

THANKS A BILLION!

A Donor-Centered Campaign Celebration Experience



Meet Your Presenters



Samantha General
(she/her)
**Associate Director
of Stewardship**



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**Senior Director of
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What We'll Cover Today

- About the University at Buffalo and Division of University Advancement
- Context: the *Boldly Buffalo* campaign
- Overview of campaign celebration planning and collaboration
- How we stayed focused on the donor experience and highly personal stewardship
- Campaign stewardship events
- Campaign stewardship beyond the event
- Wrap up and questions

University at Buffalo

- Founded in 1846
- Largest public university in New York State, and largest in the SUNY system
- SUNY Flagship University
- 300,000+ alumni across 150 countries
- 32,099 current students
 - 20,761 undergraduate
 - 11,338 graduate
 - 48 states represented
 - 104 countries represented
- 13,000 annual donors
- 18 schools and units
- 3 campuses across Buffalo, NY



Division of University Advancement



- Staff of 130 including Advancement Officers, Operations, and Alumni Engagement
- Recently completed \$1 Billion *Boldly Buffalo* Campaign
- Raise \$100 million+ annually
- DR&S is a team of 8 staff members focusing on stewardship and donor experience

Boldly Buffalo

Boldly Buffalo: The Campaign for UB was the largest, most ambitious fundraising campaign in university history—a campaign that transformed UB in nearly every way imaginable.

Bold Priorities: Our Place, Our Way, Our Future

Raising funds for student support, faculty research and innovative programs that benefit the world, the campaign plays a pivotal role in UB's aspiration to be in the Top 25 public research universities in the nation within the next decade. As public research universities are increasingly being called upon to solve the most complex issues of our time, it is imperative that UB continues to boldly move forward — that pace of discovery accelerates, that our world-class education is made even more accessible, and that our students are prepared to lead in a rapidly evolving world.



Our Students

At UB, our students are at the very heart of everything we do. As we take great pride in their extraordinary achievements, we will continue to elevate and support them as they lead the way toward a bolder, brighter future.



Our Faculty

Every day, our faculty members make progress toward solving some of society's most complex problems. Now, we will further expand our efforts to recruit and retain exceptional researchers, scholars and teachers.



Our World

From promoting clean air in Buffalo to documenting vanishing languages in Cameroon, UB's impact is felt in every neighborhood throughout Western New York, and on every continent around the globe.

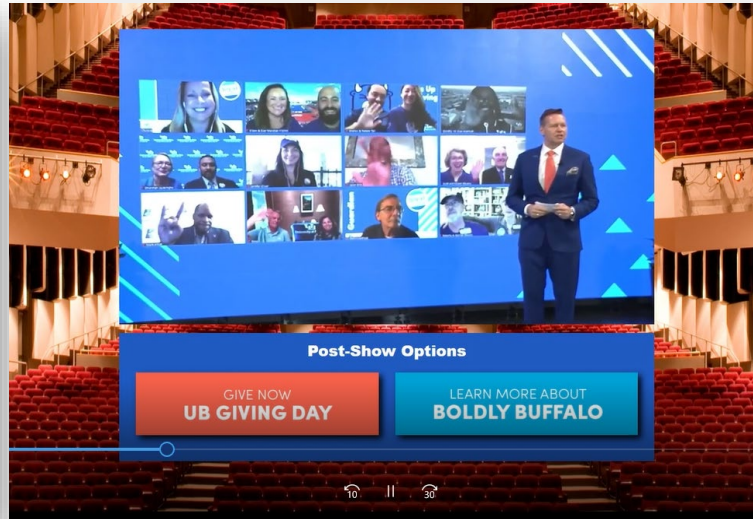
Campaign Timeline



2018

Public Kickoff

- Initial goal \$650 million
- Silent phase started July 1, 2013
- Launch included:
 - On campus dinner event
 - Simultaneous kickoffs on 3 campuses, aligned with Giving Day (make your first gift!)



2021

Global Pandemic = Virtual Relaunch

- Billion Bound!
- Incorporated donors, volunteers and alumni from all over the world.
- May or may not have been inspired by Bravo



2024

Experience Boldly Buffalo – a celebration of impact

- \$1.1 billion raised, first in SUNY history
- 84,000 donors
- Program followed by reception
- Note: We had announced that we met our goal in October 2023 and that we would continue fundraising through June 2024.

