

THESIS

STRATEGIC FUNDRAISING COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR  
THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

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Anna Sprunger Gerber

Department of Journalism and Media Communication

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Master's Committee:

Advisor: Rosa Mikeal Martey

Peter B. Seel  
Brett Bruyere

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## ABSTRACT

### STRATEGIC FUNDRAISING COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS AT COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

As a globally-focused American institution of higher education, Colorado State University aims to bring international education opportunities to all 33,000 of its students. In 2017, CSU had more than 2,000 international students from 110 countries studying on-campus in Fort Collins. Nearly 17 percent of CSU students have an international experience – study, research, internship or service-learning opportunity abroad – before they graduate. To participate in international programs, students often incur substantial costs beyond what is required for regular class enrollment, including airfare and travel, fees, and additional tuition. These costs prevent some students from participating, and often result in higher student debt upon graduation for those who do. Additional financial resources, beyond those currently provided by the university, will allow the Office of International Programs to expand its offerings and services, increase program access to include more students, and ease the financial burden on participants.

To sustain and grow CSU's international programs long-term, private funding from alumni is crucial. OIP must work to solicit funds from donors through a cohesive, theory-driven fundraising communication strategy and plan for implementation. At present, communication from the university does not tap into the overwhelmingly positive experiences of CSU's education abroad alumni. This affinity group is willing to give so that future students can have international experiences, but they do not know how – more than a third do not realize that their financial support can make a difference.

Using theories of fundraising success, donor motivation, and persuasive media as a foundation, this project investigated ways to engage potential donors to financially support initiatives of the Office of International Programs at Colorado State University. Research methods included informal meetings with project stakeholders, an analysis of existing data related to international student satisfaction, and the collection of an original survey that examined attitudes toward international experiences and fundraising among 499 education abroad alumni. This research determined that focusing on alumni attitudes and social norms is the most effective path to stimulate philanthropic behavior. The study found that 46% of participants think that financial contributions from people like them help make education abroad possible for CSU students, and 55% would give to the Office of International Programs if they could. Further, almost all participants had overwhelmingly positive experiences abroad, and more than 95% of them would recommend the experience to future students.

These insights and others were used to develop a theory-driven, empirically-based communication plan that lays the groundwork for a successful and sustainable fundraising campaign. The plan focuses on engaging participant attitudes toward education abroad and seeks to change attitudes about giving, including social norms around giving. It proposes an approach that relies on storytelling in its communication materials to tap into alumni emotions and nostalgia. The present report provides conceptual background and previous research, an analysis of data collected for this project, and recommendations for implementation and future expansion. A separate communication plan document provides key findings and recommendations for CSU administration and staff so that they can integrate the goals and strategies of the university's overall communication, fundraising, and international strategies.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In 1870, Colorado State University (CSU) was founded as a land-grant institution – a public university focused on education, access and excellence. Today, nearly 150 years since its founding, CSU enrolls more than 33,000 students annually, and is setting the standard for public research universities in teaching, research, service and extension for the benefit of the citizens of Colorado, the United States, and the world.

On February 13, 2016, CSU launched its first billion-dollar comprehensive fundraising campaign, aimed at increasing scholarships for students, investing in world-class infrastructure, providing resources to attract exceptional faculty and staff, and significantly increasing CSU's endowment to ensure long-term financial health for the university (Phifer, 2016). However, not included in the overall fundraising campaign strategy was the Office of International Programs (OIP), CSU's 50-person unit focused on international student recruitment and success, the creation and implementation of education abroad opportunities for all students, and fostering international activities on campus and around the world. To facilitate fundraising to support initiatives within the Office of International Programs, and contribute to CSU's overall fundraising goal, OIP must work to solicit funds from donors through a cohesive fundraising communication strategy and plan for implementation. This project developed that strategic fundraising communication plan to launch these crucial fundraising efforts, laying the groundwork for a successful and sustainable fundraising campaign.

As a globally-focused university, CSU maintains an inclusive perspective that aims to bring international education opportunities to all students. As of 2017, CSU has more than 2,000 international students studying in Fort Collins, and nearly 17 percent of students have an

international experience – study, research, internships and service-learning opportunity abroad – before they graduate. International students, who represent 110 countries from around the world, bring diversity to CSU. International perspectives are central to everything that the university does, and CSU is dedicated to growing global connections through its programs.

The Office of International Programs at CSU creates and fosters international teaching, learning, research and engagement activities on campus and around the world. Through OIP, CSU plans to increase international student enrollment to 10% of the student body, and to increase education abroad participation by 100 students annually until 2020. This will allow the university to produce more globally-minded citizens who are positive contributors to a global future. To sustain CSU's international programs long-term, private funding from alumni and friends of the university with an affinity for CSU's international programs is necessary.

Using persuasion theory as a foundation, this project investigated ways to engage potential donors to financially support initiatives of the Office of International Programs by referencing historical and current fundraising campaigns and strategies. Furthermore, this research helped determine effects that different types of messages may have on donors, and which messages are likely to persuade them to act on the solicitation. Based on the audience's existing attitudes related to Colorado State University and its international programs, theories such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model and the Theory of Reasoned action helped predict alumni and friends' receptivity and likelihood to donate.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) posits that a person's behavior is determined by their intention to perform a behavior – in this case, donating money – and that this intention is, in turn, a function of their attitude toward the behavior and their subjective norm (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Assuming the targeted audience of this campaign has an existing affinity for

Colorado State University (i.e., a positive attitude), the TRA suggests targeting subjective norms and attitudes related to philanthropy to influence people's perceptions of their ability to perform the desired behavior (i.e., donating money). Norms – group-identity based codes of conduct that are understood and disseminated through social interaction – provide a convenient decision-making heuristic for people by removing the need to think critically about the consequences of each decision before acting on it. For this project, norms related to philanthropy and charitable giving are targeted to foster a culture of giving among potential donors, and the goal is to change potential donors' behavior through communication.

Building on information garnered through the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) helps determine how to design communication messages and materials that prompt action. The ELM describes two routes of persuasive influence – the central route, which accounts for persuasive impact produced by careful and thoughtful consideration of the true merits of information presented, and the peripheral route, which relies on simplistic positive and negative associations (Petty & Cacioppo, 1983). The key variable in choosing which route to target is involvement – the extent to which an individual is willing and able to process the message with which they are presented. Audiences who are motivated and able to think about the content of the message will have a higher likelihood of elaboration, and subsequently, to be persuaded by messages.

This project drew on a thorough review of literature related to persuasion theory and university fundraising. A meeting with the Division of University Advancement was conducted to identify university-wide fundraising priorities for the current 2016 *State Your Purpose* campaign. A meeting was also conducted with the Vice Provost for International Affairs to determine fundraising priorities within the OIP as outlined by each of the office's five functional

units. Meetings were also conducted with a faculty member from the Department of Journalism and Media Communication who creates and runs education abroad programs, and an international fundraising professional who works for Semester at Sea. In addition to providing context and history related to fundraising and internationalization at Colorado State University, these meetings helped identify target audiences and timeline, and helped craft questions for an original survey of education abroad alumni conducted for this project. Analysis of data from the International Student Barometer Survey data from 2013, which measured CSU international student satisfaction related to educational and personal experiences, also served to help understand some of the target audience. In addition to this existing data, this project surveyed a fundraising target audience, education abroad program alumni, to generate rich understandings of audience perspectives about the Office of International Programs and the potential contributing financially to support its programs.

The final product consists of two documents: 1) a comprehensive report that outlines the theoretical reasoning behind a targeted, persuasive communication fundraising plan for the Office of International Programs and in-depth analyses of the data collected (the current document), and 2) a professional strategic fundraising communication plan for the OIP with recommendations for implementation and best practices for sustainability (see **Appendix D**).

