

Considerations for investing in a robust, multi-platform Annual Giving Program at Fresno State

Note: Fresno State currently incorporates successfully a number of these ideas in its Annual Giving program. Others have been considered and eliminated due to budget restrictions or to other program priorities at the time. It is not uncommon for university annual giving programs to take a “back seat” during a comprehensive campaign; the issue, however, is reigniting a strong Annual Giving program after a campaign or between campaigns.

What is an Annual Giving Program?

Annual Giving is a strategic, intentional, planned “campaign” to multiple constituencies based on well-defined goals and regularly evaluated against those goals.

Four elements of Annual Giving Success

1. Energetic and frequent outreach
2. Donor contact; relationship building
3. Donor recognition and appreciation; stewardship
4. Coordinated solicitation

Programs and activities often included in the Annual Giving paradigm:

1. Direct mail, alumni and “friends”
2. Online giving (web-based, LinkedIn, blasting, texting, posting, etc) Ensure ease of navigation and a few “clicks” as possible to make a gift.
3. Telemarketing, alumni and “friends”
4. Seek “monthly or quarterly gifts” whereby credit cards are charged for a predetermined time or open-ended.
5. Fresno Family (mail/phone campaign to parents of current undergraduate, traditional college age students)
6. Coordinate “Fresno Family Weekend” with other campus units
7. Student Philanthropy program; “senior class gift” campaign, coordinated with other campus units
8. Special events, both “friend building” and “fund raising” (not all special events should be “fund raisers.”)
9. Matching gifts program
10. Personal solicitations of repeat donors at certain levels
11. Class or affinity group volunteer “agents” to encourage giving among their peer group
12. Create a special “pitch” for unrestricted gifts that can be used by President Welty to take advantage of special opportunities for which existing funding does not exist.
13. Energize a campaign with a “challenge gift.” This can be especially useful in a Parents/Family Fund, with young never-givers, or to “top off” a goal.

14. Use data mining (based on complete, updated information in “Advance” database) to identify the best prospects for selected annual fund messages, means of contact (personal, mail, phone), key messages that will evoke positive response, what “campus updates” are most likely to receive an affirmative response, what gift level constitutes an appropriate “ask,” and what stewardship is appropriate.