Launching Social Media Giving Campaigns

Strategies to Acquire Donors and Increase Fundraising Revenue

Community College Executive Forum

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Meeting People Where They Are

Social media usage has grown exponentially over the past five years. Although social media platforms first emerged as diversions for a niche audience, the majority of the American population now has an account on at least one social network.

Facebook dominates among social media platforms. As of 2015, 71% of all adults use Facebook, and the majority of these users visit the site at least daily. Other platforms, including Pinterest, Instagram, and Twitter, also continue to grow in popularity.

Given how deeply ingrained social media has become, it is no surprise that many advancement professionals highlight the need to connect with supporters through these channels.

Social Media's Influence Continues to Expand

Audiences Growing Across All Social Media Channels

Percentage of Adults (18+) Using Social Media Channels, 2012 vs. 2015
n= 1,597

Channel	2012	2015
Facebook	67	72
LinkedIn	20	25
Pinterest	15	31
Instagram	13	28
Twitter	16	23

■ 2012 ■ 2015
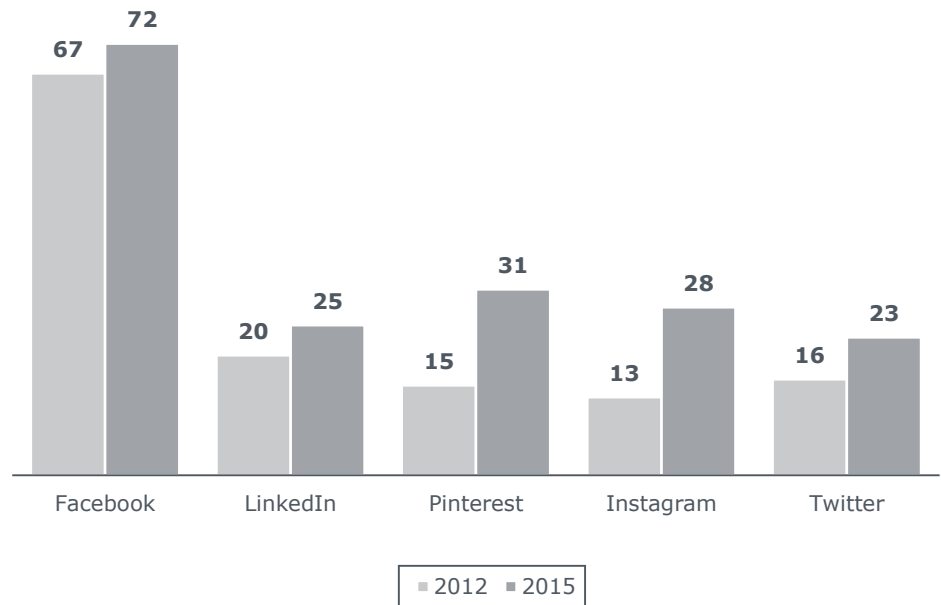
Becoming a Daily Habit

Percent of Social Media Use Categorized by Frequency, 2015
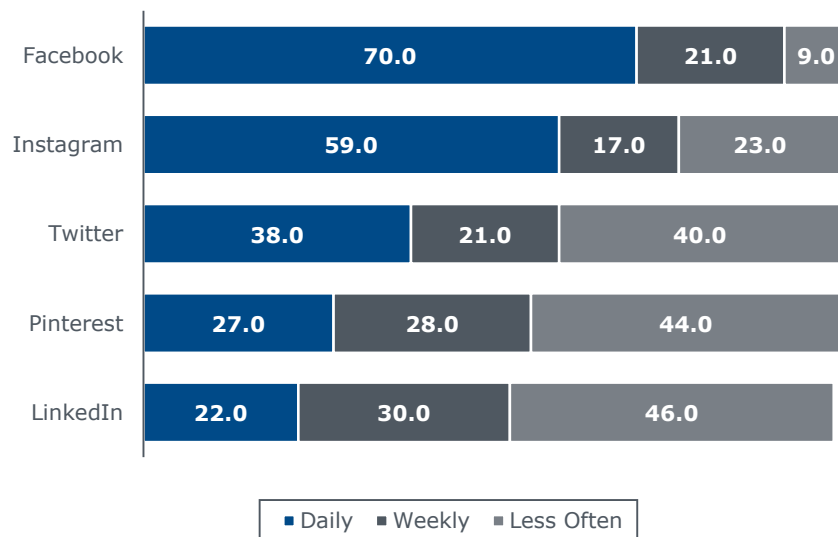
Platform	Daily	Weekly	Less Often
Facebook	70.0	21.0	9.0
Instagram	59.0	17.0	23.0
Twitter	38.0	21.0	40.0
Pinterest	27.0	28.0	44.0
LinkedIn	22.0	30.0	46.0

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Less Often

No Longer Just for Picture Sharing

Some people believe that social media is used solely for procrastination. Yet the general public increasingly relies on social media—and the internet more broadly—for its philanthropic activities. In 2013, U.S. non-profits received $2.1 billion in online donations.

Millennials donate more often through online platforms than any other channel. Their donation habits present advancement professionals with an unprecedented opportunity to capture first-time donors quickly and relatively inexpensively with a social media campaign.

For community college development staff, social media is a promising option to engage current students and young alumni. Moreover, as social media usage increases among older individuals, colleges can also access an increasingly diverse audience of adult learners and community members online.