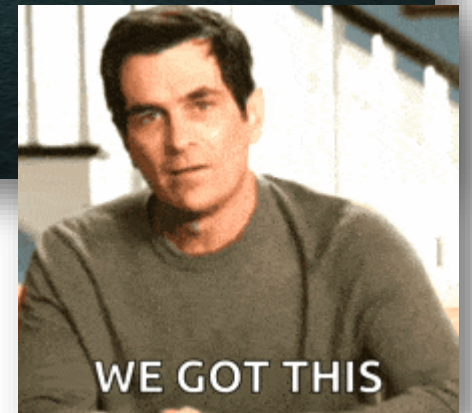
Campaign Close, Celebration & Stewardship

Planning ahead doesn't always mean smooth sailing!

- Achieved goal a year early. Had to decide whether we close or keep going.
- Multiple staff transitions at multiple levels.
- Campaign celebration plans had been crafted as early as 2022 but went through several iterations.
- Budget resources finalized June 2024: 5 months until the campaign celebration.

We had to remain flexible, move quickly, and rescale our plan as needed.

COLLABORATION BEGINS!



WE GOT THIS

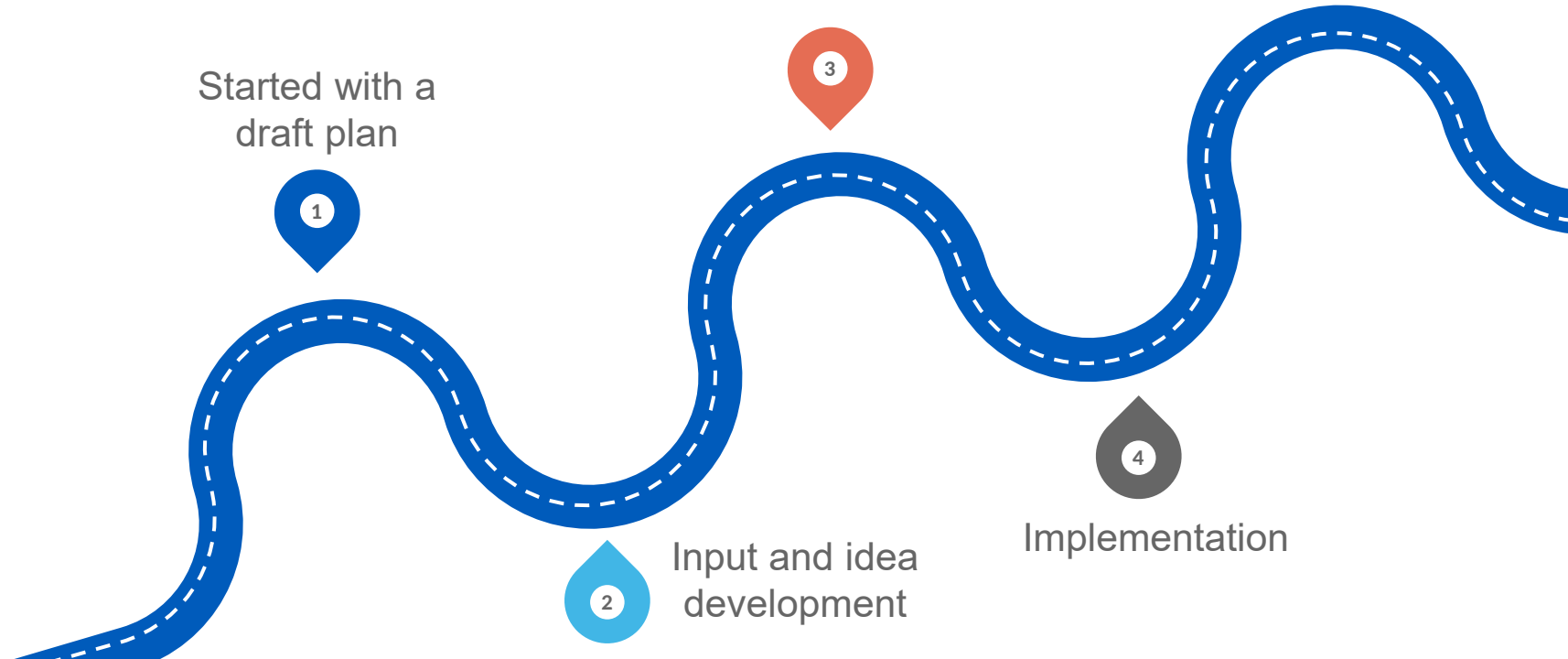
Planning Committee Roadmap

On Your Mark, Get Set, Go!

