

Alumni Engagement and Development Strategies for Departments - prepared jointly by University Relations and the Committee on Development and Fundraising

Overview

This document provides some background information for UC Santa Cruz faculty engaged in private fundraising. While the focus is on departmental fundraising efforts, the information shared is relevant to all types of faculty private fundraising, including college-focused fundraising and research initiatives. Core to mature university fundraising programs is to seek support for future-oriented advances in research and education, and to clearly articulate the impact of those programs. Working in close partnership with faculty is central to this work, and coordination with University Relations and Divisional Deans is critical to ensure units across campus are not asking the same donors.

Academic divisions, colleges, and departments have many priorities that may be attractive to donors or donor prospects. Further, many professors have long-term relationships with alumni and others, which make them ideally positioned to engage with donors on behalf of the university. But it is key that faculty work collaboratively with Development staff who have extensive experience raising funds from private donors, which is quite different from writing grants. It is equally important that departments align internally around specific fundraising priorities and have a clearly defined set of goals/specific initiatives. Below you will find clarification of departmental, divisional, and Development coordination, along with some strategies that have worked for departments.

Private donor fundraising at UCSC in a nutshell

Development officers work with campus partners to identify and cultivate potential individual and private foundation or corporate donors. They also assist in helping structure the gift, developing the proposal, and making the ask (soliciting) of the donor. They do this for individual donors as well as private foundations and corporations. University Relations' work with foundations and corporations is closely linked with the work of the Office of Research and Office of Sponsored Projects.

- Major gift fundraising efforts primarily focus on larger (\$100,000+) current use or endowment gifts, so that programs have resources available to them for multiple years or in perpetuity. Gifts may be pledged over a period of up to 5 years.
- The university also spends time raising gifts that range from \$1- \$99,999. These gifts make up 99% of all gifts that the university receives, but only 26% of total dollars raised.
- The university solicits funds from donors through a range of modalities (cash, appreciated assets including securities and real estate, bequests/estate gifts, and more).
- Collaborating with UR can enhance the relationship with the donor, contribute to larger gifts, and ensure that the same donors are not solicited by multiple entities.

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- Authority to accept gifts on behalf of the university is delegated by the UC President only to the campus Chancellor (and the Vice Chancellor for University Relations). This protocol is required because of regulations governing the UCSC Foundation and UC Regents. Even when grants are directly negotiated by individual faculty and researchers, those funds are ultimately received through a formal Letter of Gift process and those are signed by University Relations leadership. Informing University Relations of anticipated awards during the process can be both helpful in securing the funds, and useful in streamlining receipt of the funds.

General tips & fundamentals

- Successful fundraising takes work and commitment, and depends on finding a good match between faculty or departmental needs and the priorities of the donor. Most departments that have had success in fundraising are diligent about having clear priorities and resource needs. Decide on your priorities and write short statements framing the need for these priorities and how much they would cost.
- Remember that it takes time – and patience – to build relationships, often with an initial focus on “friend-raising” rather than just fundraising. It has been said that the number of zeros you are seeking in a gift is at least the number of times you will want to visit and engage with the donor before soliciting them for a major gift.
- Soliciting a donor can be thought of as offering that donor an opportunity for them to have their desired impact on the world, through UC Santa Cruz.
 - Thoughtful cultivation of donors will prepare them for the solicitation so they are not surprised by being asked for a gift.
 - It’s OK to ask potential donors for money. Rarely does a donor give without being asked.
 - Remember that it is not uncommon to get several “no’s” before negotiating to “yes.”
- The university raises support both for annual needs and for major/leadership gifts that will help transform or enable an initiative.
 - It’s important to get individuals to donate annually, as annual donors are typically the source of major gift donors in the future. At UCSC, typically if a donor has given consecutively for 5-7 years in a row, they usually give for life.
 - Still, the majority of UR’s effort is focused on raising larger gifts that help sustain initiatives over time.
 - Thoughtful, strategic requests that match the donor’s interest and capacity, and convey impact have the best chance of being funded.

