

COVER SHEET

- **University and Group Name** – Rutgers School of Social Work’s *Students Supporting Students* campaign
- **Website** – Donate today at socialwork.rutgers.edu/give
- **Contact Information** – John Schafhauser, mswclasscampaign@ssw.rutgers.edu, 848.932.5334
- **University Official to Confirm Status** – Stephanie Giordano, Director of Development, sgiordano@ssw.rutgers.edu, 848.932.5337.

Our Mission & Purpose

The mission of the Students Supporting Students Campaign is to create and nurture a culture of philanthropy at the Rutgers School of Social Work. The purpose of this campaign is to address the financial challenges facing social work students today by creating new revenues for scholarship funding.

Organizational Structure

The Campaign Committee is comprised of masters in social work (MSW) students in their final year of study. Their roles include serving as liaisons to spread our message to other students, creating promotional materials, developing a strategic fundraising plan, managing social media, and corresponding with faculty. One student member takes on the position as Campaign Chair. This student is responsible for keeping the committee on track, setting weekly goals and monitoring progress, serving as a liaison between the committee and the development staff, and reporting the final results to the class. A full time development staff member is assigned to oversee the campaign committee, provide training and resources to the students, address their questions, and process donations.

Motivation for Promoting Philanthropy on our Campus

Tuition has been steadily increasing at a rate much faster than inflation, placing a greater financial burden on MSW students than ever before. Because this is a graduate program, many students are already carrying loan debt from their undergraduate degree, need to work limited hours because of the time it takes to go to class, study, and complete their field placements, while also trying to support themselves and their families. The average MSW student graduates over \$36,337 in debt, as they prepare to enter a field that is markedly not well paid. Our students become social workers because they want to make a difference in our world and promote social change. But, if they don't have the financial means to support their passion, these talented students may be forced to pick another career. The pressing need for increased scholarship support is our motivation for promoting philanthropy on campus.

Strategy and Activities

Spreading the Word

The most effective way to communicate with students about the importance of philanthropy is to speak with them face-to-face. In the spring semester campaign members and the dean travel to over 20 classes to meet with students and share our message. Because the dean is present, these visits show students that they are valued, give them the opportunity to meet their dean, and prove to them that the school is working hard to alleviate the financial burden for future students. The dean's presence is also important for validating our message to the student body. Additionally, many times students in the class we visit will voluntarily offer a testimony about a scholarship they received and what it meant to them. These conversations reinforce our message and create a stronger case for the need to be philanthropic alumni.

In addition to classroom visits, we send various emails to students, table at social work events, and have a facebook page where we share campaign and other important news for graduating students. Near the end of the campaign we call students to encourage their support.

Encouraging Student Giving

Our messaging focuses on participation, not dollar amount. We encourage students to give \$20.14 in honor of their graduation year, but any gift of \$1.00 or more will count. To reinforce this message, the

dean agrees to do a matching gift based on student participation. For example, when 25% of our students make a gift of \$1.00 or more, the dean will add an additional \$250 to our fund. We also give every donor an exclusive social work pin to wear at graduation and job interviews.

Donor Recognition

Donor recognition is essential for encouraging students to continue their support when they become alumni, so we want all donors to feel good and know that their gift made a difference in our school. After making a gift, each donor gets a postcard in the mail thanking them for their support. Their name is listed on our website, and will be added to the graduation program and Alumni Magazine.

Results

After two years of implementation, we increased student giving from 1% in 2010-11 to 46% in 2011-12 and 52% in 2012-13. In 2012 we raised \$8,600, and in 2013 we raised \$11,342. Almost every faculty member donated to the campaign, providing about half of our total dollars raised. Forty percent of all alumni donors to the school in FY2013 came from the classes of 2012 and '13, approximating the number represented by donors from more than 50 years of classes before that. While students were in school, the average donation was \$14. After one year of graduation, the average gift from these constituents jumped to \$46, which is higher than the average gift of all other classes. So far, 19 students have benefitted from scholarships created by this campaign. If this rate of giving continues, it is projected that by 2022, 10 years after the Campaign's inception, an endowment of over \$500,000 would be established to provide sustaining financial support to students.

Budget

Item	Amount
Social Work Pins	\$375
Food for Meetings	\$125
Faculty Gifts	\$180
TOTAL	\$680

Paper and postage for our thank you cards is funded through general operating expenses of the school, so we did not include this item in our budget. The Development Office funds our campaign expenses.

Sustainability Plan

Establishing a tradition of giving provides a sustainable source of income for our school. During classroom visits to graduating students, we deliver a message that makes the soon to be alumnus feel responsible for the future of their profession, and obligated to give back to support students who rely on their financial support. Since the students can see the impact of their giving almost immediately, they feel a strong sense of pride, community, and school spirit that will influence their future philanthropic giving.

To create a sustainable stream of scholarship support, we have begun to establish a Students Supporting Students endowed fund. We want to be sure that students see the immediate impact of giving, so all dollars raised by students and faculty will go to scholarships for the following school year. At the same time, all funds raised by alumni and friends will go into our endowment, so we can invest in our school's future.

As the Students Supporting Students endowment grows year after year, we will be able to use the interest raised to provide consistent scholarship support for our students to enhance the funds raised through student giving. Additionally, the development staff is planning on soliciting alumni and faculty to provide a match that will go directly to the endowment.

Lessons Learned

Now that we are in our third year of the Campaign, we have identified five key principles that are vital to the success of the campaign. These principles are 1) support from the Dean, 2) a student planning committee, 3) messaging that focuses on participation, 4) faculty engagement, and 5) donor stewardship.

1. Support of our dean and senior administration is vital in establishing our culture of philanthropy. When visiting classrooms, they were able to talk directly with students and acknowledge the debt crisis as a pressing issue in our school. Support from the dean legitimized the message that was coming from our student committee, while making students feel valued. The dean appointed a development staff liaison to guide the student committee. As the campaign matures, the dean's time commitment will lessen, but financial commitments will continue with annual matching gifts to sustain the philanthropic culture.
2. Our student committee is needed to create the "by the students, for the students" feel that promotes a sense of responsibility and commitment for student participation in this grass-roots effort. Student leaders have knowledge of and expertise about effective peer to peer communication, and act as liaisons to spread knowledge and set examples for our classmates. Additionally, we can also ask faculty members for support directly, when it may pose a conflict for the dean to do so.
3. Participation, not dollar amount, is the primary goal promoted to the students. Students are made to feel that every gift, even \$1, matters. Messaging acknowledges the financial difficulties associated with attending college, and reminds students that their modest sacrifice makes a strong impact for their peers in the classes behind them.
4. Faculty members are vital to the success of our fundraising campaign for two key reasons. First, they are a part of the school community, so their participation sends a strong message of support. Second, faculty members are able to offer greater financial resources to the campaign, allowing additional students to be awarded scholarships.
5. To cultivate even a one-time \$1 gift into sustained giving at a higher level, donors must feel that they are valued. We provided donors with a pin and personalized postcard to remind them of the difference their donation made to the campaign. Faculty received a special personalized thank-you from us to encourage their future support. To show the impact of their support, all donors were sent messages from scholarship recipients and were notified about the campaign results.

But, the single most important lesson we learned is that we can make a difference in our school by creating a culture of philanthropy that will reduce student debt and support future social work students. We hope that our success will become a national model so that students from other schools and programs can graduate with less debt, and receive the financial aid they need to work towards their degree.