

Fundraising 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. **Those who find 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. Thoughtful, strategic requests that match the donor's interest and capacity, and convey impact have the best chance of being funded.

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.

General Tips

- Soliciting a donor can be thought of as offering that donor an opportunity for them to have their desired impact on the world, through Seattle Colleges.
- 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 do donors give without being asked. Remember it's not uncommon to get several “no's” before negotiating “yes.”
- It is important that staff and faculty have talked with their department leadership to identify how their goals align with division-wide priorities. As with most colleges, our fundraising structures are aligned with supporting departments through their divisions, and in close partnership with the academic deans, directors and presidents. When priorities align, existing staff help promote them and they are easier to represent as valuable philanthropic opportunities to donors with broad institutional support.
- Use all your connections – not just alumni. A promising donor is someone with genuine interest in your work and suspected financial capacity.
- Hold departmental social events at both your campus and at other locations where alumni are and invite Advancement staff. These are typically not “fundraisers” but rather events that cultivate and steward donors and prospects (friend-raisers). As with all events, ensure timely and strategic follow-up after the event. Below are examples that some 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 planning capacity:
 - “Salons” with alumni and friends that feature faculty or student speakers.
 - Mixers for alumni at professional meetings or conferences.
 - Free public lecture (note that ticketed fundraising events do not net 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 with Seattle Colleges and their alumni groups.
- Ask your alumni to help introduce you to their networks. Engage them in activities at your campus that utilize their expertise:
 - Ask alumni to serve as professional mentors to students.
 - Invite alumni to give lectures, workshops, or seminars on campus, or to serve as guest speakers in classes.
 - 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 newer students/alum, and ensure that these experiences are positive for both the employer and the student.
- Ask the Advancement team ([this is what we look like](#))! Depending on your needs, any one of the Advancement staff would love to help answer your fundraising questions. We can create donation pages/forms, review materials, conduct research on prospects, guide discussions on request amounts and frame solicitations in ways that might yield more flexibility in the gifts. Departments are encouraged to invite Advancement staff to attend department meetings at least once a year so they are aware of priorities when speaking with donors.

We can't wait to connect!

Contact us at advancement@seattlecolleges.edu or call (206) 934-2939.