



How Promotional Products Impact Alumni Donations

Abstract

Fundraising for colleges and universities has always been important, but perhaps never more than it is today. In order to remain effective in fundraising efforts, colleges are looking for insights into best practices to help make their campaigns successful.

To ensure Magellan Promotions continues providing our clients with relevant solutions, a study was commissioned to examine the impact promotional products may have on decisions by alumni to donate to their alma mater. The study included questions about the degree of influence of promotional products, what types of items resonate most with potential alumni donors, and the impact of including items with donation requests.

Magellan Promotions partnered with Advantage Research to administer this survey, which was conducted online between April 30th and May 18th, 2021. The Senior Research Analyst guiding the project had significant experience in a university marketing office. This perspective helped inform the research format and ensure that the final results would yield valuable insights.

Results Snapshot, Takeaways and Recommendations

Four Key Points From the Research

- 53% more likely to donate if offered a promotional product for a donation
- 50% indicated even more likely to donate if provided with promotional product options to choose from
- 43% more likely to donate if donation solicitation included stickers
- 72% had wearables in top three product categories to receive

While incorporating promotional products into a donation campaign can add complexity and cost, there is clearly an upside. Alumni are a unique audience because, in general, they have a strong emotional connection to their college and are proud of their past higher educational experience.

Promotional products are unique because not only are they useful physical goods, but they also allow recipients to show the pride of their college affiliation. Tapping into this emotional connection is a smart strategy for donation campaigns. The data collected demonstrates that by offering a promotional product, colleges should see an increase in the number of donations they receive from alumni.

The data shows the influence of promotional products on likelihood to donate is especially true for alumni in the 22-40 age group. This age group is also the most likely to say they do not currently donate because they don't have extra money at the current time or are still paying off student loans. Thus, this age group may be most interested in making a donation if they feel they are getting something tangible in return.

To best incorporate promotional products into a donation strategy, colleges should consider using one or more of these tactics:

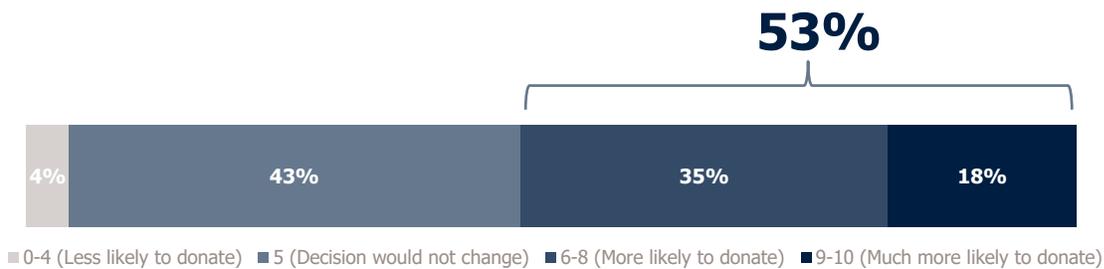
- Offer multiple product options of similar value to choose from. To give the best chance to resonate with a wide range of audiences, include a wearable, drinkware and lifestyle product.
- Influence donations by including college-branded stickers with the donation request.
- Use the main college logo on the product.
- If targeting certain demographic segments, use the insights provided to best attract donations from these groups.
- Center the donation requests around student scholarships.

Specific Questions Asked and Response Analysis

Offering a promotional item as a thank you increases the likelihood to donate for just over half of respondents. It also resonates more with younger people and men.

How would your likelihood to donate to your alma mater change if you were offered a promotional item to incentivize the donation?

n=300



People ages 41-50 and 71+ are more likely to say their decision would not change than those ages 22-40.

Men are more likely to give a 9 or 10 than women.

