



STUDENT PHILANTHROPY COUNCIL

March 11, 2016

The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management
Brandeis University
415 South Street, MS-035
Waltham, MA 02454-9110

Dear Members of the Generous U Application Committee,

Please accept this application on behalf of the University of Rhode Island's (URI) Student Philanthropy Council (SPC) for the Sillerman Center Generous U prize. This application includes background information on our group, our executive summary, a link to our video, and confirmation of our status as a student group at URI.

I. Background Information

- University name: University of Rhode Island
- Group, club or organization name: URI Student Philanthropy Council
- Group's mission or purpose: SPC's mission is to educate URI students about the impact of giving; to foster a spirit of philanthropy in students; and to promote student-to-student giving.
- Group's web site: www.urifoundation.org/StudentPhilanthropy
- Contact person: Caitlyn Lyon, SPC Student Chairperson,
[REDACTED]
- Staff advisor: Joanne Gemma, [REDACTED]
- Name and contact information for university official to confirm status as formal group: Mary Jo Gonzales, PhD, Interim Vice President for Student Affairs, [REDACTED]
- The SPC's operating budget for fiscal year 2016 is [REDACTED] which supports materials and supplies for campus-wide awareness and solicitation activities

II. Executive Summary

Since our founding in 2011, the SPC has focused on spreading the message of “Students Helping Students” and has encouraged URI students to give back to their fellow Rhody Rams in need. Ours is a collaborative effort between 30 dedicated SPC members and student partners with the University’s Student Alumni Association (SAA). We also work closely with the University’s Division of Student Affairs.

Our mission is to create and spread a culture of philanthropy across campus through fundraising efforts aimed towards supporting the Students First Fund, a fund established to help URI students who have found themselves in an unexpected financial crisis. In the past two years, the fund has helped approximately 50 students in situations ranging from homelessness to needing help with travel expenses to spend time with terminally ill family members one last time.

We make it a point to not just raise money, but to educate our student body on the importance of giving back and the impact of their support on our campus community. Furthermore, we stress to the student body the significance of donor contributions from staff, faculty, and alumni, which allows students to have opportunities to thrive in ways they otherwise wouldn’t be able to.

Our council is able to achieve these efforts through various campaigns and events held on campus, which range from a very simple “Opening Doors Day” meant to get students thinking about the campus as a community, to larger scale events such as our “I Heart URI” campaign and our “Rhody Senior Challenge.” These events not only center on the “Students Helping Students” goal, but they also center on school spirit and appreciating everything URI has to offer.

Our “I Heart URI” campaign, which was established in the spring of 2014, is one of the best examples of our campus wide impact. As our main campaign, we really stress the needs of our peers who have found themselves in situations of crisis and how the Students First Fund is there for those times when our Rams may need assistance. Our event is centered on campus-wide tabling in the University’s Memorial Union and our two dining halls, Mainfare/Hope, and Butterfield. These booths feature different spirit-driven activities, such as “Why I Heart URI” where students tell us what they love about the University, and “Pass It On” days where students are encouraged to do good deeds and invite others to do the same. These efforts have been met with great reception from students and faculty who were not aware of the Students First Fund or the opportunities it has given to the 50 students it has helped. Part of this is due to our goals of education and participation. We accept gifts of all sizes and even if students cannot make a gift at that time, we are happy to educate them on our mission and the impact he or she could have for their peers. These aspects of our campaign have allowed for positivity towards our group, which in turn spreads the message that we are all a community of Rhody Rams collectively looking to support each other.

Since our inception, we have made a very conscious effort to make our events coincide with National Philanthropy Day, National Student Engagement and Philanthropy Month. Some of the activities we host to recognize these national campaigns include our previously mentioned “Opening Doors Day” and an activity to recognize student donors on our Quad in the spring. Not

only do these events bring more recognition to our group, but they allow us to promote philanthropy at URI and to do a good deed for students.

We have also made great connections on campus that have allowed us to increase outreach to our student body, including those with the faculty and staff in our Memorial Union, which has allowed us to expand our programs at our Union-centered booths and allowed us to keep our philanthropy-related promotions on display for longer periods of time. We've also developed a great professional relationship with our school's athletics department. This has given us the chance to partner with them for one basketball game per semester where we pass out small "I Heart URI" giveaways (which we were able to purchase with help from our prize last year), such as foam fingers. We are also able to go onto the basketball court at halftime to show a video of our initiative and to promote our cause and brand to students.

One of the other large-scale campaigns meant to spread our message is our "Rhody Senior Challenge," where we encourage our outgoing seniors to make a contribution back to the school. The idea is that seniors can give back to any part of URI that impacted them, and our goal is centered more on participation from our seniors as opposed to the amount of their donations. Our council organizes a Senior Challenge committee and we participate in many engagement efforts including sending emails, making speaking presentations, peer-to-peer outreach, and hosting tabling events to promote the challenge.

We do track our student participation in solicitation and awareness activities. This includes both the amount we've raised, as well as the number of students who have participated both in a reoccurring capacity and for the first time. To date, we've had an approximate 100% increase in both the dollars raised and in student donors from this time last year.

Over the course of the next year, we are planning ways to increase our involvement and presence on campus by participating in the URI 101 mentoring program where we can make presentations to freshman about our group and initiative. We will also be part of the freshman Welcome Days, tabling to introduce ourselves to accepted freshman. In addition, our "I Heart URI" initiative will be featured in the URI freshman and parent orientation skit, called Big Break, and we hope to make brief speaking presentations to some of our larger class sections.

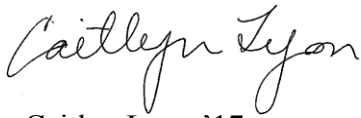
Much of the work we do wouldn't have been achievable without the generous gift we received last year from Generous U. We hope this year to win the Sillerman Prize so that we can continue raise awareness and can make our campaigns bigger and better. If we are lucky enough to receive the prize, we would like to expand our "I Heart URI" campaign to include a campus-wide education, awareness, and solicitation event that involves students, as well as staff and faculty, and shows the tangible impact of private support. We will promote this as a challenge opportunity and friendly competition amongst our campus community. This type of event can be sustained as most of the costs for marketing/promotional materials can be underwritten in our first year and utilized again in subsequent years. In addition, we would like to purchase SPC promotional items as draws for student engagement, and increase our efforts to continue stewardship of our participating students. It is our hope that our "I Heart URI" campaign can become something akin to a spring version of the University's fall Homecoming Week where we can inspire our wider campus community.

III. Video

The Council's video can be viewed by clicking <https://vimeo.com/158544133>.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We greatly appreciate your time and past support of the URI SPC. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



Caitlyn Lyon '17
Elementary Education, History and English Major
SPC Chair



Joanne Gemma
Associate Director, Annual Giving
SPC Staff Advisor