HOW TO: Engage Alumni through Peer Screenings
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Peer Screening is a best practice for engaging volunteers to evaluate their peers’ donor potential. Peer screening is a proven technique in which small groups of alumni (8-20 individuals) review lists of fellow alumni and identify those whom they believe have the ability to make major gifts.

Goals:
- Engage current alumni donors;
- Increase campaign awareness;
- Work with volunteers who will advocate for GW and solicit gifts on the school’s behalf; and
- Build a list of major donor prospects for the school.

Logistics:
- Participants receive an introductory letter inviting participation and a follow-up letter under the dean’s signature.
- Meetings are held in locations where larger concentrations of alumni live and work.
- Sessions last approximately two hours and are generally held midweek (Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday), over lunch or in the early evening over a light dinner. You may find that optimal times vary according to location.
- Discussion is facilitated by one or two volunteer hosts—usually a member of an advisory board or the Board of Trustees. Development staff provide an overview of the endowment and plans to grow the endowment in strategic areas; the campaign and campaign priorities; the importance of alumni involvement with other alumni; and instructions for the exercise.
- Each volunteer receives a customized directory that includes two different lists. He/she reviews a list of their law school classmates based upon graduation year, as well as a “neighborhood list” of law graduates who live in the general area where the volunteer resides. Volunteers have approximately 90 minutes to review these lists, and are asked to mark the names of individuals they believe capable of giving, and to estimate their potential charitable giving capacity over the next five years.

Model:
- There is no discussion about the names reviewed during the screening
- No sensitive or confidential information is revealed
- Ratings are kept confidential and are only used to direct the work of development staff
• The process is repeated by other volunteers, and enables many classes to be reviewed many times
• Staff compare ratings
• Individuals receiving the same rating by three or more screeners receive particular attention as their appraisal is highly accurate

Follow-up:
• Volunteers receive thank you notes from GW staff; the confidential data is assimilated into a peer screening database; and the newly established ratings are used to plan regional campaign activity for the school.

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