Matching FSL Needs with Donor Desire
Dan Faill | CAMPUSPEAK | @danfaill

With Giving Tuesday behind us, social media was flooded with different passions that people have, and where they donate either their time or money. These sorts of campaigns help inspire because they pull on our heartstrings, they help us feel connected, and give us a sense a connection, especially in these times.

What if I told you there was a way we can support our fraternal movement on campus through initiatives like this? I don’t mean by conducting a day of giving, I mean providing an avenue for donors to give back to your fraternal community. It’s possible; you just have to know where your relationships are. When I was a campus-based FSA, I was able to help raise around $250,000 for scholarships and Greek-specific initiatives.

With the help of the annual giving, donor relations, and alumni relations staff, our community launched two initiatives. The first was chapter-specific scholarships that were selected and awarded in coordination with the financial aid office. The second was the Greek Life Fund. The fund’s purpose was simple: to provide any prospective donor (student, alumni, parent, or friend) an avenue to support our initiatives to advance our community. We structured the fund so we could use donations to support things like a leadership course for members of the fraternity/sorority community, assist in funding retreats and conferences, and what I remain most proud of: to assist members with a grant to help pay dues when a financial crisis impacts them or their families.

With that, I’d like to provide a few tips as you think about ways you can create a giving initiative:

1) Introduce yourself to the staff in the annual giving, donor relations, and alumni relations office(s). These are the people who know the nuances of giving and are the gatekeepers of that information.

2) Get to know your major giving officer(s). Some institutions even have a gift officer who’s responsibility it is to support student life initiatives. Take them out for coffee (using social distancing) and get to know them and the work they’re doing. In turn they’ll learn a little more about your work and can mention it to donors.

3) Find creative ways to tell your community’s story. Just like recruitment, it’s about the relationships you’re able to illustrate. Simply showing retention numbers and money raised for philanthropy isn’t enough — we need to pull the heart strings and provide ways for donors to see how their funds have a direct impact on the community.
4) Don’t limit yourself to just alumni. As it turns out, our largest contributors came from parents of current members. After all, look at how our chapters provide mother/father weekends — parents want to be included in their kids’ success, and some are even able to give to ensure the community is successful too.

5) When you hear something, say something. Just like when you’re strolling across campus and hear students talking about the epic social coming up this weekend and then you have a little chat with the president just to let them know you know, you need to forward good information and insight to your donor relations team. I remember one time I had a student trying to host a women’s empowerment and body image workshop and wanted her mom to be a panelist. Turns out her mom was extremely high up the corporate chain for a very large technology company with fruit in the name. But the school’s records didn’t have that information. So after some conversations with the student, the mom and the major gift officer, a scholarship was endowed for members of the chapter and a donation was made to the Greek Life Fund.

“It’s not what you know. It’s not who you know. It’s who knows you.”
- my dad

As a recruitment coach, I tell chapters the simple truth: People join people. The same is true for donors. People give to people, especially if they can see the impact of their donations. In an age of being told to trim budgets amidst the pandemic, a little bit can go a long way. Use this as an opportunity to engage audiences you never thought possible.

---

Dan Faill worked for over a decade in higher education, serving as the campus-based fraternity/sorority advocate for most of that time, and working in alumni relations for the rest. As it turns out, Dan tends to speak his mind, and realized he doesn’t do so well with supervisors, hence why he became his own boss in 2018. If you’d like to brainstorm ways to make the ideas from this article come to life on your campus, feel free to reach out at DanFaill.com.

Additionally, Dan is a professional speaker, coach, and consultant with CAMPUSPEAK. He served on the AFA Foundation board of directors for two years, and currently serves as a Critical Conversations facilitator for Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for Women. He enjoys whatever free time he has spending it with his two children. He’s also a lover of pop culture and nerdy things, but misses the simpler times of impacting students across the nation and not having to wear a facemask when going outside.