

Fundraising for Study Abroad

1. A Student's Fundraising Approach

Sent 60 letters asking for donations

Materials used in the letter packet:

1. Actual letter (at end)
2. Picture sheet with information on previous work, specific donation options and instructions, contact information, and blog website (at end)
3. Texas A&M Scholarship Donor form from Financial Aid office
Link to form: <https://scholarships.tamu.edu/forms.aspx>
4. Smaller envelope with printed address labels for both A&M Financial Aid Office and the student's home address. This gives the donor the option to do what is most comfortable to him or her, as some donors known less personally or with higher donations prefer to send donations directly to the school.
5. A handwritten, personal note to each person. This can make the potential donor feel even more connected to you and important in your success.

Who was contacted and the distribution of their contribution to the total funding:

- Extended family – 15%
- My close friends' parents – <5%
- Family friends – 10%
- Parents' coworkers/worked with at church – 55%
- Others – <5%
- COALS Scholarship – 15%

The responses:

Most donations were received the within the first two weeks, the rest trailing in the next two to three weeks. Each donation was followed up with a phone call and an email to say thank you.

2. The Effective Approach

The way a potential donor feels about you and their contribution to you is very important and greatly depends on your presentation. It depends on how quickly and how well you connect with them and how well you articulate benefits to all parties involved. When beginning your fundraising process, consider the following questions. How can you present yourself and how important this is to you?

- Why is this so important to you?
- What past actions/experiences can you highlight that portray you as someone who follows through with promises?
- What sets you aside from other people your age as far as your motivation, work ethic, etc. is concerned?
- How will this experience positively affect your future and equip you to be the best at what you're going to do?
- What effect will it have on other communities with whom you're interacting?

- How will you use what you learn abroad to positively affect the future of your community, city, the state of Texas, and even the U.S.?
- Are the objectives of the study abroad trip, the actual location or anything else related to the study abroad important to the potential sponsor or donor? If so, how will you communicate that and make it valuable to them?
- Will a sponsor's donation be marketable to them/their business somehow?
- Can you promise a presentation to said business/individual upon return?

3. How to Approach Businesses

Think BIG, yet SMALL!

- Large Corporations = BAD news; be ready to welcome the run-around. Basically, be prepared to waste countless hours dealing with one sales rep to their managers, to their head bosses, and so on.
- Know your local “small” businesses since they are easier to work with; they aren't as focused on “profits, profits, and profits.” Stop by local hangouts in Aggieland or your university town. As mentioned earlier, network with people that you know first before approaching strangers. Also, visit hometown stores or restaurants in your local community since they will be more likely to help out a friendly, familiar face.

Don't know where to start?

- Check out your Local Chamber of Commerce since they will be able to provide you with a list of contact information of nearby businesses. Note, not all of them would be available to you.
- Start to establish connections with locals around you. “Be known!” Note, LEARN TO NETWORK!_ Why? Preparation for your future job searches ☺ Remember, it only takes one person to make a dent in your road. If you continue to network with that individual, then they will get you to the next person that can help you. Ex: Chain Letters, one person to start the trend and one additional person to continue it or finish it.

How do you approach a business?

- Fear is your biggest challenge. Once you get over this challenge, you can do it all!
- Send a letter; no emails. Take note to follow the directions given by Jessica, earlier in the presentation. The only difference, cater it to the specific business.
- Hand-deliver your sponsorship request
 - Introduce yourself directly to the staff on site, so, that they are able to put a name with a face. Take the time to be personable. Face-to-face contact is stronger than social media, emails, or phone calls.
 - Follow up, during your preparation to leave the country, while you are doing your exchange program or study abroad. Lastly, what you learned and incorporated from the experience since you have come back. Check out E-notes. You can check on your phone for the app. You can take a picture from your phone and create your own personal, post-card. When you're ready, click send and pay whatever fee, a minuscule amount at that. As an idea, suggest the local business helping you out to create a bulletin board of your journey from start to finish.

- Be direct and polite! Ask for a specific amount of money, don't be scared. However, don't be unreasonable.

Planning an event?

- Ask local businesses to donate their products such as merchandise, gift certificates, etc. You can opt to raffle the products to gain more funding.
- If possible, consider partnering with your employer or a sponsor to set up an event. You can split costs or have a mutual agreement to benefit both parties.

Other Alternatives to consider:

- Matching, basically, what you raise will be matched by the other party who has agreed to contribute. Consider, creating a challenge. For example, you will jump rope every day, for a full hour, during one whole week. If you are able to complete this challenge, then some donors can contribute funding. Present this idea to a business or even family member, if you raise \$200 then that other party will give you \$200.
- Profit Share is a bit difficult to do on your own. Most businesses will probably not consider working with you. However, if you work with others like those going to the same study abroad with you then you could possibly do a profit share. Get to know your fellow travelers. Once you have raised funds, split the monies equally. What a profit share does, per say, you make an agreement with Fuddruckers...you may have to work a few hours or not during the specified time-frame but you will have friends or family come eat during that time-frame. Those individuals supporting you will then place their receipts in a basket. During the end of the time period, you will then receive a percentage of the profits.

