

Cornell University *Case Study*

Cornell University Advances Philanthropic Relationships with Omnichannel Outreach



Cornell University

About Cornell

Founded in 1865, Cornell University is one of our nation's premier Ivy League universities, enrolling over 25,000 students in Ithaca, New York. Cornell University alumni and supporters are extraordinarily generous, contributing over \$700 million annually.

Transforming Omnichannel Outreach With RNL Tech and Expertise

In FY20, the University engaged RNL to assist with the transformation of its student ambassador program to a Digital Engagement Center, integrating calling, texting and video messages. Key objectives of the initiative included:

- Integrating multiple channels to create a better donor experience and drive participation.
- Engaging alumni and supporters with high-impact contact from current Cornell students.
- Help meet the campaign goal of 200,000 engagements with supporters.
- Boosting leadership giving from donors contributing \$1,000 or more annually.
- Shifting to a hybrid on-campus/remote center after full remote efforts.

Managing Omnichannel Outreach From an RNL Digital Engagement Center

Cornell has invested in student philanthropic outreach for decades. "Having a one-to-one conversation and the ability to tailor an ask to an individual's interests is really powerful," says Nicole Allen Cook, director for donor participation and marketing strategy for Cornell.

"We know from research and from tracking behaviors along with responses to solicitations and marketing that alumni want to support students above all else. They really care about what students are doing, how their work is changing the world, and want to help them succeed. Having a student talk directly to an alum and supporting that conversation with multichannel marketing goes a long way toward building continued connection, engagement, and giving to the university" says Cook. RNL's help was crucial to taking the engagement effort to the next level and to test out strategies amidst the pandemic. Adding integrated channels across texting, video, and phone amplified Cornell's already accelerating digital outreach. The ability to have a partner who could help adapt strategy in a changing time made a difference.

The RNL Digital Engagement Center is an Integrated, Omnichannel Solution That:

- Combines personalized texting, calling, and video outreach to engage supporters with giving, event, and involvement opportunities.
- Utilizes RNL Engage, our integrated and remote-capable platform to power these channels and transform students into engagement ambassadors.
- Builds on RNL's decades of expertise with the leadership of an Engagement Center Manager (ECM) to guide operations, mentor students, and meet KPIs crucial to your goals.
- Delivers the best results possible within your budget.



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Boosting Leadership With Omnichannel Strategy

Cornell and the RNL team saw a significant opportunity to increase leadership giving. Several senior student ambassadors were promoted and the team piloted asks as high as \$10,000 in the engagement center.

"We are treating these students like mini leadership gift officers. This has enabled us to increase revenue, bringing in more than a million dollars last year in pledges. Investing some callers in leadership calling has kept our ROI high and enabled experimentation in areas of engagement and stewardship," says Cook.

Innovative Outreach

The RNL team worked with Cornell to support alumni participation efforts along with developing a leadership giving support strategy. Driven by the student ambassador digital engagement center campaign, RNL supported all efforts of Cornell's pipeline from new donor acquisition to engaging donors of \$25,000+.

For two consecutive years, RNL helped boost participation giving while also supporting leadership giving. In 2023, the efforts achieved for every part of the Cornell pipeline resulted in over \$1,000,000 pledged.

This campaign included coordinating calling, texting, video messages and voicemails. Leadership giving efforts were focused around key donor action periods, including calendar year end, fiscal year end, and Giving Day.

A targeted upgrade approach to previous givers and boosting a leadership giving challenge. During the two and a half years of RNL's on site management partnership, Cornell secured \$2.4 million in donor pledges, and greatly improved core metrics of the program.



We meet donors in a place to grow relationships. It's about stewarding and educating donors in a way that they feel tied to the greater mission of the institution.



—Jon Gregory, Associate Director, Donor Participation & College and Unit Partnerships, Cornell University

FY21-23 IMPACT



\$2.4M

Total pledges in Omnichannel Digital Engagement Center

FY KEY MILESTONES



70.8%

Contact rate at 51% increase in efficiency



20,967

Conversations



\$241

Average pledge an 86% increase over FY20



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