

Establishing Phonathon and Crowdfunding Programs to Build Relationships With Alumni



About Louisiana Tech University Foundation

The Louisiana Tech University Foundation was established to provide a means whereby alumni and friends of the university can provide support for the educational mission of the university. The Foundation's mission is "To promote the educational and cultural welfare of Louisiana Tech University and all departments thereof, and to develop, expand and improve the university's facilities so as to provide broader educational advantages and opportunities, encourage research, and increase the university's usefulness to the citizens of Louisiana and the United States of America."

About On-Campus Phonathon Management

A robust phonathon is a crucial component of a strong annual giving program, and Ruffalo Noel Levitz is pleased to be the industry leader in on-campus phonathon solutions for over 20 years, delivering an unparalleled level of strategy, service, and results to our clients. On-Campus Phonathon Management will help you maximize your phone channel outreach. We work collaboratively as a consultant and partner to meet your objectives and ensure success.

Identifying an Opportunity

When was the last time you talked to your alumni via phone? For the Louisiana Tech University Foundation (Louisiana Tech), it had been seven years since alumni were called for a donation. Recently hired Vice President of University Advancement Brooks Hull and Director of Annual Giving Elaine Poynter have a strong background in running successful phonathon programs at previous institutions. One of their first priorities when they arrived at Louisiana Tech was to introduce phonathon outreach at the university. "It's a channel that we have a strong interest in and we strongly favor it," Brooks said. Many times, this is the only connection alumni will have with your institution all year. Cultivating a connection between current student ambassadors and your alumni through a phonathon program is an effective and highly personal way to engage and increase the chance your fundraising goals are met.

Establishing the Phonathon Program

Louisiana Tech decided to partner with Ruffalo Noel Levitz as part of a managed on-campus program and was eager to get started. The team decided to launch the first calling session for seven weeks during the summer of 2016. While nontraditional, it was a strategic decision to help avoid competing with the 2016 U.S. presidential election and get a jump start with outreach—casting a wide net and engaging more recent donors and future donors early in the new fiscal year. A second calling session lasted for six weeks during the winter of 2016. To recruit student ambassadors, the Louisiana Tech Foundation team worked closely with the financial aid office and student contacts prior to the RNL Program Center Manager's arrival. Once the center manager was on campus, students were efficiently hired and trained.

“ The student training was outstanding; we are very grateful for our [RNL] Program Center Manager! ”

—Elaine Poynter, Director of Annual Giving

Effectively Connecting With Alumni

During the 13-week calling campaign, Louisiana Tech saw impressive results. Elaine explained, “We were optimistic heading into the program, but we were truly excited with actual results. With more than 1,800 commitments in such a short amount of time, we greatly increased our overall alumni giving percentage—a gain of two percentage points was impressive.” In total, more than \$204,823 was committed via the program, with an average gift amount of \$112. The alumni interaction was great for alumni and student ambassadors alike. There were concerns that calling to ask for donations would upset alumni. However, everyone the students interacted with was pleased to speak with current students. Even if they didn’t donate that day, it was a positive interaction and left the opportunity open to reach out again. The positive experience also led to the retention of student callers. “It speaks to the training that RNL provided.” Brooks said “If the students are available and back on campus, they want to come back to work in the call center.”

Phonathon Program Results

\$112 AVERAGE PLEDGE AMOUNT	\$204,823 TOTAL PLEDGE AMOUNT
\$185,576 SPECIFIED AMOUNT	\$19,247 MATCHED AMOUNT
\$47,794 CREDIT CARD GIFTS	1,830 TOTAL NUMBER OF PLEDGES
51% CONTACT RATE	2,066 TOTAL CALLING HOURS OVER 13 WEEKS

An Impactful Addition

Once the RNL Phonathon program was underway, Louisiana Tech launched RNL Crowdfunding, powered by ScaleFunder, to enhance existing engagement and fundraising efforts. Named after the Louisiana Tech mascot, the Bulldogs, the team branded their crowdfunding as “Bull Market.” They found that better visuals, more social media shares, and stronger product champions translated to a successfully funded campaign. In the first year, the Foundation ran seven campaigns and hope to have six campaigns running at all times in FY2018.

8 campaigns raised Average Gift Size
\$247,334 **\$185**

4 INITIATIVES
 successfully funded

BAND OF PRIDE
 CAMPAIGN FOR
 NEW UNIFORMS

2016 Band of Pride Uniform Campaign

By Louisiana Tech University

Show your loyalty to the Band of Pridel!
 Support the campaign for new uniforms!

\$128,507

102% **140** **11**
 Funded Donors days left