Chapter 2 of the current document presents an outline of relevant history and theories related to fundraising and persuasion theory. Chapter 3 includes an overview of CSU's current fundraising efforts and the goals of this project. Chapter 4 describes the research methods, which included three steps: informal meetings with project stakeholders, analysis of existing international student data, and the implementation of an original survey of education abroad alumni. A discussion of the research is in Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 summarizes the project

findings, and addresses its implications, limitations and recommendations for future research.

The strategic fundraising communication plan for education abroad alumni is in **Appendix D**.

## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Fundraising: History of major university giving in America**

Philanthropy in the United States dates back to the 1600s, when Native Americans gave European explorers food and assistance after their arrival in the “New World.” Not long after this charitable gesture, in 1638, English minister John Harvard bequeathed his library and half of his estate to help establish a new college in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Harvard College was subsequently created in his name, representing not only the first official record of charitable giving in (what would eventually become) the United States, but also the first instance of private college and university fundraising (Burlingame, 2004). With a long history of university fundraising in the United States, it’s important to understand the past to learn from the lessons and better prepare for the future.

After Harvard’s groundbreaking donation, many large donations were made by wealthy donors to aide newly-founded American colleges and universities, or establish new ones. From 1715-1718, American merchant Elihu Yale sent gifts to the Collegiate School of Connecticut, which, in recognition, changed its name to Yale College in 1718. Nearly 175 years later, in 1889, American industrialist and oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller gave \$600,000 to help found the University of Chicago in Illinois. In 1893, the philanthropy of Baltimore resident and railroad heiress Mary Garrett made possible the opening of Johns Hopkins University Medical School. Barrett’s donation was made under the condition that admission to the medical school be made equal for men and women, signifying one of the earliest recorded instances of purpose-driven philanthropy (Jarrett, 2011). Under the pseudonym “Mr. Smith,” innovator and entrepreneur George Eastman provided a new campus for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1912,

and two years later, black preacher and Howard University alumnus Jesse Moorland donated his collections of books and artifacts to his alma mater to form the first African American research library in America.

After centuries of donations from wealthy donors to elite American colleges and universities, in 1995, Mississippi washerwoman Oseola McCarty became the University of Southern Mississippi's most famous benefactor when she announced that upon her death, her life savings of \$150,000 would be donated to the university. Her action demonstrated that though historically practiced by the wealthy, philanthropic giving to higher education could be done by "average" people, too (Burlingame, 2004). University fundraising has grown and changed over time, becoming more diverse as time has gone on, to now include not only elite colleges and wealthy donors, but to reach all walks of life and every institution.

In 1915, Harvard University again led the way in fundraising innovation when the university began a comprehensive, multi-year mass fundraising campaign, the first of its kind in American higher education. The Harvard Endowment Fund (HEF) drive extended until 1925, and while the contentious campaign failed to meet its goal, it provided many valuable lessons that set the standard for the comprehensive campaign model that many universities still follow today (Kimball, 2014). Among many other things, the HEF campaign prompted the centralization of alumni affairs and development efforts at Harvard, forced a fundraising paradigm shift between the tradition of discretely soliciting wealthy donors and the new practice of mass solicitation, and set the standard for today's ubiquitous episodic pattern of continuous fundraising campaigns that alternate private solicitation of wealthy donors with public appeals (Kimball, 2014).

In the more than 375 years since the inception of American higher education fundraising, many historical changes have taken place. Traditional church-affiliated and individual solicitations have been replaced with increased direct institutional appeals, fundraising has become a centralized institutional activity, and, once limited to independent colleges, fundraising has now become accepted in public higher education as well (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990). An understanding of this history and the current state of university fundraising is important for the development of this project as it draws on these traditions to foster a fundraising culture among alumni of Colorado State University's international programs.

### **Modern day college fundraising**

While college and university fundraising is not a new practice, more than ever before, there is a need for private donors – individuals, alumni, foundations and corporations – to bridge the gap between waning public funding and growing educational needs. According to the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (2016), because of reduced levels of public funding and increased competition between higher education institutions in the United States and abroad, American universities are working harder than ever to secure necessary resources to support world-leading research and teaching. Additionally, there are benefits to private funding that are not provided by public support. In contrast to public funds, philanthropic income provides universities with flexible support that enables them to build upon their strengths, enhance the student experience, extend research programs, and create the best possible environments within which students and faculty can excel. Alumni relations and fundraising outreach also help colleges and universities build networks of friends and supporters who contribute to the long-term well-being of the university in ways beyond financial contributions (CASE, 2016).



## **Theories of Fundraising Success and Motivation**

While fundraising consultants and university development officers have long histories of practice and successes, what is uncommon in university fundraising is using scientifically tested communication theory, as this project does. Sixteen years ago, Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990) considered fundraising to be “thinly informed by research,” but in the years since the publication of their commentary, several interdisciplinary fundraising theories have emerged. Two models – public good/pure altruism and private good – outline dichotomous motivations for philanthropic giving, while motivation theory suggests factors that motivate and inhibit donor giving. While social identity theory provides context for individuals’ group affinity, relationship marketing offers an additional perspective useful in determining how to tap into these motivations.

Drezner & Huehls (2015) suggest two major motivation models for donor giving – the public good/pure altruism model and the private good model. The public good/pure altruism model explains that many donors are motivated to fill a direct need, rather than supplement a need. For example, a decrease in public funding for higher education may motivate donors to contribute funds to offset the funds lost. On the contrary, the private good model finds that donors may also make gifts for their own personal benefit. For example, a donor may be motivated to give because of a tax incentive, the publication of their name, or the feeling of belonging to a community, such as a university alumni network. Both models informed the current project to provide a better understanding of why alumni donors might be motivated and how to target them.

Research conducted by the Center on Philanthropy (2009) at Indiana University found top motivations for giving among college graduates included concerns about equity – or a feeling that those with more should help those with less – and making the world a better place. Donors

motivated to make the world a better place also gave a larger amount to charity, on average, than those driven by other motivations. A review of philanthropy motivation research conducted by IU researchers Sargeant and Woodliffe (2007) offers insight into the kinds of associations, messages and circumstances that compel people to donate. Research has shown that making small, multiple asks results in increased donor compliance, and positive portrayals of beneficiaries engender positive attitudes on the part of donors. Individual giving behavior can be motivated by empathy for the beneficiary group, and as perceived similarity with that group increases, so does compliance with fundraising requests. Giving behavior can be influenced by individual role models perceived as being relevant by the donor, and by communities of participation perceived as being relevant by the donor. Factors that inhibit donor behavior can include a lack of money, time, risk to an individual's ego, and doubts over the worthiness of a cause.

Social identity theory also provides context for why donors might be motivated to give. This psychological theory describes how individuals define themselves as being part of an organization, which in fundraising is often referred to as affinity. Groups that people belong to – social classes, sports teams, educational institutions, etc. – are an important sense of pride and self-esteem, giving people a sense of social identity, or, a sense of belonging to the social world (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). The more affinity or social identity a person has with an entity, the more likely they will be to support it, financially or otherwise (Drezner & Huehls, 2015). Understanding social identity theory helps provide a better understanding for how a person's community – in this case, Colorado State University – can play a role in why they decide to give.

In soliciting and stewarding donors, relationship marketing offers a social psychological perspective to guide the planning and development of messaging and communication strategy.

Relationship marketing emphasizes customer retention and satisfaction, rather than a dominant focus on sales transactions. Its goal is to establish, maintain, and enhance long-term relationships with customers and other partners, so that the objectives of both parties are met (Grönroos, 1994). In the case of higher education fundraising, relationship marketing outlines the importance of building and maintaining relationships between institutions and donors. Using this perspective as a foundation for fundraising communication can help higher education institutions attract and retain donors, based on their affinity for the university and specific programs for which they may be interested in providing support.

An understanding of these fundraising theories was necessary for this project to be successful in uncovering the motivations, group identity and affinity of Colorado State University alumni. Combined with historical fundraising knowledge, these theories serve as a foundation for the strategic and persuasive communication plan that facilitates fundraising for the Office of International Programs.

