to ensure high participation.

CONVERSATIONS WITH DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS

In order to discover more about the successes and challenges of fundraising, I conducted interviews with eight development professionals at various institutions. Four of the professionals work in the higher education sector. The other four non-profit professionals work in the healthcare sector, and these professionals were interviewed for the purpose of comparison and contrast to the educational fundraising experience.

The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare

Four interviewees were staff members at The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare: Tanya Holton, Vice President of Development, and Christine Parks, Helene Feist, and Laurie Tellis, Development Data Coordinators. The Schwartz Center is a non-profit whose mission is to promote a level of compassion in the healthcare system that founder and late lawyer Kenneth Schwartz felt that he received while battling cancer. The Center fulfills this mission by hosting national "Rounds" for nurses, doctors, and other medical professionals on pertinent healthcare topics.

The Schwartz Center utilizes a variety of techniques to keep its donors engaged with the organization. These include multiple touchpoints with the donors throughout the year (including a Valentine's Day card mailing); stressing social media participation (adding "Have you joined us on Facebook?" to solicitation letters and invitations); and sharing compelling, emotional stories from those who have benefited from The Schwartz Center's programs. Currently, The Schwartz Center's main communication methods are direct mail and email solicitations. Signups for the non-profit's newsletter are offered at the "Rounds" and promoted by The Schwartz Center's employees through various channels. The engagement strategies that have worked best for The Schwartz Center include publishing news articles in the New York Times, Health Affinities, and the Boston Globe, as well as national news stories; mailing regular newsletters to donors; and events such as the annual dinner. The annual dinner is the organization's main fundraiser, hosted in honor of late founder Kenneth Schwartz.

All four professionals emphasized the belief that stewardship plays a vital role in keeping donors engaged. According to Tanya, "The Schwartz Center loses 67% of donors yearly", which is a significant percentage of donors to lose. The reason for this significant loss may be that donors only give to The Schwartz Center if they have had a recent significant experience involving healthcare, and may not see the significance of continuing to participate beyond an initial gift. Tanya believes that building stewardship is essential for creating retention amongst donors. Helene stressed that "$50 may be the next $100 around the corner", and that it is important to thank all donors, regardless of the amount that they gave. Laurie believes that a key component of a successful stewardship is "keeping in touch with the donor. Let them know how the donation is being used, and if it's being used in the way that they want." Christine believed that donors with "healthcare stories, either positive or negative" are most likely to continue to support The Schwartz Center's mission of promoting healthcare compassion year after year.

To identify prospective donors, the organization hosts events promoting compassionate care, encouraging conversation and drawing particular attention to personal experience. The process of identifying these donors is by no means short: it can take up to 2 years simply to acquire a new donor at any giving level. The organization has had difficulty cultivating and soliciting young donors in particular. An attempt was made to create a Young Professional focus group to discuss how best to reach the younger medical population, but the idea was abandoned due to schedule conflicts.

The Schwartz Center professionals have a variety of ideas that they plan to utilize to increase the donor base and retain donors. Tanya hopes to "take programs like Honor Your Caregiver, in which patients recognize an exceptional doctor or nurse, and make them both national and viral," utilizing the internet and various social media sites. Helene stresses the importance of "instant gratification, through being able to 'give now' through your cell phone." The Schwartz Center also hopes to host more personal, small gatherings with corporate professionals or major givers, who "sometimes don't want to be around as many people and would prefer to be solicited in a more intimate setting."

Harvard University

Harvard University is both the earliest institution of higher education to be established in the United States, and the first to embark on a fundraising campaign. Given these important aspects of Harvard's history, I sought to conduct interviews with employees of the Harvard University Alumni Affairs and Development department, in order to learn more about Harvard's annual fund and young alumni programs. The two development professionals I interviewed were Mary Kate Moore, Associate Director of Reunion Campaigns, and Evan St. George, Assistant Director of the Harvard College Fund.

According to Mary Kate, "Although 80% of graduates report satisfaction with Harvard, about 30% of the alumni are engaged, and this mirrors the participation rate." Evan believes that "the donor needs to feel compelled to make the first gift and feel like it matters. They need to feel good about making it. It's a struggle to thank young donors, to whom $100 is a lot of money to give, and to make them feel that their support is both important and makes a difference." The university utilizes many strategies to help ensure the participation of Harvard students and alumni.

For students, the university encourages student philanthropy through recruiting and training senior volunteers, who meet weekly with members of Evan's team. The volunteers are trained on why Harvard fundraises, what each gift means, and the importance of being a spokesperson for the fund. After undergoing this training, the volunteers are asked to solicit gifts from seniors on campus during the senior giving campaign. The students who often become the most active volunteers are those who were involved with the Alumni Affairs and Development office while in school, through the Phonathon program or the senior gift committee. Mary Kate believes that it is essential to stress that there are ways to give back that aren't simply monetary. Students are encouraged not only to donate money, but also to volunteer and be involved with the senior giving process.

"Young alums present challenges and opportunities," according to Evan. "They have more hectic schedules than people with established careers, from job searching or working crazy hours. The opportunities, though, are that they are fresh out of school, still feel passionate about the school and are really excited about the school. This is helpful because they aren't only reflecting about their own time here, but also reflecting on their own stories as they're connecting with classmates, and even asking others to give." Harvard has found high returns on utilizing email solicitations with young alumni, as mobile device use among this age group is extremely high and continuing to climb. Email has been more successful than direct mail, because young alumni are changing addresses so often. The phone program seems to be equally successful among both older demographics and among recent graduates, particularly when it is possible to acquire the recent graduates' cell phone numbers, which are more accurate and useful than simply having their parents' phone numbers.

Mary Kate draws from observations of other Ivy League fundraising programs to stress where Harvard can improve. Princeton and Dartmouth have high participation rates "because seniors, when asked to make a gift, are asked to give for five years. So they're set in a habit of giving. They also have annual reunions and alumni parades, so people feel positive in the early years." Enacting similar programs at Harvard could lead to higher participation rates.

Evan believes that empowering volunteers is essential. "I would venture a guess that the schools with the highest participation rates, it's not that their direct marketing or appeals are more effective because it's just an appeal. But I would venture a guess that the reason that the rates are high is because their volunteers are out there doing what they say they're going to do, having these conversations and taking on more assignments, and feeling ownership over closing gifts and knowing, 'I'm responsible for these gifts and that the college is relying on me to solicit these gifts.'"

Overall, Evan believes that Harvard currently runs a successful fundraising program largely due to the fact that "everyone has their unique reasons for giving back – maybe they were personally on financial aid and completely understand the impact that those dollars have. People feel like Harvard has opened doors for them that they never would have considered before. They feel that Harvard changed their lives and made possible all the things they accomplished. They not only want to pay it back, but pay it forward so Harvard can continue making the change in others' lives."

Boston College

In order to compare fundraising strategies among various universities in Boston, in addition to my interviews at Harvard, I performed interviews with development professionals at two other local institutions: Boston College and University of Massachusetts Boston. To learn about the strategies Boston College utilizes to solicit young alumni and student donors, I interviewed Dan Allenby. Dan serves as Vice President of Advancement at Boston College and is the founder of The Annual Giving Network, a popular blog for development professionals.