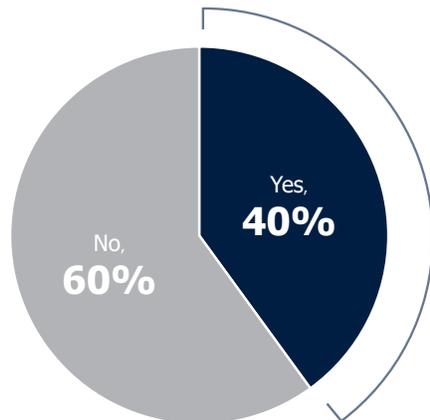
The overall mean score was higher among 22-50 year olds than those 71+.

Less than half of the respondents have ever been offered a promotional item as a thank you for a donation - an opportunity exists to grow this as a fundraising strategy.



Has your alma mater ever offered you a promotional product with their school logo as a thank you for a donation?

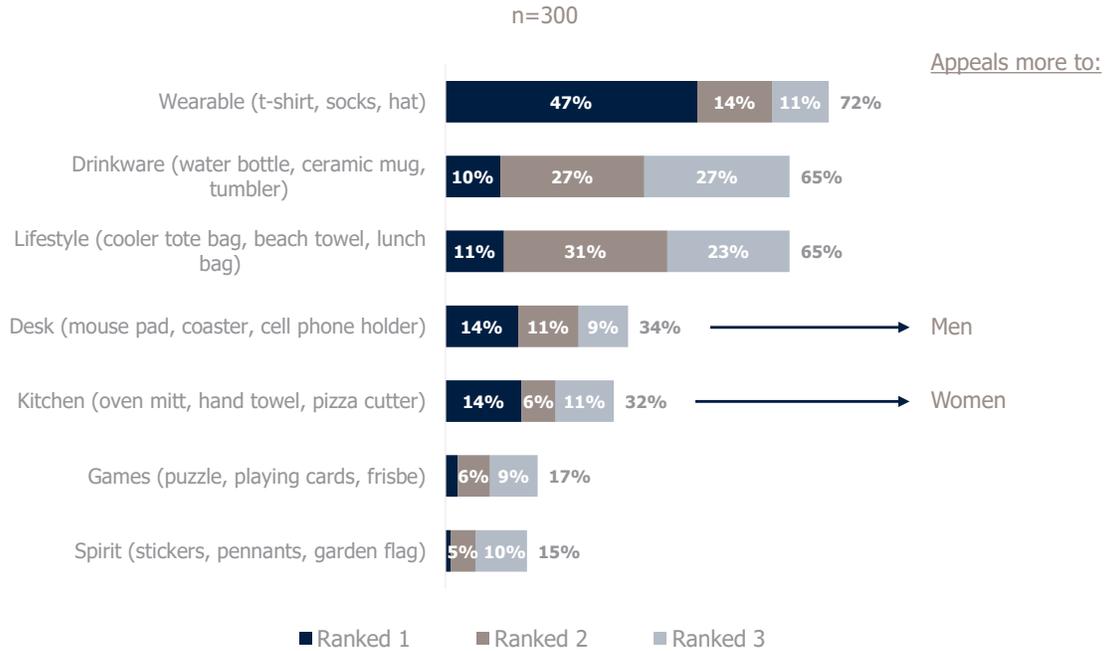
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Younger people (ages 22-30) are more likely to say they were offered a promo item as a thank you for the donation than ages 41-50 and 61+.

Overall, alumni prefer to receive wearables, drinkware and lifestyle items as promotional items.

Rank your top three categories of products that you would like to receive.



Stickers Included in Donation Requests Effects Likelihood of Donations

One tactic to entice donations is mailing something of value along with the donation request. To help provide insight into this option, the survey asked respondents whether receiving stickers with the donation request would increase their likelihood of donating. Stickers were chosen because they are relatively inexpensive, easy-to-include in a mailer and are proven to be appreciated by alumni. The exact question asked and results are below.

