HOW TO: Leverage Salons to Cultivate Prospective Donors
May 2016

Salons are intimate dinner events focused on a specific topic and intended to generate a high level of engagement between guests and hosts. The salon is hosted by one or two individuals with strong ties to a school or unit and who are leaders in their field.

Goal: Engage potential donors in a setting that facilitates personal interaction and follow up.

Logistics:

- Identify guest list/audience—aim to yield no more than 20 guests.
- Host at a facility with private room; one table seated strategically. Typically dinner is preceded by a cocktail hour; dinner lasts approximately 90 minutes.
- Hosts give opening remarks; introductions are made around the table, and everybody in the room participates in a single unified discussion led by the hosts.
- Invitations are sent via email from the dean/director/program head or the lead development officer.

Guidelines:

- Use already engaged alumni to reach out to new prospects.
- Small number allows for individual follow up.
- Moderator must ensure that all guests are engaged and participate in the discussion.

Follow-up:

- Hosting development officer sends a follow-up email to anyone who is an actual donor prospect; follow up is relatively easy, since everyone was engaged in the conversation and you know exactly what was discussed.
- GSPM has been able to close first time gifts from new salon participants!
Thank you to Chris Rotella for sharing his experience successfully organizing salon events for GSPM.