### **Theories of Persuasive Media**

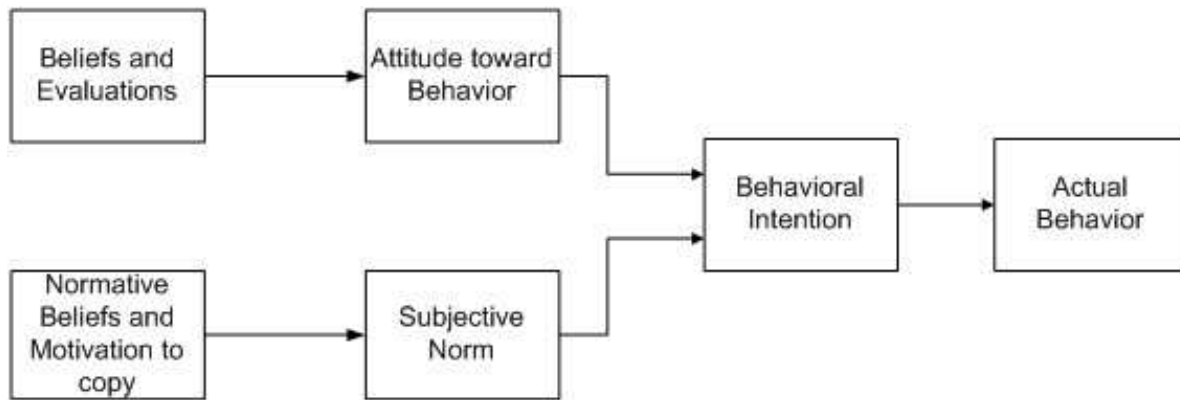
To be effective, communication projects such as this one should always consult and include information from media theories of persuasion. These theories help determine audience motivations, guide content and material creation, and dictate strategy. For this project, the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Elaboration Likelihood Model serve as the persuasive theoretical foundation to complement history and theory related to fundraising.

### **Theory of Reasoned Action**

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) provides a framework for understanding human behavior and crucial factors that influence people's decisions to perform, or not perform, specific behaviors. The TRA posits that a person's behavior is determined by their intention to perform a

specific behavior – in this case, providing financial support for Colorado State University’s international programs – and that this intention is a function of their attitudes toward the behavior, perceived expectations and opinions of others (norms), and motivation (Rice & Atkin, 1996). In media research, the Theory of Reasoned Action has proved useful in developing persuasive communication campaigns, and has previously been used to predict the likelihood of a person using social media (Peslak, Ceccucci, & Sendall, 2012), the likely reactions of a company’s stakeholders in a situational crisis (Coombs, 2012), and the effects of news media on consumers (Hoewe & Sherrick, 2015). Because of its parsimony and wide applicability, the TRA model is valuable in helping to understand what kinds of messages a person will find persuasive. By indicating which of its variables to target, the model serves as a useful tool for this project.

Five key variables make up the Theory of Reasoned Action model – beliefs and evaluations, attitude, normative beliefs and motivation to copy, subjective norms, and behavioral intention – and it is often represented as a flow chart with two paths of influence, as shown in **Figure 1** (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The model’s top and bottom routes combine to help influence a person’s intent to perform a behavior, and the left-to-right flow signifies how a positive association with each variable along the way increases the likelihood that a person will ultimately perform the actual behavior. Positive associations with a combination of top and bottom variables results in a higher likelihood that a person will seriously consider, and ultimately act, on the targeted behavior. In this case, financially supporting Colorado State University’s international programs is the actual behavior.



**Figure 1. Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975)**

In the Theory of Reasoned Action model, beliefs represent a person’s assessment of a behavior as being both relevant and worth the time, energy and money required to perform it, and evaluations represent an assessment of whether a behavior has a good or bad outcome (Ajzen, 2012). An attitude constitutes a person’s predisposition to respond to a behavior in a favorable or unfavorable manner (Ajzen, 2012). Normative beliefs represent what society thinks about a specific behavior, and specifically, how an individual thinks they will be perceived by society when choosing to perform the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2008). If a person believes that society thinks they should perform a behavior, they are then motivated to copy that behavior, and look to their social group for further validation through subjective norms. Rimal & Real (2003) define subjective norms as group identity-based codes of conduct that are understood and disseminated through social interaction. The more favorable a person’s attitude and subjective norms toward a behavior, the stronger the person’s intention to perform the behavior in question (Ajzen, 1991). And finally, behavioral intention is the immediate antecedent of actual behavior, representing a person's readiness to perform that given behavior (Ajzen, 2015).

On the topic of fundraising, the Theory of Reasoned Action suggests targeting attitudes toward behavior, or a positive view of financially supporting CSU, and norms, which dictate

whether a person perceives the behavior of donating money as being something that their peer group practices, and if it will be well-received if they do it too. Norms can also help dictate if a person perceives others at their income level as being donors, or others from their graduating class or program, and even how much people are giving.

Though the TRA has been expanded and updated since its inception to include a perceived behavioral control variable (known as the Theory of Planned Behavior), the older, simpler model is more appropriate for this research. The consideration of perceived behavioral control applies more to high-stakes situations in which a person is making a decision that could potentially have negative consequences on their life. In making a financial contribution, donors have complete control in the decision of whether to complete a financial transaction; the alternative to giving money does not necessarily result in a negative outcome or consequence.

This communication plan specifically targets norms related to philanthropy and charitable giving to foster a culture of giving among potential donors and their peers. In this case, norms represent whether a person believes that others like them should provide financial support for Colorado State University's international programs, and whether their peers expect them to provide support as well. Norms help shape how group members act by setting a standard to be followed (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). Addressing norms may also subsequently influence attitudes, although the model does not explicitly connect the two. Attitude was also kept in mind when developing fundraising communication materials, because of its potential influence on the way copy is written or pictures are chosen. Targeting social norms to change behavior is an approach that has been used in the past. For example, research has focused on the role of norms in college students' intent to use alcohol (Rimal & Mollen, 2013), on people's healthy and

unhealthy food selections (Mollen, Rimal, Ruiter, & Kok, 2013), and on water conservation behavior (Lapinski, Rimal, DeVries, & Lee 2007).

The goal of this project is to change or prompt potential donors' behavior through strategic communication. Alone, the Theory of Reasoned Action is a strong predictor of behavior, but the model is strengthened and reinforced with the help of other theories and models. While the TRA helps determine how to target messaging – in this case, directed toward influencing attitudes and social norms – the Elaboration Likelihood Model helps determine how to craft messages. A commonly-cited weakness of the Theory of Reasoned Action is its neglect of a variable related to self-efficacy, or whether a person believes that they can perform the specified behavior. Understanding this weakness of the model can be beneficial in helping to design materials. Including small encouragements, like the fact that any amount of money donated makes a difference, may help encourage donors who think they do not have enough money to give.

### **The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)**

While this project relies on the Theory of Reasoned Action to provide guidance for how to craft and target fundraising communication messages to a specific audience, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) helps subsequently determine how to design effective communication messages and materials that prompt action. The ELM takes a process-oriented approach to persuasion that describes two cognitive routes – the central processing route and the peripheral processing route. While the central route views attitude change as resulting from diligent consideration of information that is central to what people feel are the true merits of an argument, the peripheral processing route relies on simplistic positive and negative associations to influence decision-making (Petty & Cacioppo, 1983).

The basis of the Elaboration Likelihood Model is an assumption that an oversaturation of messages causes receivers to find a quick heuristic to help process the abundance of information. Key variables to consider when choosing which route to target include involvement, the extent to which an individual is willing and able to process the message with which they are presented, and motivation. Audiences who are motivated and able to think about the content of the message will have a higher likelihood of elaboration, and subsequently, to be persuaded by messages. For this study, it can be assumed that the audience has a high level of cognition, and an interest in information related to Colorado State University (i.e., high involvement). The ELM predicts how, and under what circumstances, different types of variables will affect the impact of a persuasive message (Booth-Butterfield & Welbourne, 2002). For this project, the ELM was particularly valuable in guiding the development of materials for the communication plan.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This project uses scientifically-tested communication theory related to fundraising and persuasion as a foundation for the development of a strategic fundraising communication plan for the Office of International Programs at Colorado State University. The history of university fundraising in America and the subsequent fundraising theories that have emerged – the public good/pure altruism and private good models for philanthropic giving, donor motivation theories, social identity theory, and relationship marketing – help explain the rationales and influences behind donor giving. A well-tested communication model, the Theory of Reasoned Action, provides suggestions for targeting different audiences based on their attitudes and social norms. As a final consideration, the Elaboration Likelihood Model’s suggestions for message development guided the creation of communication materials, in conjunction with the overall fundraising communication campaign targeted at potential donors.



