

# New Donor Acquisition

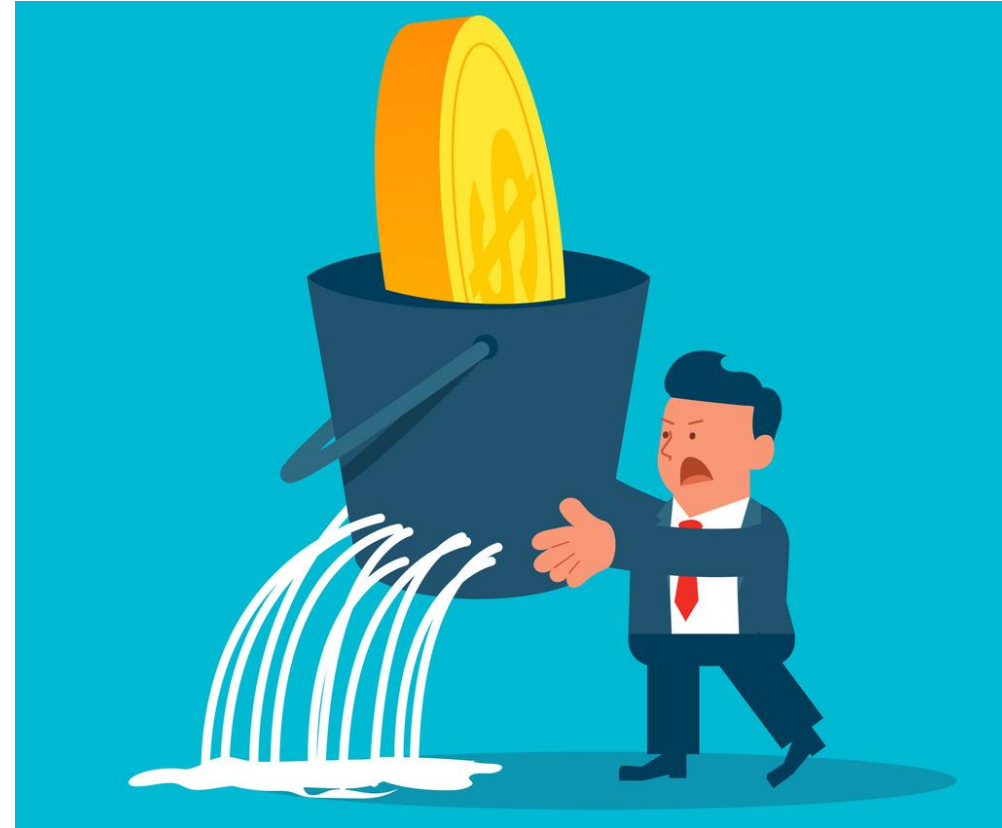
# Agenda

- Putting acquisition into perspective
- Developing effective messages
- Inspiring new donors through special campaigns
- Evaluating and building on your acquisition efforts

# **PUTTING ACQUISITION INTO PERSPECTIVE**

# Consider the leaking bucket

- Retention of current donors
- Reactivation of lapsed donors
- **Acquisition of new donors**  
(to fill the bucket)



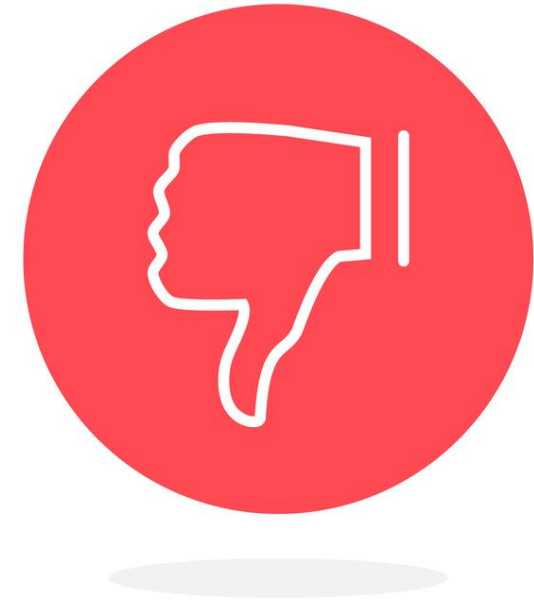
# Appreciate the benefits of new donor acquisition



- It's fun!
- Opportunity to be creative
- Chance to think long-term about the future
- Benefits of natural constituencies (a key difference between educational vs. other non-profits)
  - Alumni
  - Parents
  - Faculty/staff