Donors Interact with Nonprofits through Social Media

Online Giving Continues to Grow

$2.1B

Total online donations to non-profits in the United States in 2013

8.9%

Increase in online giving from 2013 to 2014, versus 2.1% increase in overall giving

Millennials Prefer to Donate Online

Percentage of Millennial Donors by Channel, 2012[1]

n= 6,522

Channel	Percentage
Phone	15%
Mail	34%
Online	70%
In Person	39%
Payroll Deductions	14%
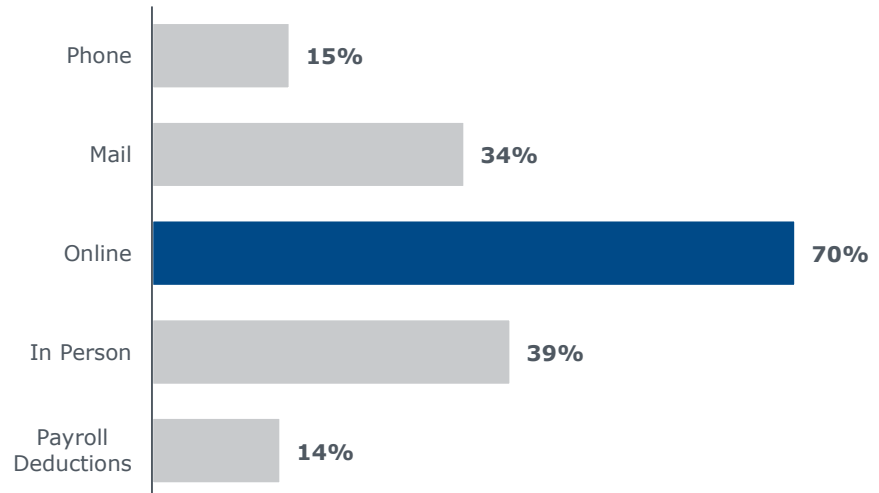
> ❞
>
> **Willing to Spread the Word**
>
> "Social media, with its immediacy and ease of connection, continues to play a central role in Millennials' relationships and interactions with nonprofit organizations…Millennials who have established relationships with nonprofits said they are willing to spread the word about worthy nonprofits, and they like to use Facebook for that purpose.
>
> *The Millennial Impact Report*

Source: Grovum, Emma and Raymund Flandez, "The Big Boom in Online Giving," *The Chronicle of Philanthropy,* https://philanthropy.com/article/The-Big-Boom-in-Online-Giving/150689; "The Millennial Impact Report (2012), http://casefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/MillennialImpactReport-2012.pdf; Elise Young, "turning Young Alumni into Donors," *Inside Higher Ed* (July 17, 2012), https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/07/17/young-donors-need-be-reached-online-and-tangible-explanations-impact; Edison Research, *The Social Habit* (June 2012); EAB interviews and analysis.

1) Percentages do not add to 100% because some Millennial donors used multiple channels.

A Potential Deal Breaker?

Although college development staff are well aware of the power of social media, they typically avoid making direct asks on social media due to misconceptions about its potential and mistakes that others have made in the past.

Perhaps the most salient concern revolves around the time commitment required to launch a social media campaign. Development staff must often juggle simultaneous fundraising initiatives, so they hesitate to invest more time in an untested fundraising strategy.

In fact, development staff at some colleges that experimented with social media campaigns have reported limited success in garnering donor attention. However, many of these campaigns underperformed because of inadequate planning and hasty execution.

Misconceptions Abound About Social Media Fundraising

Typical Concerns for Development Staff

"Social media gifts are one-time events that don't yield repeat donations."

"These platforms don't have user-friendly giving functionality."

"Asking for money on social media will alienate our followers since they only follow us for updates about life on campus."

"No one gives in response to a social media ask. That's what email, direct mail, and our website are for."
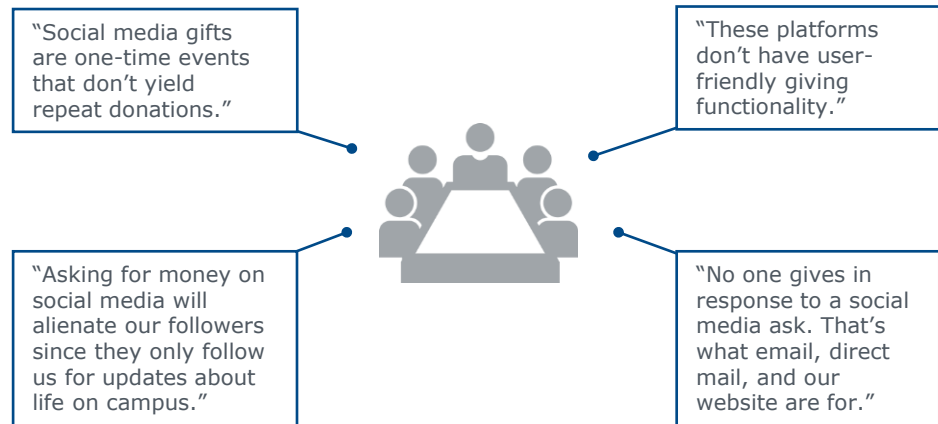
Common Social Media Campaign Dead Ends

"We tried raising money on social media. We didn't reinforce the message through other channels. We thought social media was enough."

"Occasionally we'll insert a one-off ask into our timeline, but no one responds to it."

"Our dedicated social media campaign ended up saturating our audience with solicitations."

"We ran a social media campaign. We launched it in a day, and no one seemed to noticed."