Among the various student engagement strategies, Dan says the senior class gift has been most successful in rallying students to participate in the fund. The senior gift campaign is yearlong, and includes challenges to make the campaign fun, competitive, and immediate. For example, "one Dean said he would jump into the Charles River in a tuxedo if the class met their fundraising goal, which the class did." Visibility, leveraging social media networks, and events are other essential components in encouraging students to give back. Dan has noticed that the students most likely to give back after leaving campus "tend to be leaders while on campus. They're well-networked, mature, and take the time to understand the finance of higher education, why tuition is expensive, and why the school charges so much yet continues to solicit, because that isn't a simple concept."

To encourage young alumni participation in the annual fund, Boston College utilizes a phone program, direct mailings, and email solicitations. Some of these programs have proved challenging, but others have been more successful. Dan explains that young alumni "don't really like paper letters, but they don't really read the emails we send either. However, Phonathon contract rates are going down in general, but the contact rate is highest amongst young alumni –

this is the generation who always have their phones on them." Dan believes that "teaching [young alumni] about philanthropy and its impact, and the ways that people can make a gift – through the annual fund, checks, going online, recurring gifts" is important, as is the aim to "keep it fresh and not just send the same letter every year; that will get stale. Be thoughtful and strategic."

Participation is one of the main goals of annual giving amongst young alumni, so Boston College focuses on tiered membership giving societies. For example, young alumni can become leadership givers by giving $100, as opposed to older alumni, who would become part of leadership societies with $1000 gifts. Focus is also placed on recurring gifts, monthly gifts, and giving through mobile links or social media sites. Boston College hopes to improve participation by being more sophisticated about constituent bases and appeals, and focusing on loyalty and loyal donor programs, as – according to Dan – "this is the key to a successful annual fund: retention."

University of Massachusetts Boston

The University of Massachusetts Boston (UMass Boston) is the only public university in the city, with a student population made up entirely of off-campus students. I interviewed Betsy Freedman Doherty, Associate Vice Chancellor of Alumni Relations and the UMass Boston Fund, to learn about the unique opportunities and challenges of fundraising at UMass Boston.

Betsy believes that one way to successfully engage students at UMass Boston is by offering student and alumni networking events. This helps build student affiliation to UMass Boston and the alumni community, while giving alumni the chance to see firsthand the impacts that their gifts have on the students at the university. Other essential components include drawing awareness to giving opportunities and building a strong connection with students from the first time they step onto campus. One goal of the University Advancement office is to form a partnership with Enrollment Services on campus. This would have multiple benefits, from gathering parent data (which aids in soliciting gifts from parents of current students), to integrating graduating seniors into the Alumni Association before they leave campus. This would build an affinity to the alumni community, which could provide an incentive to give, and also ensure that the university has accurate email data for these students.

According to Betsy, an essential component of gaining alumni participation amongst the young alumni body is "offering them something that's meaningful to them. Offering something of value makes it a win-win situation. It can be gratitude, a sense of well-being that they've made a difference" or a more tangible reward, such as the opportunity to network with established alumni on the Board of Visitors. Young alumni don't seem to respond well to direct mail and are more responsive to online and electronic methods, so email solicitations and cell phone calls work best for reaching this constituent base. A combination of all programs is essential to reach as many young alumni as possible. Maintaining accurate data, including gathering non-UMass Boston email addresses from students (whose accounts expire four months after graduating) and collecting cell phone numbers, is vital to reaching this base, further explaining why the partnership with Enrollment Services could provide a plethora of benefits.

In order to increase visibility and participation in the Alumni Association on campus, all graduates in the class of 2013 were offered automatic membership into this association for their first year out of college. Traditionally, the Association membership benefits are provided to alumni who give $25 or more to the university. This initiative seems to have increased alumni engagement with the campus, as young alumni are attending more professional development events. It is too soon, however, to determine whether or not participation has increased among this demographic in a statistically significant manner. The initiative also has the additional benefit of ensuring that the university has up-to-date email addresses for the entire class of 2013.

As with other giving programs, stewardship is essential in donor retention and in transitioning annual donors to major gift donors. If a “thank you” is both thoughtful and timely, donors will be retained and move up the giving ladder in time. Two women who Betsy met at the Class of 1963 Reunion expressed their gratitude for receiving thank you phone calls from a Phonathon student after making $25 gifts, and these women explained that the treatment encouraged them to want to make an increased gift in the subsequent fiscal year. Similar to Boston College, UMass Boston also offers a scaled leadership society for its GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) alumni. GOLD alumni are only required to give $100 to join the leadership society, but the amount eventually increases to $1000, the baseline for non-GOLD alumni.

Creating more opportunities for networking and instilling in students a combination of gratefulness towards the institution and a habit of giving will combine to lead to successful participation rates among young graduates. Through these networking events, students will be given the opportunity to understand why giving is important to the university. The university’s participation rate can also increase with a firm educational component. UMass Boston is a public university, but only receives less than 30% of its funding from the state of Massachusetts. Many students and alumni may believe that the institution receives more support from the state than it actually does. If more students were aware of the importance of their gift to the institution, they may be more inclined to participate. As many students attending UMass Boston are the first in their family to attend college and may not have grown up in a culture that encouraged giving, creating a unique on-campus culture of giving is the first step to receiving student gifts. This culture can first be introduced at new student orientations, where Student Philanthropy and Alumni Council members currently pass out water bottles encasing letters promoting both SPAC and the Alumni Association. Awareness that alumni and student generosity helps contribute to a positive student experience can encourage students to want to give back and support others. This educational component can continue to be present at SPAC events including Philanthropy Day, where students can teach their peers about the UMass Boston Fund and inform them of its influence on every individual student. The UMass Boston Fund supports student scholarships and financial aid, recruiting and hiring professors, and funding classroom and lab equipment. Over 78% of students at UMass Boston are currently receiving financial aid or scholarship; in other words, 3 out of every 4 students are benefiting from monetary alumni support. The students who are not receiving financial aid or scholarships may have benefited from the fund in other ways, through utilizing lab equipment, or studying under a qualified teacher whose recruitment was made possible because of the UMass Boston Fund. Explaining that students can invest in the future of the university to ensure that others receive the same benefits that they received can help to continue a cycle of giving that can ultimately transform the university.

Establishing a parent giving program at UMass Boston, which many other institutions utilize, could attract another significant source of the school's non-alumni population, provided that the university can access this data. Betsy, who has been tasked with building a parent giving program at UMass Boston, says that "parents have a short 'shelf life' so to speak – they're only involved with the institution usually as long as their child is attending, but they also are apt to give at an accelerated level, so they really defy all the rules." Because parents are only involved with the university for a short period of time, they may be willing to make major gifts with less cultivation. Again, access to the Enrollment Services data is vital for this initiative to be successful.

<u>Professional Development Advice</u>

As part of my interview, I asked The Schwartz Center team, Mary Kate Moore, Evan St. George, Dan Allenby, and Betsy Freedman-Doherty to share their insight about the development profession and offer advice to an aspiring development professional.