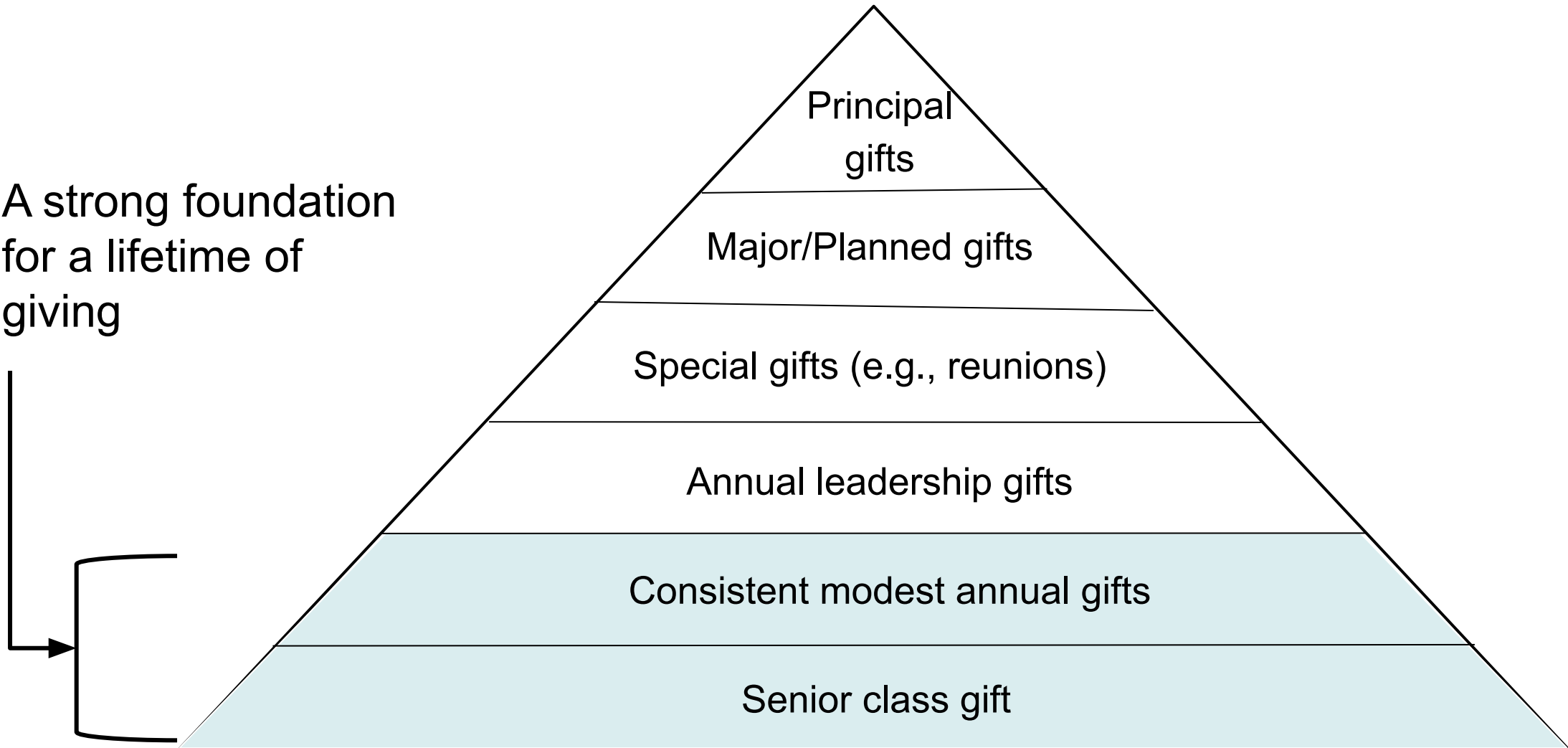
# Recognize the challenges

- It's hard work!
- Higher costs
- Lower response rates
- Smaller average gifts
- Lower short-term ROI
- Requires greater focus on younger audiences (who typically have lower capacity)



# Think about the journey of a lifelong alumni donor

A strong foundation  
for a lifetime of  
giving



# Create donor personas for shared characteristics

- Demographics: Age, gender, region, marital status, children
- Interests: Academic areas, sports, causes, issues
- Careers: Industry, employer, role within company
- Communication preferences: Mail, phone, text, email, social





# Build predictive models to identify gift likelihood



*Example: University of Virginia*

- Determine what you're trying to predict (e.g., scholarship gifts)
- Identify characteristics of existing donor to that area
- Look for similar characteristics in non-donor populations
- Assign scores to indicate which donors are more likely
- Use scores to guide marketing focus and budget allocation

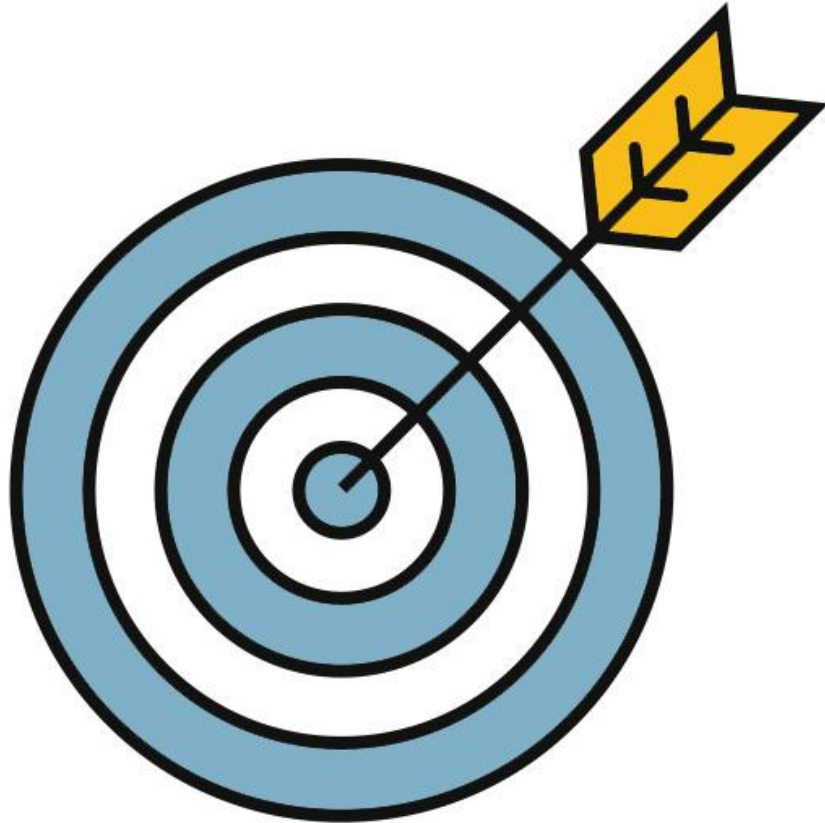
# DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