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Urgency Drivers Highlight Need for a New Approach

If carefully planned and executed, a social media campaign can serve as an innovative method to not only generate immediate revenue but also attract first-time donors.

In recent years, the rising cost of direct mail coupled with the difficulty of engaging alumni have prompted development staff to investigate inexpensive methods to fundraise. Social media allows staff to market a campaign to large numbers of people at little cost to the institution. Staff can also tailor social media campaigns to target segments because online advertising allows for extensive customization.

Furthermore, the growth in online giving in recent years—often at the expense of direct mail—indicates that more people are increasingly receptive to online-based fundraising efforts.

Three Primary Motivations for a Social Media Campaign

1

Direct Mail Costs Rising

"We are white-knuckle holding on to direct mail, but it keeps getting more expensive. We're not even sure how effective it is."

2

Difficulty Connecting with Alumni

"Many of our alumni do not know who we are or what we do. We need new channels to get the word out there and showcase our initiatives."

3

Online Giving Continues to Grow

"I know that everyone gives online today. Can we connect our social media pages to the trend here?"

Transferring Social Media Success to Your Campus

This report highlights four examples of successful social media campaigns from across the country. In each case, the development staff implemented innovative but cost-effective practices to maximize revenue generation and donor acquisition in a 24- to 36-hour period.

Each profiled campaign constitutes the development staff's second attempt at a social media giving event, with the exception of the University of Massachusetts Amherst's "UMassGives" campaign. This campaign has occurred annually since 2012.

Campaign Highlights from Four Replicable Examples

Kennebec Valley's Giving Tuesday Campaign (2014)

26	Individual donors
~20	First-time donors
$12K	Dollars raised
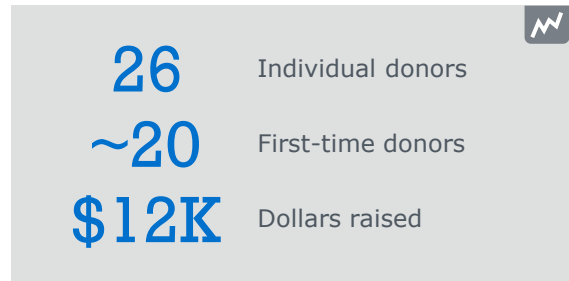
Hostos Community College's Giving Tuesday Campaign (2014)

36	Individual donors
10	First-time donors
$17K	Dollars raised

Empire State College's 24-Hour Giving Challenge (2015)

750	Individual donors
183	First-time donors
$101K	Dollars raised
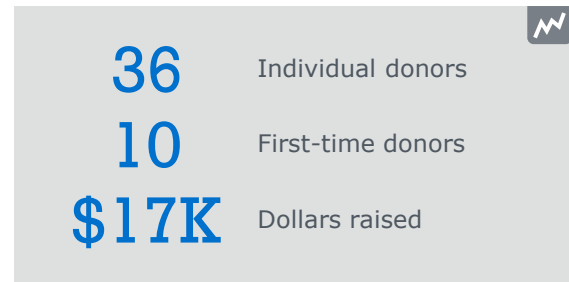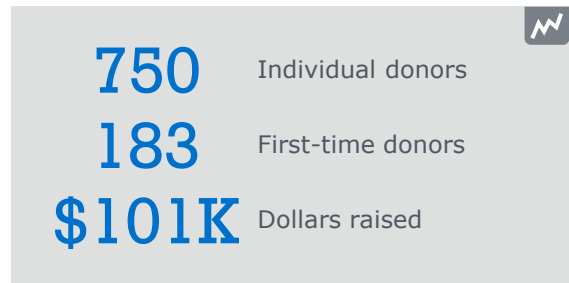
UMass Amherst's "UMassGives" Campaign (2015)

1,682	Individual donors
630	First-time donors[1]
$108K	Dollars raised
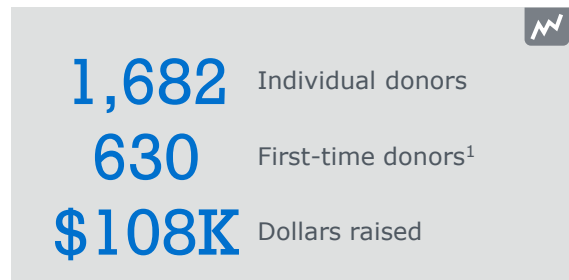
1) First-time donors include those who have never before donated to the university and those who have only donated in previous UMass Gives campaigns.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Launching a High-Return Social Media Campaign

Even though the average social media campaign lasts only 24 hours, development staff need to start planning several months in advance. In addition, campaigns often require follow-up to ensure that donors remain engaged and eager to participate in future fundraising initiatives.

This report distills a time-bound social media campaign into four distinct phases: planning and preparation, deploying alumni and volunteers, launching the campaign, and campaign follow-up. The following pages outline the most critical elements within each phase and provide guidance on how a community college's development staff can efficiently implement them.

Four Key Components of a Short-Term Giving Event

1
Planning and Preparation

Profiled Elements
- Selecting a Date
- Creating a Master Schedule
- Assessing Technological Infrastructure
- Finding Lead Donors

2
Deploying Alumni and Volunteers

Profiled Elements
- Recruiting Alumni and Supporters
- Training Online Ambassadors
- Retaining Volunteers

3
Launching the Campaign

Profiled Elements
- Priming Donors
- Pre-Scripted Posts
- Creating Urgency

4
Campaign Follow-up

Profiled Elements
- Thanking Donors
- Making the Second Ask
- Campaign Reflection

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Starting on the Right Foot

The planning and preparation stage begins with the selection of a launch date. Staff should evaluate three criteria when selecting the optimal date: logistics, efficiency, and branding.

For Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC), Giving Tuesday offered an opportunity to immediately fulfill all three criteria. Giving Tuesday is a global day of charity founded in 2012 by New York City's 92 Street Y community center and the United Nations Foundation. Each year, the event falls on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving.

In 2014, KVCC scheduled their month-long annual campaign to begin on Giving Tuesday. Since Giving Tuesday allows non-profit organizations to use their branding, messaging, and templates for free, KVCC inserted their college logo into Giving Tuesday's materials and uses these materials for all campaign communications. Co-branding with other initiatives ultimately conserves the development staff's time and energy to focus on other critical aspects of the campaign.

Launch Campaign on Convenient and Memorable Date

Criteria for Selecting an Optimal Date

Logistics

Ensure campaign does not conflict with academic breaks or other major events

Efficiency

Find opportunities to replace or supplement existing advancement initiatives

Branding

Partner with existing philanthropic ventures to give your campaign extended reach

Building on an Internationally Recognized Day: Giving Tuesday

Opportunities Presented by Giving Tuesday

- **Repurpose Existing Content:** KVCC embedded old videos and pictures into their messaging

- **Substitute Previous Event:** KVCC replaced their end-of-year campaign with Giving Tuesday

- **Adapt Free Resources:** KVCC attached their logo and wording to free Giving Tuesday materials

- **Capitalize on Global Event:** Giving Tuesday receives free coverage and publicity
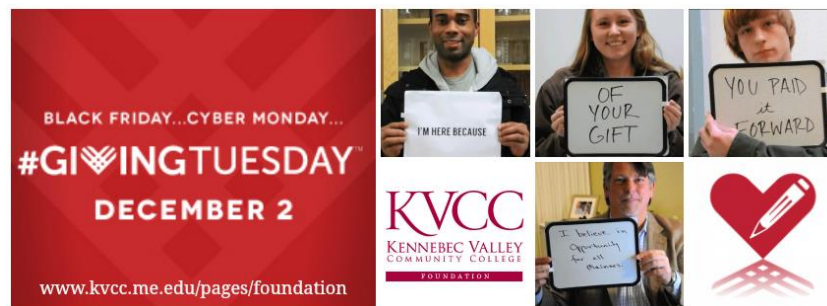
IMAGE CREDIT: KENNEBECK VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

Compiling a Master Schedule

The exact planning and preparation time for a social media campaign varies according to the size of the development office's staff. Nonetheless, most social media campaigns follow the same general timeline.

To organize all of the necessary steps and tasks, development office staff at the University of Massachusetts Amherst create and maintain a single, overarching planning document, often called a master schedule. This schedule serves the dual purpose of dividing the planning process into a series of manageable tasks and recording the campaign's progress.

Ideally, the project leader should be in charge of managing the master schedule. He or she should create this item immediately after the initial planning meeting, even though individual development staff will continuously revise and update its contents.

Simplify Campaign Management with a Single Document

Sample Timeline for Structuring a Campaign

Planning and Preparation	Deploying Alumni and Volunteers	Launching the Campaign		Campaign Follow-Up
3 Months Prior	*1 Month Prior*	*1 Week Prior*	**Launch Day**	*1 Week After*
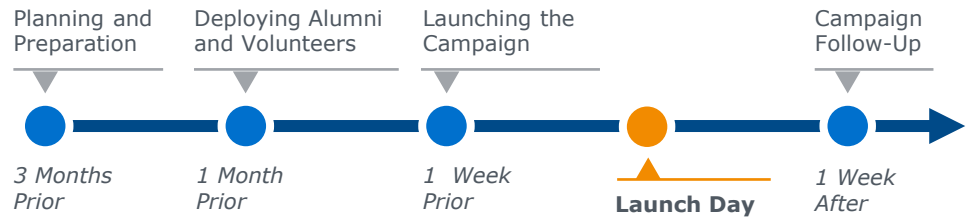
UMass Amherst's Giving Day Task List
Planning Document Captures Main Responsibilities and Tracks Progress

Task	Date Due	Date Completed	Person Assigned	Follow-up/Notes
Initial planning meeting with web team	10/15/15	11/13/15	John	Provide team with scripting to go live 11/27
Contact Kathy about T-shirts	10/18/15		Lisa	Need to find out how many we have left from last year
Send letter to President for approval	11/1/15	10/22/15	John	

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Harnessing Technology to Drive Donations

In most cases, community colleges do not have to invest in a new technology infrastructure to ensure a positive donation experience. Instead, colleges should focus on how they can redesign their current communications to simplify the donation process. Ultimately, every communication attached to the campaign—whether from social media, emails, or banner ads on the college's homepage—should directly link potential donors to the campaign's giving page.

After donors navigate to the giving page, they should be able to complete the transaction in 5 to 10 minutes. To shorten the process, Kennebec Valley Community College only allows donors to make unrestricted gifts. The option of restricted gifts may overwhelm donors with excessive choices, particularly when donors have to select specific departments from a drop-down list.

