



EAB

# Keeping Fundraising Strong During an Election Year

Strategies for Continued Donor Engagement and Giving

Advancement Marketing Services

# Meet Today's Presenters



**Jenny Jones**

*Principal,  
Advancement Marketing Services*



**Maria Vance**

*Senior Director,  
Strategic Research*

# How EAB Serves Advancement Leaders



Solutions for Immediate and Sustained Growth



## Advancement Advisory Services

Engage with best practice research and advisory services to benchmark performance, retain top talent, and engage alumni



## Advancement Marketing Services

Collaborate with comprehensive fundraising partner, deploy multi-channel alumni experience, increase donor participation and giving, and identify prospects for growth

**PROGRAM  
STRATEGY**

**ANALYTICS +  
BENCHMARKING**

**DONOR  
EXPERIENCE**

## Is your team adjusting your fundraising strategy this fall because of the election cycle?

---



**Yes**, we have made significant changes.



**Yes**, we have made a few adjustments.



**Not yet**, but we are considering changes.



**No**, we don't think the election will impact our strategy.





# The Current Fundraising Environment

---

SECTION

1

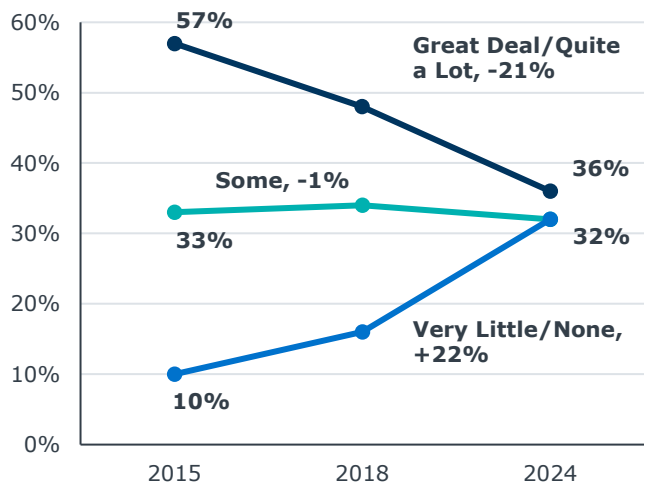


# Confidence in Higher Ed at An All Time Low

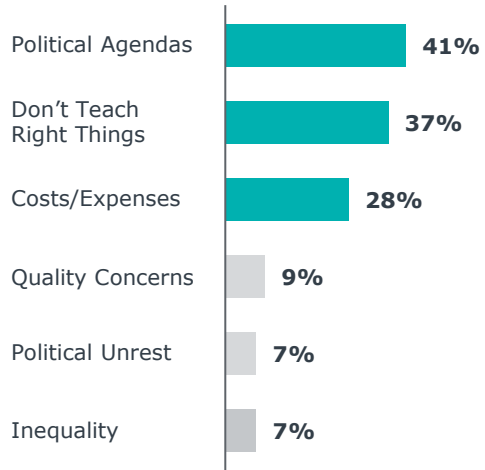
## US Adults with Little or No Confidence Tripled Across Last Decade

### Americans Divided on Higher Ed's Value

*Confidence in Higher Education, July 2024*



### Political Agendas and Curriculum Among Top Concerns



Source: Jones, Jeffrey, "U.S. Confidence in Higher Education Now Closely Divided", Gallup, July 2024; EAB interviews and analysis.

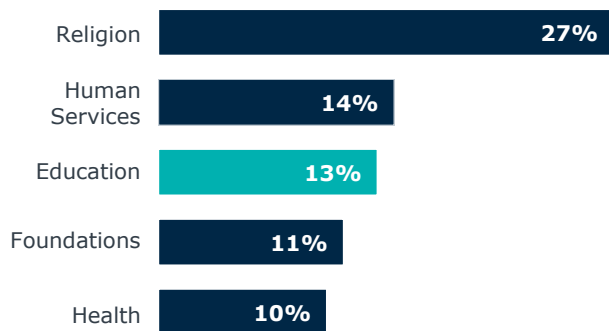
# Headlines' Impact on Advancement



## Donors Dissuaded by Negative Narratives

### Education Drops Below Human Services

Percent of Total Giving by Cause, 2022



### Donor Distancing

75%

Of millennials would give to charity over their alma mater

-12%

Median decline in donor count between FY22 and FY23



My alma mater does not need my money. They already receive state funding and charge outrageous tuition prices. **I'd rather give to people in need instead.**

*Anonymous Donor, Reddit*





# There Is A Lot Vying For Donors Attention

Your Already Distracted Donors Are Even More Distracted Right Now

In the **485 minutes per day** that U.S. adults engage with digital media, they are being met with...