- **Team Lead:** Assistant VP for Stewardship and Communications
- **Committee Representation:** Advancement Communications, Stewardship, Donor Experience and Alumni Engagement
- **Team Captains Assigned:** Communications, Logistics, Stewardship
- Weekly touch bases 30 min

Other Key Partners

- Advancement Services/Application Support. [So. Many. Lists.](#)
- On Campus Production Team (our Center for the Arts crew)
- Microsoft Co-Pilot



Marketing & Communications

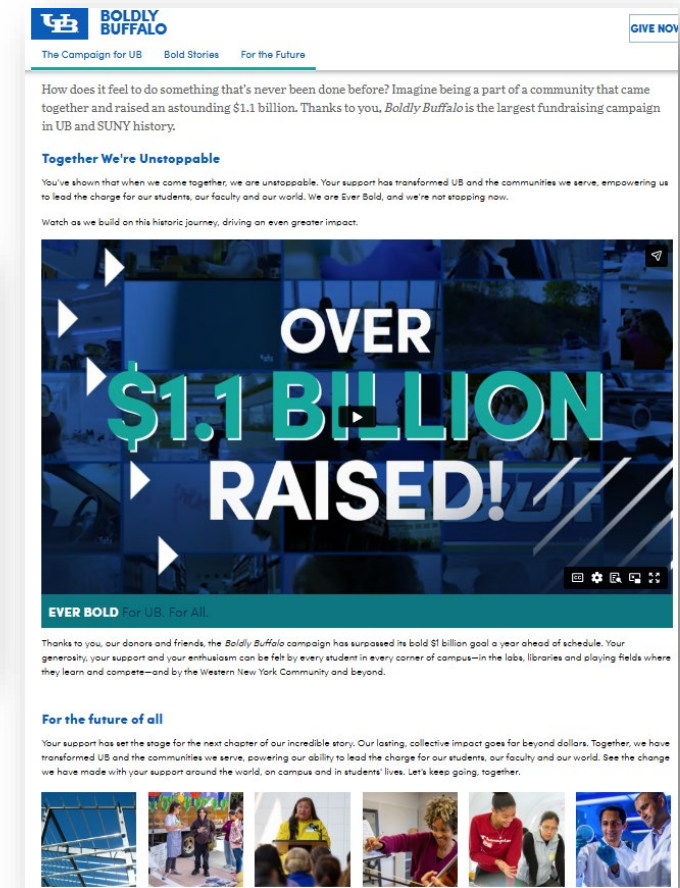
Bold Design Campaign Videos

Professional videos that served as a bookend to our launch videos.

Campaign Impact Mailer

Served as the foundation for everything else to come:

- Scripts
- Video
- Event programs
- Landing page
- E-newsletters
- Event decor
- Alumni Magazine – campaign issue
- Event video



Visit the Ever Bold landing page to watch our campaign videos, and read more about how we captured campaign impact:
<https://www.buffalo.edu/campaign.html>



Defining the Campaign Donor Experience

First: What were we trying to accomplish?

What do our donors want to see? Hear? Learn?

- Above all, express our gratitude.
- Showcase their personal and collective philanthropic impact.
- Strengthen their emotional connection.

The answer? *Experience Boldly Buffalo*

- Short(ish) program – fewer talking heads more impact.
- Intentionally intimate audience, selective about invitation list. Allowed for more surprise and delight with the *right* people; donors walked away feeling appreciated and taking pride in their investment.
- Showcase our students and faculty: turning impact into entertainment. More of a production than a program.
- Cocktail reception after program. No sit-down dinner allowed for interactive experiences.