Link All Communications to Streamlined Giving Page

Multiple Routes to One Destination
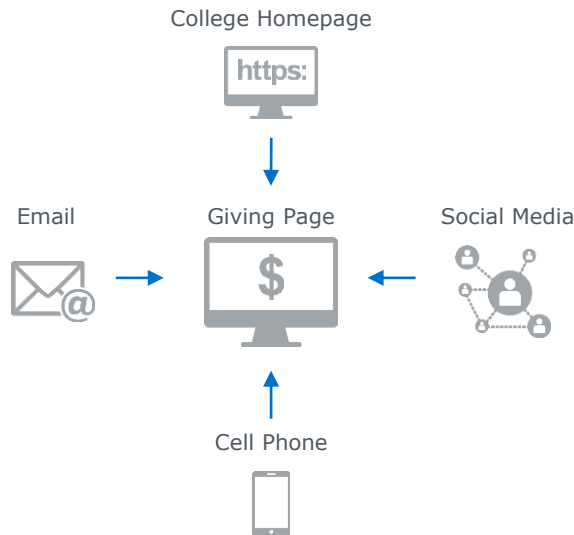
Maximize the Impact of Your Giving Page
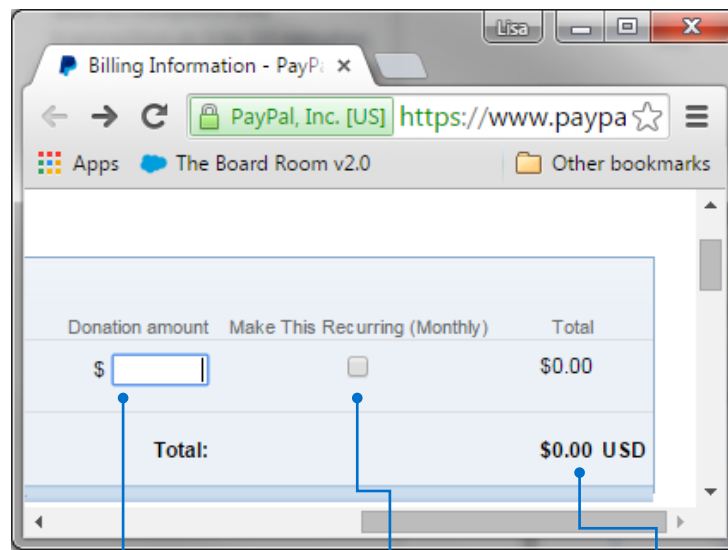
IMAGE CREDIT: KENNEBEC VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Avoid overwhelming donors with numerous options for restricted gifts

Include an option to make regularly scheduled gifts

Track giving data to identify donor trends

Preparing to Offer Matching Gifts

The most successful campaigns begin with a matching gift, or a pledge from a donor to give as much as the college receives from other sources up to a pre-determined amount.

Staff should recruit matching gifts several weeks before the campaign launch date. Matching gifts motivate donors who would like to see the impact of their gift doubled, especially if they would otherwise doubt their ability to make a sizeable contribution. In many instances, development staff unveil a matching gift halfway through a campaign to regain momentum.

Hostos Community College acquired considerable donation revenue through matching gifts during their second Giving Tuesday campaign. They sent emails to long-time donors who traditionally made pledges during their annual end-of-year campaign. By framing matching gifts for Giving Tuesday as a new method to give back to the college, development staff successfully convinced two donors to each pledge $5,000 matching gifts.

Announce Large Donations to Spur Additional Giving

Benefits of Matching Gifts

☑ Enter launch day with guaranteed dollars

☑ Doubles donations up to a pre-determined amount

☑ Encourages new donations in a plateauing campaign

Increasing the Efficacy of Match Requests

Send from the President
- Ensure written communications (e.g., email, letter) that solicit donations come from the community college's senior-most executive to add impact
- Pre-write and send the letter for the president's approval at least five weeks before launch day

Provide Clear Instructions
- Concisely explain how potential match donors may become involved in the campaign
- Include links for how to make their donation in the initial email

Target Reliable Donors
- Reach out to donors who have made regular and substantial gifts in the past
- Record the frequency of outreach requests to prevent over-solicitation

Explain Impact on Students
- Provide quotes, pictures, or videos of current students to emphasize how the success of the campaign will directly benefit students

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Seeking Authentic, Accessible Ambassadors

UMass Amherst launched its first "UMassGives" campaign in 2012 to celebrate its 150th anniversary. However, the development staff wrestled with two major issues for how to best reach their alumni. First, each of UMass Amherst's colleges maintained a separate development office, which made close coordination on a single campaign difficult. Second, staff struggled to create messages that resonated with numerous alumni.

The development staff resolved these concerns through the transferal of social media messaging responsibilities to online ambassadors. Most of UMass Amherst's ambassadors are alumni with active social media networks. Their authentic appeals better resonate with other their peers than appeals from development staff.

Appoint Alumni to Steward Fundraising Campaigns

Why Use Alumni to Spread the Word?

Staff-Led Model
The development office or foundation takes ownership of social media outreach

❌ Time-consuming for development staff

❌ Tone of posts inaccessible to alumni

❌ Limited number of networks with which to share messages

Alumni-Driven Model
Well-connected alumni administer the campaign's social media outreach

✔ Frees up development staff time for other tasks

✔ Authentic appeals resonate with other alumni

✔ Messages spread quickly and organically across networks

Success Depends on Peer Engagement

"Programs like Giving Tuesday work best when it's the peer community reaching out to you. It's not the end of the world if a college does not have a huge staff because it's really about finding alumni with the biggest Klout[1] and getting them to push out the word and the messaging."

