



ASSOCIATION OF
DONOR RELATIONS
PROFESSIONALS



2018 Donor Relations Case Study Information – University of Georgia

About University of Georgia:

As the state's oldest, most comprehensive, and most diversified institution of higher education, The University of Georgia heralds a commitment to inspire the next generation growing stronger through global research, hands-on learning and extensive outreach. As its motto states, "to teach, to serve, and to inquire into the nature of things," UGA endeavors to prepare the University community and the state for full participation in the global society of the twenty-first century.

Donor Relations Program Narrative:

2013 = \$117.3 Million

2014 = \$126.4 Million

2015 = \$144.4 Million

2016 = \$183.8 Million

2017 = \$227.8 Million

2018 = \$242 Million

In 2013, the central Donor Relations office was a team of four. They were sending all endowed donors an annual financial report, writing and mailing presidential and tribute acknowledgements, coordinating a cumulative and annual giving society, and managing two events—an annual black tie donor recognition event and a Thank a Donor Day for students to express gratitude. They were able to gain a new role in top donor stewardship planning, but two employees were soon moved out of the team due to an overall division restructure.

In 2014, their team grew to five as they were able to hire two new coordinators to concentrate on Presidential level gift acknowledgements and scholarship stewardship. This helped to develop better strategies for the entire acknowledgement program since a position that was previously held by one person could be split into two, more focused roles.

By 2015, their team of five was maintaining new acknowledgements for first-time donors, second-time donors, loyalty donors, and faculty/staff donors. Additionally, leadership annual giving society members were receiving a welcome packet. Thank a Donor Day was gaining momentum, and they delivered their first Gratitude Reports to endowed scholarship donors. Due to new administration, restructures affected the team's size again, but they kept moving forward with new strategies. The administrative changes prompted the team to conduct something they had been wanting to do for a long time—a campus-wide stewardship survey to find out what was happening with donor relations in the university's schools, colleges, and units.

In 2016, the Donor Relations team of six began developing a more systematic plan for scholarship stewardship and top donor stewardship through a new scholarship assistant hired in 2015 and a promoted role that served as a liaison with the Principal Gifts team. Additionally, their survey indicated that units across campus lacked support from the central office. The response was initiating Team Stewardship. This collaborative meeting has changed the course of stewardship campus-wide. By meeting with stewardship coordinators in their units on a quarterly basis, they began advancing their goals and donor relations on a broader level by offering professional development and mentorship to one-man shops. The open-attitude of their meetings has also served to increase morale for stewardship coordinators; they have begun to see more collaboration and friendships form between departments.

In 2017, successes (despite so many structural changes) began to catch the eye of administration. They were able to hire a new position dedicated to donor impact and a part-time administrative assistant. They finally became a team of seven and a half! With a sharper focus on impact reporting, they were able to begin preparing for new, more meaningful communications for giving societies, top donors, and endowed faculty funds. They also strengthened their relationship with unit stewardship coordinators—some of which have been promoted or added new donor relations programming since Team Stewardship began.

By September 2018, they were able to promote their part-time employee to a full-time presidential acknowledgement writer to assist the current acknowledgement writer. This was essential to their presidential stewardship because acknowledgement letters from the university's president grew 245% since the original writer was hired in 2014. Programatically, they rolled out an updated annual giving society, new cumulative giving recognition, endowed faculty impact reports, individual impact reports, and new scholarship recipient videos. Thank a Donor Day grew by 24% from the previous year, they collaborated with other departments to steward a new giving society and Career Center program, and they're still coming up with new ways to engage their colleagues through Team Stewardship.

Thanks to an investment in their own team's staff and professional development of stewardship coordinators across campus, they have been able to focus on more intentional stewardship planning, personalized impact reporting, reliable acknowledgement processes, and meaningful giving societies.

Donor Relations Pride Points:

- Qualify and quantify. An effective transparent stewardship plan. Tell your story. Track your success. Map your goals.
- Propose with a purpose. Proposals that illustrate what we need. Do your research. Get to the "why".
- Collaborate. An organization wide stewardship community. Create a stewardship family.

