

Case Study

“Our donor database and contributions have grown exponentially — and Talisma Fundraising from Campus Management has been a big part of that.”

Sue Chipman, Executive Director
Macon State College Foundation

TALISMA®



Macon State College Foundation

Challenges

- Build a fundraising organization from the ground up by implementing an all-in-one donor management system on a limited budget
- Optimize and sustain relationships with students, alumni, and supporters over the long term
- Pursue advanced fundraising strategies to provide increased financial support to students, faculty, and educational programs

Solutions

- Talisma Fundraising donor management software
- Integration with Microsoft Dynamics GP and SunGard Banner
- Accurate and secure donor database that enables personal communications and relationship building

Results

- Donations increased from \$32,000 in 1998 to \$1.3 million in 2010
- Donations of \$1,000 or more increased 12 percent over the past four years
- Integration of the entire fundraising lifecycle from prospect identification to stewardship

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Macon State College  FOUNDATION

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Macon State College Foundation

Profile

Macon State College was founded in 1968 as a small junior college of 1,100 students and began offering baccalaureate degree programs in 1997. Today, with over 6,000 students, it is the largest undergraduate college in Central Georgia. That rapid growth can be attributed in part to its unique model for higher education: each of its degree programs is concentrated in professionally oriented disciplines designed to enhance the economic vitality of the Central Georgia region.

After becoming a baccalaureate institution, Macon State knew it would need considerably more private support to create and maintain strong bachelor's degree programs. One of its first moves was to re-establish the Macon State College Foundation as a vehicle to substantially increase the college's endowment.

Challenges

Difficulty Reaching Out to Alumni

When Sue Chipman, associate vice president of Development & Alumni Affairs, thinks about her early days at the foundation 13 years ago, it feels like a century ago. Having already proven her fundraising skills as an executive director of the Girl Scouts of Middle Georgia, she saw the challenges that lay ahead.

"The foundation was organized in 1969, but it had pretty much been dormant for 20 years," she says. "When I started, it really was the first time the college had a fundraising office of any sort." She says that uncovered any number of challenges, including a seeming inability to approach alumni for contributions. "We simply did not have a list of alumni anywhere. We had individual files on alumni in our vaults and literally had to go back and pull every one of those files from graduation programs and manually enter them into a database. There had been some community donors in the past, but those records were not kept in a consistent way. There just wasn't an electronic format for any of the data we needed."

Urgency for Proven Fundraising Software

When it comes to effective fundraising software, Chipman knew exactly where to turn. "I had learned early on in my career that you can't run a development program unless you have a very good database system. I actually made the purchase of Talisma Fundraising (formerly Donor2) software a condition of my joining the foundation."

Chipman had used other software programs but they didn't compare to the level of service she received with Talisma Fundraising. "I remember someone telling me that a lot of software will provide the needed functionality, but customer service was going to be the distinguishing factor."

Solutions

Lifetime Communications

Talisma Fundraising provides the foundation a consistent, 360° view of donor activity and communications. Everyone in the organization works from the same donor records and database, ensuring a more strategic and coordinated approach to contacting donors and soliciting donations and support. Ultimately, Chipman found the strategic software tools she needed to build and sustain relationships with students, alumni, and supporters over the long term.

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She went right to work, finding and entering previous donors and alumni into the system. “For past graduates, we pulled their files from the registrar’s vault. We did have some electronic records that were being kept by our IT folks, so we worked with them to import the data into Talisma.”

Integration with Microsoft Dynamics GP

Along the way, Macon State replaced its legacy accounting program with Microsoft Dynamics GP and integrated it with Talisma Fundraising. “In the past, we had to make journal entries,” says Chipman. “We kept track of all our giving through the Talisma system and then made separate journal entries into the accounting system. Now, when we make a gift entry into Talisma, it flows directly into Microsoft Dynamics GP. So it saves us time but there’s also an internal control measure there that we didn’t have before. There are fewer errors, and from an accounting and integrity standpoint, we’ve got a much better system.”