Nathan Adams, Executive Director of Annual Giving
University of Massachusetts Amherst

1) A "Klout Score" measures an individual's activity and influence on social media

Source: EAB research and analysis.

Recruiting Volunteers to Promote Your Campaign

UMass Amherst's development staff invite alumni to become online ambassadors if they both demonstrate an interest in fundraising activities and possess a large social media network. Staff identify potential candidates who participate on the college's social media networks, and they email these candidates to ask if they would like to participate in an upcoming campaign.

To maximize response rates, staff send recruitment emails at least one month in advance of the campaign's launch. These emails are conversational in tone and include succinct explanations of the online ambassador role.

Reach Out to Alumni with Active Social Media Presences

Alumni Recruitment Process at UMass Amherst

1   **2**   **3**

Identify Supporters on Social Media

Look for alumni who actively participate on the college's social media pages or possess a large network

Send Ambassador Invitation Emails

Create an outreach template that explains how the alumnus's social media acumen can help generate donations

Create a Database of Online Ambassadors

Maintain a list of all prospective and active online ambassadors for development staff to use in future campaigns

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Getting the Best Response
Characteristics of Effective Recruitment Emails

☑ Sent at least one month in advance of launch

☑ Includes concise explanation of their role

☑ Written in conversational tone

☑ Thanks volunteers for participation

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

How to Make the Most of Your Volunteers

To best prepare online ambassadors for their campaign, UMass Amherst's development staff sends each volunteer a training document that covers best practices in social media marketing. This document explains the purpose of UMassGives and the instrumental role of online ambassadors in the curation of the campaign.

In addition, development staff send online ambassadors pre-scripted messages to post on social media. For example, 12 hours after the campaign launches, staff may email ambassadors a pre-scripted announcement to post to Twitter about matching gifts.

Train Participating Alumni in Social Media Best Practices

Preparing Volunteers to Lead Campaigns

UMass Amherst's Online Ambassador Training Document

What is UMassGives?

Explain both the purpose and the timing of the social media campaign

How can you bring in donors and dollars?

• Now

• One Month Before UMassGives

• During UMassGives

Specify how volunteers can help generate interest during each stage of the campaign

UMassGives 2015 Bonus Challenges

Include any campaign prizes or incentives for volunteers to mention in their messages

Sample Social Media Messages and Emails

Provide examples of Facebook posts, Tweets, and emails to help volunteers get started

It's finally here, #UMassGives! A lot can happen in 36 hours. It's up to you! www.umass.edu/umassgives http://bcove.me/ft7gvfu7 <UMassGives Video>

#UMassGives a $2000 bonus to the area with most donors from 12-1pm EDT. Visit www.umass.edu/umassgives to help your favorite area win!

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Ambassador Engagement and Retention

After each social media campaign, development staff have an opportunity to sustain relationships with their volunteers for future campaigns and initiatives.

At UMass Amherst, development staff send their online ambassadors monthly email blasts that contain upcoming volunteer opportunities and social media updates. These updates allow staff to keep ambassadors engaged with university initiatives in between campaigns. After three consecutive years of Giving Tuesday campaigns and subsequent retention efforts, UMass Amherst maintains a roster of approximately 200 online ambassadors.

Sustain Relationships Through Monthly Email Updates

Online Ambassador Retention

Specialized Thank You Email
- Send a thank you email to each online ambassador who participated in the campaign

Monthly Updates on Future Opportunities
- Send a monthly email blast to the active roster of online ambassadors to maintain their involvement
- Outline ongoing volunteer opportunities in addition to reminders about next year's campaign

An Active Roster of Online Ambassadors

200 Online ambassadors at UMass Amherst who have participated in at least one giving campaign

50% Percentage of ambassadors who continue to regularly respond to update emails

Priming Prospective Donors

A social media campaign truly kicks off for development office staff approximately two weeks before the launch date. This period serves to introduce and excite potential donors about the campaign.

Development staff should avoid posting content or sending emails about the campaign more than two weeks in advance to prevent messaging fatigue. However, within two weeks of the launch date, staff should encourage online ambassadors or other volunteers to post, share, and tweet as much as possible to generate excitement amongst their peers.

SUNY Empire State College added extra emphasis to their pre-campaign messaging with an email from the college president 24 hours before launch. The email specified the purpose of the event and included a link to a countdown clock on their giving page.

Introduce Campaign to Donors Two Weeks in Advance

Essential Steps Before Campaign Launch

Limit Outreach from Development Staff
Rely on a concrete schedule of emails and official social media posts to be released in the two weeks prior to launch

Use Volunteers to Initiate Peer Conversations
Prompt online ambassadors, students, or other volunteers to post on their social media pages (e.g., change their profile picture, post status updates, retweet messages)

Send a Letter from the College President
Ghostwrite a message for the college president to send 24 hours before the campaign launches that includes links to the Giving Page

Build Anticipation with a Countdown Clock
Include a countdown on the giving page to grow excitement for the campaign launch

Finding the Right Balance

"The great thing about social media and email is that it's free, so we can post and send as many messages as possible about our campaign. We can saturate our channels so all of our donors at least know about the campaign. However, if prospective donors get too many messages from our college, then we'll get tuned out. We do not want to be ignored when it really matters."

Foundation Executive Director
Midwest Community College

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Pre-Scripting Social Media Posts

During the two week pre-launch period, development staff should script each email, letter, or social media post that will be released over the course of the campaign. This ensures clear and consistent communication to prospective donors. At minimum, staff should schedule an update through email or social media every four hours throughout a 24-hour campaign.