4. Other Fundraising Efforts and Resources

- 15 Minutes of Fame – visit the local newspaper or radio station to tell about your goal. See if they can help you out and then, agree to do an interview about your experience when you come back.
- Bake Sale – any baked goods or even the simple, lemonade stand.
- Break the Piggy Bake – find coins around the house, your cars, or your coin jar.
- Car Wash
- Community Groups – work with local groups like American Legion, Shriners, or alumni. Suggest that they support you and in return you will do an educational seminar of what you learned when you come back.
- Fundraising Party – have a cook-off or dance party in which there is a small cover charge. Present a fun time for your friends and family to help you out financially.
- Garage/Yard Sale
- Jobs – do odd jobs like walk neighbors jobs or get a temporary position until you leave. Or consider working more hours and saving a certain percentage of funding from each paycheck. A little savings can go a long way.
- Make your own goods – check out bracelets or t-shirts that represent your trip
- Personal Fundraising Websites – gofundme.com
- Recycle Scrap Metals – soda cans can make you some money.
- Special Collection –tell your local worship center about your trip and see if the church community can donate to your cause.
- Social Media

5. A Realistic, Success-Oriented Timeline

According to Sarah Whetsell from the Study Abroad Programs Office, the payment dates can vary by program, but for the most part, students will have a \$500 payment upon confirmation, a \$500 deposit due in February (for summer programs), and then the remaining balance will be due prior to departure of the program. For summer programs, this usually goes on the summer tuition bill which is usually due a few days before the start of classes (NOT start of the program).

Therefore, it is important to pick a fundraising style that ensures you will receive funds in enough time to pay at the designated times, and especially by the time of the trip. Dropping out of the program results in losing varying amounts of money you have already invested in fees depending on the proximity of the study abroad start date.

6. Ambassador & Mentors Services

The Ambassadors and Mentors for Study Abroad in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences seek to aid students in finding the international program that fits each student's specific needs. As peers who have participated in study abroad, the mentors are better able to guide students through the study abroad process as well as counsel any personal questions or doubts that may arise.

This workshop is meant to help you go abroad despite financial obstacles. We will do our best to help you throughout your study abroad and fundraising process by helping you with the following, including letter editing, questions that pop up during fundraising, and even advice as to what to expect once you finally go abroad. Please feel free to contact us because we are happy to help.

Dear [specific donor's name],

I am studying agriculture and medicine at Texas A&M University, I am 20 years old, and I have decided to change the world.

These two sentences alone may give the impression that I am a wide-eyed college kid with a romantic view of the world; this assumption is far from the truth. While I know one person cannot change the world, each of us doing our part can accomplish the positive change we need.

Three years ago, a group of my friends and I decided it was not okay for children to go thirsty. Despite the roadblocks, we designed and sold t-shirts, raised \$12,000, built a well in Uganda, and traveled there to meet the villagers we were committed to helping. We encountered appreciative smiles, but we also saw gaunt faces, naked children, and eyes too deeply sad for words. I admit; before this experience, changing the world was a bit of a romantic notion. Since meeting these children, I truly understand what it means to be a catalyst for change and I fully accept that responsibility.

Since returning from Africa, I have tried to live up to my promise by personally sponsoring the college education of two young Ugandan women, taking on leadership positions in two A&M social justice organizations, and being very involved with the poor and hungry in the Bryan/College Station area. But the most direct, important way I am keeping my promise is by pursuing my education. I am studying agriculture to help improve hunger and poverty, and medicine to bring wellness to people in need.

Now an opportunity has presented itself that will allow me to continue my journey. I have been selected to participate in a study abroad program in Namibia, focusing on technological change and agricultural communications. This includes communicating to Namibian farmers the importance of wildlife preservation through the Cheetah Conservation Fund, teaching sustainable farming practices through the Gobabeb Desert Research Center, as well as cultivating leadership collaboration among the students at the University of Namibia.

In order to participate, I must raise \$6,000 for the study abroad program. I am asking you to believe in the positive change I can create and invest whatever dollar amount you can contribute. I have included a page with further information. My hope is that you will see the value of this program and that it opens your heart to make a contribution. I thank you in advance for anything you can do in support of this effort.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Jessica Guerra
Texas A&M University '14
March 15, 2012

About the program:

Namibia – Technological Change and Agricultural Communications

“Agricultural communications and technology transfer are necessary tools in addressing agricultural problems in both Namibia and Texas. Coursework includes competency building in change theory, critical thinking, and leading change effectively (personal, organizational, societal), and an emphasis in the principles and techniques of communicating scientific information relevant to Namibian agriculture. Students will partner with University of Namibia students and/or local Namibian agri-businesses to complete program assignments. Cultural field trips include the Etosha National Park, the Cheetah Conservation Fund and other rich resources of Namibia.” (alec.tamu.edu)



Photos of Irene, whose education I helped sponsor:

Below are some of the children of Palyec drawing water from the well we built, and a welcome from Palyec's Mayor during the dedication of the well.



Where we'll go...



How do you make a donation?

There are two ways you can donate:

1. Send cash OR a check made out to me, and mail to my home address.
2. Send ONLY a check made out to "Texas A&M University," along with the completed Scholarship Donor Form.

(An envelope and stickers for both addresses are included).

For questions, please contact me at:

Cell phone: (210) 884 – 8110

Email: ourfutureisgrand@gmail.com

Thank you,
Jessica Guerra