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- At the lower levels, certain types of support are easier to raise, such as student scholarships, one-time supply purchases, and seed funds for research.
- Funding for staff salaries and general operations are particularly difficult to fundraise for and not suggested unless part of a larger request that includes an endowment.
- It is important that departments have talked with their deans to identify how their goals align with their division-wide priorities. As with most universities, our fundraising structures are aligned with supporting departments through their divisions, and in close partnership with the academic deans. When priorities align, existing staff help promote them and they are easier to represent as valuable philanthropic opportunities to donors with broad institutional support.

Strategies to engage current and future donors

- Use all your connections – not just alumni. Ask your alumni to help introduce you to their networks. A promising donor is someone with genuine interest in your work and suspected financial capacity.
- Hold departmental social events at both UCSC and at other locations where alumni are. These are typically not “fundraisers” but rather events that cultivate and steward donors and prospects (i.e. friend-raisers). As with all events, ensure timely and strategic follow up after the event. Below are some examples that departments have used successfully. Each one requires time and energy to plan and implement, so it is important to consider which is the best fit for your department’s alumni and planning capacity. Some potential opportunities include:
 - “Salons” with alumni and friends that feature faculty or student speakers.
 - Mixers for alumni at professional meetings or conferences.
 - Annual dinner fundraiser and large public lecture. (Ticketed fundraising events do not usually raise significant resources due to the time and costs often associated.)
 - Alumni weekend events or other alumni reunion events.
 - Special events at the time of commencement. These can serve as a great time to send students off on a positive note and plant the seed for future engagement.
- Engage alumni in activities at UCSC that utilize their expertise:
 - Ask alumni to serve as professional mentors to undergraduate or graduate students.
 - Invite alumni to give lectures, workshops, or seminars on campus, or to serve as guest speakers in classes.

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- Hold a seminar series where alumni come to campus to speak with students about their experiences, address students' questions and offer advice.
- Ask alumni to offer summer internships, residencies, or jobs to younger students/alum, and ensure that these experiences are positive for both the employer and the student.
- Other avenues to demonstrate a departmental commitment:
 - Ask all faculty in the department to donate personally to a project or initiative that represents a departmental priority.
 - Engage emeriti faculty both by asking them if they might make a donation or planned gift, helping to contact alumni, and/or setting up a fund in their name.
 - Consistent departmental communications (e.g.: newsletters) with donors and alumni are helpful, but only if they can be sustained over time.
 - Some divisions and other units on campus have alumni or external councils that meet once a year and advise the unit on various strategic issues, including fundraising. Establishing councils should be considered only if capacity exists to continue them and ensure that a consistent and meaningful experience can be sustained for external advisors.

Support that Development staff can provide

- There are generally 1-3 development officers and support staff members in each division. They are charged with working with the deans and department chairs to identify and secure funding for division priorities.
- The senior development officer (DO) can serve as a liaison to other teams in University Relations, such as Foundation Relations, Annual Giving, Alumni Engagement, Prospect Development (research) and Donor Relations & Development Communications.
- The best place to start is with the senior development officer based in your academic division. Each development officer manages a portfolio of prospects, and can add new prospects to their portfolios who have high potential on an ongoing basis. They can work with faculty to identify alumni and potential donors, and conduct research on donor prospects, including those who may be identified by the faculty.
- Development officers help guide discussions on request amounts based on research and frame solicitations in ways that might yield more flexibility in the gifts. In many cases, development officers accompany faculty and deans on visits and ensure the team is fully prepared for the solicitation meeting. They can provide advice on fundraising strategies

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and review written materials.

- Departments are encouraged to invite Development Officers (DOs) to attend faculty meetings at least once a year so that DOs are aware of departmental priorities when they are speaking with donors.
- The university does not endorse separate databases for donors and alumni stored in other departments. Independent department databases may have information that central systems do not, but as a whole the central UR system is the single best source for alumni and donor information. Note that UR is migrating to a more advanced relationship management database in late 2023.