To develop an effective communication campaign, this project investigated the following research question based on these models and research on persuasive communication:

**What are the most commonly held attitudes of alumni of CSU's international programs toward the University, its international programs, and donating money to support these programs?**

The data collected and analyses conducted to answer this question guided the strategies, tactics and messages of the fundraising communication campaign.

## CHAPTER 3. CSU'S CURRENT FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

After several years of silently raising private funds, Colorado State University publicly launched its largest and most ambitious comprehensive fundraising campaign on February 13, 2016. The *State Your Purpose* campaign launch announcement was made at CSU's annual 1870 Dinner in front of the university's highest-ranking officials and most-valued alumni, with a public announcement immediately following.

With the goal of raising one billion dollars in private funding by the year 2020, the campaign has four main priorities – increasing scholarships for students, investing in world-class infrastructure, providing resources to attract exceptional faculty and staff, and significantly increasing CSU's endowment to ensure long-term financial health for the university (Phifer, 2016). In addition to outlining priorities for the campaign, the university also offers suggestions for giving, including to its eight colleges, athletics, enrollment, academic and student affairs, and the library. In July 2016, after just four months of public fundraising, the university announced that it had raised \$197.8 million during the 2015-2016 fiscal year. Combined with funds from the campaign's silent phase, the total amount raised topped \$625 million at that point, with 62.59 percent of the fundraising goal raised (Phifer, 2016).

### **State Your Purpose Fundraising Communication**

In addition to outlining priorities and ways to give, as part of the *State Your Purpose* campaign launch, the university also provided campaign brand guidelines. The guidelines are designed to assist communicators in implementing the campaign brand through communication pieces, proposals, brochures, events and presentations, and to ensure campaign brand alignment with the university brand (Colorado State University, 2015). A digital guide explains how to

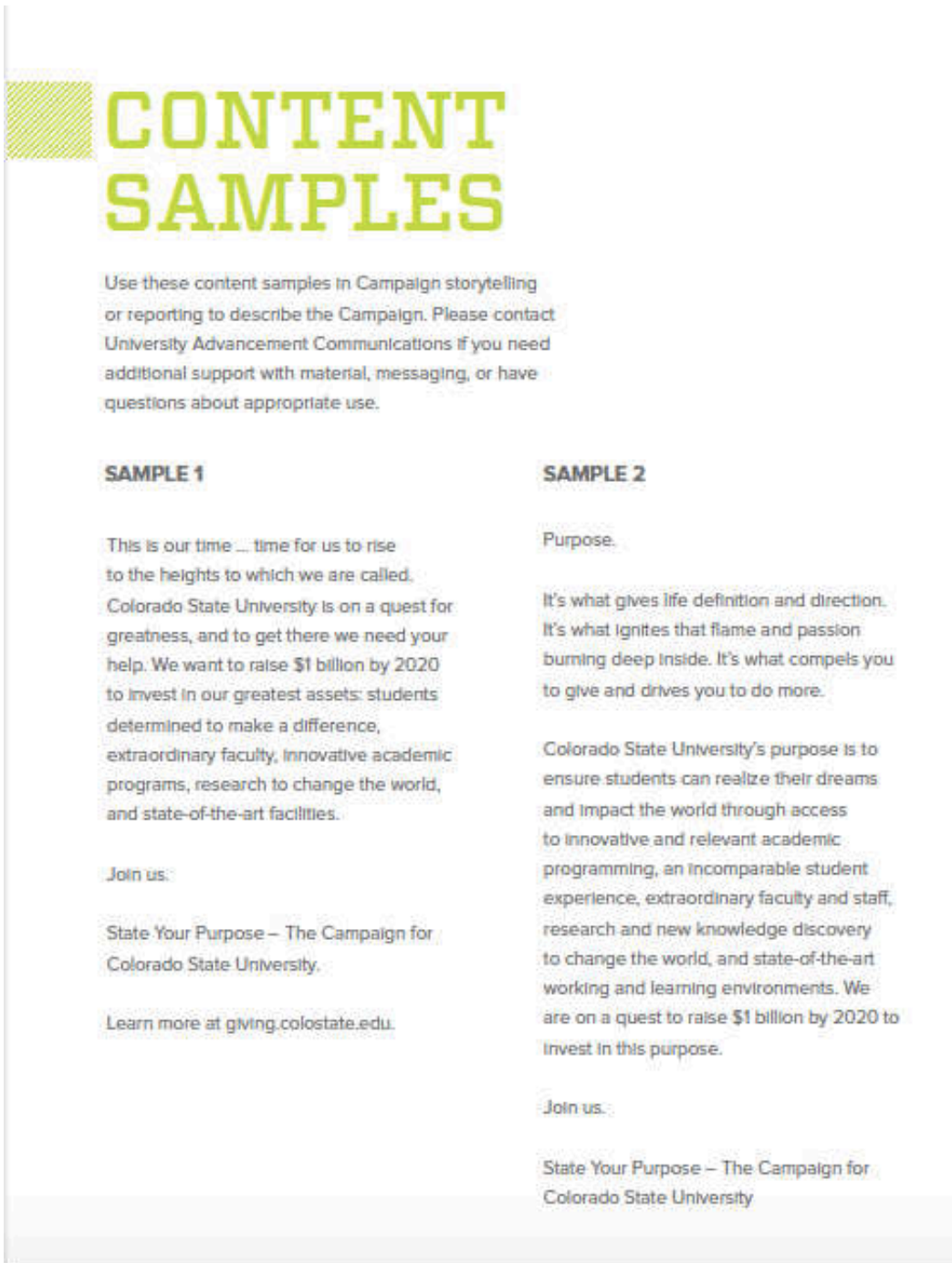
appropriately use the campaign and alternative marks, typography, archetype icons, color, graphical elements, email signature, photography and tone, and provides content and graphic samples. Following these guidelines in combination with the existing branding standards of the Office of International Programs ensures that the needs of both entities are met, and materials and messages are being produced with the utmost integrity and the best chance for success. Examples of graphics and language are shown in **Figures 2-4**.



**Figure 2. Example of branded campaign material (Phifer, 2016).**



**Figure 3. Example of branded campaign material (Colorado State University, 2015).**



**Figure 4. Guidelines for campaign message content (Colorado State University, 2015).**

These guidelines provided a baseline for the current project's communication and branding, from which Office of International Programs-specific guidelines and messages were

developed. The provided guide also served as a model for OIP-specific fundraising communication.

### **Project Details**

Interviews, analysis of existing data, and market research build on this theoretical foundation to provide a better understanding of the priorities and needs of CSU's *State Your Purpose* fundraising campaign and the Office of International Programs at Colorado State University, as well as the attitudes and norms of CSU's international alumni and education abroad alumni. This project aligns the goals of the two entities, using information gleaned from the research, to offer a strategic fundraising communication plan to address them.

The final product consists of two documents: 1) a comprehensive report that outlines the theoretical reasoning behind a targeted, persuasive communication fundraising plan for the Office of International Programs and in-depth analyses of the data collected (this document), and 2) a professional fundraising communication plan for the OIP with recommendations for implementation and best practices for sustainability.