Tanya stressed that flexibility, non-linear thinking, and understanding of a team environment are essential. Laurie suggested volunteering or interning with non-profits to gauge if there is a genuine interest in development in each organization of interest, before joining its staff. Laurie also stressed that “people” skills, database management skills, and research skills are important for fundraisers in various positions to acquire. Christine noted that knowledge of technology (as development moves away from paper) is vital, and that one must have a “donor is always right” mentality and a willingness to take on all projects. Helene explained that writing skills for appeals and thank you cards and a genuine passion for fundraising are essential for success at making appeals and performing thoughtful stewardship.

Mary Kate believed that key components are being organized, even-keeled, flexible, and patient, and being a self-starter. She encourages aspiring professionals to take advantage of their network and work opportunities, attend classes and lectures, and hear from individuals outside of a development context to get a different perspective on the impact of the fundraising process. Evan stressed the importance of “people skills” as well, as “people give to people, people don’t give to organizations”, and noted that rapport-building, trustworthiness, passion, and networking are vital components for a development professional’s success.

Dan suggested viewing blogs, attending conferences, and having conversations with current development professionals. He believes the most successful development professionals are those who are good listeners and self-starters, those who are entrepreneurial, good at networking, and good at writing. Dan utilizes publications like the magazine CASE Currents; websites for nonprofit consultants such as Marts and Lundy, and Sy Seymour's *Designs for Fundraising*. Dan emphasizes that each article in these helpful sources "strikes at the timeless development characteristics like working with volunteers and general fundraising".

Betsy noted that it is most important to be a "jack of all trades – an event manager, writer, planner, solicitor and fundraiser" and more. In order to attain success, she suggested interning or being a student assistant in a development office to see the different jobs that people are doing, as many people may like the idea of a career but not like the career in actuality. Detail-focused strategic thinkers with understanding of the "big picture" are the quintessential development professionals.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES IN DEVELOPMENT

My personal interest in seeking a career in development began in the fall of 2011. I started school at the University of Massachusetts Boston on a four-year academic scholarship covering both tuition and fees. During October of my freshman year, I applied for a position as a Phonathon Associate within the University Advancement office. I based my decision to apply on many factors: my desire to work on-campus, the opportunity to apply my skillset from previous jobs, and my interest in learning more about the alumni of UMass Boston. Because I had received a scholarship, my goal was to help other students receive the same opportunity that I had. I was offered a position as a Phonathon Associate by Kelly Westerhouse, Director of the

UMass Boston Fund, and Torey Heeren, student supervisor of the program. I accepted the position, and began my work in FY12, which is defined as the fiscal year that ranges from July 1st, 2011, through June 30th, 2012.

FY12

During my first week at Phonathon, we were introduced to our twenty-five co-workers and to the new Assistant Director of the UMass Boston Fund, Joe Ryan, who would be our direct supervisor during the calling shifts. We were then introduced to the logistics of the UMass Boston Phonathon program. Unlike the structure used at many universities, the UMass Boston Phonathon program did not use an automated phone system. Instead, the university's program was manual. Sheets containing individual alumni contact information, degree information, and giving history were printed and organized by college affiliation, and by presence or absence of giving history. Each caller would receive a stack of these sheets nightly, known as "calling cards" or "white cards." We learned a variety of facts during these pivotal first weeks, which shaped our calling experiences in the weeks to come.

We learned about the UMass Boston Fund's objectives, the reasons we ask our alumni to support the university, and the areas that the UMass Boston Fund supports. The UMass Boston Fund is an annual fund, meaning gifts donated to the fund are largely unrestricted and are applied to the area in which there is the most need. Usually, these areas are student scholarships and financial aid, faculty recruitment, and classroom and laboratory equipment. Students are instructed to make their calls with three goals in mind: to update alumni records (including addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, current business addresses); to build rapport through conversing about both the alum's experience at UMass Boston (or one of its predecessor institutions) and the current events on campus; and to solicit pledges and gifts for the university.

Next we were taught about the complex history of UMass Boston, which proved essential when we began our calling. UMass Boston was created through a merger of two colleges. The history of this university began in 1851, when Nathan Bishop pioneered the founding of Girls' High School, which was renamed Girls' High and Normal School in 1854 and became Boston Normal School in 1872. Boston Normal School went through various name changes, including Teachers College of the City of Boston (1922), State Teachers College at Boston (1952), State College at Boston (1960), and Boston State College (1968). Occurring alongside these events is another important chapter of the university's history, which began in 1863 when the Massachusetts Agricultural College was opened in Amherst. This school served as the pillar of the UMass system, which opened the first University of Massachusetts Boston campus building in 1964 in the Boston Gas building in Park Square. After moving to the Columbia Point campus in 1974, the college grew when it merged with Boston State College in 1982. True to its teaching roots, UMass Boston maintained the Boston State motto, "education for service". UMass Boston houses a number of colleges on campus: College of Liberal Arts, College of Science and Mathematics, College of Management, College of Education and Human Development, College of Public and Community Service, College of Nursing and Health Science, the Honors College, and the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies. Learning about the history of the university proved to be beneficial when I began calling. I learned through conversations with alumni that the "charter class" of 1969, the first class to graduate from UMass Boston, takes exceptional pride and identifies strongly with UMass Boston. By contrast, graduates from Boston State College are sometimes bitter at their perceived unfairness of the Boston State/UMass

Boston merge, which many students protested at the time. State Teachers College graduates, who have seen the university change to Boston State before relocating to the peninsula as UMass Boston, do not always feel connected to UMass Boston either. This lack of affinity is an obstacle for the university, as I would learn in my future experiences.

Our training also included a discussion of common fundraising terms, placing special emphasis on the donor segregation terms of "Future", "SYBUNT", and "LYBUNT". We were taught that a Future was an individual who had not yet given to the university. A SYBUNT (an abbreviation for "some year but unfortunately not this year") was an individual who had made a gift to UMass Boston in any time prior to the most recent fiscal year. A LYBUNT (an abbreviation for "last year but unfortunately not this year") was an individual who had made a gift to UMass Boston during the last fiscal year. We were also taught of the importance of fiscal years, and how to place special emphasis on this during our calling. As the fiscal year spans from July 1st to June 30th of the following year, awareness of the fiscal year is essential in explaining to an alumni why they may be solicited twice per calendar year for an annual fund. We then went into more detail about the various parts of the call, possible responses by the alumni, and the importance of obtaining a credit card number. By completing a call by both securing a gift amount and obtaining the alum's credit card information, we could efficiently turn an unfulfilled pledge (which would require a follow-up mailing) into an outright gift.

Finally, we were given scripts specific to each of the three donor types (LYBUNT, SYBUNT, and Future). We were taught to use a three-ask "ladder" system. For Futures, we began our asks at $100. Depending on the type of refusal we received, we would then ask for $50 or $25. The third and final ask of either $25 or lower was based on participation. We were encouraged to share with alumni the various incentives they could earn with a gift of $25. The ladder system varied for LYBUNTs and SYBUNTs, depending on the amount of their last gift. We were also taught to never minimize the impact of a single alum’s contribution through using words like “less than” or “a small gift”. Instead, we were taught to reframe the conversation to ask for “a more manageable amount” or to ensure the donor that “every dollar counts.”