You received a mailer requesting a donation that included stickers. Would the inclusion of stickers make you more or less likely to donate?

n=300



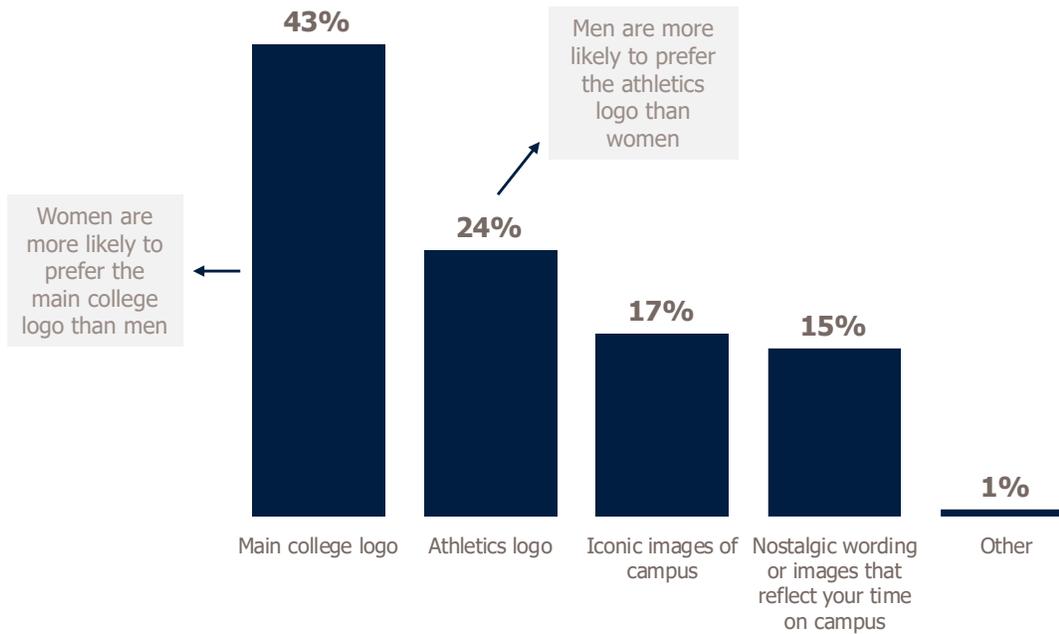
Net likelihood of stickers increasing donation* = **35%**

*Much more likely: 16% + more likely: 27% -- less likely: 8% = 35%

A college's main logo is preferred overall, and even more so among women. Men are more likely to want to have the athletics logo on a product.

What type of logo or image would you prefer to be on a product that you receive?

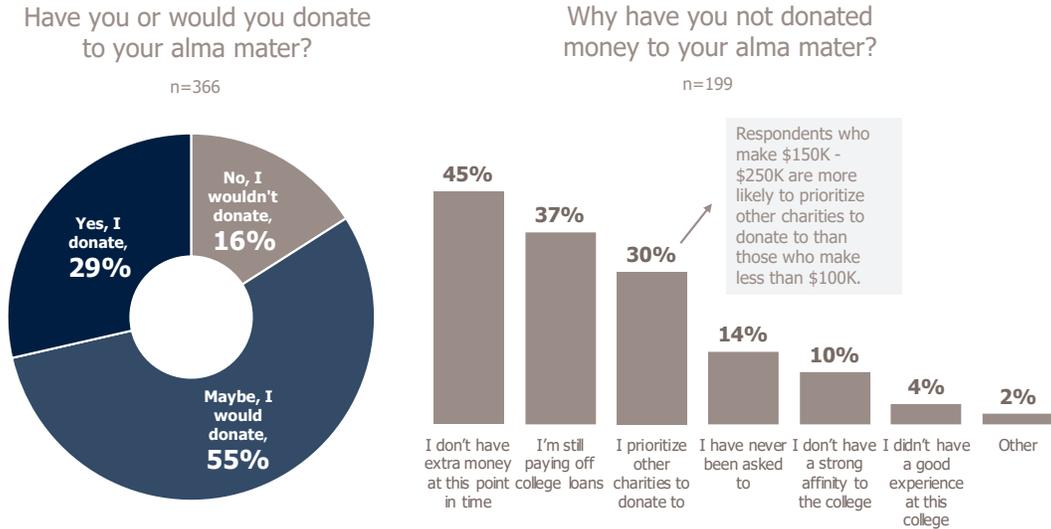
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Additional Insights From Survey Respondents