The communication plan includes communication goals and strategy, concepts of and guidelines for developing communication materials, messages and designs, recommendations for campaign implementation, and ideas for future expansion. Concepts include written content samples, graphics and images, and sample communication materials. The plan's elements not only set the guidelines for the International Programs' communication, but ensure their alignment with the *State Your Purpose* campaign as well. With concepts already drawn up, and detailed instructions for targeting the audience and crafting effective materials and messages, the final product allows for immediate implementation.

## CHAPTER 4. METHODS

To thoroughly research and develop a comprehensive fundraising communication plan grounded in empirical evidence for the Office of International Programs at Colorado State University, an original survey of 499 CSU alumni who participated in education abroad during their time as students was conducted. Existing survey data that assessed international students' experiences at the university and with its international programs and services ( $n = 433$ ) were also analyzed. To help determine the appropriate questions for the original survey and strategies for the communication plan, in-person meetings with four key CSU administration, faculty and partners were conducted first. This provided clarification on the vision, goals, and techniques used for the plan created.

This project drew on resources available to the researcher through her role as Communications Manager for the Office of International Programs at Colorado State University, leveraging connections with CSU faculty, staff and administrators to schedule and conduct meetings with stakeholders within CSU's Division of University Advancement, Office of International Programs, CSU's new international education partner, Semester at Sea, and the Department of Journalism and Media Communication. These meetings were used to generate ideas for further topical research, and to guide the fundraising communication plan. Then, market research was conducted, including a review of previously collected data related to CSU international student satisfaction, and an original survey was conducted to gather data from alumni who participated in education abroad to get a better understanding of their attitudes toward the university, education abroad, and fundraising. **Table 1** shows each element of the

research, its purpose, and its output. The following sections of this chapter explain each element in detail.

**Table 1. Project Research Elements, Purpose and Output**

PROJECT ELEMENT	PURPOSE	DESCRIPTION
1. In-person meetings with stakeholders	Guidance, suggestions, and review for plan strategies, tactics, and communication materials	Written notes and feedback from 40-minute meetings with four stakeholders
2. International Student Barometer Survey (existing data)	Assessment of international students' attitudes toward CSU and their experiences to identify areas of opportunities and challenges in communicating fundraising goals to them	Existing survey conducted in 2013 among 433 CSU international students assessing their experiences, including satisfaction measures and willingness to recommend
3. Education Abroad Alumni Survey (original survey)	Assessment of participants' willingness to donate and identify effective communication strategies for connecting with and motivating alumni to donate	Original online survey conducted in spring 2016 among 499 education abroad alumni

### **Initial Meetings and Professional Supervision of the Project**

To receive guidance and earn project support from CSU International Programs and Advancement stakeholders, semi-structured meetings were conducted with four different individuals ahead of any original research for this project. During these meetings, stakeholders were asked a range of questions tailored to each individual and focused on the current campaign, CSU fundraising history, special considerations for the audience, goals, and challenges (see **Appendix A**). After completion, interviews were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis.

To facilitate the meetings, each person was emailed at their publicly available work email address. Through her position as Communications Manager with the Office of International Programs, the researcher was previously acquainted with two of the interviewees, and was



electronically introduced to the other two. In the initial email, the professional and academic roles of the researcher were explained, including a summary of the research project goals and the importance of their participation, before asking for an hour of their time. One person responded within two days, one after connecting with his administrative assistant a few days later, and another two responded after being prompted by a reminder email sent a week after the initial request.

Three meetings occurred with subjects at their offices, and one took place at a coffee shop. After asking permission at the start, each meeting was recorded using the Voice Memos app on iPhone. Recordings were done as a reinforcement to notetaking to ensure accuracy and allow for repetition. The four meetings lasted an average of 43 minutes.

Because each meeting subject's involvement in the process was different, each were asked different questions related to their level of involvement, experiences and expertise. The primary purpose of these meetings was to earn support from key individuals involved in the project, therefore it was unnecessary to conduct any sort of formal participant check or follow-up. After conducting all the meetings, notes from each meeting were drafted, and common themes were identified through qualitative thematic analysis.

These meetings offered valuable insight, anecdotal evidence, and guidance to ensure that the project fit within CSU's current fundraising efforts and the overall goals of the university, addressed the needs and goals of the Office of International Programs, and had support from key stakeholders. Coupled with existing data and original market research, this step also ensured that the communication plan developed through this research project fits within current university efforts, is of high quality, and is based on valid empirical evidence.

### **Existing Data - International Student Barometer Survey**

Once the meetings with stakeholders was complete, existing data from the 2013 International Student Barometer Survey (ISB) ( $n = 433$ ) was analyzed. Conducted by the British company i-graduate, the annual survey measured international student satisfaction related to students' educational and personal experiences at their institution of higher education. CSU last participated in the ISB in 2013, and the results of that survey served to help understand some of the fundraising communication campaign's target audience, CSU international students (who are now alumni and potential donors). Most importantly, it was used as a reference point for gathering additional data from education abroad alumni (American/U.S.-born alumni who studied abroad), providing comparable questions for an original survey conducted for the project. The data was used, in conjunction with anecdotal information gathered through stakeholder meetings, to offer consumer insight related to international alumni and their attitudes toward their experience as CSU students, and to help craft future recommendations for communicating with international alumni for fundraising and engagement.

The ISB survey measured variables such as international students' satisfaction with arrival and orientation, learning, living, and support services, and willingness to recommend to future students, and included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The final data included averages, as well as verbatim comments. More generally, the data on students' perceptions, satisfaction and affinity for the university offers indications of alumni attitudes toward the university and their feelings of group identity, which may ultimately influence their willingness to support CSU financially. This data aided in the development of effective fundraising communication messaging and strategy for this alumni audience by providing clues about their specific experiences, nostalgia and points of pride.

**Satisfaction:** The survey measured five different points of international student satisfaction – overall, arrival, learning, living, and support. Satisfaction was measured using a 4-point scale where 1 = Very Dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 3 = Satisfied, and 4 = Very Satisfied. Satisfaction average percentages are based on Very Satisfied and Satisfied responses. The overall satisfaction average of respondents was  $M = 3.10$ .

**Arrival:** The satisfaction average for arrival was  $M = 3.04$ . Satisfaction was higher among several more specific measures related to arrival – bank account ( $M = 3.26$ ), meeting faculty members ( $M = 3.25$ ), finance department ( $M = 3.23$ ), formal welcome ( $M = 3.16$ ), and residence services ( $M = 3.16$ ).

**Learning:** The satisfaction average for learning was  $M = 3.12$ . Satisfaction was higher among several more specific measures related to learning – online library ( $M = 3.34$ ), academics English ( $M = 3.34$ ), physical library ( $M = 3.33$ ), expert professors/TAs ( $M = 3.32$ ), and technology ( $M = 3.30$ ).

**Living:** The satisfaction average for living was  $M = 3.14$ . Satisfaction was higher among several more specific measures related to living – campus environment ( $M = 3.29$ ), eco-friendly attitude ( $M = 3.28$ ), good place to be ( $M = 3.26$ ), sport facilities ( $M = 3.26$ ), and safety ( $M = 3.25$ ).

**Support:** The satisfaction average for support was  $M = 3.10$ . Satisfaction was higher among several more specific measures related to support – student legal services ( $M = 3.45$ ), off campus life ( $M = 3.42$ ), CASA/Key/academic advisor ( $M = 3.38$ ), campus activities ( $M = 3.38$ ), and SLiCE ( $M = 3.38$ ).

**Recommendation:** The survey also measured respondents' willingness to recommend Colorado State University. Recommendation was measured using a 5-point scale where 5 = I

would actively encourage people to apply, 4 = If asked I would encourage people to apply, 3 = I would neither encourage nor discourage people to apply, 2 = If asked I would discourage people from applying, and 1 = I would actively discourage people from applying. Recommendation average percentages are based on actively encourage and would encourage if asked responses. The overall recommendation average for respondents was  $M = 4.22$ . Overall, 97.5% of respondents were either neutral, or would recommend Colorado State University.