After training, we began the semester by calling those in the LYBUNT segment. During my first calling shift, I was delighted to speak to an enthusiastic and positive alumna whose last gift to the university was $500. I followed the script and built a rapport, and when it came time to ask, I followed the “ladder” system and asked if she would make a pledge of $750. She surprised me by exclaiming, “I’ll give $1000!” The overwhelming positivity and generosity of this early conversation had a profound impact on my view both of fundraising and of our alumni population. During that first calling shift, I became aware that there were alumni who truly loved UMass Boston and looked forward to supporting the future generations of the school. I also began to see fundraising through the lens of discovering the alumni’s interests and explaining to them how the UMass Boston Fund could help them to support these interests while making a difference. Since my first call, I have spoken with a multitude of alumni, some proud of their alma mater and eager to give back, and others angry with UMass Boston for various reasons. I feel that having a successful first call played a role in instilling confidence in my fundraising abilities, as it helped me to be unafraid to ask for large gifts, and confident that many alumni of UMass Boston have a positive view on the school and are eager to give back.

In October 2011, the University Advancement office hosted its first on-campus “fundraiser”, Philanthropy Week. Philanthropy Week was implemented to encourage student giving as well as to raise awareness for the UMass Boston Fund. Phonathon students and members of the University Advancement staff set up and staffed tables on both the first and second floors of the UMass Boston Campus Center. We called students over to the table to inform them of our role on campus, and encouraged them to make a gift to the UMass Boston Fund. Students making a gift of $10 or more received a flash-drive bracelet with the UMass Boston symbol. We also gave students the opportunity to sign postcards featuring a picture of Phonathon students holding up the letters to the word “Thank You”. We encouraged students to write about their experiences at UMass Boston and to inform the alumni of how the fund had helped them in particular, whether through scholarship funds, financial aid, or even through an informative class or helpful faculty member. We explained to them the impact of the UMass Boston Fund and its initiatives, as we had learned from Phonathon training. Over 1,000 students signed thank you postcards, which the University Advancement office then sent to first-time donors.

During spring 2012, the Phonathon leadership team was restructured; another student caller was promoted to Supervisor, and three students were promoted to Junior Supervisors. The Supervisors, alongside the Director and Assistant Director of the UMass Boston Fund, oversaw the hiring, training, and evaluation of callers, and led the nightly calling shifts. The Junior Supervisors assisted in training and evaluations.

Additionally, the Assistant Director of the UMass Boston Fund created and implemented the university’s first-ever student giving program, the Student Philanthropy Council (which I will refer to as “SPC” or “the Council”), of which the Junior Supervisors became the three co-chairs. Any student who donated a dollar or more to the UMass Boston Fund, including donors from Philanthropy Week, became a de-facto member of the Council. In April of 2012, the Council hosted a résumé writing and networking event for its members, which included an alumni panel.

In fiscal year 2012 (FY12), 63 students donated a total of $269.76 to the UMass Boston Fund and became members of the SPC. Alumni, a faculty member, a corporation, and a former trustee supported the initiative by collaboratively donating $642.48 during Philanthropy Week. This total was adjusted to account for the price of the flash drive bracelets, such that students who donated $10 to get the flash drive were credited as donating $4.16. The students who donated were then sent an online survey to determine what on-campus initiative the funds would support, and these students voted to support scholarship aid.

At this point in Phonathon, those previously in the "Future" category were transitioned into a new group known as "GOLD", or Graduates of the Last Decade. This segment was given a new tailored script. Callers were given "Fast Facts" specific to each of the colleges, for use when talking to alumni in this category. We were also introduced to the concept of "generational marketing", or tailoring the language in our calls to the age group of the alumni to whom we were speaking. Finally, callers were given weekly statistics sheets to track their progress. The sheets were divided into various categories, including pledges, send information (or unspecified pledges), refusals, credit cards, total attempts, and total contacts. We ended the semester by making thank you calls to any alum who had donated during the fiscal year, and making pledge reminder calls to alumni who had not yet fulfilled their pledged amounts.

During my first semester as a Phonathon caller, I received 80 pledges, 11 of which were gifts. I raised $4,195 for the UMass Boston Fund, and had secured 6 new donor pledges, 25 increased pledges, 13 decreased pledges, and 37 same amount pledges. During this semester, I also received 17 unspecified pledges and 79 refusals. During my second semester, I received 63 pledges, 9 of which were gifts. I raised $2,760 for the UMass Boston Fund, and secured 25 new donor pledges, 16 increased pledges, 15 decreased pledges, and 7 same amount pledges. During this semester, I also received 39 unspecified pledges and 52 refusals.

FY13

Following an evaluation of my work, I was offered a promotion to become a data entry assistant in the University Advancement office beginning in fiscal year 2013. This newly-created role was designed to allow the Supervisors and Junior Supervisors more time to work on initiatives such as increasing membership in the Student Philanthropy Council (SPC).

One of my tasks as a data entry assistant was to enter the data from individual callers' nightly tally sheets into a shared drive on the computer, and to summarize the nightly totals by college and by donor type (Future, SYBUNT, and LYBUNT). This served a dual purpose: the data was used by the Director of the UMass Boston Fund to analyze the success of the program, and by my Supervisors to create the statistics sheets for student callers. Additionally, I entered all pledge and unspecified pledge data into a spreadsheet of the names of the alumni. I utilized mail merge to create personalized letters to the unspecified ("send information") pledge donors, which described the initiatives of the fund. Finally, I put the physical pledge cards, brochures about university information and matching gifts, and the letters into envelopes and sent them to the prospective donors.

Meanwhile, at Phonathon, donors were further segmented. A category of SYBUNTs designated as One Year Lapsed donors (OYL) was introduced. In addition to the previous semester's evaluations by the Supervisors and Junior Supervisors, we were given the opportunity to fill out self-evaluation forms to rate our progress. The Assistant Director also introduced the concept of "success percentage" on our statistics sheets, i.e. total contacts divided by the sum of pledges and credit cards. Credit cards counted as a “bonus”, while unspecified pledges and refusals counted against callers. I concluded the semester with 69 pledges, 9 of which were gifts. I received 11 new donor pledges, 19 increased pledges, 9 decreased pledges, and 30 same amount pledges. I also received 30 unspecified pledges and 13 refusals, bringing my total success rat for the semester to 71%.

During this fiscal year, the Student Philanthropy Council hosted its second Philanthropy Week event, and I once again assisted with working at the tables for these events. The event was similar to the previous year: students were encouraged to sign thank you cards or donate to become members of the Council. As incentive for students to give, the University Advancement office paid a vendor called Fun Enterprises in Weymouth $700 to provide and supervise a tie dye table. For one day during Philanthropy Week, the Assistant Director, myself, and other students encouraged our peers to give $10 to the UMass Boston Fund to tie dye a shirt and become members of the SPC. As with the flash drives in the previous year, students who donated $10 to tie dye the shirts were donating $4.34 to the UMass Boston Fund (with the rest being used to pay for the shirts).

During the spring of 2013, the SPC held their second Philanthropy Week for that fiscal year. This week did not include a tie dye booth, but did include the flash drive bracelets. Students collaboratively donated $511.14, which was matched by various alumni donors. The designation of the cumulative total of nearly $3000 was once again voted on by students and was applied to College of Liberal Arts initiatives.