# Personalize communications as much as possible

- Salutation/name
- Degree information
- Interest area(s)
- Signatory
- Prepopulated reply device



# Get to the point



- Keep your writing
  - Clear
  - Concise
  - Focused
- Avoid big complicated words
- Don't assume prospects understand a lot about your organization or philanthropy

# Highlight the most important words and phrases

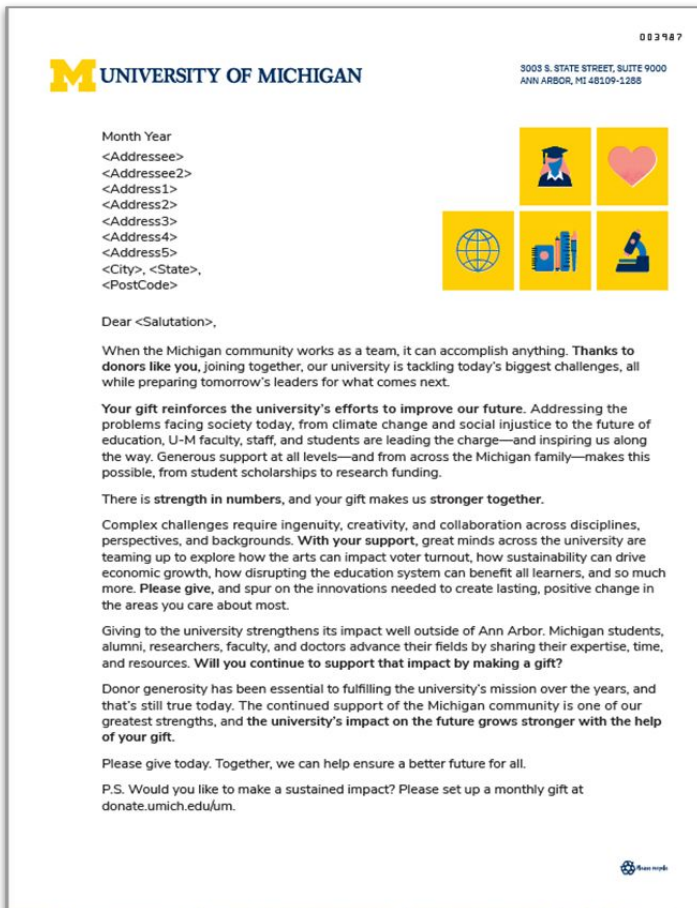
- **Bold**
  - Underline
  - *Italics*
- Make it so the reader can scan and understand

Dear {First Name(s)},

We are excited to welcome back students, families, faculty and staff for the 2021–2022 school year. Our community is full of hope and aspiration for all we can accomplish together this year. To celebrate the start of the 2021–2022 academic year, we are launching **Welcome Back, Give Back — a 22-day campaign to support the Durham Academy Fund.**

# Capture attention with bold designs and images

## Low-performing non-donor letter



## High-performing non-donor letter



*Example: University of Michigan*

# Convey a sense of urgency

- State goal
- Create deadlines
- Explain what happens if goal is (or isn't!) achieved
- Leverage important periods
  - Beginning of academic year
  - Reunions
  - Graduation



# Select signatories, senders, and voices carefully

- Someone they know
- Someone they trust
- Someone they view as relevant

*"The teachers have this intrinsic trust for students to do a great job, which is the first step in any strong relationship. When I step out of Athenian, I feel like the possibilities are endless."*

- Class of 2021 Graduate

Dear {Informal Salutation}:

Athenian teachers have brought out the best in each of our four children. Our eldest, Evan '19, is now in college and the confidence and independence he developed while at Athenian continues to guide him. Evan is embracing the many possibilities of life after Athenian thanks to the foundation provided by his Athenian teachers.


*Example: The  
Athenian School*



# Keep it lighthearted

- Humor
- Playful tone
- Puns
- Catchy taglines
- Warm images

*Example: University  
of Virginia*



Jere, the dog days of summer are here, and you and your Wahoo pets are invited! Join the pawty today through July 31 by making a \$25 gift to your favorite area of UVA, and you'll receive a pet bandana for your pawsome furry friend.

[GIVE NOW](#)

Alumni support is vital in ensuring UVA remains a top-tier place for higher education. Your gift today celebrates your family's UVA love in the most adorable way pawsible and gives back to the University community.

Post a photo of your furtastically fashionable pets to social media with #WahooPets to join UVA's pawty!