### **Questions used for Education Abroad Alumni Survey**

Three questions used in the education abroad alumni survey conducted in spring 2017 were modeled after similar questions from the 2013 International Student Barometer Survey. The first two questions used included one Likert scale question about whether someone would recommend their international experience at CSU to future students, and a second open-ended question asking for additional information about why respondents would or would not recommend their CSU. The third question used Likert scales to ask people to respond to nine different measures of satisfaction – transition to foreign country, accommodations, cost/value, location, academics, support from CSU, relationships with locals while abroad, relationships with other internationals while abroad, and relationships with other Americans while abroad.

### **Market Research – Education Abroad Alumni Survey**

In addition to analyzing existing data representing a segment of the fundraising communication plan's target audience (international students), this project surveyed education abroad alumni to gain a better understanding of the attitudes and perceptions of that key population toward philanthropic giving and their international experiences as a student. The in-person meetings with CSU stakeholders and international partners, as well as the survey questions from the International Student Barometer survey, helped provide valuable insight to

help craft survey questions and ensure proper measurement of appropriate variables and question formation.

### **Population and sampling**

The survey ( $n = 499$ ) targeted CSU education abroad alumni, defined as graduates of the university who participated in an education abroad experience during their time as a student. This includes for-credit and not-for-credit study, research, internship and service-learning programs in foreign countries. CSU's Advance donor management database contains approximately 6,000 education abroad alumni on record, ranging in age from recent college graduates to those in their mid-to-late-50s, including both men and women. The young demographic makeup reflects an increase in popularity and availability of international opportunities for students in the recent past. The sample was majority white (72%) women (73%), likely because traditional education abroad participants tend to be white women as well. The sample represents approximately 2.9% of CSU's 207,861 living alumni (Colorado State University, 2015).

### **Recruitment**

Participants were recruited through email. A list of education abroad alumni emails was pulled from the Division of University Advancement's Advance alumni, donor, parent and friend database, and approximately 6,000 recipients received an email that included a recruitment message and survey link (see **Appendix B**). Included in the recruitment message was the option to enter a \$50 Amazon gift card drawing by including an email address at the end of the survey. The recruitment message was sent through Advancement's email client from the name "CSU Office of International Programs," and included a university logo. Any replies went directly to [anna.gerber@colostate.edu](mailto:anna.gerber@colostate.edu).

Using Qualtrics, the survey was administered over a two-week span in early March 2017. An initial email request was sent to the education abroad alumni list on Wednesday, March 8, and the survey closed after 14 days.

## **Measures**

The survey consisted of five categories of questions – screening, experience, outcomes and satisfaction, willingness to support, and demographics. Questions were written after meeting with key stakeholders and analyzing the existing International Student Barometer survey and data as references for language and ideas for inquiry (see **Appendix C**).

### ***Screening questions***

The survey asked respondents what year they graduated from Colorado State University, or what year they last attended, and what their program of study was. It then asked if, during their time as a student, they participated in an education abroad experience (defined as a for-credit or not-for-credit study, research, internship or service-learning experience in a foreign country). If the respondent chose no, Qualtrics took them to the end of the survey.

### ***Experience***

The next set of questions asked for more information about respondents' education abroad experiences, including when they participated, which country (or countries) they studied in, the specific program or foreign institution at which they studied, the program type (study, research, internship, service-learning, other), and duration of study. Questions in this section also asked respondents if they received a scholarship or other type of financial aid to fund their education abroad experience.

### ***Willingness to support***

The third section aimed to measure respondents' norms and motivations related to giving. Likert scale questions were used to assess how strongly respondents felt that financial giving is important, and gauge their perception of CSU alumni giving, including whether other CSU alumni give to the university, whether alumni like them (e.g., same graduation year, same major) give, and whether they personally would be willing to give, or if they have already given. Questions also assessed respondents' willingness to support international education experiences for current and future students, and to what extent (e.g., giving time, giving small/large amounts of money, giving short term/long term). Final questions gauged respondents' willingness to give to support education abroad programs and students through the Office of International Programs, or if their preference would be to support other campus initiatives, such as an academic department, pre-professional organization (e.g., Public Relations Student Society of America, Future Farmers of American, etc.), or extracurricular activity (e.g., intramural sports, fraternity or sorority, etc.).

### ***Outcomes and satisfaction***

The fourth section measured respondents' attitudes toward education abroad and their international experience. Likert scales were used to measure respondents' overall satisfaction, the likeliness that they would participate again if given another chance, and their likeliness to recommend the experience to future students. Further questions addressed whether respondents felt their education abroad experience enhanced their time as a student at Colorado State University, whether they made personal connections with peers and/or CSU faculty during their experience and if those connections enhanced their time as a student, and if they have spent more time abroad because of their experience. Questions also addressed how the experience has

ultimately helped (e.g., personal growth, professional success) and/or hindered (e.g., postponing graduation, incurring debt) their personal and professional success. Open-ended questions were featured throughout to allow for elaboration on several different points.

### ***Demographics***

The survey concluded with four demographic questions, starting with an open-ended question asking their age. Respondents were then asked to choose their gender and household income by selecting one option from several choices. They were asked to choose their race, checking all that applied from several choices. Finally, the survey concluded with the option to enter their email address to be included in a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card.

### **Research Procedures**

Using Qualtrics, a secure online questionnaire platform, the survey was administered to CSU education abroad alumni, defined as Colorado State University alumni who participated in a university-sanctioned education abroad experience. A list of emails was pulled from the Advance donor management database maintained by the CSU Division of University Advancement, which included approximately 6,000 education abroad alumni. After crafting a recruitment message and the five-section, 37-question survey questionnaire in Qualtrics, the survey was administered over a two-week span. The alumni list was blind-copied to protect recipients' privacy, and sent through Advance's email client from the name "CSU Office of International Programs" to establish familiarity and legitimacy.

Once collected, data from the market research survey was used to generate rich understandings of audience perspectives related to their education abroad experience and their potential to financially contribute to support these programs in the future. Data was analyzed for trends, perceptions and norms related to giving, attitudes and satisfaction with education abroad,



recommendation, and memories. These results helped provide a better understanding of where persuasive communication is needed with this audience, and how it should be developed and implemented. Data was also compared to the results of the international student satisfaction data to determine differences between the two populations and how they should be targeted. Together with the information garnered through face-to-face meetings with project stakeholders, this survey data helped shape the fundraising communication plan. The table below outlines the steps taken and resources used to complete the project.

**Table 2. Project Steps**

	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Step 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted meetings with Whei Wong Howerton, Jim Cooney, Pete Seel, and Audra Brickner</li> <li>• Analyzed meeting notes and transcripts</li> <li>• Identified themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recording device</li> <li>• Prepared questions</li> <li>• Notebook for notetaking</li> <li>• Microsoft Office software</li> </ul>
Step 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyzed International Student Barometer data</li> <li>• Identified themes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISB data</li> <li>• Microsoft Office software</li> </ul>
Step 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrote and conducted education abroad alumni survey</li> <li>• Analyzed education abroad alumni survey data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualtrics online questionnaire</li> <li>• Email list from Advance donor database</li> <li>• SPSS</li> <li>• Microsoft Office software</li> </ul>
Step 4:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created strategic fundraising communication plan, including recommendations for implementation and future expansion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microsoft Office software</li> <li>• Adobe Creative Suite software</li> </ul>

## CHAPTER 5. RESULTS OF STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

This chapter provides an overview of the information gathered during stakeholder meetings. The goal of these meetings was to gain a better understanding of Colorado State University's fundraising practices and goals to produce an effective strategic fundraising communication plan that coordinates well with the needs and aims of key stakeholders at CSU.

### **Meetings with Stakeholders**

The individual, semi-structured meetings with project stakeholders served as the launch for this project, helping to ensure the research was conducted thoroughly and responsibly, and followed academic guidelines while also fitting within the context of the university's fundraising efforts. Meeting subjects provided guidance and insight into audiences, identified fundraising priorities for the university and for the Office of International Programs, highlighted special considerations for messages and communication materials, and provided idea generation for conducting effective research and producing a strategic and relevant final product.