It was during spring 2013 that I became fully invested in preparing for a career in development. I made a gift of $25 at the second Philanthropy Week ($19.16 when adjusted for the shirt price total) and subsequently joined the Student Philanthropy Council. I noticed that our organization lacked social media presence, and I spoke with the Assistant Director and the Co-Chairs. They encouraged me to create a Facebook page to promote the organization. On March 3rd, 2013, the page was launched.

At a promotional event for the SPC, I spoke with the Assistant Director about how I noticed that our club was not named on the Student Government online list of on-campus student organizations. I learned that this required a number of steps, including drafting a charter and obtaining a specific number of members. The Assistant Director mentioned that he was hoping that a student would be interested in taking the SPC beyond the University Advancement office and to the student population itself. I spoke to the current co-chairs of the SPC, who were excited to take the club further. SPC also hosted a networking event between young alumni and student donors, entitled “Hints to Optimize Potential Employment (HOPE)”, where I was able to network with alumni while receiving professional advice from individuals in Career Services at UMass Boston.

My interest in development propelled me in my Phonathon efforts as well. I finished the semester as the top caller, obtaining 168 pledges, 32 of which were gifts. I received 35 new donor pledges, 44 increased pledges, 29 decreased pledges, and 60 same amount pledges. I also received 33 unspecified pledges, and 7 refusals. My success rate for the semester was 96%. I applied for a Supervisor position, which I was subsequently granted. I was also offered a summer position with the Alumni Relations office under the supervision of Betsy Freedman-Doherty, the new Associate Vice Chancellor of the UMass Boston Fund and Alumni Relations, in order to continue my work with the SPC and Phonathon initiatives.

Outside of Phonathon, I began to search for development internships at various non-profit organizations in Boston. I applied for a scholarship with the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) to cover my registration at their summer conference on Educational Fundraising. I also began the first steps for making the SPC a Recognized Student Organization (RSO) on campus by drafting a charter with my co-worker, co-chair of the SPC and recently-promoted Supervisor of the Phonathon program, Elizabeth Nappi. At the conclusion of the spring semester, I was awarded the CASE Summer Scholarship covering the travel and event cost of the Summer Institute in Educational Fundraising (SIEFR). I was also offered positions as a development intern at New England Aquarium, Boston Children's Museum, and Historic New England. I accepted the positions at the New England Aquarium and Boston Children's Museum.

FY14

Summer 2013

During the summer of 2013, I worked in collaboration with Betsy (the Associate Vice Chancellor) and Kelly (the Director of the UMass Boston Fund) to edit the SPC charter. Betsy informed me that the Alumni Association had organized a task force on student giving and alumni participation, with the hopes of forming an on-campus group supporting alumni initiatives.

Due to the newly-forming cohesive collaboration between the UMass Boston Fund and Alumni Relations, we decided to combine the task force's ideas with the current SPC model to create the Student Philanthropy and Alumni Council (SPAC). The SPAC was comprised of two Co-Presidents (Supervisor Elizabeth Nappi and me), a Vice-President/Secretary and a Treasurer (the other two former co-chairs), and a Coordinator (the recently promoted Junior Supervisor of the Phonathon program). Through meetings with Student Government officials, we learned the requirements and benefits of becoming a Recognized Student Organization. One benefit was being able to apply for a portion of the Student Government club budget to support our events such as Philanthropy Week. We realized this opportunity would allow us to dedicate all of the money we raised towards the UMass Boston Fund, instead of having to subtract the student gifts from the items they paid for (as we had with the flash drive bracelets and shirts). Although we could still perform fundraisers, we were no longer able to mandate that a student must give money to become a member of the SPAC. Through learning this, we altered our club's mission statement. We added a volunteering component, while also maintaining our dedication to voluntarily supporting the UMass Boston Fund, and to networking with our alumni population. We also added a component of on-campus philanthropy through offering to provide other organizations with event and fundraising support. We submitted the Constitution for approval at the end of the summer.

The two development internships I completed gave me a perspective of development roles outside of a university setting. At the New England Aquarium, I worked with the membership and annual fund department. I assisted in preparing the summer annual fund appeal mailing. I attended an event called "The Wrap Party" to celebrate the re-opening of the Aquarium's main attraction, the Giant Ocean Tank. I was also given the opportunity to draft a grant proposal to support sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation initiatives, allowing me my first insight into the corporate and foundation sector of the non-profit world. At the Boston Children's Museum, I worked with the development services department, where I trained to use Blackbaud's The Raiser's Edge software. I utilized the database to pull prospective donors and used a variety of online sources to perform research. Both internship experiences that summer were rewarding and interesting, and gave me the rewarding opportunity to work hands-on in different subdivisions of development.

My position in the Alumni Relations office at UMass Boston allowed me the opportunity to work within the Communications and Alumni Relations subdivision of development. One of my main tasks was to assist in maintaining the UMass Boston Alumni website, recently re-launched as a separate entity from the main UMass Boston website. I updated the Phonathon webpage in the University Advancement section of the website to include a picture of the current callers and to clarify the goals of the program, and created content for a new Student Philanthropy and Alumni Council webpage to be housed on the Alumni website. I assisted in the process of archiving articles and data from the former UMass Boston Alumni portions of the main UMass Boston website. In addition to my Communications duties, I also contacted corporate sponsors to request sponsorship for UMass Boston's annual gala, and compiled documents into Board Books for the Alumni Association Board of Directors to utilize at meetings.

Additionally, I began to introduce myself to professionals within the University Advancement office to set up informational interviews and learn more about the subdivisions of development. I met with the Director of Prospect Research, the Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations, and Directors of Development for several UMass Boston colleges. I also spoke with individuals in the different development departments of the New England Aquarium and the Boston Children's Museum. The summer culminated in a fall internship offer at a nonprofit called The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare.

Fall 2013

The Schwartz Center for Compassionate Healthcare internship provided me with in-depth insight into the donor services subdivision of development in particular. I was further trained in Blackbaud's The Raiser's Edge software, used for tracking constituent information. Within The Raiser's Edge, I performed a variety of functions, including making notes of donor correspondences, observing giving history patterns for data collection purposes, and processing credit card and check gifts. I also conducted research on wealthy prospective donors utilizing websites such as Relationship Science, LexisNexis, and Wealth Engine. Each of these websites served a different purpose in terms of gathering pertinent data on the prospect. Relationship Science utilized The Schwartz Center's current contacts and formed ladders to determine paths through which we were connected to the prospect. LexisNexis and WealthEngine included contact information and numerical data on the prospect's assets, such as home values. I also utilized the EventOMatic feature of The Raiser's Edge to input guest registration information for the non-profit's annual gala.

At the UMass Boston Phonathon, my duties as a Supervisor shifted from calling alumni to more managerial aspects of the program. Tasked with reconstructing the training program, I created various training materials for callers to utilize, including a sheet of sample "thank you" notes and tips on how to transition from building rapport with the alum to asking for a gift. I also updated training materials from the previous semesters to be redistributed to the callers. I assisted in the recruiting and hiring process, conducting interviews with prospective Phonathon employees. I also coached and evaluated callers, and kept track of the callers' statistical performance. As I was only able to call alumni for one night during the semester, I raised $525 through three pledges and one gift to the UMass Boston Fund.