Maximize Resources

Maximize resources: Donor and Volunteer Time, Staff Time, Budget

- **Intentional about invitation lists.** Bigger isn't always better.
- **Kept events on campus.** Event logistics could share décor, giveaways, rentals that moved from place to place. This also created some continuity from event to event.
- **Strategic.** Campaign stewardship event was strategically timed when our donors and alumni would be in town for other things. Made the most of their time with us.
 - Board meetings
 - Homecoming
 - Alumni Awards



Personalized Invitations

JOIN US

ON OCTOBER 18

Dear Don & Gail,

Looking forward to celebrating
the Boldly Buffalo campaign's
success with you at our
upcoming event! Your support
of UB was so important
to our success.

Sincerely,
Nick

The Schedule

**Wednesday
(AM)**
Faculty/Staff
Breakfast

Thursday (PM)
Alumni
Achievement
Awards

Friday (AM)
Campus Bus
Tours

Friday (PM)
Experience
Boldly Buffalo

Saturday
Homecoming
Tailgate Village
& Game

EVENT #1

FACULTY/STAFF DONOR BREAKFAST



Faculty and Staff Donor Breakfast

Showing Gratitude to our Campus Community

- Event was happening anyway, **why not connect it to this special week?**
- **Incorporated recognition** for fac/staff donors giving all 10 years of campaign.
- **Utilized elements that would be used later in week** for bigger events (wall graphics, balloons, giveaways, talking points, etc.) which helped make the event extra special.



EVENT #2

ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



EVENT #3

CAMPUS TOURS & LUNCH



Event #3: Campus Tours and Lunch

Showcasing Campaign Impact Around Campus

- **Collaborated** with faculty & staff across campuses
- Tour Guides: staff & students
- Carefully selected areas & buildings **impacted by campaign donors**
- Lawn signs marking visible campaign impact
- Added stop: attendees' old dorm!
- **Snacks!**



BOLD BUS TOURS

Today you'll see how UB's three campuses have been transformed thanks to generous donor support of the Boldly Buffalo campaign.

- 8:00 a.m. Welcome
- Continental Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m. Tour, Murchie Family Fieldhouse and Brittany Murchie Mulla Sports Performance Center
- 9:15 a.m. UB Stampede bus departs Fieldhouse
- Along the route:* Paula T. Agrusa Plaza
- 9:20 a.m. Tour, Barbara and Jack Davis Hall
- 9:45 a.m. UB Stampede bus departs north campus
- Along the route:* Future Home of Russell L. Agrusa Hall
- 10:30 a.m. Tour, Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences
- 11:00 a.m. UB Stampede bus departs downtown Buffalo
- 11:40 a.m. Your choice of south campus tour:
- Hayes Hall
Squire Hall
Pharmacy Building
- 12:15 p.m. UB Stampede bus departs south campus
- 12:30 p.m. Tour, One World Cafe (Capen Hall)
Buffet lunch in all-new University Club
- 1:30 p.m. UB Stampede bus departs Capen Hall, returns to Murchie Family Fieldhouse Parking Lot

EVENT #4

EXPERIENCE BOLDLY BUFFALO



The Big Show: A Program Focused on Impact

- **Collaborate** right from the invitation, included handwritten note from gift officers and leadership.
- **Look for small upgrades that make a big difference.** For example, we hosted a champagne toast for campaign volunteers and key stakeholders right before the event.
- **It's in the details.** We made sure to carefully curate the production: every song and every speaker was carefully selected to showcase impact directly to our audience. We knew who was in the room and make sure that the speakers (recipients and named professors/chairs) and videos of featured spaces were funded by donors in the room.
- **We worked together** with University partners from the UB production team, the theater and dance department, the UB choir and various schools and units. **START THIS PROCESS EARLY.**
- **We kept it short.** A meaningful program doesn't have to be long. We kept things moving by incorporating entertainment, videos, and the unexpected.

Champagne Toast



Experience Boldly Buffalo: Making it Count

Surprising our Donors

In addition to the customized program, we utilized assigned seating, so we knew where every donor was sitting. This allowed us to provide each donor with a unique experience and strategically sit them next to scholarship recipients, deans, gift officers, etc. **In some cases, this was the first time donors were able to meet the students they supported.**

In advance of the event, we **collaborated** with students, faculty and staff to collect handwritten notes that we could attach to seats, including QR codes to personalized ThankView videos.



