

HOW TO BUILD A **SUCCESSFUL** **INTERNATIONAL** FUNDRAISING PROGRAM









A Guide for Colleges, Universities, and Boarding Schools

Developed in 2017

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Academic institutions have experienced a **dramatic increase in matriculation of students from around the world** as our economy and society have globalized in the last few decades. According to the Open Doors Report on International Exchange, the number of international students in the U.S. reached a record high of 1,043,839 in the 2015-2016 academic year.

To explore how development programs are responding to this growing trend, Campbell & Company conducted a quantitative and qualitative study on international fundraising through an online survey and eight in-depth interviews in the summer of 2016. We focused on development professionals and administrators at colleges, universities, and independent schools with experience fundraising abroad, primarily in Asian countries.

Based on our study results and insights from development leaders in a subsequent webinar we hosted, we compiled a guide to **strengthen your fundraising presence abroad**. Beyond this guide, Campbell & Company can help higher education institutions and boarding schools implement successful international fundraising programs, so please contact us to learn more at www.campbellcompany.com/international-fundraising.



GETTING STARTED

These steps will give your international fundraising program a strong foundation:

Track international students, alumni, and parents by region.

When planning for major gift fundraising, **invest resources in regions with a critical mass** of parents and alumni or locations with a handful of very wealthy prospects you believe can be cultivated to make major gifts.

Reach out to parents when their children enroll.

Begin welcoming your international families as soon as possible. **Hold accepted student events abroad** and invite alumni, parents of alumni, and other current families so they can meet each other and stay up to date on your institution. A development or alumni office representative can organize the event, and your President or Head of School can make an appearance via video conference.



Host events when parents first drop off their children.

Mirror the level of formality you would be afforded in the families' home countries when planning these events. Holding a reception at a hotel or private club may be more appropriate than an outdoor barbeque. **Bring a small gift** for each family that represents your institution. These initial in-person interactions can be strengthened through subsequent phone calls and emails.

Integrate international students into campus life.

Students who have a positive experience will be more likely to become donors in the future. Given that international students may face cultural barriers on campus, **plan events to get them involved** in the community and hire staff to guide international students through transition issues. Developing relationships with students when they are on campus is much easier than waiting until they graduate to reach out.

Give alumni opportunities for continued engagement with their alma mater.

Stay in touch with international alumni through regular communications and keep their contact information up to date. If you do not have any alumni clubs abroad, start them in regions with high concentrations of your alumni.

Build an institutional understanding of the culture(s) in which you seek philanthropic support.

In many countries, hierarchy and social status can influence how you interact with prospects and what amount is acceptable for them to give. Additionally, **prospects may expect you to be more direct** with your ask than in the U.S. It's critical to develop an awareness of these differences and act accordingly.

"With parents, we try to develop relationships with them as early and as often as we can. We feel the four year window of time is a relatively short period of time on the capital gifts side, so we want to establish those relationships as quickly as possible."

- Steve Staples, PhD, Executive Director, International Development at Princeton University

STRUCTURING YOUR PROGRAM

Follow these recommendations to build a thriving international fundraising program:

Grow your international fundraising platform by hiring the right staff.

While cultural competency is a crucial skill for all development officers, those working in international fundraising need to be especially attuned to cultural differences. **Look for candidates able to navigate various cultural norms** and engage parents, alumni, and prospects from a variety of regions. Good listening skills and strong representation of your institution abroad are critical. Fluency in the language(s) is an advantage but not a necessity.

Conduct consistent outreach to international constituents.

Plan to reach out once a month or more to alumni, parents, and prospects abroad. In-person methods of engagement—such as junkets, tours, and local events—are most effective, but mail, phone, and online communication can bridge the gap between on-the-ground interactions. In addition, sign up for the social media platforms popular in your target regions, such as WeChat.





"When you commit to a region, it is recommended that you commit to building presence at all levels. It is best to get press for your dean and your faculty, generate alumni that love you, have strong student representation from that country, and get that leading student or athlete profiled in local media outlets, social media, etc."

- Amy Ambrose, Assistant Dean of Advancement
at Berkeley Law, University of California

Invest patiently and carefully.

International fundraising programs require significant time and travel investments. You will need to carry out in-person donor engagement, and this process can be intensive, involving both prospects and their families. **Securing gifts abroad can take longer than in the U.S.** As such, international fundraising is best suited for principal or high-end major gifts.

Manage institutional expectations.

Make sure leaders at your institution understand that **international fundraising is a long-term commitment.** Programs often take three to five years to produce significant results. Modeling your international fundraising strategy on your furthest domestic market strategy will prevent you from overextending.



PREPARING FOR INTERNATIONAL TRIPS

Before traveling overseas, review these tips for productive international visits:

Make regular trips abroad a priority.