During this semester, the Student Philanthropy and Alumni Council gained approval by the Undergraduate Student Government and became a Recognized Student Organization on campus. I attended an Alumni Association meeting to meet the members of the Task Force on Student Giving and discuss partnership opportunities between our organizations. This led to the formation of a "Dress For Success" professional event in collaboration with Career Services, featuring a fashion show by students wearing business-casual attire. To promote philanthropy on campus, SPAC offered other on-campus organizations volunteer support at events. Members of SPAC helped staff the African Student Union's "African Night," fundraised for the Krystle Campbell scholarship, and participated in the non-profit Homestart's "Winter Walk" for the homeless of Boston. SPAC also hosted another Philanthropy Week during the last week of October, featuring a photo booth funded by the Alumni Association.

Winter 2013 and Spring 2014

During the winter of 2013, I interned in the Development and Communications department at Peace First, Inc., a national non-profit whose mission is to promote peace between children. Through this internship, I was trained in Salesforce, an online version of The Raiser's Edge, and was tasked with drafting "tweets" for the non-profit's celebrity ambassadors to post on the social media platform Twitter.

At the start of Spring 2014, I began an internship with the University Advancement office at UMass Boston, working with both the Director of Development for the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies and the Alumni Relations department. Utilizing Ellucian Advance, a "The Raiser's Edge" for higher education institutions, I identified alumni data gaps. I assisted in reunion preparation through preparing mailings, organizing documents, and conducting reminder phone calls. I also prepared a tentative “touchpoints” solicitation checklist for the McCormack Graduate School, the first solicitation plan designed specifically for McCormack alumni.

During Spring 2014, the Student Philanthropy and Alumni Council hosted a Philanthropy Day on campus to continue in the tradition of raising money for the UMass Boston Fund. The Undergraduate Student Government did not grant our organization funding for the spring semester, nor did the Alumni Association. To compensate, SPAC reached out to local florists to gather flowers to give to student donors. We also implemented an “Honor Your Graduate” solicitation approach by encouraging students to make a gift in honor of a graduating class or a particular senior. Collaboratively, from the Fall and Spring Philanthropy events, the UMass Boston Fund acquired 159 student donors.

The Phonathon program was restructured mid-year in attempt to increase alumni participation rates. All student employees, including supervisors and junior supervisors, were tasked with calling alumni again, while the managerial aspects of the program were handled by the Annual Giving Officer, Steve Ward. During February and March, I raised $2,790 through 30 pledges and 3 gifts to the UMass Boston Fund.

In April, it was announced that annual giving staff members had reached out to a fundraising management company called RuffaloCODY. RuffaloCODY partners with institutions to create an on-campus, automated phone program. RuffaloCODY’s techniques included scripts with a stricter “ladder” structure, which all callers were required to follow. With the manual phone program, callers were encouraged to change their ask amounts depending on the pacing of the call. RuffaloCODY’s ask structure for previous donors entailed asking first for double the amount of the last gift, then for one and a half times the last gift, then for a match of the last gift, and finally for half of the last gift. The ask structure for Futures, now re-titled non-donors by RuffaloCODY, entailed asking first for $100, then for $50 in honor of the University's 50th anniversary, then for $35, and finally for a graduation year gift (i.e. $20.04 for an alumna who graduated in 2004).

The program's main initiative was to increase credit card gifts, while reducing pledges and mailings, which cost money for the university to send. Therefore, "send informations" or undesignated pledges were no longer accepted. If an alum refused to commit to any of the four ask amounts by the end of the call, they were not asked if they would like to receive additional information, but were simply coded as a "no pledge" in the RuffaloCODY system. RuffaloCODY also segmented donors into categories beyond LYBUNTs, SYBUNTs, and Futures, including lapsed donors and alumni who had refused to give during the prior semester. The program is staying on-campus until June 30th, 2014, the close of FY14. Following this date, data will be available as to how successful the RuffaloCODY program has been on campus, compared to the former manual program.

From my experience in these various development roles, I have gained a stronger understanding of both the development field and what factors can cause various annual fund programs to be successful. The Student Philanthropy Council's growth into the Student Philanthropy Council brought with it an increase in both donors and dollars raised for the UMass Boston Fund. The club has grown since its establishment in 2012 due to the regularity of events like the once-per-semester Philanthropy Week. Establishing a culture of giving on campus and drawing attention to why funding is needed is essential in gaining student participation in any annual fund. Including the senior giving component in the most recent Philanthropy Day event was beneficial as well, as senior giving programs are a lucrative source of donor acquisition on - other campuses. As the club grows, philanthropy can become integrated into the culture of UMass Boston, which will increase not only student and senior giving, but recent graduate giving as well.

The Phonathon program has also gone through various transformations, from being run by an Assistant Director, to briefly being student-run, to partnering with RuffaloCODY. The new automated program has saved time from students dialing the phones, manually keeping track of the results of their calls, and having the supervisors tally these results at the end of the night. The revised and tailored scripts for different segments of the alumni population – paired with the information sheets about the colleges – have helped student callers to successfully convey to different groups of alumni why their support makes a difference. The complex training program provided the foundation for callers to learn about their role within the UMass Boston Fund and why participation by alumni and students is key to fulfilling the initiatives of UMass Boston.

Overall, my experience at UMass Boston and in my development internship roles at various non-profits has instilled within me an appreciation for the value of giving and an ideology that every dollar counts and does indeed make a difference, making the annual fund a vital component of any fundraising program. I believe that I have been a successful fundraiser because I utilized the information I was given in training and applied them to my calls. I also listened to the alumnus or alumna during our conversations and tailored my ask based around the specific initiatives within the UMass Boston Fund that they were interested in. After asking the alum about their educational experience, I would listen to identify what made the UMass Boston experience rewarding to them specifically. I frequently heard compliments about the school's convenience and affordability, mention of outstanding teachers, and complaints about the lack of dormitories and parking. When making my ask, I would repeat the alumni's reasoning for enjoying UMass Boston (or their complaints about the experience) and pair it with a UMass Fund initiative. For example, if an alumna mentioned affordability, I would tell her that true to its roots, the university is still affordable, with over 78% of students currently benefitting from financial aid or scholarship, which the UMass Boston Fund supports. If an alum complained about parking or lack of dormitories, I would bring up the "25 Year Plan", UMass Boston's comprehensive campus renovation plan that includes both a parking structure and dorms, before mentioning the new buildings currently being constructed on campus. A statistic that I often utilized in my calls was that less than 30% of UMass Boston's funding comes from the state of Massachusetts. This percentage was useful in my explanations to alumni that while the construction of the buildings is being paid for by the state, filling the buildings with classroom and lab equipment and qualified professors is one of the UMass Boston Fund's initiatives.

