



EAB

RESEARCH BRIEF

# Fundraising for Student Success

# Advancement Forum

**Rebecca Stefaniak**

*Research Associate*

**Anna Krenkel**

*Senior Research Manager*

## LEGAL CAVEAT

The Advisory Board Company has made efforts to verify the accuracy of the information it provides to members. This report relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and The Advisory Board Company cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information provided or any analysis based thereon. In addition, The Advisory Board Company is not in the business of giving legal, medical, accounting, or other professional advice, and its reports should not be construed as professional advice. In particular, members should not rely on any legal commentary in this report as a basis for action, or assume that any tactics described herein would be permitted by applicable law or appropriate for a given member's situation. Members are advised to consult with appropriate professionals concerning legal, medical, tax, or accounting issues, before implementing any of these tactics. Neither The Advisory Board Company nor its officers, directors, trustees, employees and agents shall be liable for any claims, liabilities, or expenses relating to (a) any errors or omissions in this report, whether caused by The Advisory Board Company or any of its employees or agents, or sources or other third parties, (b) any recommendation or graded ranking by The Advisory Board Company, or (c) failure of member and its employees and agents to abide by the terms set forth herein.

The Advisory Board is a registered trademark of The Advisory Board Company in the United States and other countries. Members are not permitted to use this trademark, or any other Advisory Board trademark, product name, service name, trade name, and logo, without the prior written consent of The Advisory Board Company. All other trademarks, product names, service names, trade names, and logos used within these pages are the property of their respective holders. Use of other company trademarks, product names, service names, trade names and logos or images of the same does not necessarily constitute (a) an endorsement by such company of The Advisory Board Company and its products and services, or (b) an endorsement of the company or its products or services by The Advisory Board Company. The Advisory Board Company is not affiliated with any such company.

## **IMPORTANT: Please read the following.**

The Advisory Board Company has prepared this report for the exclusive use of its members. Each member acknowledges and agrees that this report and the information contained herein (collectively, the "Report") are confidential and proprietary to The Advisory Board Company. By accepting delivery of this Report, each member agrees to abide by the terms as stated herein, including the following:

1. The Advisory Board Company owns all right, title and interest in and to this Report. Except as stated herein, no right, license, permission or interest of any kind in this Report is intended to be given, transferred to or acquired by a member. Each member is authorized to use this Report only to the extent expressly authorized herein.
2. Each member shall not sell, license, or republish this Report. Each member shall not disseminate or permit the use of, and shall take reasonable precautions to prevent such dissemination or use of, this Report by (a) any of its employees and agents (except as stated below), or (b) any third party.
3. Each member may make this Report available solely to those of its employees and agents who (a) are registered for the workshop or membership program of which this Report is a part, (b) require access to this Report in order to learn from the information described herein, and (c) agree not to disclose this Report to other employees or agents or any third party. Each member shall use, and shall ensure that its employees and agents use, this Report for its internal use only. Each member may make a limited number of copies, solely as adequate for use by its employees and agents in accordance with the terms herein.
4. Each member shall not remove from this Report any confidential markings, copyright notices, and other similar indicia herein.
5. Each member is responsible for any breach of its obligations as stated herein by any of its employees or agents.
6. If a member is unwilling to abide by any of the foregoing obligations, then such member shall promptly return this Report and all copies thereof to The Advisory Board Company.

# Table of Contents

---

<b>1) Executive Overview .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Key Observations .....	4
<b>2) Student Success Campaign Structure and Priorities .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Campaign Structure and Areas of Focus .....	5
Donor and Campaign Participant Engagement Strategies .....	6
Targeting Young Alumni .....	6
<b>3) Communication around Campaigns .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Marketing and External Communication.....	7
Internal Communication .....	8
Assessment of Campaign Success.....	9
<b>4) Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Project Challenge .....	10
Project Sources .....	10
Research Parameters .....	10

# 1) Executive Overview

---

## Key Observations

**Development directors adopt a broad definition of “student success” in relation to fundraising.** While all profiled institutions associate academic scholarships with student success, the types of programs included in fundraising for student success varies by institution. **Institution F** has an Office of Student Affairs Development that focuses on fundraising for student programs and organizations. At **Institution C**, student success fundraising also includes initiatives like the Senior Class Campaign in which students are the primary donors. At profiled institutions, all types of campaigns may support initiatives related to student success.