# Lower ask amounts



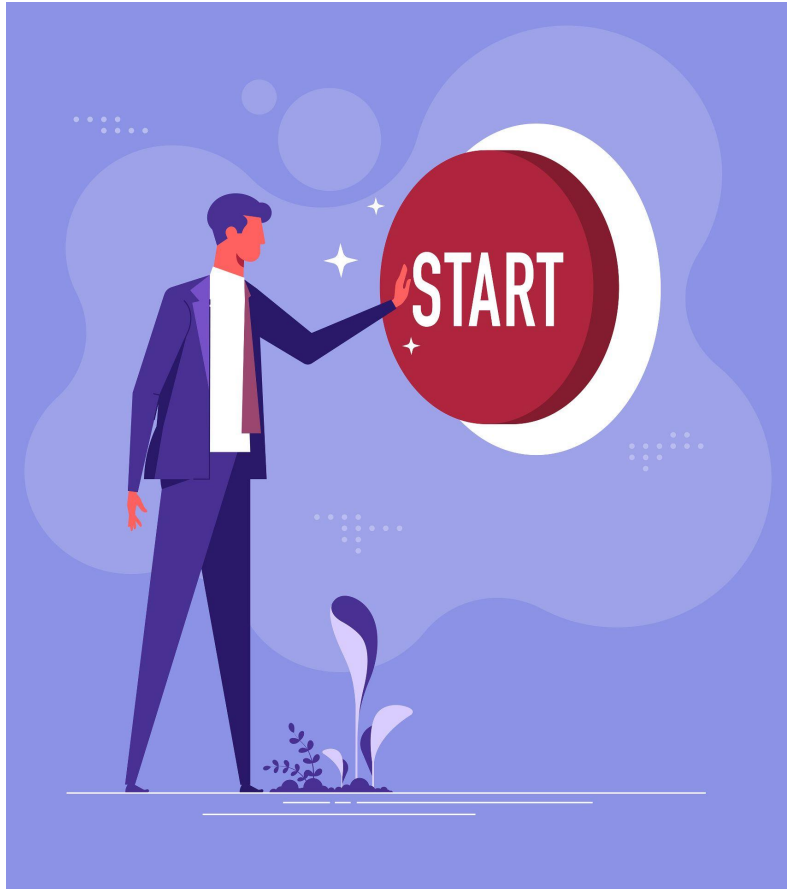
*Example: Spelman College*

# Test often to find out what resonates

- Envelopes
- Subject lines
- Subject matter
- Designations
- Signatories
- Images
- Ask amounts



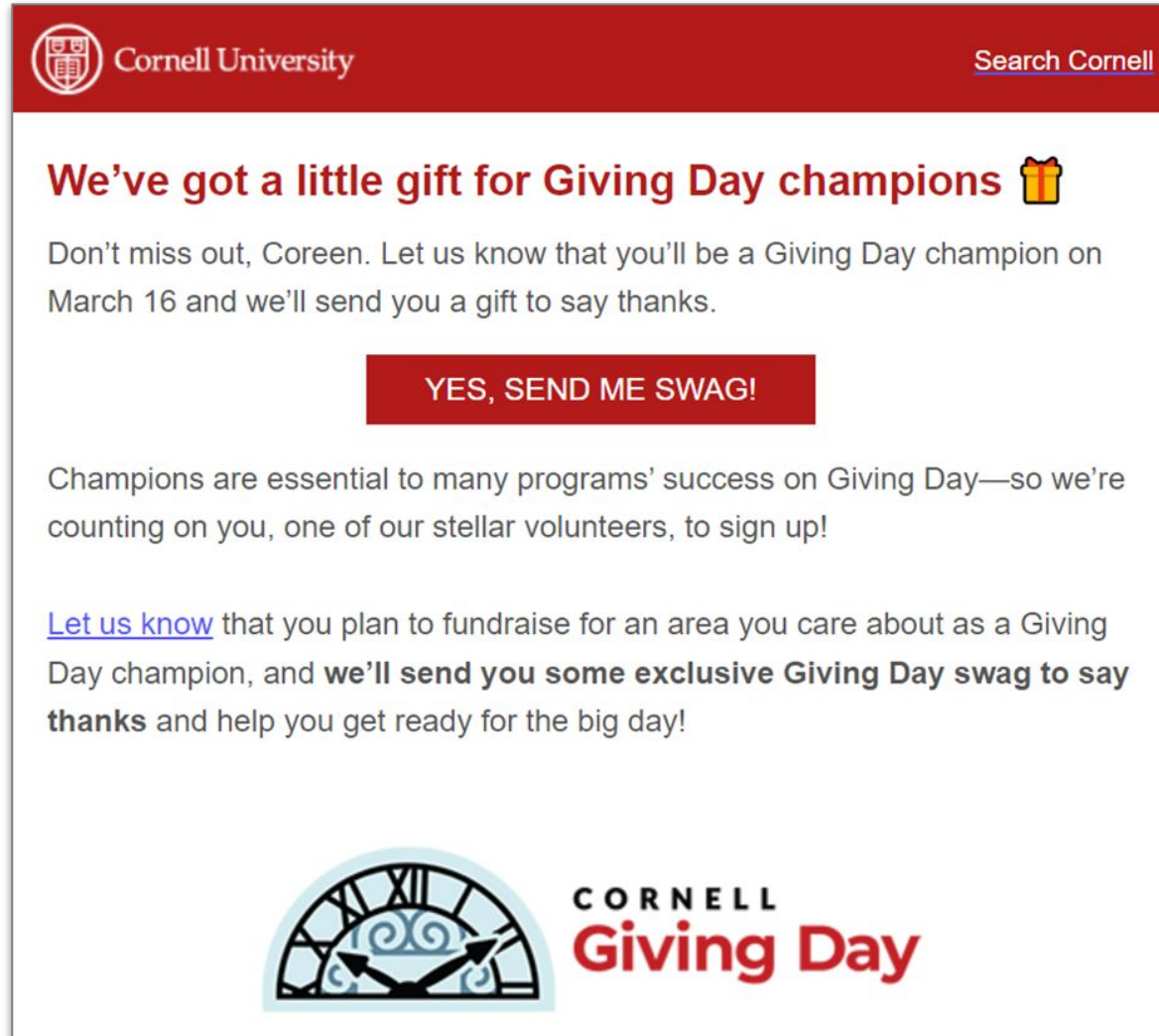
# Make it easy to give!