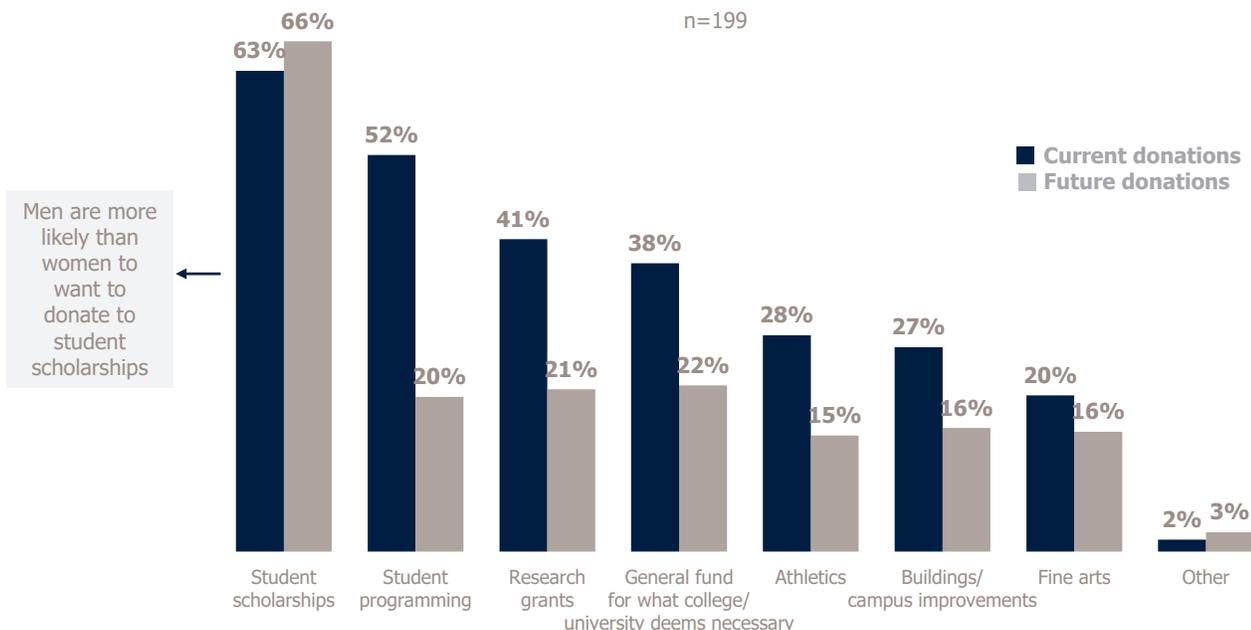
The survey was created to find additional insights about potential donors beyond promotional products. Below are highlights of what was learned.

Not having extra money is a main reason why respondents don't donate money to their alma mater. Over one third are still paying off their college loans.



Respondents want their donations to go to students through scholarships or programming initiatives.

[If you made a donation] for what purpose(s) would you most like to see your donation to your alma mater used for?