**In addition to academic scholarships, include priorities such as service learning, internships, undergraduate research, study abroad, leadership development, and financial aid for housing and living expenses in fundraising campaigns for student success.** Development officers at **Institution A** indicate that allowing donors to give to general cause-based areas such as “helping a student graduate” or increases donor engagement without overly restricting the gift’s applicability.

**Large comprehensive capital campaigns are not necessarily more effective in terms of funds raised for student success, but they do allow for more widespread campus involvement.** Contacts recommend advancement staff evaluate current resources and strategic goals when deciding whether to launch a large capital campaign or smaller cause-based initiatives. Since student success is a new area of focus for fundraising at many institutions, it may be beneficial for central development offices to lead the first effort and form partnerships with specialized development offices and academic departments.

**Replacing the term “campaign” with “initiative” in marketing materials and outreach may increase participation.** While the term “campaign” typically alludes specifically to fundraising, “initiative” is more inclusive and encompasses both fundraising and volunteering. Contacts note that donations of time in the form of volunteer hours at events are also valuable to student success efforts as monetary donations. **Institution D** is engaged in a program called the “Student Initiative,” which has both a fundraising goal and a volunteer hour goal.

**Contacts recommend contacting young alumni as a target group in student success fundraising initiatives.** Development staff categorize “young alumni” as those who have graduated from college in the past four to eleven years. Although they may be unable to contribute large monetary gifts, young alumni are less removed from the student experience and can also donate their time by volunteering at fundraising events. They can also serve as career mentors to current students or facilitate pathways to internships and research opportunities.

## 2) Student Success Campaign Structure and Priorities

### Campaign Structure and Areas of Focus

#### Embrace a Broad Definition of “Student Success” as it relates to Fundraising

Fundraising for student success initiatives is a concept popularized in the last five years at most institutions. Development officers agree that scholarships are an integral part of student success and have launched campaigns to raise funds for such initiatives. They also note that scholarship fundraising is easily marketable to donors

since they are familiar with how scholarships impact students’ lives. However, fundraising for student programs and other transformative learning opportunities that contribute to student success is not as familiar to donors. While tuition scholarships help students get to college, student success initiatives help them succeed while enrolled, graduate, and become active alumni. Student success campaigns combine scholarships, student programs, and transformative learning opportunities to fundraise for the entire student experience.

#### Frequently Cited Beneficiaries of Student Success Fundraising

- Academic scholarships
- Internships
- Service learning
- Study abroad
- Leadership development
- Undergraduate research

#### Weigh Institutional Priorities when Deciding between a Comprehensive Campaign and Smaller Initiatives

Development staff state that factors such as institutional resources, current campaigns, and strategic goals influence their decisions about the size and scope of student success fundraising campaigns. Large comprehensive campaigns typically raise more money and present a unified message for marketing purposes, which contacts report makes them easier to “sell” to donors. However, initiative-based campaigns target high-priority areas, require fewer resources, and they can be launched by specific schools or departments.

#### Combine Scholarships with Other Student Success Programs

Scholarships are an integral part of student success, especially for low-income and first generation students. **Institution B** is currently engaged in fundraising campaign called the “Scholarship Imperative,” which has been the primary focus of the Office of Advancement’s capital campaign for the past eight years. The purpose of the initiative is to fund \$25,000 scholarships for 1,789 students annually. To accomplish this, staff must raise \$400 million by 2016. However, contacts note that support mechanisms in addition to scholarships are required for student success in college. The Scholarship Program which is about 60 percent funded by donors and closely tied to the Scholarship Imperative, provides financial, academic, and social support for high-achieving, low-income students through efforts such as programming, mentorship, and funds for student emergencies.

## Allow Donor to Designate their Donations to General Causes

Because terms such as “student success” and “student support” can be difficult to understand when directing a gift, development office staff are experimenting with cause-based giving (i.e., allowing donors to give to a goal or group of students rather than to a specific program). Cause-based giving also ensures that gifts are not too strictly allocated so they can be applied across schools and departments. Development offices also set fundraising and volunteer goals for specific schools, units, or groups such as parents, community members, and students.