- Offer multiple ways to give
- Make donate buttons and links common and visible
- Minimize amount of information and time required to complete transaction
- Encourage recurring gifts
- Provide contact information for those who want personal assistance
- Plan follow-up after engagement activities and events

# **INSPIRING NEW DONORS THROUGH SPECIAL CAMPAIGNS**

# Capitalize on giving days!



The screenshot shows an email notification from Cornell University. At the top left is the Cornell University logo and name. At the top right is a "Search Cornell" link. The main heading is "We've got a little gift for Giving Day champions" with a gift icon. Below this is a paragraph: "Don't miss out, Coreen. Let us know that you'll be a Giving Day champion on March 16 and we'll send you a gift to say thanks." A red button with white text says "YES, SEND ME SWAG!". Below the button is another paragraph: "Champions are essential to many programs' success on Giving Day—so we're counting on you, one of our stellar volunteers, to sign up!" A blue link "Let us know" is followed by the text: "that you plan to fundraise for an area you care about as a Giving Day champion, and we'll send you some exclusive Giving Day swag to say thanks and help you get ready for the big day!". At the bottom is the Cornell Giving Day logo, which features a stylized clock face with Roman numerals and the text "CORNELL Giving Day".

Cornell University [Search Cornell](#)


## We've got a little gift for Giving Day champions 🎁

Don't miss out, Coreen. Let us know that you'll be a Giving Day champion on March 16 and we'll send you a gift to say thanks.

[YES, SEND ME SWAG!](#)

Champions are essential to many programs' success on Giving Day—so we're counting on you, one of our stellar volunteers, to sign up!

[Let us know](#) that you plan to fundraise for an area you care about as a Giving Day champion, and **we'll send you some exclusive Giving Day swag to say thanks** and help you get ready for the big day!

 **CORNELL Giving Day**

*Example: Cornell University*

# Leverage challenges

## First Time Donor Challenge

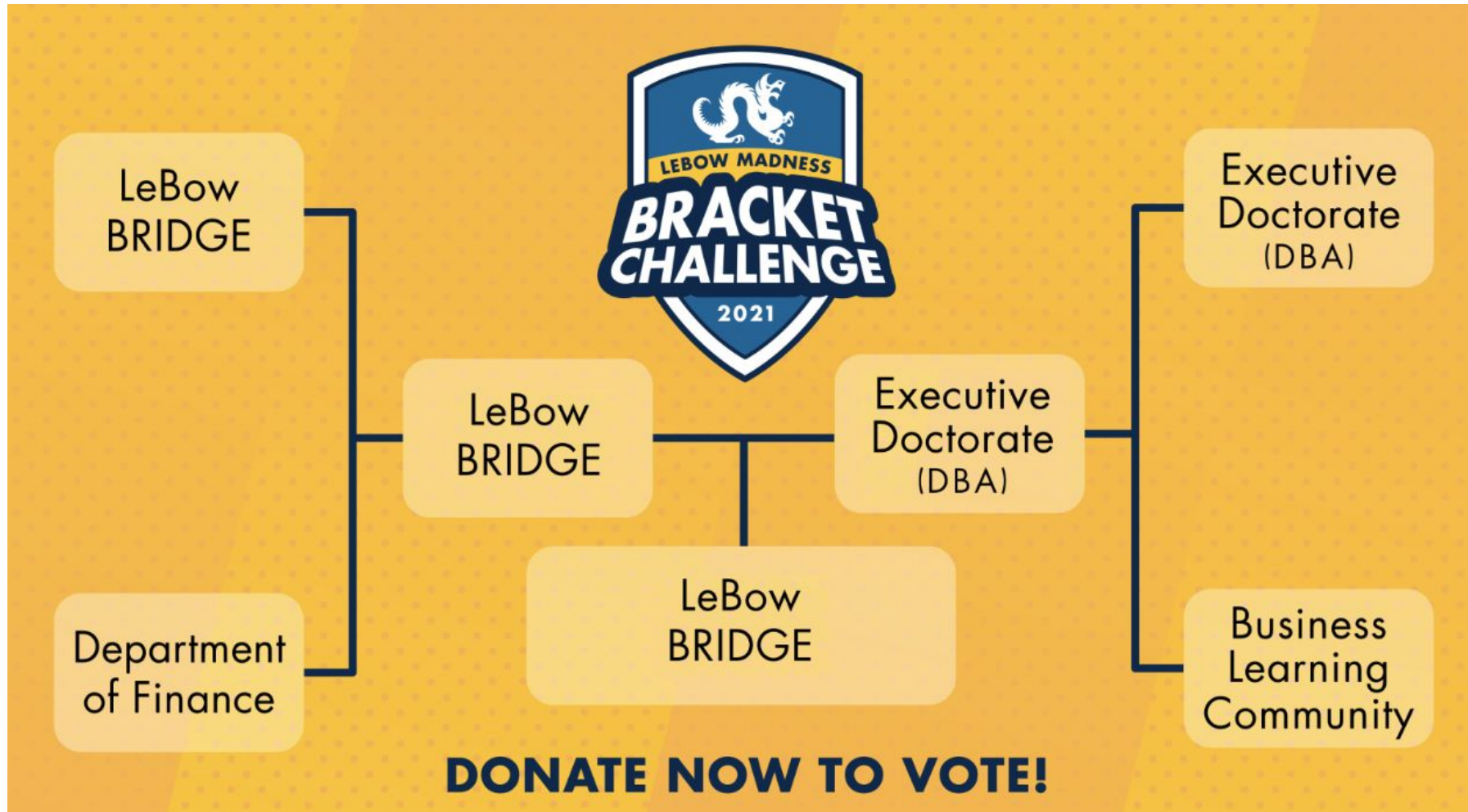
If you are an alum or a student who has never before made a gift to Syracuse University, please consider making your first gift today! Your gift of at least **\$10** (to any area of the University) will be matched with a **\$50** donation to the Hendricks Chapel Dean's Fund and the Hendricks Food Pantry.



