

Don't Stop Asking!

If you are a house corporation officer for your chapter, you know that your work must go on regardless of the challenges brought about by COVID-19. One of the more obvious hurdles we face in the Greek world because of this virus is fiscal.

Economic uncertainty can make chapter house fundraising more challenging. The “wealth effect” that people feel in a generally rising stock market dissipates when stocks dip into bear market territory. People who felt a month ago that they were in great shape are now feeling unsteady and may be less inclined to consider charitable requests.

We have a few suggestions for how to continue generating revenue in an environment of uncertainty:

- 1. Be proactive.** Pick up the phone and call your top donors and prospects. Ask them how they are and what their concerns are. Tell them how you are working to maintain the viability of the chapter and the house corporation. Remember - if your house corporation has “competitors” for the same donors, your “competitors” may only be using social media, email or direct mail channels. People need to hear real voices now, someone asking how they feel.
- 1. Keep updating your graduates.** At the same time, plan and prepare a series of frequent updates for your graduates (and other constituents such as undergraduates and their parents) to distribute via social media posts, email blasts, podcasts, and regular mail. Update your website landing page to show in pictures and in text. There’s no need to make it appear as if you aren’t impacted by COVID-19 ... be candid about your challenges and you might find graduates willing to assist.
- 2. Keep sending annual dues appeals/fundraising requests (if your chapter already does this.)** If your chapter does not currently have an annual appeal or some type of graduate fundraising program, consider starting one. Email: mark@columnsfundraising.com or call 404-317-0435 to discuss annual fundraising appeals.
- 3. Consider no refunds for Pig Dinner reservation fees.** Ask your graduates if they are willing to forego a refund and allow the house corporation to keep the funds to partially offset lost rental income from the spring and summer

semesters. Our bet is that many of your graduates will appreciate being asked and will allow you to keep their pre-paid fees.

- 4. Ask, Ask, and Ask Again!** Don't be presumptuous and assume a donor will say no to making a gift. Let the donor make the decision.

Our team worked through the stock market crash of 1987, the Swine Flu scare, the Ebola virus scare, and we ran campaigns during the 2008-2009 recession, and if our experience has taught us one thing, it's this: this, too, shall pass. In fact, some initial donor surveys are starting to reveal that more people are considering increasing, rather than reducing their giving this year. We will need more time to confirm that this donor sentiment does indeed play out, but we remain hopeful and bullish!

Do you have other questions about fundraising campaigns or specifically about raising money for your chapter, or perhaps, starting an annual giving program? Successful fundraising campaigns require time, expertise, and organization, so if you are thinking about a renovation or rebuild in the next several years, or an annual giving program to offset operating expenses, it is not too soon to contact us to discuss your project or get other questions answered. Proper planning now is prudent so that your house corporation is ready to go when the time is right!

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