### Examples of Initiatives Supported by Cause-Based Giving

Campus-wide goals	Groups of students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing STEM programs</li> <li>• Encouraging first-year retention</li> <li>• Helping a student graduate</li> <li>• Saving the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International students</li> <li>• First-generation college students</li> <li>• Veterans</li> <li>• Women in engineering</li> </ul>

## Structure Donor Recognition Levels Based on Degree and Frequency of Giving

In student success fundraising, donor engagement is calibrated based on gift amounts and frequency. **Institution C** has a loyalty program in which donors across all areas are recognized for consecutive years of giving. Due to the personal nature of donations towards student success initiatives, it is especially rewarding for donors to interact with beneficiaries and see how their gifts impact students’ lives.

### Opportunities for Donor/Student Interaction



Ask students to blog about the impact of donor contributions



Have students write personalized thank-you notes to donors



Invite students to meet their donors at donor banquets



Request that students share photos and videos about the impact of donor gifts

## Leverage the Value of Donations of Time in Fundraising Efforts

Young alumni, or those who have graduated from college in the past four to seven years, are often enthusiastic participants in student success campaigns since they feel more connected to the student experience. Development administrators at **Institution C** share that nearly 70% of their donors to Student Life are either young alumni or current students. Although young alumni are usually unable to contribute as much in monetary donations as older alumni, development contacts report that donations of time in the form of volunteer hours are invaluable in student success fundraising efforts. They might volunteer at an on-campus fundraising event, serve as mentors to current students, staff the registration table at an alumni-student banquet, or facilitate internship and research opportunities.



### Donations of time often precede donations of money

“We are looking to build a culture of philanthropy among current students and young alumni through volunteering in student success fundraising campaigns. But before we ask students for money, we need to first create a culture of giving back in terms of time and talent rather than treasure.”

-Research interview

## 3) Communication around Campaigns

### Marketing and External Communication

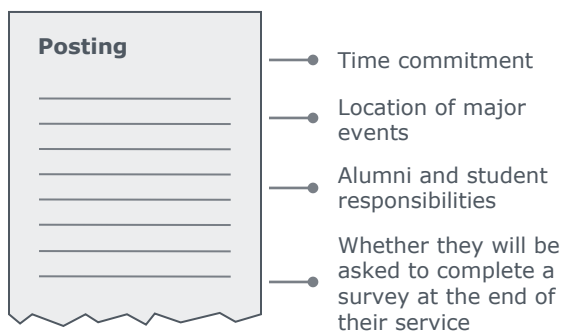
#### Consider Avoiding the Term “Campaign” to Encompass Goals beyond Fundraising

**Institution D** is currently engaged in a three-year fundraising and volunteer effort called the “Student Initiative.” As a strategic choice staff refrain from using the term “campaign” when referencing the initiative, as the purpose of the initiative is engagement in addition to fundraising. While the Student Initiative has a fundraising component, **Institution D’s** marketing and outreach emphasizes involvement rather than monetary donations.

#### When Recruiting Volunteers, be Transparent about Commitments and Expectations

For planning and engagement purposes, it is beneficial for both institutional staff and volunteers to know what to expect in terms of time commitments and responsibilities. Alumni relations staff at **Institution D** advise institutions to provide fundraising and campaign participants with very clear information about what volunteers should expect and what their responsibilities are. During their outreach, alumni relations staff present volunteers with a volunteer job description that defines the expectations for their role clearly.

#### Sample Volunteer Job Description



## Engage the Community in Student Success Fundraising Efforts and Events

Community members can contribute to student success fundraising as vendors, volunteers, and donors. At **Institution F**, nearly half of donors to student success initiatives are not alumni, but rather community members who feel connected to the campus and students. Since community members can be such a valuable resource in campaigns, communication and invitations to participate in events on campus with students are important in securing donations of time and money.

## Use Databases to Track Alumni Outreach and Previous Involvement

Student affairs development officers at **Institution F** coded all of their alumni into their database based on involvement in student activities and groups so that they can contact alumni from specific organizations and programs. Contacts state that older alumni sometimes feel disconnected from student affairs fundraising efforts since the structure may have changed since they were students. For example, a group they were a part of may have a new name, or serve a different function on campus. However, attending an on-campus event can remind older alumni of the positive experiences they had as students and inspire them to donate.