Integration with SunGard Banner

The foundation had similar results when integrating Talisma with the college’s student information system, SunGard Banner. After students graduate, Chipman’s team has the ability to import their records into Talisma from SunGard Banner for relationship building and solicitation purposes. “We do a query that imports all the people who’ve graduated from the college within a given period of time into our database,” says Chipman. “It’s a useful tool to begin reaching out to graduates as soon as they leave school.”

Results

Personalized Approach

The foundation has come a long way since 1998. Chipman says they now have good, accurate records on every donor. “We have an accurate donor list and we can easily segment it to identify those who are major gift prospects,” she says. “When we make a call on a donor, we have easy access to their history so we have a much better sense of who they are before we call them. I think that makes donors feel that their gift is important, no matter how small or large.”

Chipman considers it critical to add personal touches to the foundation’s communications. Talisma Fundraising helps foster that individual approach. “We send birthday cards to all of our major donors and their spouses,” says Chipman. “It’s just one way we can segment the donors based on their profiles. That way, we’re able to impress upon them that they’re unique and important to us and not just one of many.”

Talisma is also a key part of the foundation’s relationship building philosophy. “People give based on our relationship, so we want to do everything we can to earn the donor’s trust,” says Chipman. “When you’re dealing with the number of donors we are, you need to have an organized system that allows you to capture information about people. It’s why we’re very focused on maintaining that information in the Talisma database. This way, new and future development professionals will have a good sense of who our donors are, what they value, and how they think, so we can continue to help them meet their own personal objectives.”

Fundraising Impact

In terms of the big picture, Chipman feels that Talisma Fundraising from Campus Management helps her team increase donations year to year. “Our donor database and contributions have grown exponentially and Talisma has been a big part of that in a very real way,” she says. Since 1999, the foundation has generated nearly \$12 million in contributions. In 1998 (the first year Macon State College had an Office of Development & Alumni Affairs), 193 donors gave \$32,000 to its annual campaign. In 2010, 1,176 donors contributed \$1.3 million. Donations of \$1,000 or above have increased 12 percent over the past four years. Today, the foundation manages more than 18,000 records and 40 individual funds.

Next Steps

Exponential Growth

Today, more students are attending Macon State College than at any other time in the institution's 41-year history. The college set an enrollment record in fall 2009, with a final number of 6,615. Chipman knows that in order for the foundation to keep pace with that kind of exponential growth, they will have to continue to focus on renewing donor gifts and then find new ways to encourage donors to increase their support to the college.

Chipman says Talisma customer support is an important piece of the puzzle. "I'm very appreciative of the support that Campus Management has provided over the years. They're always there when we have an issue. They stay with us, no matter how technical the problem is, until it's resolved. I've never felt, as I have with some software companies, that they were dismissive of my questions in any way. I always feel comfortable calling them because of the patience they've shown us."

Maintaining Trust

"A lot of people think fundraising is really complicated, but it's really very basic," says Chipman. "You have to do a good job, earn people's trust, keep good records, develop a plan, and work that plan. Talisma helps us develop our plans and implement them because it's comprehensive software with excellent support. Today, that's manifesting itself in our ability to manage a fundraising program and a philanthropy program that is positioned for growth."

About Campus Management Corp.

More than 1,700 colleges, universities, foundations, and other nonprofit organizations rely on Campus Management Corp's enterprise software products and services. For over 25 years, philanthropic organizations of every size and mission have turned to the company's Talisma brand (formerly Donor2) to build awareness, increase donations and memberships, and enhance visibility into campaigns and constituent profiles. Talisma products deliver measurable results across the spectrum of nonprofit organizations, including health care, higher education, arts and cultural, faith-based, and community services. Campus Management's ecosystem of products includes solutions for finance, HR, payroll, Web portals, Constituent Relationship Management (CRM), hosting, and IT managed services.

CampusVue® Ecosystem



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