Dancers delivering flowers to a longtime supporter of the Theatre and Dance Department.



Personalized note cards with QR codes to semi-personalized ThankView messages at seats



Experience Boldly Buffalo: Before the Show

Welcoming the Crowd

- High energy music, curated playlist to accompany video slideshow with campaign impact facts
- Since the show came before the reception, we provided charcuterie cups and champagne in the theater for guests as they took their seats.



Experience Boldly Buffalo: Kicking Things Off

Surprise Student Performance

- Get the party started!
- Capture their attention



Welcome:

- VP for University Advancement
- **Gratitude, Gratitude, Gratitude**
- Key shout outs of donors, faculty, leaders, volunteers in audience.

Experience Boldly Buffalo: The Program

Used Repeated Campaign Themes to Frame the Program:

Our Place. Our Way. Our Future.

- Each theme featured an intro video, music and speakers that highlighted the theme.



Our Place:

- Volunteer/Faculty Speakers talked about the transformation to our campuses and how that inspires so much more.
- "This is Our House" video featuring all capital improvements made possible by campaign donors.

Experience Boldly Buffalo The Program



Our Future:

- Student Scholarship Recipient Speakers – Donors in the room
- Student Performance "Choose Your Fighter" with the message, because of your support, we can be anything we want to be.

Our Way:

- Featured named endowed chairs, whose donors were in the audience.
- Live Student Performance "Unstoppable" accompanying a video featuring all named chairs and professors made possible by donors to campaign



Experience Boldly Buffalo: The Program

Flipping the Switch to Ever Bold

- Primary campaign video transitioned to "Ever Bold" campaign stewardship marketing platform.
- Campaign Co-Chairs and University President announce total raised.
- Robot dog brought in the grand total.
- Confetti cannons! Because why not?



Experience Boldly Buffalo: The Program

Big Finish:

- **Student** Choir sings "Higher Love"



Experience Boldly Buffalo: The Reception

Time to Party!

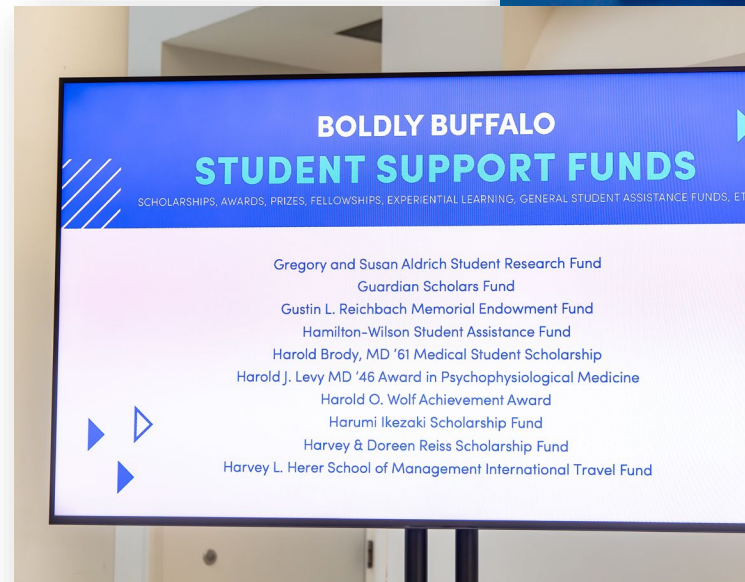
- Continued with a carefully curated playlist.
- Offered cocktails and food stations with a variety of options.
- **Made it interactive:** added displays that showed impact, and stations for donors to interact with students and faculty, while having a good time.
- **Collaborated** with the Student Life Carnival, which was occurring the same night, so we could end the night with **fireworks!**



Experience Boldly Buffalo: The Reception

Making a Visual Impact with Decor

- Lit it up!
- Chair Installation visual representation
- Customized photobooth to commemorate the campaign
- Video monitors with named funds, donor recognition
- Utilized custom wall graphics that both told our story and made the space more interesting



Experience Boldly Buffalo: The Reception

Making a Visual Impact in the Details

- Cocktail Napkins with impact facts
- **Branding everywhere:** custom bar with Boldly Buffalo logo, “thanks a billion” champagne flutes, etc.