However, in my experience, I also faced difficulty when speaking with alumni who did not possess a sense of affinity toward the university. These included not only Boston Teachers' and Boston State graduates, but recent graduates as well. As the university accommodates individuals who often have multiple jobs or priorities off-campus, many alumni stated that they chose UMass Boston simply for its convenience and did not particularly enjoy their experience nor feel any connection toward the school. Very rarely have I heard complaints about poor professors or administrators at UMass Boston or the price of attending the university. I would argue that UMass Boston's challenge in building a more successful annual fund program is to attempt to create this affiliation. If alumni wanted to remain connected with UMass Boston after graduation, they would be less likely to hang up on student callers or screen their calls.

DISCUSSION

General Recommendations for Increasing Annual Fund Participation

Based on my research, conversations with professionals, and personal experiences working in the field, I have identified several channels that I would recommend to colleges that are working to grow participation in their annual funds.

In terms of soliciting alumni, a combination of direct mail and email appeals should continue to be utilized, due to the proven benefits of both channels. However, email appeals should be focused on more heavily than direct mail, due to the automatically higher return on investment that email appeals bring (due to their free cost). As increasing alumni participation is the goal, dollar amounts should not be stressed as heavily as the ideology that "every dollar makes a difference"; therefore, concise yet pertinent emails stressing the importance of participation should be sent fairly frequently throughout the fiscal year. Social media should also be a key component. In an age of growing technology, utilizing social media can have a positive impact on building affinity and loyalty, as well as promoting giving. Continued use of a phone program, which adds a more personal touch to solicitations than direct mail, is beneficial for ensuring immediate fulfillment and, in turn, higher participation rates.

Parent giving programs, student giving programs, and young alumni giving initiatives should also be stressed at universities. A multi-faceted parent program offering various benefits, like the opportunity to meet prominent alumni or host guest lectures on campus, will help to raise annual fund dollars. A student giving program, with a clearly stated 'reward' for students participating, 'purpose' to clarify the campaign's goals, and a visible 'impact', can begin a pipeline that may transition students to becoming alumni donors. (Woolbright, 2014)

Universities should alter their leadership giving structures temporarily, in order to assist with young alumni joining Alumni Associations; this is a strategy that both Boston College and UMass Boston have used to increase participation at a higher level. In terms of increasing annual fund participation by young alumni donors, universities should continue to utilize traditional channels such as Phonathon and direct mail interspersed with email solicitations, social media campaigns, and cell-phone-specific Phonathon programs, if data are readily available.

<u>Comparison of General Recommendations to Best Practices</u>

While utilizing online fundraising is a recent trend, fundraiser Patricia Goldman of the non-profit March for Dimes recently noted, "I have yet to see pure online fundraising really take off. It has to be connected to the real world." (Daniels and Narayanswamy, 2014) It is critical to maintain a balance between online fundraising and traditional methods so as to reach as wide an audience as possible. Social media has served a notable role in the growth of many modern institutions. For example, in an attempt to modernize their image, the 163-year-old Santa Clara University in California recently utilized the popular entertainment website BuzzFeed to post a humorous, engaging piece directed toward freshmen. (Mangan, 2014) Frostburg State University in Maryland launched a multiple-platform social media campaign, utilizing the photo-sharing Instagram, status-sharing Twitter, and blogging website Tumblr coupled with the hashtag "#instaFrostburg", to promote positive affinity for the university. (Mangan, 2014) If students are engaged while on-campus at their universities, they may be more likely to give back to the institution as students, seniors, and alumni due to their sense of affiliation. Along this track, encouraging students to become members of a student giving program, promoting a parent giving program, and building connections between students and alumni while the students are still attending campus will help increase alumni participation as well as student participation.

Alumni will be able to see which efforts their gifts are funding, while students can reap the benefits of networking with professionals who share their alma mater.

Recommendations for Increasing Participation at UMass Boston

From my research, interviews, and personal experiences working in the field, I have identified several ways through which the University of Massachusetts Boston (and colleges sharing certain features with UMass Boston) can continue to increase participation in the annual fund.

The Phonathon program should continue to utilize RuffaloCODY's automated phone system, which is already showing excellent contact rate progress and rates of return. I have seen firsthand the differences between running a manual and an automated phone program and have concluded that the RuffaloCODY system is more efficient for several reasons. Not only do callers save time by not having to dial the phone after every call, but callers are also able to be supervised and coached throughout the semester in the same room as their peers. This is an advantage that we did not have pre-call-center, when we operated out of the University Advancement office and called alumni from individual cubicles. Statistics are calculated automatically, saving valuable time, and there is considerably less set-up than the manual program required (besides turning on computers and plugging in phone lines). Data entry and creating "send information" letters are also no longer necessary, as RuffaloCODY does not send blank pledge cards for unspecified pledges. UMass Boston recently signed a three-year contract with RuffaloCODY, continuing this trend of success. However, I would not recommend utilizing text message campaigns, which are ingrained with a lack of urgency that contrasts with UMass Boston's goal of raising participation.

In terms of student giving at UMass Boston, the Student Philanthropy and Alumni Council should continue to work closely with the University Advancement office to fulfill the endeavor of sponsoring the UMass Boston Fund. Although student gifts do not count toward the alumni participation rate, they do count towards the annual fund. I believe that students who give should be solicited as alumni through a segmented appeal that stresses the importance of loyalty and participation. If a student is able to obtain knowledge of the importance of giving, and has already begun the tradition of giving while still in school, they will be likely to give as an alumna or alumnus. This begins a cycle of generosity that can eventually lead to major gifts.

To further engage students, SPAC should partner with other on-campus organizations and gather the names of the clubs' past and current members, and report this data to the University Advancement office. This will help to create a mutually beneficial partnership between student organizations and the Advancement office. Students will be able to utilize the Advancement office to contact past and present members of their organizations, while the Advancement office can send targeted appeals to the members of the clubs as alumni. Once the club membership information is on the alum's record, student callers will be able to use this data to form strong connections with the alum as well as gage their interests and where these interests intersect with the initiatives of the UMass Boston Fund.

SPAC should also work with the Alumni Relations office to host mutually-beneficial networking events between students and the alumni community. This will help to create the sense of affinity and community that UMass Boston feels the need to strengthen, especially given its current lack of student residence halls. Communication with the Enrollment Services Office may assist in SPAC and the Advancement Office's solicitation plans for student donors, by helping to provide the necessary data. SPAC should also continue to educate the student population about the importance of giving through tabling, events, and peer-to-peer solicitations. Senior giving challenges should also be implemented and integrated into the annual Philanthropy events, sponsored by challenge funds from the Alumni Association members. If students are used to giving as seniors in particular, they may be more likely to give upon graduation due to the presence of affiliation with the university.

Although it will not have an impact on alumni participation per se, a solid parent giving program will increase dollars directed toward the annual fund. As Associate Vice Chancellor Betsy Freedman-Doherty explained, a partnership with the Enrollment Services department is vital to fulfilling this endeavor, to capture parent information and begin solicitations when their students are freshmen (so that they have time to build affinity with the university over four years). The parent giving program can further assist in creating a sense of community on campus. If even the parents are participating in the fund, and their children, as students and as alumni, recognize this vote of confidence in their university, they may become inspired to participate as well. In addition to building a parent giving program on campus, UMass Boston should consider later establishing an additional giving society for parents of alumni, or a parent alumni association. The formation of the parent alumni association will give parents the opportunity to continue to participate in the annual fund even when their children have graduated. To garner support for the association, UMass Boston's development team should mainly solicit parents who gave while their children were UMass Boston students. In terms of additional outreach, UMass Boston's development team should consider including a mention of the parent alumni association on the outside of the envelopes used for mailings to the alumni. This will help to raise awareness for the society without outright soliciting parents who are not currently participating in the UMass Boston Fund, to gage which parents are interested in participating. As many direct mail pieces mistakenly go to the parents instead of the alum, the parents will be given the opportunity to let UMass Boston know if they want to become involved with giving when they provide the university with the alum's updated address.