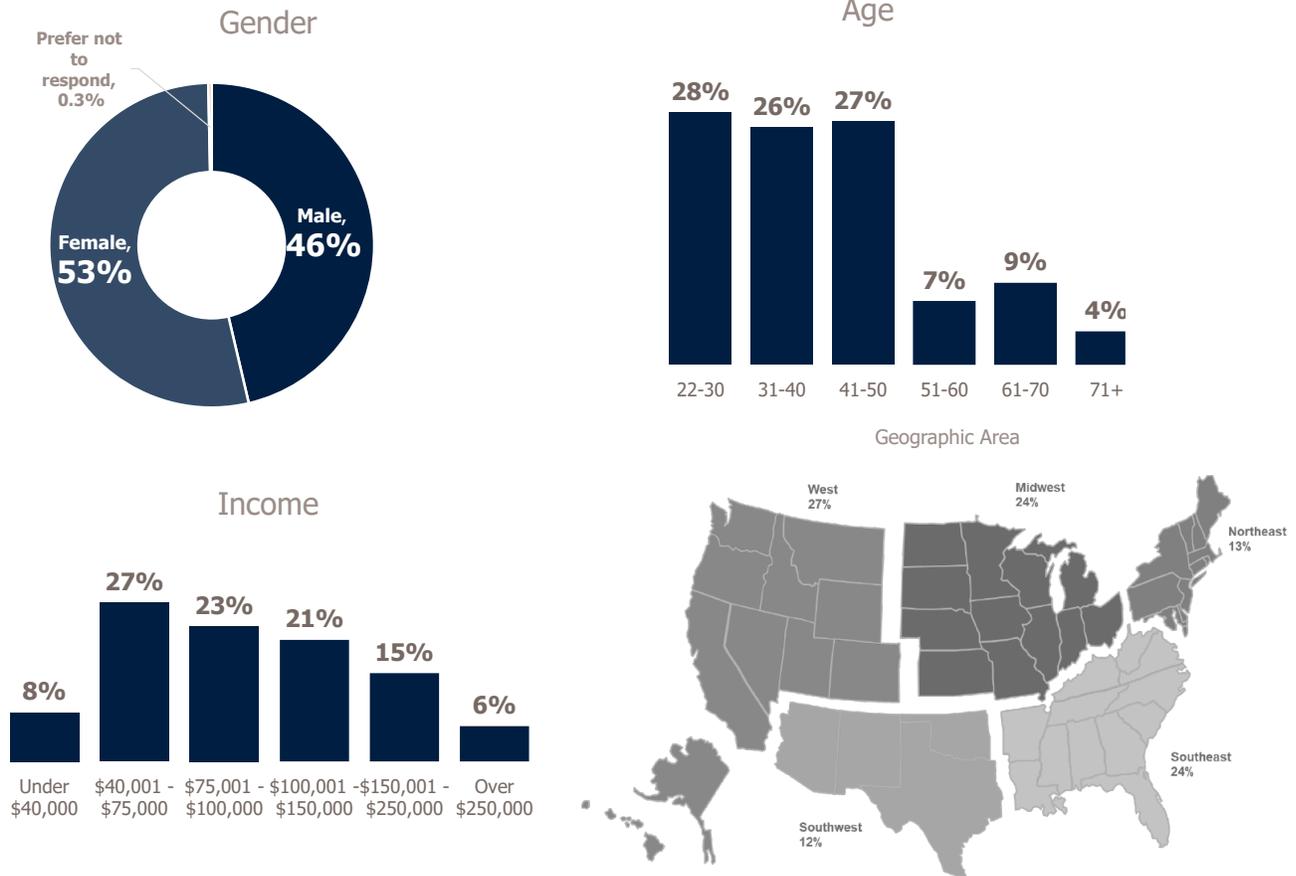
About the Respondents

The survey targeted adults 22 and older with a bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year university who live in the US and either have donated or would consider donating to their alma mater. Here is demographic information on the 300 respondents:

Of the respondents, 29% have donated in the past, 55% would consider donating at some point, and 16% would not donate to their alma mater. If a respondent indicated they would not consider donating in the future, their survey ended. Therefore, the survey focused on those who either have donated or would consider donating in the future.

For the respondents who donate at least once a year, most (78%) donate more than \$100, with 30% of them donating in the \$101-250 range. Of respondents who give less frequently than annually, 74% donate \$100 or less, with most (35%) donating \$26-50.

Demographics



ABOUT MAGELLAN PROMOTIONS

Magellan Promotions is a promotional product agency. Our mission is to help build community through creative, engaging and memorable solutions. We have unique expertise and experience in helping colleges solve their challenges through integrating promotional products into their campaigns.