

Title: Virtual Wall

Category: 9a. Best Practices, Fundraising, 2,999 FTE or fewer

Institution: Lourdes College

Contact:

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Description:

The Virtual Wall is an online gallery that celebrates the support provided to Lourdes College from graduating students and alumni. Donors listed on the Wall have made a financial gift in support of the Class Gift Campaign Fund, which benefits student services, programs and scholarships. The top of the wall features a timeline of memories specific to each graduating class, as provided by graduates of that year. There is no minimum gift amount required to become a recognized member of the Virtual Wall. Names are listed in alphabetical order by class year.

Goals and objectives:

In place of a physical wall, which was prohibitive in terms of cost and maintenance, the Virtual Wall was designed as an innovative and unique way to recognize the camaraderie and support of those who valued their educational experience at Lourdes College. Each person featured on the wall can have their own virtual space to provide a little information about themselves -- including their major and degree, year of graduation, a sentiment on why they support Lourdes and a photo. The donor profile section allows visitors to learn more about the members of each graduating class and to thank the teachers, friends, and others who provided support during their studies. The goal is to inspire and encourage other members of each class to participate in the campaign.

Alignment with institutional and/or advancement goals:

The main purpose of the Virtual Wall is to increase support and enthusiasm for the Class Gift Campaign. The Class Gift Campaign is a new program at the College, designed to encourage all graduating students and alumni to leave a legacy at Lourdes College through a financial gift to the Lourdes Fund. Since building a culture of philanthropy can be a challenge, we wanted to create a unique way to recognize and honor our donors (many of whom are traditional-age students). There is no minimum

and no maximum gift amount, so all donations, regardless of size, are honored with recognition on the Wall. The only goal of the Class Gift Campaign is 100% support from students graduating at the end of the current semester. Each gift is special, and represents a part of the support of the entire student body.

The Virtual Wall includes a custom content management system that allows Institutional Advancement staff to easily update and modify listings and details. The dramatically lower cost in terms of implementation and upkeep make the project much more sustainable than a physical donor wall. The Wall also reduces costs in terms of printing (eliminating the need to print 450-500 pieces sent to graduating seniors on a yearly basis).

Audience: alumni, graduating students

of Staff:

Programming for the Virtual Wall was performed by a local agency, Thread Information Design. The design was also developed by Thread, based on artwork provided by the Publications Coordinator/Graphic Designer at Lourdes. Two staff members at the College are responsible for tracking donations and regularly updating the listing of names and other details.

Program budget:

The Virtual Wall eliminates the need to print 450-500 Graduating Class Gift invitations per year at a first-year savings of \$400. Adding donor names to the wall using our custom content management system takes only minutes of a staff member's time – as opposed to engraving names on a physical wall, which could cost \$1,700-\$2,500 per year. The development cost for the Virtual Wall website was only \$4,700, compared to the tens of thousands of dollars required to construct and maintain a physical wall.

Challenges:

Since both the Class Gift Campaign and the Virtual Wall were new programs in 2008, the College wasn't sure what to expect in terms of participation. We also wanted to merge the idea of a physical wall with the virtual, interactive feel of a website. The project was successful on both fronts, encouraging nearly 50% of the Class of 2008 to make a donation and creating a donor wall experience that is both familiar (in terms of its representation of a physical wall) and unique.

Results:

The Virtual Wall was officially launched on April 2, 2008 at a "Grad Bash" celebration. To date, nearly 50% of our graduating students have donated through the Class Gift Campaign. In addition, many other alumni have made donations, from the Class of 1959 to the Class of 2006. Individuals can choose to have their names listed on the

Virtual Wall, and many are submitting pictures and quotes to include with their listing. As a whole, the Virtual Wall received over 4,100 visits between April 1 and June 30, 2008 (statistics provided by Google Analytics). The site is proving to be a great networking tool for our alumni.

The Virtual Wall also aligns with our Franciscan values, including respect for the environment. The site has a far greater reach than a physical wall ever could, and its “green” aspects will allow the sustainability and continued growth for future alumni.