

Title of entry: John Carroll University countdown for support
Category number and title: #12 – *Best Program in Annual Giving*
Institution: John Carroll University
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General description of the entry

A series of solicitation emails were distributed to FY2008 non-donors. The emails were sent on each of the final three days during FY2008. At the beginning of FY2009, following the same theme, a thank you email was distributed to all FY2008 donors.

Goals and objectives of the project

The purpose of the email campaign was threefold:

- 1) **Donor participation.** We were interested in generating support for The Carroll Fund, John Carroll's unrestricted annual fund. The total amount raised was less of a goal than the actual number of donors acquired. In the planning meeting we determined that a goal of 50 donors would be highly successful since this is a new form of solicitation for the institution.
- 2) **Education.** Like all institutions, we continually explore new ways to educate our alumni and friends about the importance of annual support. Emphasizing the close of the fiscal year on May 31 created a sense of urgency and aided us in our overall objectives.
- 3) **Thanks.** The final email that was distributed was a thank you message. Standing in front of an iconic John Carroll University building, we used the same students from the solicitation campaign to deliver our message of thanks. This worked well for those donors who responded to the original email solicitation as well as for donors throughout the previous fiscal year.

Description of how project fits into overall institutional and/or advancement goals

John Carroll University has identified four institutional priorities. One of these priorities is the continued growth of annual unrestricted support of The Carroll Fund. Of particular importance is increasing our alumni participation rate. The “John Carroll University countdown for support” was specifically aimed at helping increase our alumni participation in The Carroll Fund.

Audience

The first three emails were distributed to approximately 10,000 FY2008 alumni non-donors for which we had an active email address. We refreshed the distribution list prior to each mailing so as to add any new or changed email addresses. The refreshed list also deleted anyone who made a donation in response to the email or chose to opt-out of future John Carroll University email solicitations.

The final thank you email was distributed to all FY2008 donors (all donors, not just alumni) for which we had an active email address.

Total number of professional and support staff who worked on the program; please note the use of freelancers, outside agencies or volunteers

- 1) Robert P. Kirschner, Director of Annual Giving
Primary staff member assigned to the project
- 2) Mary Giorgis, Advancement Technical Support Specialist
Staff member responsible for generating data from database
- 3) John Carroll University students (3)
Volunteer students who were modeled in the email campaign
- 4) Claudine R. Grunenwald
Semi-professional freelance photographer

Program budget and unit costs where applicable

Since the delivery of the campaign was via email, there were no costs. The photography was gratis and the students were volunteers. We did spend \$36.85 for lunch from *Chipotle Mexican Grill* as a thank you for the student volunteers and photographer.

Any special circumstances or challenges faced

Our primary challenge or concern was how to address any sort of resistance from alumni. We have a recent history of emailing our alumni university announcements and information concerning events and activities. However, this email campaign was the first solicitation via email to our entire alumni database. Our primary concern was alumni choosing to opt out of all future John Carroll University emails as a result of the solicitation.

To address this issue, the Office of Alumni Relations agreed to personally contact all alumni who opted out following the email. The goal of this outreach is to clarify the graduates intent behind opting

out with the hope that we can mark the record as opting out for email solicitations only, and not all university emails. At the close of the solicitation campaign, only 32 individuals unsubscribed from future John Carroll University emails. That is approximately 0.3% of the total emails distributed. Alumni Relations is in the process of contacting those people personally.

Documented results, measurements of effectiveness

Specific results for each individual email are included with the attached samples. The results are summarized below.

Wednesday, May 28 – “Only three days remain in our fiscal year”

Population:	10,102 non-donors (<i>with an active email address</i>)
Opened:	2,798 (29.9%)
Clicked through to giving page:	61 (21.8% of those who opened the email)

Thursday, May 29 – “Only two days remain in our fiscal year”

Population:	10,067 non-donors (<i>with an active email address</i>)
Opened:	1,456 (15.6%)
Clicked through to giving page:	33 (22.6% of those who opened the email)

Friday, May 30 – “Only one day remains in our fiscal year”

Population:	10,039 non-donors (<i>with an active email address</i>)
Opened:	1,295 (13.9%)
Clicked through to giving page:	32 (24.7% of those who opened the email)

Monday, June 2 – “Thank you!”

Population:	2,616 donors (<i>with an active email address</i>)
Opened:	1,236 (49.8%)

Total gifts as a result of the campaign: 47

Total dollars donated as a result of the campaign: \$15,360

BN: *One gift was for \$5,000 and another for \$4,000 with a \$1,000 match*

By all measures the campaign was a success. It achieved our participation goal and far surpassed our expectations regarding the amount of money it would generate. Of particular importance was the fact that a **vast majority** of donors were new alumni donors to John Carroll University. We also received a good deal of feedback stating how nice the email was and that people looked forward to seeing where on campus the students would be the next day.

It should be noted that the number of alumni contributing to The Carroll Fund increased 2% (74 donors) from FY2007 to FY2008. The email solicitation contributed approximately 64% of that increase.

We have begun planning next year’s campaign and will likely conduct a similar effort at the close of the calendar year.