[Join the Challenge](#)

*Example: Syracuse University*

# Encourage competitive spirits





*Example: Drexel  
University*



# Tap into affinities

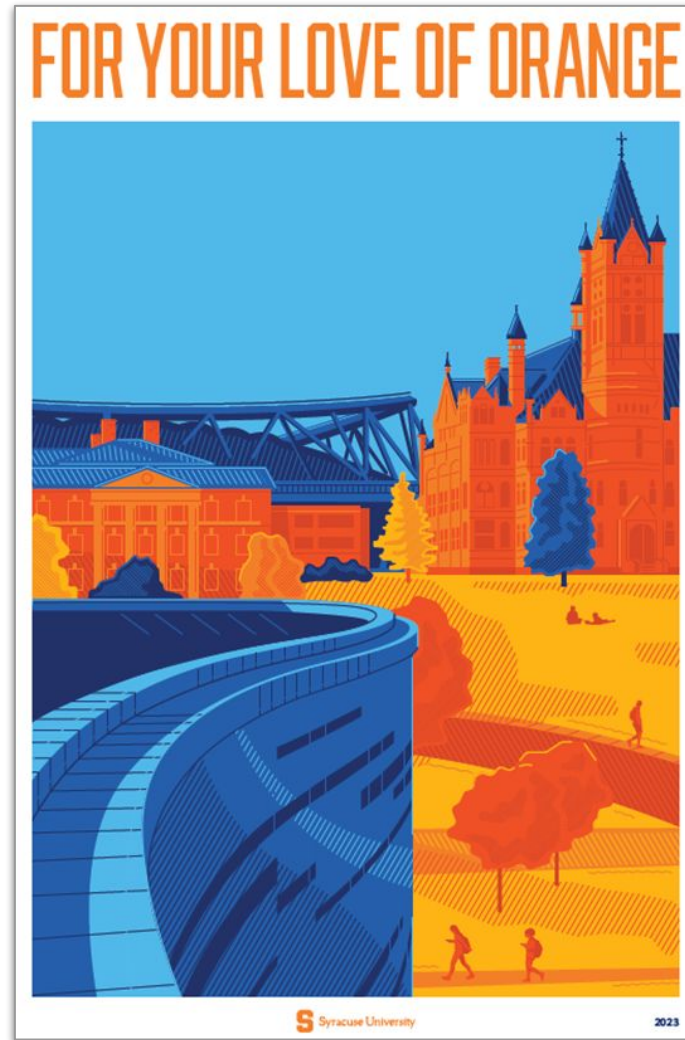


## 2022 STUDENT ORGANIZATION CHALLENGE

	<p><b>Club Baseball</b></p> <p>As Syracuse University's only baseball team, we're committed to extending our university's rich baseball legacy and compete in the NCBA's New England West Division.</p> <p><b>Our Goal</b></p> <p>We are raising money for our 150th Anniversary game in April 2023 at the Syracuse Mets' field! Funds raised will go toward reserving the field, producing event promotional materials, and helping the team cover equipment fees. Learn more from project lead, MP Geiss '23, Senior Class Marshall, <a href="#">present our program's history</a> at the Baseball Hall of Fame.</p>	<p>OUR GOAL \$7,000</p> <p><b>SUPPORT OUR GOAL</b></p>
	<p><b>OttoTHON</b></p> <p>OttoTHON is Syracuse University's 12-hour Dance Marathon that raises money throughout the year for Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital.</p> <p><b>Our Goal</b></p> <p>We are raising money to afford a photo booth for our annual 12-hour Dance Marathon event on March 5th. Anyone that attends OttoTHON understands it is an incredible experience. We want our dancers and miracle families (families who have been treated at Upstate) to have a tangible memory from such a special and heartwarming day.</p>	<p>OUR GOAL \$2,000</p> <p><b>SUPPORT OUR GOAL</b></p>

Example: Syracuse University

# Entice with unique premiums



*Example: Syracuse University*

# Celebrate special occasions and milestones



Example: William & Mary



Fairfield University | Office of Alumni Relations

### Happy 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to the Fairfield University Glee Club!

In celebration of this Diamond Jubilee, the Glee Club has designed a commemorative t-shirt to mark the occasion, and they want Glee Club alumni to have the opportunity to show their Glee pride too!

Each t-shirt costs \$30, which includes a \$5 gift to The Carole Ann Maxwell, D.S.M. Endowment for Choral Music.

[Buy Your T-Shirt](#)

FRONT

BACK

Example: Fairfield University

# Be careful of becoming overly transactional

It's Getting LOUD in Here!



Fill out the form below to make your donation in support of the Student Experience Fund and receive your limited-edition Loud House keychain.