UMass Boston should also utilize permanent email addresses for alumni, in order to ensure that they have accurate data. Using permanent email addresses will allow UMass Boston to remain in contact with the alumni population, even before the Enrollment Services partnership is established and as the alumni change addresses. Additionally, it will benefit the university, as alumni can show pride by utilizing the email addresses and sharing with their professional contacts their continued affinity to their alma mater.

Offering Alumni Association memberships to the recent graduates of UMass Boston is one way to encourage alumni engagement with the university. As this initiative was launched last year, there is not yet evidence to support that it will lead to increased gifts to the annual fund, if alumni will indeed renew their memberships with a $25 annual fund gift. However, the vast benefits of the Alumni Association (and particularly the networking component) will most likely serve as an incentive for recent graduates to rejoin the Association.

Further engagement through networking events with the Student Philanthropy and Alumni Council can also benefit young alumni. Not only will the alumni be given the opportunity to network with peers, they will also be able to learn about the impact of giving and the importance of their participation with the annual fund.

<u>Comparison of UMass Boston Recommendations to Best Practices</u>

Key initiatives at UMass Boston are building affinity, loyalty, and participation – all of which are crucial to the success of the university and its annual fund. UMass Boston's current alumni participation rate is less than 6%, while St. Thomas Aquinas College in California and Princeton University are among the universities with top alumni participation, at 63.7% and 62.4% respectively (Smith-Barrow, 2013). As confirmed by the literature in this field, stewardship plays a large role in increasing alumni participation, and it is important to "thank (donors), acknowledge their gift, restate your (university) mission, and tell them what you are doing with their money to reassure them they have made a great investment." (Blum, 2014) UMass Boston Phonathon students currently "thank you call" donors, and SPAC signs and sends thank you cards to first-time donors, and should continue to do so to build a sense of loyalty. As fundraiser Michal Heiplik explains, "If you keep treating them like the loyal donors they are, they will stick around." (Blum, 2014)

Text message campaigns seem to be ill-advised, as a recent local fundraising campaign at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts attempted to utilize a "Text to Pledge" initiative, garnering support from only 12 donors in total. The museum's director believes the initiative failed because "people rally around an urgent need." ("Fundraising by Text Message", 2014). Because UMass Boston's main aim is to immediately increase participation, I would not recommend utilizing this new giving channel. I would also not recommend utilizing campaigns revolving around specific staff members at UMass Boston. Although Boston College was able to successfully base a campaign around their dean, students at UMass Boston do not spend as much time on campus and therefore would be unlikely to have collective affinity with specific staff members. However, UMass Boston has many first-generation college students and is known for its diversity. Campaigns focused around students from different backgrounds, telling their stories about how UMass Boston played a role in their success, could work well at UMass Boston, as can solicitation pieces outlining updates on the progress of renovations on the campus, and how student and alumni donations are improving campus life.

I would recommend continuing to utilize direct mail, to ensure that fulfillment rates continue among older alumni who are now used to giving through this medium. As instant fulfillment plays a role in increasing participation immediately, using increased email solicitations (coupled with occasional direct mail pieces) will help to fulfill this initiative. Similarly, continuing to utilize the Phonathon program to have students stress instant fulfillment may have a positive impact on the giving trends of young alumni in particular, who may be more willing than older alumni to give using a credit card.

To increase student giving to the UMass Boston Fund through SPAC, emphasizing a ‘reward’, ‘purpose’, and ‘impact’ specifying why gifts are important and how they benefit students is critical. (Woolbright, 2014) Describing the impact of gifts of any size may also positively influence students and alumni hoping to participate in the fund. In FY10, Lincoln Memorial University was able to double their fundraising returns through various initiatives, including listing of what the university was hoping to fundraise for, which led to an increase in both size and number of gifts. (“Testing Lots of Ideas”, 2011) An educational component of young alumni solicitations – which stresses why participation is important, and that even a few dollars can make a difference – may encourage young alumni to make a modest gift, more than older alumni, who have established careers and are more financially stable. Contrary to vast misconceptions that universities solicit their alumni for unreasonable amounts of money, at UMass Boston, alumni are encouraged to make a $25 “participation” gift, which in turn grants membership to the Alumni Association, and provides them with a plethora of benefits.

In addition to building a parent giving program on campus, UMass Boston should consider later establishing an additional giving society for parents of alumni, or a parent alumni association. The formation of the parent alumni association will give parents the opportunity to continue to participate in the annual fund even when their children have graduated. To garner support for the association, UMass Boston's development team should mainly solicit parents who gave while their children were UMass Boston students. In terms of additional outreach, UMass Boston's development team should consider including a mention of the parent alumni association on the outside of the envelopes used for mailings to the alumni. This will help to raise awareness for the society without outright soliciting parents who are not currently participating in the UMass Boston Fund, to gage which parents are interested in participating. As many direct mail pieces mistakenly go to the parents instead of the alum, the parents will be given the opportunity to let UMass Boston know if they want to become involved with giving when they provide the university with the alum's updated address.

Regular updating of the giving strategies utilized in soliciting the different populations will help to gain new donors and increase retention. The annual fund is ongoing and solicitations are made several times per year. Even successful giving channels must be regularly updated so alumni will see the importance of continuing to give year after year to the same fund. Northeastern University ran a student giving campaign with a baseball theme, which was highly successful. In the subsequent year, they updated the campaign to "World Series Repeat"; they kept the successful baseball theme, but also integrated a new and compelling call to action, to encourage donors to want to contribute again (Woolbright, 2014). Identifying positive attributes of past giving channels and incorporating them with new ideas will help to ensure continued support from alumni.

As part of this update, UMass Boston can consider Phonathon giving challenges. For example, student callers can encourage the alumni they reach to make a gift in honor of fellow alumni or even friends. Student callers can also take creative approaches when asking alumni for significant gifts, such as utilizing "pay it forward" mentality to encourage alumni to give in honor of other alumni. These challenges can help the phone calls stay current year after year, while the purpose of the phone calls – to update information, establish a connection, and make an ask for a gift – remain intact.

CONCLUSION

Alumni, parent, and student giving can transform a university, and participation is the first step to building a pipeline, propelling annual fund donors to major gift donors. Educating constituents about their role in the annual fund and encouraging participation at every level are key components to beginning this process. Updating and exploring new approaches to traditional solicitation channels tailored towards the younger generation will encourage recent graduates to participate with their university. Promoting student giving programs and parent giving programs can further increase participation in the annual fund as a whole. Stressing the importance of participation, and why participation is essential to the university's growth and development, will also have a visible impact on the success of the university's annual fund.

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