**Continuous Political Advertisements**



**Economic Concerns**



**Nonstop News Coverage**



**Frequent Political Donation Requests**



**Overwhelming Social Media Activity**



# Individuals Are Invested In Election Fundraising



People Are Giving To What They Care About

**AP**

*Kamala Harris smashes fundraising record with stunning \$81 million haul over 24 hours*



*Trump Announces Nearly \$53 Million Fund-Raising Haul After Guilty Verdict*



*The campaign is getting real for political donors*



*Biggest fundraising day of the 2024 cycle*



**4.7 million**

**Individuals donated \$200 or more** during the 2020 presidential election

# But With Challenge, Comes Opportunity



People Are Engaged and Giving, Use This Moment To Your Advantage



Only **\$2.7 billion** has been raised so far for the 2024 presidential election... compared to the **\$499.33 billion** raised for all nonprofits and charities in 2023.



**Charitable giving increased** in 9 of the last 10 presidential election years.

## But How?

- ▶ Incorporate **mission and value-based** messaging
- ▶ Use **digital** to your advantage
- ▶ Prioritize **stewardship and retention** strategies



# Key Advancement Strategies During an Election Cycle

---

SECTION

2

# Key Strategies During an Election Cycle



Incorporate **mission and value-based** messaging



Use **digital** to your advantage



Prioritize **stewardship and retention** strategies

# The Power of a Mission-Driven Message

## Why Your Core Mission Matters in Fundraising



### Establishes Trust and Loyalty

Emphasizing what “good” your institution does reassures donors that their support is vital and impactful



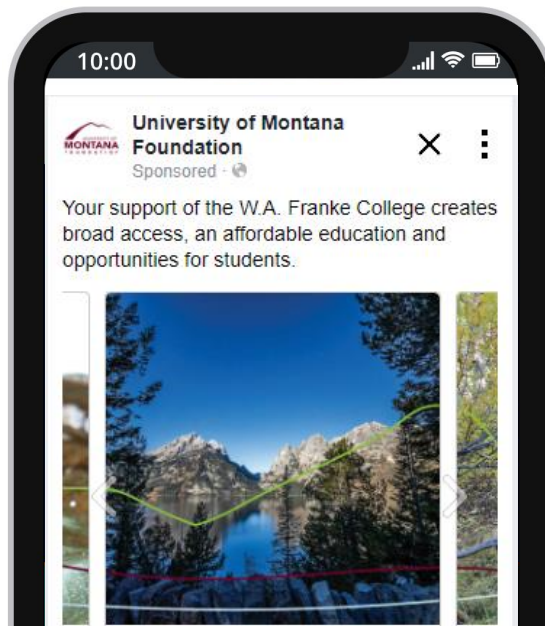
### Cuts Through Noise

A clear, compelling mission helps differentiate your institution from the multitude of causes vying for attention



### Aligns With Donor Values

Donors are more likely to give when they see that your mission aligns with their personal values and beliefs



A focus on sharing your mission via storytelling can be a strong tactic in advancement fundraising. Stories are remembered up to **22 times more** than facts alone.

# It's The Core of Who You Are, What You Do, and Why

14

Emphasizing Your Mission Sets You Apart In A Crowded Landscape



... generate, disseminate, preserve, and apply knowledge in order to **drive social, economic, and cultural progress.**



... provide an educational experience of exceptional quality and to contribute to the **development of scholars and professionals who drive societal change.**



...ensure student success and communities by providing affordable **access to higher education and workforce training.**

Highlight specific examples of your institution's impact to reinforce your mission:

**Increased graduation rates**

**Breakthroughs in research**

**Community service initiatives**

**Job and career placement success**

# Even In Noisy Environments, Missions Stand Out

“We build our engagement strategy around fostering a deep understanding of Washington University’s value with our stakeholders.

This helps us achieve multiple goals: **strengthening the university’s reputation, boosting alumni pride, ensuring students graduate with great jobs, and inspiring more students to choose a WashU education.”**

*Pamella Henson, Executive Vice  
Chancellor for University Advancement  
Washington University in St. Louis*