First Name: \*

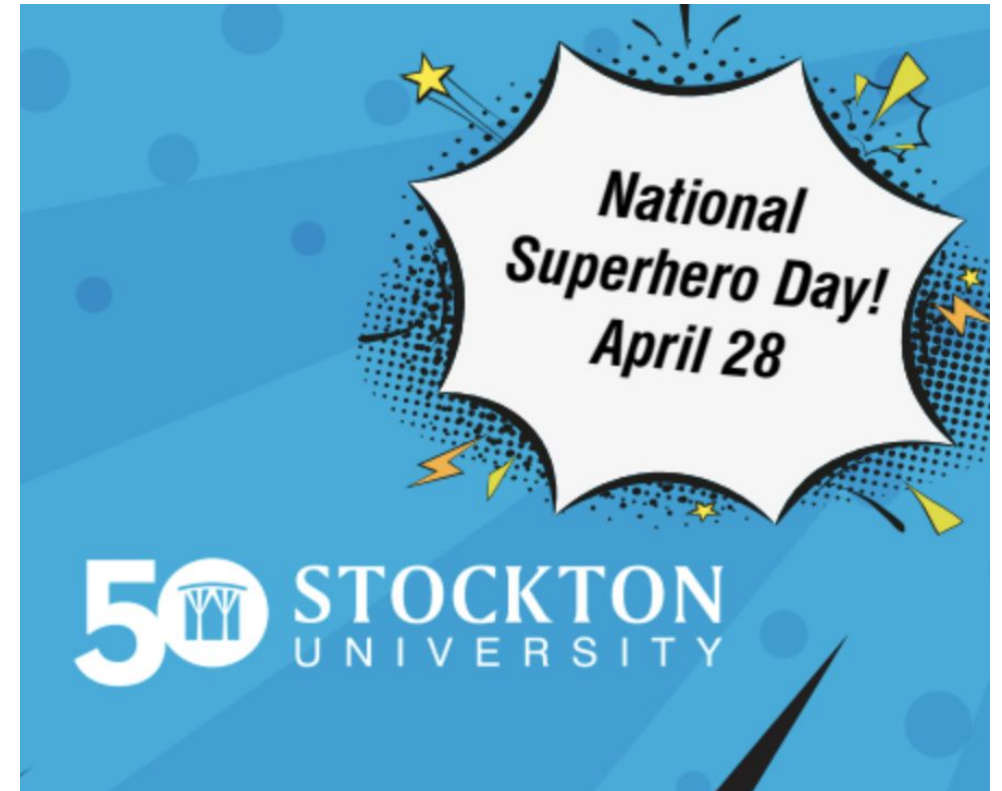
Last Name: \*

Email \*



Example: Syracuse University

# Leverage existing holidays



Examples (clockwise from top left):  
Towson University, Stockton University,  
The Principia

# Offer access to uncommon experiences



## Professional Headshots for Seniors

Hosted by the Senior Class Campaign  
Friday, April 28th  
10:00 - 2:00 pm  
War Memorial



Hey Seniors,

We're offering a professional headshot opportunity to all senior class campaign donors. You'll receive a high quality, professional headshot with the back drop that will we all know and love. See details below!

**Friday, April 28, from 10:00 a.m.–2:00 pm  
War Memorial**

**SECURE YOUR SPOT**

See you there,  
Senior Class Campaign Executive Board

P.S. Follow us on [Instagram](#) for more information about the Senior Class Campaign!

*Example: Cornell University*

# **EVALUATING AND BUILDING ON YOUR ACQUISITION EFFORTS**

# Understand response rates for new donors

- Are calculated as  $\#$  of new donors generated /  $\#$  non-donors contacted
- Vary by channel
  - Phone: 10-15%
  - Mail: 1%-3%
  - Email: < 1%
- Will always be lower compared to retention and reactivation efforts (except with very long lapsed donors)
- Decrease the further out alumni get from graduation



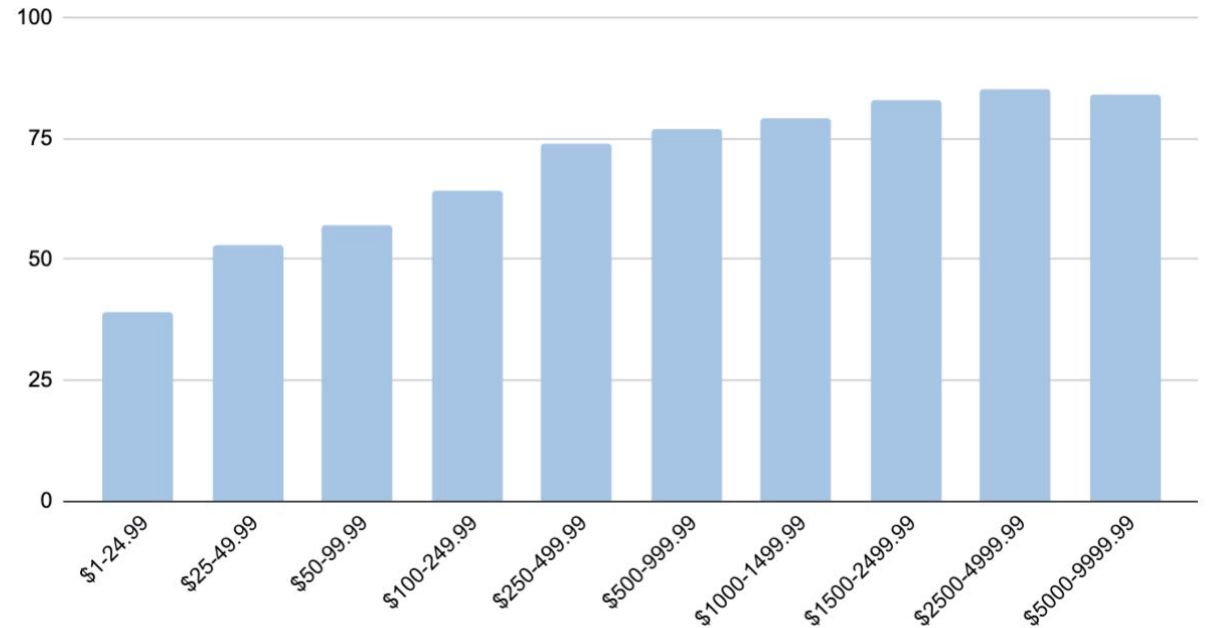
# Appreciate average gift amounts



- Total \$ revenue from new donors / # new donors
- Will always be lower compared to retention and reactivation efforts
- Will be higher as personalization increases