Experience Boldly Buffalo: Interactive Experiences



Showcasing our Students and Faculty

- Made it fun with interactive experiences: VR, donors, faculty and student research/project demonstrations (like portable ultrasound machines), student scholarship recipients, robot puppies...

Experience Boldly Buffalo: Going the Extra Mile

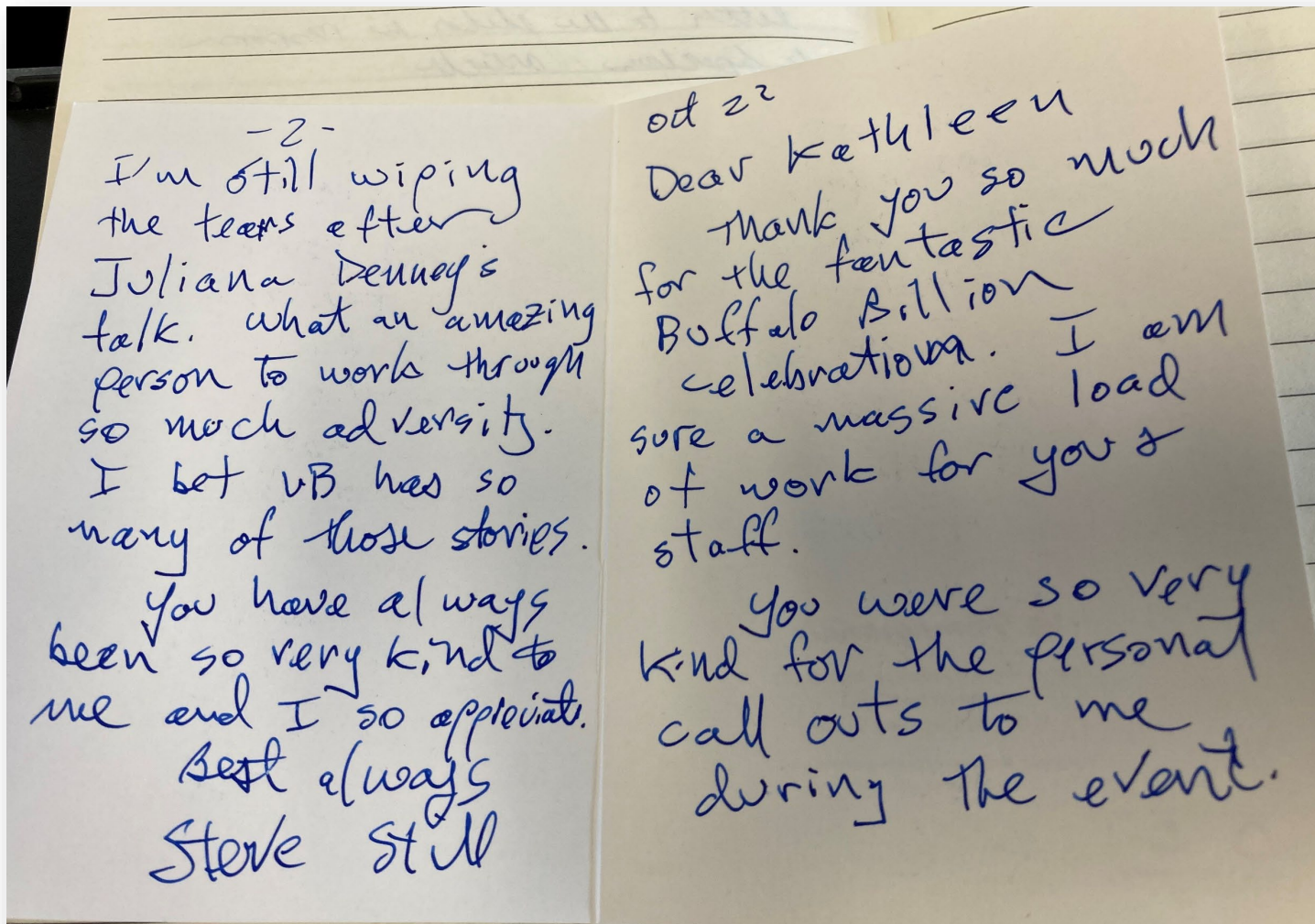
Always Surprise and Delight

Seized every opportunity to connect with donors:

- Dropped off welcome bags at hotels for out-of-town attendees, provided them with access to special campaign-focused campus tours
- Donor/student lunch on campus before the events
- Utilized text messaging (new frontier for us) to alert attendees when different things were happening and send post-event messaging
- Attendee Gift Bags: Had customized chocolates locally made (had vegan/gluten free options available), gift tags had a QR code that linked to a special video, commissioned special pin



Experience Boldly Buffalo: Donor Response



Sam and Clay,

Just wanted to send a quick note congratulating you on an awesome event - certainly, the most impressive I've been a part of at UB. Your work is so, so important. I've, directly and personally, benefitted from that effort. As a result, so have many of my students (including those joining last night).

I was honored to participate and have the opportunity to spend a wonderful evening with Scott and Coleen Stevens. If I can be of any assistance moving forward, please don't hesitate to ask.

John Atkinson

Boldly Buffalo: Not Over Yet



EVENT #5

Homecoming Celebration



Homecoming Celebration

An Event for All: Continuing the Celebration

- All annual giving donors (Loyal Blues) invited
- **Collaborated** with academic units to create an "alumni village"
- Students and faculty had projects on display
- **Continuity** – reused balloons, photo booth, pins, and other items from evening before



EVENT #6... and counting

Ever Bold



Taking it on the Road: Going from Boldly Buffalo to Ever Bold

- Extended life of campaign by slight rebranding to “Ever Bold” which is **focused on impact**
 - “Bold Times” e-newsletter became “Ever Bold” newsletter
 - Websites switched over to showcase impact stories
 - Marketing collaterals switched over
- **Collaborating** with Office of Alumni Engagement to host engagement events in targeted regions to showcase the impact made possible by alumni and campaign donors
- Hosting all-call alumni events AND smaller stewardship dinners, **maximizing leadership travel**



A Year of Campaign Stewardship

**CAMPAIGN
STEWARDSHIP
BEYOND EVENTS**

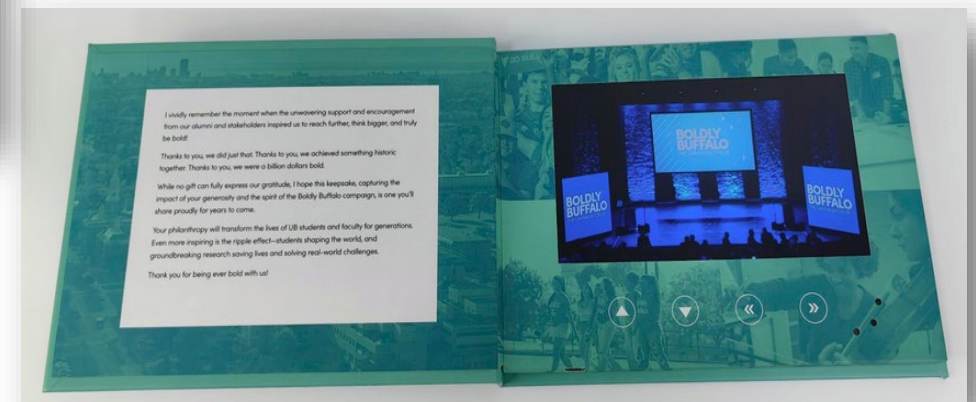


A Year of Campaign Stewardship

Post-Event Stewardship

Stewardship Boxes:

- Letter from President
- Campaign Impact Mailer
- Videos from events
- Personalized photos of guests while at the Boldly Buffalo event
- Custom Video Book
- 3D models
- Champagne flutes
- Sparkling cider
- Chocolate buffaloes
- Little Victor pins
- Pennant
- Mini Bluetooth speaker



Donor Responses

Yesterday 7:22 PM

I absolutely shrieked with Joy when I played that cool little video that I received from you .It was so thrilling to suddenly see Mike and hear his voice. Unexpected, gorgeous. I'm thrilled with what you did, and of course, thrilled with what you're doing.

[REDACTED] was moved to tears after opening her box. That's a huge compliment! Great work!

There is an old Chinese saying happiness is an unexpected gift. What a wonderful surprise. I especially love the video since I missed the event.