While conducting these four meetings and gathering different perspectives on fundraising and international programs, three common themes emerged from stakeholder responses: 1) storytelling is an important tool to engage potential donors and promote university priorities, 2) if alumni cannot come on campus, bring CSU to them, and do so consistently, and 3) relationships are key to maintaining personal connections between alumni and CSU.

### **Audra Brickner**

For the first meeting, I met with Semester at Sea's Vice President of Advancement, Audra Brickner. As head of fundraising for Semester at Sea, an education abroad program affiliated with CSU, Audra is able speak to the experience of building relationships and soliciting

donations from alumni of an education abroad program. Because of her prior experience as a fundraiser for CSU's Colleges of Engineering and Business, Audra is also able to provide perspective on raising money from international alumni, particularly those living in Asia, who represent a significant proportion of CSU's international alumni.

I met with Audra for 48 minutes on October 5, 2016, at her office on Centre Avenue, just south of the CSU campus. I asked her questions about the characteristics and giving behaviors of international alumni and alumni of education abroad programs, since she has experience working with both populations. Though both alumni groups were discussed, the conversation naturally gravitated more toward a dialog about international alumni and her experiences fundraising internationally and communicating with donors who live far away from CSU.

During the meeting, Audra brought up several considerations from her experiences cultivating relationships and soliciting donations from international alumni. She noted that her understanding of international alumni is that they tend to feel most connected to Colorado State University and their time as a student through their faculty mentors and professors, and their academic programs. International alumni are often willing to give in honor of someone who influenced or supported their academic experience at CSU, and humbly prefer not to put their own name on their philanthropic donations.

During our conversation, Audra also emphasized the importance of connecting international alumni back to CSU and to their experiences as a student. She recommended providing them with photographs of campus, logoed apparel, and other mementos to remind them of their time as a student. In Audra's past experiences, she has created custom photobooks containing images of campus, facilities, and faculty to aid in reconnecting alumni to the university and their own experiences. This is especially important when traveling abroad to visit

with alumni, as gift-giving is an international custom and these items can spark meaningful and insightful conversations about the past, present and future of CSU.

Finally, Audra noted the importance of treating all alumni equally and not giving preferential treatment to some over others. In her experience, this strategy has resulted in unexpected donors coming forward after being treated well.

### **Jim Cooney**

For the second meeting, I met with Jim Cooney, CSU Vice Provost for International Affairs. As VPIA, Jim oversees five functional units – Education Abroad, International Student & Scholar Services, International Initiatives, China Programs, and Operations & Communications – and 50 employees within the Office of International Programs. In 2006, Jim wrote CSU’s first-ever internationalization plan, and in 2013, spearheaded a successful campaign that resulted in CSU winning the Senator Paul Simon Award, NAFSA: Association of International Education’s highest honor, awarded to one university a year in recognition of their comprehensive internationalization efforts. Jim has extensive experience in higher education and international education, resulting in his familiarity with campus fundraising and international priorities and audiences at CSU and other universities around the country.

Jim’s involvement in the project is two-fold. As Vice Provost for International Affairs, he is uniquely able to provide information and insight about the short- and long-term goals of the Office of International Programs, and how fundraising can benefit campus international initiatives. In addition to his role in the project research, Jim serves as the supervisor for my professional position as International Programs’ Communications Manager. He was involved throughout the duration of this research project, helping to ensure that the projects fits within the scope of the Office of International Programs and its needs. Since this project ultimately benefits

the office, its employees, and the populations it serves, Jim was more than willing to be of service.

I met with Jim for 40 minutes on October 10, 2016, at his office in Laurel Hall on the Colorado State University campus. Given his position at the university and his role in this project, the questions I asked centered around his perception the current state of international programs at CSU and their importance and value, as well as his ideas for maintaining and growing these programs in the future. I asked for an overview of current fundraising efforts for international programs at CSU, as well as perceived barriers to these efforts, and ideas for fundraising priorities and initiatives.

In this meeting, three main funding priorities for International Programs were identified. Per Jim, the most “obvious” funding needs for the Office of International Programs are education abroad scholarships for American/U.S.-born students, scholarships to recruit and fund international students’ study at CSU, and discretionary money to be used for international-themed on-campus programming. Jim noted that “trying to open the doors for domestic students” to participate in education abroad is a top priority because “the experience changes students’ perspectives” and exposes them to important experiences. Scholarships for international students are crucial to being able recruit and fund students from around the world, which boosts CSU’s enrollment, promotes diversity, and attract talented students. For students who are not otherwise exposed to international experiences during their time at CSU, the hosting and supporting of international programming – including events like international speakers, and the hosting of cultural exchange groups – offer a global perspective on-campus.

Ambitious long-term priorities were also brought up during the conversation, such as establishment of a new center for international affairs to house international research and

academic programs alongside CSU's international-focused units (e.g., INTO CSU English language center, the Confucius Institute, and the Office of International Programs). Since those priorities are out of the scope of this project, and not seen as needs for the immediate future, they were discussed only briefly.

Throughout our conversation, Jim was also able to identify some challenges for moving forward, along with reasons why a fundraising strategy has not previously been implemented. The main challenges he mentioned were logistical, citing the lack of dedicated staff and limited travel and operational budgets to communicate and connect with far-reaching alumni. He also cited the young age of international alumni and alumni of education abroad programs as being a barrier in getting them to donate, saying that “[alumni] need to get older and more successful” before we can rely on their financial support. Another challenge named was a lack of perspective on specific fundraising goals and the monetary amounts that each goal requires. Jim perceives this information as crucial to donors who want options and priorities to choose from, and which simply have not been established yet. Despite these challenges, he recognizes the importance of developing and maintaining connections with alumni, friends, and corporations in the U.S. and around the world, and is willing to think progressively about ways to connect and solicit potential donors and to dedicate resources to making that happen.

### **Pete Seel**

For my third meeting, I spoke with Journalism and Media Communication Professor Peter B. Seel. In addition to being a committee member for this project, Pete has traveled extensively internationally, taught international exchange students, participated as a faculty member on multiple Semester at Sea voyages, and has designed, promoted and taught two international education programs – one in Europe and one in Australia/New Zealand – run by the

Journalism and Media Communication Department at CSU. Pete's expertise and direct experience helped provide insight about the motivations and attitudes of education abroad program participants, and the connections between alumni and the faculty who participate together on these types of international experiences.

I met with Pete on October 12, 2016, for 35 minutes at his office on campus in the Clark Building. After giving me a background of his own international experiences, starting with traveling around the world through his service in the Air Force, I asked questions about his more recent, pedagogical international experiences with both international and American/U.S.-born students. We talked about the outcomes of these educational experiences, and the personal and academic growth that often results.

Throughout my conversation with Pete, he repeatedly brought up the theme that an education abroad experience is life-changing for students, as it "broadens their horizons" and exposes them to people and situations outside their comfort zone. International experiences can have long-term impacts on students, inspiring them to go on to travel, work, live, or pursue more education internationally.

As a faculty member, Pete provided unique perspective on maintaining connections with his students. He has fostered and maintained the kind of impactful, personal relationships that enrich an international experience for students, and which they value and remember during their lives after college. When asked how he maintains these important connections, he cited social media as a key contributor in recent history – he is now able to keep in touch with international friends and peers, and former students, easier than ever before.



## **Whei Wong Howerton**

For the final meeting, I met with Whei Wong Howerton, Executive Director of University Advancement Communications at Colorado State University. The meeting with Whei served to identify university-wide fundraising priorities for the current *State Your Purpose* campaign, and to gain a better understanding of the university fundraising campaign's communication. Her expertise is related to both fundraising and communication, so in addition to being able to speak to the current campaign's goals and priorities, she provided insight about CSU's alumni network, branding, and targeted campaign communication and solicitations.