# Consider retention rates

- % of new donors in a year who give again the following year
- Are usually less than 20% for first-time donors
- Will always be lower compared to retention and reactivation
- Can be especially low for special gifts (e.g., crowdfunding)
- Decrease along with the size of the gift (so beware of \$5 gifts!)



# Calculate return on investment (ROI)



- \$ generated / \$ spent in order to acquire the donor
- Is sometimes (often) negative for acquisition efforts
- Varies significantly by channel
- Channels with low response can have high ROI (e.g., email)

# Stay focused on lifetime value

- Most institutions acquire donors at a loss
- Short-term losses are often recovered through future gifts
- Retention rates grow tremendously in years two and three
- Consistent annual donors often become planned gift donors
- The concept of lifetime value is more important than the exact calculation

# Monitor donor coverage ratios

- Number of new and reactivated donors you've secured compared to those lost through attrition
- Helps you monitor the “leaking bucket”
- Example:
  - Yr. 1: 1,000 donors generated
  - Yr. 2: 400 donors do not renew
  - Yr. 2: 300 new/reactivated donors secured
  - Donor coverage ratio = 75%











# Analyze each channel's strengths and weaknesses

Channel	Strengths	Weaknesses
Phone	Personal, high response, high ROI	Expensive, hard to reach people now
Direct Mail	Scaleable, able to state case thoroughly	Lower response rate
Email	Low cost, high average gift	Low response rates, lots of static to compete with

# Keep an eye on social channels too


## Traffic and Conversion Rate by Social Channel

	Traffic to Campaign	Conversion Rate
 Facebook	84%	13.4%
 Instagram	13%	22.7%
 YouTube	2%	17.4%
 LinkedIn	1%	33%
 Snapchat	0.08%	12.7%
 Reddit	.06%	9.3%
 TikTok	.09%	8.8%
 Twitter	.06%	.5%

# Prioritize new donor stewardship

- Handwritten notes
- Welcome letters/packets
- Multiple stewardship touch-points throughout the year
- Make sure they're thanked before their next ask!
- Special activities and events

*Example: Cornell University*



The screenshot shows a webpage from Cornell University. At the top, there is a red header with the Cornell University logo and name on the left, and a search bar on the right. Below the header is a large red banner with white text that reads "SENIOR CLASS CAMPAIGN" and "COFFEE TAB". To the right of the banner is a circular stamp that says "CLASS OF 2023". Below the banner, the text reads "HO PLAZA APRIL 12 & 13 10:00 - 12:00 PM". Below this is a paragraph of text: "The Senior Class Campaign is hosting a coffee tab! Stop by our table on Ho Plaza, Wednesday, April 12 or Thursday, April 13 from 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. to pick up your ticket for a free coffee at Libe Café." This is followed by another paragraph: "As many of you have already helped to give back to Cornell University, we want to say **thank you** & support you in your academic journey by providing the pick me up we all need. Grab a coffee or tea on us!" Below this is a third paragraph: "Join us and while you're at it, learn more about the Senior Class Campaign and our goal to give back to the area of Cornell that means the most to you. Donors can pick up their **Senior Class Campaign Philanthropy Cord!** You can make your gift using an option below, or at the event." At the bottom of the page, there are three red buttons with white text: "VENMO", "ONLINE", and "BURSAR".



# Determine how acquisition affects everything else

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
# Alumni	170,155	179,555	188,955
# Alumni Donors	10,209	12,569	15,116
Retention Rate	63%	63%	63%
# Retained Donors	-	6,432	7,918
# New & Reactivated Donors	-	6,137	7,198
Participation Rate	6%	7%	8%

- How much time will it require?
- What portion of your budget will you spend?
- Will it affect your messages? (donors vs. dollars, unrestricted vs. restricted)
- How will it impact overall metrics?
  - Average gift
  - Participation
  - Revenue

# Determine how acquisition affects everything else

	Year 1 (FY23)	Year 2 (FY24)	Year 3 (FY25)	Year 4 (FY26)	Year 5 (FY27)
Alumni of Record	170,155	179,555	188,955	198,355	207,755
Alumni Donors	10,209	12,569	15,116	17,852	20,776
Retention Rate	63%	63%	63%	63%	63%
# of Retained Donors	-	6,432	7,918	9,523	11,247
# New + Reactivated Donors	-	6,137	7,198	8,329	9,529
Alumni Participation Rate	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%

# Key Takeaways

- Acquiring new donors may feel difficult and unproductive today, but investing now pays off in the long term
- If you want to increase acquisition, then make it a priority
- The more personalized your efforts are, the more productive they will be
- Your acquisition efforts will only be as good as your data
- The only thing more important than a donor's first gift is their second gift
- Have fun—acquisition is an opportunity to step outside of the norm

**aGn**

**ANNUAL GIVING NETWORK**