### Consider Adding New Development Staff Positions

The Office of Student Affairs Development at **Institution F** created two positions specific to student affairs fundraising. The Constituent Relations Officer is responsible for engaging with current students and alumni regarding fundraising programs, and the Stewardship Relations Officer coordinates strategic outreach and manages relationships with scholarship donors.

## Internal Communication

### Utilize Websites to Streamline Internal Communication during Large Campaigns

Since the central development office typically leads comprehensive student success fundraising campaigns, internal websites linked to the university intranet's homepage can be an effective means to communicate daily campaign news to school-specific constituents such as development officers, deans, and department heads. Internal websites can also increase staff engagement and buy-in during large, multi-departmental initiatives by keeping them informed about campaign events and progress. Some institutions also send monthly e-newsletters with campaign updates such as upcoming events, progress towards fundraising and volunteer goals, and new initiatives and priority areas.

### Organize Roundtables for Development Staff to Increase Campaign Buy-In

In-person meetings are also a means of communicating throughout the course of a multi-departmental student success fundraising campaign. **Institution F** has a Fundraising Council chaired by the Director of Advancement Services for Student Affairs Philanthropy. The Fundraising Council is comprised of development staff



across the university and meets every few months to disseminate information and share campaign metrics.

### Fundraising Council Participants and Agenda



### Assessment of Campaign Success

#### Avoid Announcing Specific Campaign Goals Prematurely

Development administrators advise that institutions only make campaign goals public after a majority of that goal has been met, regardless of whether these goals are measured in terms of dollars raised or hours volunteered. Consequentially, public goals are typically achieved even if the original goal set during the quiet phase of a campaign was not met. Student success campaign goals can be especially difficult to predict since they tend to include both monetary and non-monetary components. Additionally, the overall dollar amount raised in a student success fundraising campaign varies greatly depending upon scope, institutional size and reputation, campaign initiatives, campaign length, and campus involvement. For example, a large capital campaign may have a dollar goal in the billions, but within that a scholarship fundraising goal of \$200 million and a student program fundraising goal of \$500,000.

#### Contacts Rely on Surveys to Identify Areas for Improvement

Contacts emphasize the importance of using data from previous campaigns to make strategic decisions about future campaigns. The means of data collection after campaigns is not consistent between institutions because they have different structures and reporting requirements. However, all contacts note that feedback surveys are an effective way to assess whether events for donors were held at convenient times, and whether they appeal to alumni. Contacts disaggregated this information by donor profile. When monetary goals are not met, it is also important to consider extenuating circumstances such as the economy and the job market.

## 4) Research Methodology

---

### Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Forum with the following questions:

- How do institutions structure campaigns for transformative student learning opportunities? Is it more effective to launch a large-scale student success campaign, or break this into separate initiatives?
- What are the overall goals of a student success fundraising campaign?
- Aside from scholarships, on what types of transformative learning opportunities do student success fundraising campaigns focus?
- Which strategies do institutions utilize to communicate with and promote campaign buy-in among internal and external constituents?
- How do institutions engage the community (outside of alumni) in student success fundraising efforts?
- How can institutions maintain donor and participant engagement during student success fundraising campaigns?
- Which metrics do institutions utilize to evaluate the success of a student success fundraising campaign and determine whether they met their goals?
- If any of these goals were not met, to what do institutions attribute any shortcomings?

### Project Sources

The Forum consulted the following sources for this report:

- EAB's internal and online research libraries ([www.eab.com](http://www.eab.com))
- Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>)
- Institutional websites

### Research Parameters

### **A Guide to Institutions Profiled in this Brief**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Approximate Institutional Enrollment (Undergraduate/Total)</b>	<b>Classification</b>
<b>Institution A</b>	Midwest	36,900/42,300	Public, very high research
<b>Institution B</b>	North	7,600/17,900	Private, very high research
<b>Institution C</b>	North	10,300/25,000	Private, very high research
<b>Institution D</b>	South	4,000/5,600	Private, very high research
<b>Institution E</b>	West	7,300/18,500	Private, very high research
<b>Institution F</b>	West	26,000/35,800	Public, very high research