Running a Successful 50th Reunion Gift Program

Kate Philip, Director of Alumni Relations at The Buckley School
Lessons Learned from the True Professional (the alum)

- Reunion giving can and should work for independent schools
- Class leadership is crucial
- Dual in-person solicitations yield results
- Reunion events are the important *precursor* to the successful ask
- Mailings are useless
- Know how the school wants to direct the class gift in advance
Kate,

I am happy to RSVP in the affirmative for our class reunion on April 16th.

I am curious if there is going to be an "ask" at our dinner, and if so what has the school's recent experience been with giving by 50th reunion classes? What experience do our peer schools have with alumni giving at significant anniversaries? To the extent you have a goal for our group, could you share it with me? How does our class stack up generally in terms of giving? (My impression is that we are a laggard.)

I look forward to meeting you.

Thank you,

Alumnus Tony '65
K-12 Schools Can Do It, Too! (Even K-9!)

- “We’re a small shop” “We’re not a university”
- But…our constituents are used to the approach
Kate,

Thanks for your reply.

While I'm not surprised that Buckley hasn't had a specific reunion giving program, it occurs to me that there may be an opportunity here to start something. In my experience, if the school can find a way to get competitive juices flowing, there is money to be raised.

For example, perhaps the school could start a tradition that 25th and 50th reunion classes are asked to make a gift for a specific purpose (something tangible that the school needs). Once precedents have been established, I would be surprised if subsequent 25th and 50th reunion classes didn't try to surpass their immediate predecessors in the amounts raised.

If this idea has any interest to you, I would be happy to discuss further. I wouldn't like to see Buckley miss out on a potential development opportunity!

Regards,
Alumnus Tony '65
Dear Sam,

I hope you are well. It was great to see you last month at our 50th Buckley Reunion. It’s remarkable how many things have changed and yet how many things have remained the same.

One thing that I’m certain of is what a large debt all of us owe to the school for the terrific head start in our education that Buckley provided. As the headmaster described before our dinner, Buckley is in the process of renovating two adjacent townhouses directly across the street from the academic building. It would be wonderful for our class to come together to give a gift in support of the school and this important project.

I would like to visit you along with Kate Philip, the Buckley Director of Alumni Relations, to speak about a class gift in greater depth. You can expect a call from Kate in the coming week to find a convenient date for us to meet in early June.

I look forward to talking with you soon.

Best,
Tony
“Looking forward to learning more about my classmates…”

Profile of a previously absent alumnus:
- $1,000,000-$4,999,999 to Secondary School (he was on the board at the time)
- $1,000,000-$5,000,000 to University for Reunion
- $100,000-$249,999 to University
- $25,000 to University annually
- Board of the Eisenhower Fellowship
- Board of his Secondary School
- Chair of his college’s 35th Reunion Gift Committee
Mailings are useless...

Dear Buckley Alumnae,

One 50th Reunion in April was a great success, an enjoyable evening for all. Twelve of us attended (numbers unknown), and it was remarkable how quickly everyone was able to remember old relationships and how much fun we had reminiscing. Hopefully, even more of you alumnae will be able to attend our next reunion, five years from now, our 55th. An important theme throughout the evening was the important role Buckley has played in our lives. Many agreed that Buckley was the first school they ever attended.

Long after our reunion, a few of us came up with the idea of establishing a new, special 50th Reunion Class gift for the school – a one-time gift each class will make when they reach this milestone – to help ensure Buckley’s excellence in this forum. Our class will set a benchmark which we hope future classes will want to equal or exceed. The long-term goal behind establishing this giving program is that the 50th reunion class will respond to Buckley’s financial needs or the given time, in order to maintain the excellence.

We hope you will be interested in joining this leadership effort.

Buckley remains among the top private schools in New York City. The faculty is regarded just as highly as the teachers are – finally recognized anew, and maintaining that excellence is the top priority, additionally, with the recent opening of the school’s new Arts & Sciences Building, Buckley also has renewed the increased pride in its facilities. While many of us think back fondly of our time "spending time at 144 East 74th Street, the fact is, in today’s world, top level facilities are a requirement, a necessity, not just a source of pride.

At the end of the day, maintaining excellence throughout the school is driven by its financial strength. It is always a shock to see that Buckley’s endowment falls to the bottom of the city’s independent schools, as noted in the list to the right. Of particular note is our weakness compared to St. Bernard’s and St. Davids’ – schools that also end at Class 25, or below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Endowment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory</td>
<td>$10,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs</td>
<td>$11,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Bernard’s</td>
<td>$15,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>$16,750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colgate</td>
<td>$19,975,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Davids</td>
<td>$20,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckley</td>
<td>$25,986,868</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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This is why the 50th Reunion Gift program will be established to support and build Buckley’s financial strength, by responding to its financial needs, as identified within. This year, the school has requested that the gift be given to the Centennial Building Campaign, which has funded the school’s recent renovation.

So far we have already raised just over $100,000 from our classmates. Based on this exciting level of interest, we are asking everyone in the class to participate. While leadership gifts ($15,000 and above) are appreciated, gifts of any size would be greatly very much appreciated. Making it a gift for the whole class is important. If you are interested, and we hope you will be, please contact Kate Philp, Director of Alumni Relations, at (212) 971-8787 or kphilp@buckleyalumni.org. Together we can establish an important new way to demonstrate Buckley’s identity as we move into the future.

All the best,

Tony

Bill
The Reunion Itself
Make Institutional Decisions In Advance
Perseverance is key!