Successful international fundraising programs are those that are on the ground—year after year—talking to prospects, building relationships, and demonstrating a genuine interest in the target region. **Visit as often as you can** while taking into account your program's budget, time, and staffing constraints.

Research relevant everyday cultural practices before embarking on a trip.

Seemingly insignificant norms related to introductions, seating arrangements, meal times, and even eye contact can impact your ability to connect with international prospects. **Strive to have an authentic understanding of the culture** before sending anyone abroad.

Once you know a prospect is likely to give, bring senior leaders abroad.

Institutions tend to be more successful at securing major gifts when senior leadership is involved in international fundraising. **Bringing a high-ranking individual conveys respect.** After the senior leader has made the connection, they can often transition the relationship to development staff.

"It's very important that you show respect and put forth a member of the university staff who has the latitude and ability to represent the university and who also can make decisions."

- Peter Wilch, Vice President for Development at University of San Francisco



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Take these steps to make meaningful international connections:

Do prospect research prescreens and consider paid research services.

Prescreens by your institution are essential; **check Forbes International wealth lists** and localized English language business journals. In some countries, key information isn't easily accessible. While paid research services such as Wealth-X can be costly, they may be worth the investment.

Involve international volunteers in your target regions.

Find one to two liaisons in each area where your international fundraising program is active. These **volunteers can guide you**, supporting relationship building efforts and possibly planning events on behalf of your institution. Many volunteers are happy to make connections but may not be comfortable soliciting peers.

Use in-person engagement and annual fund solicitations to start the conversation. With the help of international volunteers, **use on-the-ground engagement** to

qualify prospects. Soliciting and receiving an annual fund gift also gives you an indication of philanthropic intent and an open door to continue the conversation. Stewardship of this gift is key to getting to know your donors better.



Are you building the right relationships?

- ✓ Conduct prescreens
- ✓ Check wealth lists
- ✓ Involve international volunteers
- ✓ Use in-person engagement
- ✓ Listen intently
- ✓ Tap into donors' motivations

Listen intently when prospects speak about their interests.

Being a good listener is important no matter when or where you are interacting with donor prospects, but **focused listening is especially critical when forming networks in new cultures** where you might be perceived as an outsider.

Understand and tap into your donors' motivations.

There are four primary motivations for someone to give: rational appeals, personal connections, prestige and recognition, and corporate interest. **Cultural nuances can influence these motivations.** For instance, in other countries, philanthropy tends to be more transactional than in the U.S., so a rational approach is often beneficial.

"As you spend the time to patiently and thoughtfully build relationships overseas, you often start to hear 'Have you met so-and-so?' There is a nice pool of prospects who are routinely identified this way."

- Ivan Shin, Executive Director of International Development at UNSW Sydney (The University of New South Wales)





AVOIDING PITFALLS

These recommendations will help you sidestep ethical issues as you fundraise abroad:

Establish a formal procedure for vetting large international gifts.

As there are many unknowns associated with international giving, **a more thorough vetting process will help** ensure all gifts meet your institution's ethical standards. This process could involve a committee that researches and votes on large international gifts.

Be transparent about the expectations surrounding corporate gifts.

Companies often seek marketing opportunities or other returns on their gifts, which can be challenging to navigate abroad, as companies may not have the same rules regarding gift-giving.

It's important to **set boundaries when dealing with international corporate philanthropy.**



"We have a formal policy that we will not accept a gift in the year before someone may have an admissions case. I think that's helpful for the fundraiser because it backs them up in what they are saying."

- Ryan Carmichael, Vice President for University Development at Columbia University



“Don’t overthink it. Be culturally sensitive and prepared for whatever part of the world to which you travel. Treat a potential international prospect the same way you would a domestic prospect. Identify, listen, engage, and understand that it takes time.”

- Bill Johnson, Associate Vice President for Development and Alumni Relations at the University of the Pacific



IN CONCLUSION

Meet donors where they are, both geographically and culturally. International fundraising does not have to be complex, but it requires a significant investment of time and money to achieve the cultural literacy necessary for true donor-centered fundraising. **Stay the course and continue to invest for best results!**

A CHECKLIST FOR YOUR INTERNATIONAL FUNDRAISING PROGRAM

- ☐ Are you targeting regions where you have a critical mass of parents and alumni or very wealthy prospects?
- ☐ Are you building the cultural literacy needed to cultivate relationships with your international prospects?
- ☐ Are you engaging international parents early and often?
- ☐ Are you creating opportunities for international alumni to stay in touch with your institution?
- ☐ Is your program focusing on principal and major gifts?
- ☐ Do you have in-country volunteers who can help you navigate your target regions?
- ☐ Are you making regular visits abroad and conducting outreach in between?
- ☐ Are you taking senior leadership on international trips?
- ☐ Are you managing institutional expectations for your program?
- ☐ Do you have specific ethical procedures established for your program?

Questions? Please contact us at
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