During their most recent campaign, Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) sent out 6 emails with donation updates throughout the day. These emails charted the college's progress toward donation goals to encourage further giving. For example, once the campaign had raised nearly $1,000, staff sent out an email that asked potential donors whether they would help the college meet this memorable milestone.

In addition, KVCC integrated authentic student appeals into their messages. These appeals provided quick but resonant reminders of how donations directly benefit students.

Draft Standardized Communications Before Launch Date

Charting Progress Toward Numerical Goals

Abridged Email Appeal

> We have raised $2,895! Will you help us reach $3,258—the equivalent of tuition and fees for a full-time student for one year?

Articulates how donation revenue will precisely fund a student's tuition

Integrating Authentic Student Appeals

Sample Facebook Post

$825 has been given to the KVCC Foundation today in the #UnSelfie spirit of #Giving Tuesday! Your help is needed to ensure we reach $1,000 for student scholarships & programs. Please consider a gift in an amount indicative of the year you graduated, or will graduate (e.g., $5, $15, 215, or $2015 for the Class of 2015).

Donate Here:
www.kvcc.me.edu/pages/foundation/givingtuesday

IMAGE CREDIT: KENNEBEC VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

Offers memorable recommended donation amount

Provides link for immediate donation click-through

Highlights impact of donation on KVCC students

Source: EAB interviews and analysis..

Finding a Role for Current Students

In most cases, current students cannot donate as much to a fundraising campaign as alumni or established donors can. Nonetheless, Hostos Community College (HCC) engages their students in giving campaigns to drive online activity and excitement.

During their 2014 campaign, HCC incentivized their students to participate in their Giving Tuesday campaign with an on-campus party, raffle tickets, and t-shirts. If students posted an "Unselfie," or a picture of themselves with an HCC Giving Tuesday sign, then they were entered into a raffle to win received one of five $100 cash prizes.

Generate Online Activity Through Student Participation

An Event to Generate Social Media Buzz

- Host "Unselfie Party" at prominent campus location
- Invite well-regarded faculty and executive figures to participate
- Offer prizes, including raffle tickets and free t-shirts, to those who post pictures on social media

IMAGE CREDIT: HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

Further Ideas to Recruit Student Participants

- Reach out to a variety of student organizations
- Recruit student ambassadors to help spread the message
- Advertise campaign hashtag and giving pages on signs

IMAGE CREDIT: HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis

Maintaining Post-Campaign Momentum

After Empire State College suddenly acquired new donors, it became especially important for staff to retain them for future campaigns. To express gratitude for each donor's participation, staff sent thank you emails addressed to each individual donor and signed by the college president. These messages recognized the "pioneers" who participated in the college's first 24-Hour Giving Challenge. The college publicly announced the names of individuals who contributed large donations, including matching gifts.

In subsequent messages to donors, staff also introduced upcoming campaigns to promote further opportunities to give to the college.

Personalize 'Thank You' Messages to Individual Donors

Celebrate Donors to Encourage Future Giving

- ☑ Send personalized letters to donors, ideally addressed from the president or other widely-recognized campus figure

- ☑ Highlight first time donations with a personal thank you or mention on the college website or newsletter

- ☑ Publicly thank individuals by name (unless otherwise specified) who contributed matching gifts or large donations

Inform Participants of Upcoming Donation Opportunities

- ☑ Use mailings or social media posts to remind donors and participants (e.g., online ambassadors, student volunteers) of upcoming fundraising initiatives

- ☑ Include donors who made gifts in the past but missed out on the most recent campaign

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Introducing Incentives on Campaign Day

Giveaways can also engage potential donors outside the student body. In 2014, SUNY Empire State College's 24-Hour Giving Challenge exceeded its donation goal by more than 225%, in part because development staff engaged participants through "on the spot" prizes. For example, if 50 individuals made a donation within the same hour, then the college's vice president of student affairs promised to shave his goatee. Rather than planning out these incentives, staff created them spontaneously as the 24-hour campaign unfolded.

Empire State College's creative incentives helped acquire new donors. In one 24-hour period, the college gained over 200 new donors—approximately the same number of donors they had across the entire previous year.

On-the-Spot Challenges and Prizes Drive Participation

Three Keys to Spark Donor Participation

Hourly Challenges

Participation challenges launched throughout the day encourage donors to monitor campaign progress

Popular Merchandise

Inexpensive prizes (e.g., college-branded t-shirts, frisbees, selfie sticks) appeal to all demographics
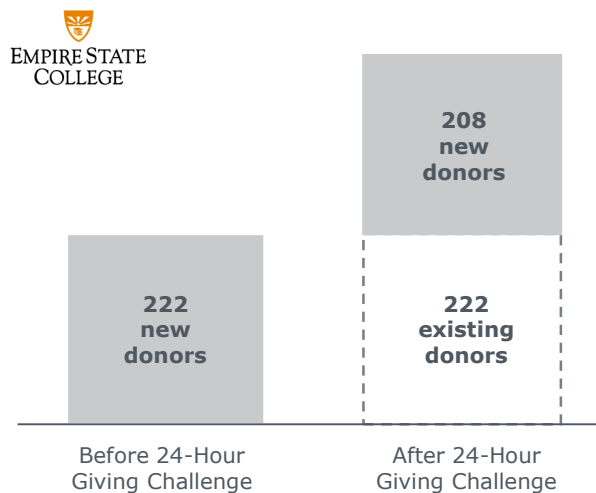
Creative Incentives

Spontaneous prizes that include well-known campus figures create excitement for participants

Doubling the Donor Base

Number of Donors at Empire State College

EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

208 new donors

222 new donors

222 existing donors

Before 24-Hour Giving Challenge

After 24-Hour Giving Challenge

Source EAB interviews and analysis.