# Key Strategies During an Election Cycle



Incorporate  
**mission and  
value-based**  
messaging



Use **digital** to  
your advantage

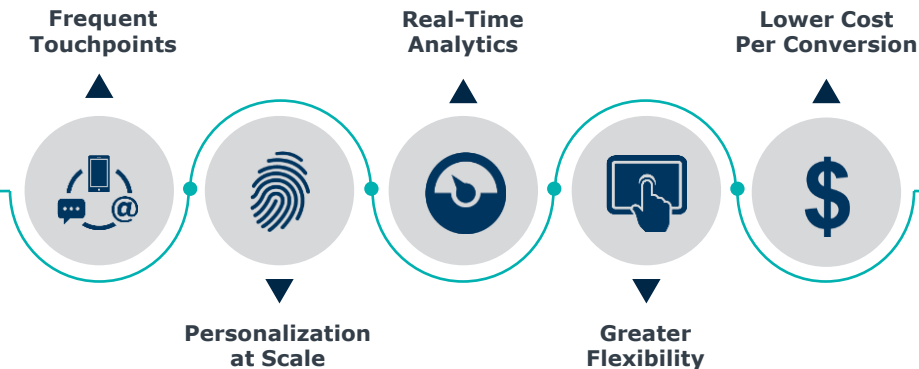


Prioritize  
**stewardship  
and retention**  
strategies



# Digital Has Many Benefits

An Easier, Faster, and More Engaging Way To Reach Donors



**63%** | of donors prefer to give online

**90%** | increase in EAB-influenced gifts from digital marketing<sup>1</sup>

1) Data reflects EAB partners from CYE22 to CYE23



# Campaign Flexibility Keeps You Agile and Adaptable

Pivot Creative and Deployment As Much As Needed, Affordably

Frequent Touchpoints



Real-Time Analytics



Lower Cost Per Conversion



Personalization at Scale



Greater Flexibility



**Greater flexibility during an election cycle allows you to...**

**Pivot messaging** quickly and easily

**Optimize campaign timing** based on current events

**Test and refine** copy and content faster

**Keep up** with changing donor behaviors and actions



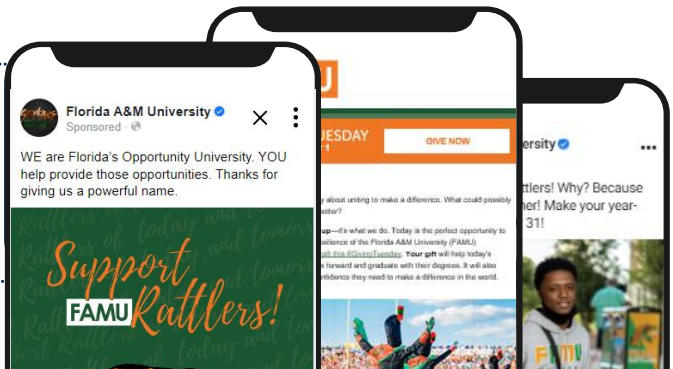
# Frequent Touchpoints Cut Through the Noise

## During Political Chaos, Stay In The Mix With Your Donors



Frequent touchpoints on digital platforms keep you in front of your donors even during noisy and disruptive times.

**Donors need 8+ touchpoints before giving their first gift.**



# Key Strategies During an Election Cycle



Incorporate  
**mission and  
value-based**  
messaging



Use **digital** to  
your advantage



Prioritize  
**stewardship  
and retention**  
strategies

# Retaining Your Current Donor Is Most Important



Making Them Feel Seen Will Keep Them In Your Atmosphere

Retention and stewardship strategies help donors feel seen, appreciated, and engaged – something particularly important **when they're being asked of their money and time in all different directions.**

## It's Getting More Difficult To Attract New Donors...



19.2%

decline in new donors in 2022



13.2%

decline in donors who gave less than \$100

## ...So We Must Prioritize Donor Retention



25%

of new donors typically give the following year



80%

of donors who give three years in a row will renew

Source: The Chronicle of Philanthropy, [Giving Was Up but the Number of Donors Was Down the First Three Quarters of 2022](#), January 12, 2023.

# What Your Donors Expect In Stewardship



Think Beyond The “Typical” Stewardship Tactics

## Older Donors

## Millennial & Gen Z Donors



### Meaningful Impact

Seek giving opportunities as solutions to real world problems



### Measurable Progress

Seek quicker turnaround with measured data toward a goal



### Endowments & Pledges

Attracted to the long-term impact of endowments & pledges



### Current Use Gifts

Attracted to the tangible results & ability to address issues in real time



### Restricted Support

Trust institutions to allocate funds where most needed



### Specific Person Support

Trust only specific faculty or programs to make desired impact

# Stewardship Is A Fundraising Strategy

**“Stewardship goes beyond gratitude - it’s about fostering lasting partnerships. We must nurture donor relationships to honor their generosity without exhausting them, **especially since we rely on their continuous support.**”**

*- AVP of Donor Relations*





# Final Takeaways and Additional Resources

---

SECTION

3



# Takeaways

1

Election cycles can create a noisy fundraising environment, but likely won't distract from advancement too much and can even open opportunities to engage with donors.

2

In times of disruption or noise, focusing fundraising messaging around your institution's mission and impact is critical.

3

Using a digital-first approach will allow you to deploy more frequent touchpoints and remain flexible with changing environments and donor behaviors.

4

Prioritizing stewardship and retention strategies will allow you to keep your donor base engaged and giving.



# How Can We Help?

I'd like to **speak to an EAB expert** about...



1

More strategies to keep alumni and donors engaged this fall

2

Digital marketing strategies I can implement into my program

3

Best practices stewardship and retention strategies

4

Another advancement need

# Thank You



**Jenny Jones**

*Principal,  
Advancement Marketing Services*

**[jjones@eab.com](mailto:jjones@eab.com)**



**Maria Vance**

*Senior Director,  
Strategic Research*

**[mvance@eab.com](mailto:mvance@eab.com)**



We value your feedback. Please take a few minutes to **complete the short survey that pops up in your browser.**



202-747-1000 | [eab.com](http://eab.com)