Today I received the beautiful and thoughtful Boldly Buffalo gift. Tomorrow is my birthday. The special video brought bittersweet tears of joy, memories and great pride to me. I'm grateful for both Les and myself to have been part of the UB community- in our youth and through current day. Thank you for making the world a better place and for allowing me to be part of it.

A Year of Campaign Stewardship



Loyal Blues Month

Celebrating Loyal Blues all Fe**blue**ary long

We have been celebrating Loyal Blues throughout the month of Fe-blue-ary, but wanted to be sure to wish you a **Happy Valentine's Day** and extend our deepest gratitude for your incredible support.

We're happy to share with you a UB Choir performance of 'Higher Love' this Day.

Happy Valentine's Day

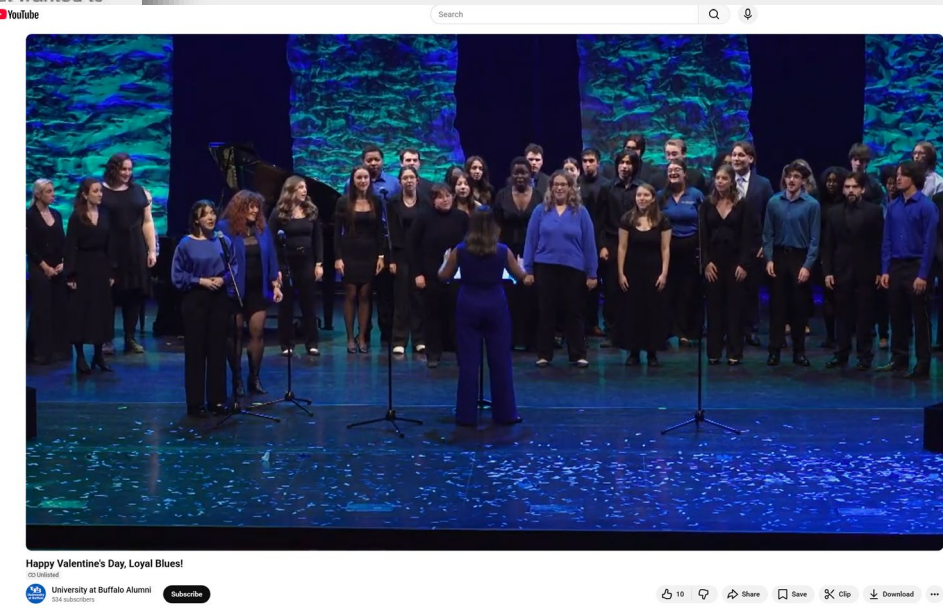
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Your generosity lifts UB higher!

Thank you for being a part of the UB family. Your kindness and continued support inspire and elevate us every day.

To learn more about how we've been celebrating Loyal Blues, click the button below.

[Check out the events scheduled throughout Fe-blue-ary!](#)



What We'll Remember for Next Time

No Surprise Here, You Need All the Data

IMPACT DATA was essential to our success. At the start of the quiet phase, make sure you work with your gift processing team and advancement services team to make sure you are all on the same page with how gifts are coded or flagged for future reporting. Make sure you can report on all the numbers that will help tell the story and inspire future investment. Some examples to consider:

- # of Endowed funds (break down by fund type like scholarship, professor, chair)
- # of funds for first generation students
- # of students who receive campaign funded scholarships and awards
- Amount raised for scholarship, research, programs, capital improvements
- How are your capital improvements coded?
- # of first-time donors to the campaign
- # of volunteer hours logged



Tips (What We'll Remember for Next Time)

- **COLLABORATE** with partners outside of Advancement – your entire organization has something to offer!
- **COLLECT PHOTO AND VIDEO** of marquee campaign investments throughout the years (new buildings and spaces, art installations, etc.)
- **KEEP A RECORD** of your favorite student thank you notes, and impact examples. You'll want to reference them. Also, where are they now?
- **PLAN AHEAD** 6-8 months is essential, a year would be even better.
- **RE-USE AND REPURPOSE** everything you can to get the most bang for your buck.
- **KNOW WHAT YOU WANT** from your photographer. Make sure you get the key shots for post-event use.
- **BE INTENTIONAL & CREATIVE** in making your donors feel known & appreciated.



Connect with us!

Find us on
LinkedIn

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