# Turning One-Time Donors into Continuous Supporters

Social media encourages first-time donations because of its immediate and accessible nature. College staff can convert these first-time donors into continuous supporters by promptly making a second ask. Campaign participants who receive a second ask are more likely to give and keep giving than those who do not receive any solicitations for an extended period of time.

Approximately three months after the campaign concludes, development staff should solicit second donations. Whether this solicitation occurs through direct mail, email, or a phone call, it should explicitly thank donors for their participation in the previous campaign and ask whether they would like to continue their support with another donation.

In general, development staff should include all donors in second asks. However, they should avoid sending standard outreach to major donors, who should instead receive personalized solicitation.

Re-Approach Donors with Second Asks to Sustain Giving

Timeline for Making a Second Ask
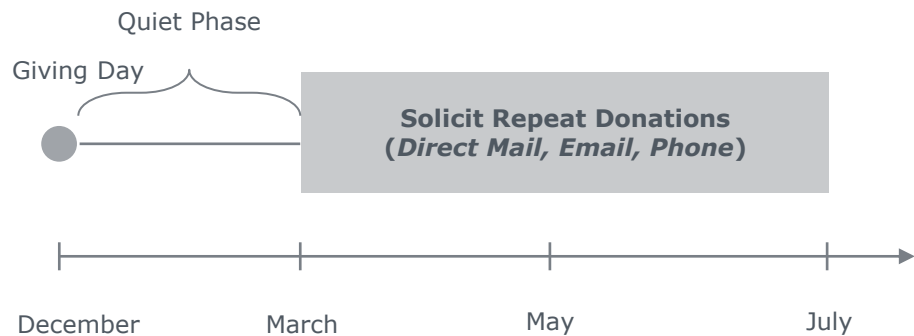
> **Retaining New Donors**
>
> "When acquiring new donors, research has shown that if you can get back to them and ask them to give another gift rather quickly, they're more likely to say yes. The more time that lapses before going back to ask them again, the lower the response rate. So that's the core of it for that acquisition piece. We're trying to retain higher numbers of those first-time donors.
>
> *Executive Director of Development*
> *Private University*

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

The Post-Game Playbook

Shortly after a campaign concludes, administrators should assess the results and identify lessons learned to help inform future initiatives.

The Humane Society, which regularly runs four to five successful social media campaigns per year, assesses how each of their campaigns performed in terms of dollars raised and supporter engagement on social media. Staff then recommend next steps for future campaigns. They use a template for this post-campaign analysis that includes key data points, sentiment analysis, and screenshots of effective posts. This approach ensures that staff will not need to reinvent the wheel each time they launch a social media campaign.

Self-Evaluate Campaign Results and Outline Next Steps

Humane Society's Campaign Assessment Checklist

☑ **Campaign Overview:** Summarize major activities and record lessons learned from the campaign

☑ **Statistical Evaluation:** Determine donation patterns, including who, where, and to what extent gifts were made

☑ **Sentiment Analysis:** Evaluate both positive and negative supporter sentiments on every campaign post

☑ **Screenshots and Mentions:** Save images of key posts, including social media comments from celebrities and other influencers

> **Measurement is Everything**
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> "We measure everything. At the end of any given campaign, we have a template that we fill out that includes fundraising or advocacy numbers, sentiment analysis about our posts, and screenshots. It also includes a summary of what we did and what recommendations we have, so we can learn from the data and make decisions for next time based on that information."
>
> *Carie Lewis*
> *Humane Society*

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Interactive Campaigns Inspire Donor Participation

The campaigns profiled in this study incentivized donor engagement and empowered volunteers to fundraise on behalf of the institution. Student, faculty, and alumni participation brought energy to social media pages and saved development staff time.

Much of the success of these campaigns reflects the upfront, behind-the-scenes efforts of development staff. In all four examples, comprehensive planning, including pre-scripted messages and pre-arranged matching gifts, built and sustained campaign momentum. Meanwhile, student and alumni volunteers generated online activity to drive donations. Finally, development staff concluded the campaigns by evaluating campaign outcomes and maintaining relations with participating donors.

Key Takeaways of a High-Return Social Media Campaign

Planning and Preparation

- Create a master schedule and task to-do list
- Ensure technological infrastructure allows efficient navigation to giving page
- Recruit matching donors to expand donation capacity

Deploying Volunteers and Alumni

- Invite alumni active on social media to curate the campaign as online ambassadors
- Create a training document and suggested posts to maintain messaging consistency
- Retain alumni with monthly emails that suggest upcoming volunteer activities

Launching the Campaign

- Begin emails and social media posts approximately two weeks in advance to spark interest
- Release pre-scripted campaign updates to keep participants engaged throughout the day
- Use hourly giving challenges and creative prizes to incentivize donations

Campaign Follow-up

- Thank all donors and campaign participants with email, social media post, or letter
- Keep track of all donors and solicit second donations in the months following the campaign
- Self-evaluate the campaign's outcomes; determine which areas need improvement

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.