Some Fundraising Data Points of Interest:

- Repeat Donor Retention Rates of 83% and higher in donors of \$250 and up.
- Donors of \$1,000 and up upgrading their gifts at a rate of 41% and higher.
- 32% of donors are giving 97% of the gifts.
- 10% of donors are giving 86% of gifts.
- 39,539 donors in 2013 and 52,464 donors in 2018.

Other Points of Interest (FY17 to FY18 Growth):

- 64% increase in Presidential Gift Acknowledgements
- 29% increase in scholarship recipients
- 27% in Third Pillar donors (three consecutive fiscal years of giving or more)
- 24% increase in student Thank a Donor Day participation
- 21% increase in 2018 Presidents Club Reception attendance
- 12% increase in endowed funds stewarded through Financial Reports

When investments are made in the development efforts of an organization, increases in fundraising success are bound to happen. In our case studies, we saw many examples of growth in the front line fundraising teams, as well as other investments in donor relations as having a positive effect on fundraising.

What the University of Georgia is able to demonstrate is that growth in the activities of the donor relations team in particular has had significant impact on retaining their donors. At 83%, their retention rate is far above the national average retention rate of just 46%! It is clear that UGA is doing some incredible work in donor relations and donor retention.

While the activities of the donor relations team are not the sole cause in achieving such incredible fundraising results, they are certainly a contributing factor.

A Favorite Quote of the University of Georgia Donor Relations Department:

“A river cuts through rock not because of its power but its persistence” – Unknown

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This study was authored as a collaborative effort between ADRP and GiG/FEP in an effort to show the value of donor relations programs and their impact on fundraising. For more information on ADRP, check out www.adrp.net and for information on the Fundraising Effectiveness Project, see www.afpfep.org.

University of Georgia

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Fundraising Results	\$117,300,000	\$126,400,000	\$144,400,000	\$183,800,000	\$227,800,000	\$242,000,000
Donor Relations Professionals	4	5	5	6	7.5	7.5
Key Donor Relations Activities	Endowed Donors Receive Annual Financial Report, Write and Mail Presidential and Tribute Acknowledgements, Coordinate Cumulative and Annual Giving Society, Manage Annual Black Tie Donor Recognition Event, Student Thank A Donor Day	All of 2013 but with added focus on Presidential Level Gift Acknowledgements and Scholarship Stewardship. Developed more focused strategies for entire acknowledgment program.	All of 2014 and now maintaining new acknowledgements for First Time Donors, Second Time Donors, Loyalty Donors, Faculty/Staff Donors. Added New Leadership Annual Giving Society Welcome Packet. Thank a Donor Day continuing to Gain Momentum. Delivered First Gratitude Reports to Endowed Scholarship Donors.	All of 2015 and now developing more systematic plan for scholarship stewardship and top donor stewardship.	Administration notes real value of work of department! All of 2016 with even sharper focus added to impact reporting. Able to prepare for new and more meaningful communications with Giving Societies, Top Donors, Endowed Faculty Funds. Relationships strengthened with unit stewardship coordinators. These individuals are now getting promoted and adding new members to their respective unit departments.	Seven and one half employee level maintained! All of 2017 and rolling out new updated annual giving society, new cumulative giving recognition program, endowed faculty impact reporting, new scholarship recipient videos. Thank a Donor Day grows by 24%. Collaborating with other departments to steward new giving societies. Career Center Program emerges. More focused and intentional stewardship planning, personalized impact reporting, reliable acknowledgement processes, and meaningful giving societies.
Big Donor Relations Department Change	Gain New Top Donor Stewardship Planner - Lost Two Employees Due to Restructure	Two new coordinators hired bringing more focus to individual work responsibilities	New administration restructures team (again). Conducted campus wide survey to learn about other donor relations in other units.	Hired new scholarship assistant and promoted donor relations liaison to Principal Gifts Team. Kicked off "Team Stewardship" to bring support from central donor relations office to university units. Begin meeting with stewardship managers at units quarterly begin offering professional development and mentoring to one-person shops. Collaboration	Hire new position dedicated to donor impact. Team Stewardship continues to show real value to units and central office.	Continued Focus and Engagement on Team Stewardship Program with Units.