I met with Whei for 47 minutes on October 13, 2016, at the Mugs Coffee Lounge on Laurel Street near both of our offices. Given Whei's inside perspective on the university's capital campaign, I asked a variety of questions about the campaign's communication strategies and special considerations for communicating with diverse populations and potential donors who live far away. The conversation also focused on utilizing existing resources and communication vehicles, especially events and milestones, related to the campaign to engage international programs alumni.

As a communication professional, Whei's priority was discussing storytelling, which she cited as an important tool to use in making the case for CSU's needs and priorities related to the capital fundraising campaign. Through the stories of faculty, staff, students and alumni, CSU can illustrate the importance of education experiences, outline fundraising priorities, demonstrate the need for financial support, and illustrate the impact of philanthropic giving.

Another highlight of the conversation was Whei's insistence on the importance of acknowledgement. By acknowledging a potential donor, whether they have given before or not, CSU communicates to alumni that we remember who they are, we want them to know that they

are still important to us, and we hope that we are important to them as well. It is also important to thank them for being part of the CSU network, and to acknowledge their support, whether they are a donor or not.

Whei also mentioned the importance of special events in engaging alumni and other potential donors. There are annual, hallmark events, like CSU Homecoming, which serve to connect the CSU community both on campus and around the world. In Whei's professional opinion, it is of utmost importance to make potential donors feel included in those celebrations of Colorado State University, whether they can make it to campus for the actual event or not. Another event-related consideration is connecting with people in their home countries and cities, whenever possible. This includes helping to motivate and mobilize alumni and partners to host events and meetings among themselves, but also to ensure that when CSU constituents travel abroad, that they take time to connect with local alumni and potentially engage them in their academic or industry efforts abroad.

Finally, Whei highlighted the importance of understanding that there are many ways for alumni to give back to CSU. While not every prospective donor is prepared to give money at the time when they are first asked, allowing them to remain connected and give back to the university in other ways is important in keeping them connected and engaged until they are ready and able to make a financial contribution. The alternative ways she mentioned for giving back were the donation of time (volunteering), talent (skill-based volunteering), treasure (the donation of an heirloom or other item of value), and testimony (leveraging their story and personal experiences).

## Themes from Stakeholder Meetings

Throughout the stakeholder meetings, three themes emerged as important considerations when communicating with international programs alumni and friends to solicit them as potential donors – 1) using storytelling to communicate with potential donors and promote university priorities, 2) communicating with alumni regularly and consistently to keep them engaged and connected to CSU, especially if they cannot easily return to campus, and 3) cultivating and maintaining relationships between alumni and CSU, not just when asking for money. These key themes provided valuable advice for developing the strategic fundraising communication plan, as well as influencing the development of questions for the education abroad alumni survey.

Within the context of communication and marketing, storytelling is a versatile tool to engage audiences by sharing authentic, narrative experiences with them. Storytelling – the first theme that emerged from the stakeholder meetings – can be used to demonstrate the challenges and successes of CSU students and programs, highlight university strengths (e.g., innovation, community, academic programs, etc.), share the impact of gifts, and transport alumni back to their experiences. These types of stories can be shared through a variety of print and online media, including print mail communication like postcards, letters or magazines, email communication like e-newsletters or direct emails, and online outlets like the *CSU SOURCE* newsroom, college/department websites, and social media. As it relates to fundraising, storytelling can be used as a persuasive tool to convince alumni to become donors.

The concept of engagement was the second theme that emerged from the stakeholder meetings. Within the scope of this project, using a communication lens, the concept of engagement means encouraging alumni to actively participate in the CSU community and in this case, the university's international programs. Engaging alumni means connecting with them

through communication to foster a feeling of connection between them and current students. This is particularly important for people who are far removed from the CSU experience, either by age or geography.

In higher education, the importance of building and maintaining relationships between institutions and alumni often relates back to an institutional goal of converting alumni enthusiasm into financial support. The theme of relationships, which emerged during stakeholder meetings, relates back to the theoretical foundation of this study and the theory of relationship marketing. Relationship marketing guides the planning and development of messaging and communication strategy by emphasizing customer retention and satisfaction, rather than a dominant focus on sales transactions. With the goal of establishing, maintaining, and enhancing long-term relationships with customers and other partners, relationship marketing theory suggests that the objectives of both parties are met (Grönroos, 1994). In the case of fundraising, “customers” are alumni, and their connection to, and pride in, the university and its specific programs may be converted into financial support.

Two themes from the stakeholder meetings – storytelling and relationships – were particularly useful in guiding the development of questions for the education abroad alumni survey, and several open- and closed-ended questions were incorporated with them in mind (see **Table 3**). The third theme – engagement – is more relevant to the communication plan.

**Table 3. Meeting Themes and Associated Survey Questions**

Theme	Questions
Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have any other thoughts on why you would or would not recommend an education abroad experience to current/future CSU students? (open ended)</li> <li>• Do you have any other thoughts about what was or was not especially satisfying or fulfilling during your education abroad experience? (open ended)</li> <li>• What was the most important thing you learned during your education abroad experience (academic or personal)?</li> <li>• What is your favorite memory from your education abroad experience?</li> <li>• What elements of international culture from your education abroad are still part of your life today? (e.g., food, clothing, home furnishings, etc.)</li> </ul>
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the following questions, please rate your satisfaction with each aspect of your education abroad experience. (5-point Likert scale) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relationships with locals while abroad</li> <li>○ Relationships with other internationals while abroad</li> <li>○ Relationships with other Americans while abroad</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Please select how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Participating in an education abroad experience: (5-point Likert scale) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Resulted in new friends.</li> <li>○ Resulted in strong connections with faculty.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## CHAPTER 6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter provides an overview of the results of informal meetings with stakeholders, the analysis of the existing International Student Barometer data, and the original education abroad survey conducted for this project. It identifies themes from the stakeholder meetings and trends in the survey responses from both international and education abroad alumni populations. This comprehensive analysis was used to guide the development of the fundraising communication plan.

### **International Student Barometer Survey Existing Data**

An analysis of the International Student Barometer data yielded important insights about the international alumni population, including feelings of support and acceptance during their time as students, an appreciation of the beauty of campus and the nearby surroundings, feelings about the importance of academics, and a willingness to recommend CSU to future students. International alumni felt supported during their time at CSU, especially by the Office of International Programs, community volunteers, and their professors/academic advisors, as well as safe, welcome, and connected to the Fort Collins community. Alumni also felt a deep appreciation for the beauty of CSU's campus, as well as the natural beauty of the surrounding areas. Academics were one of the most important things to international alumni, who felt intellectually challenged and supported by their professors and advisors during their time as students.

The first insight from the satisfaction data was that international alumni felt supported during their time at CSU, especially by the Office of International Programs, community volunteers, and their professors/academic advisors. Open-ended responses supported this insight:

- “I LOVE my temporary family who offered me accommodation for the first few days I arrived here. They are really nice and friendly. Also, I loved the welcome dinner which host by a nice and sweet family for international students! These are really nice experience, and I am really impressed by how community treat the CSU students.”
- “Almost every service are perfect, staff are very warm, cheerful and helpful.”
- “For me as an international student being far from home and family is very difficult, and personal circumstances as a new mom have been particularly challenging. However, EVERY single person that is part of the CSU staff have been nothing but supporting, caring and patient. The academic experience has been challenging, inspiring and nothing short from the best experience of my life.”
- “Because I really enjoy studying at CSU, my professors are very learned, helpful and friendly, they always strive for knowledge as well. The campus is very gorgeous, especially the Oval. Almost every service are perfect, staff are very warm, cheerful and helpful.”

The second insight was that as students, international alumni felt safe, welcome and connected to the Fort Collins and CSU communities. Open-ended responses supported this insight:

- “I'm really loving my time here at CSU. The international office has made my transition here really easy. I also love school life. There so much to see and do, my friends are amazing (I love the way you put me with other American students, not the Internationals!) and the choice of classes you have on offer all appeal to me.”
- “People here are really friendly and nice, make me feel I belong here.”
- “The American friends I have are quite amicable and easy to get along with. I did doubt if I would be accepted here being from another country and thinking maybe Americans do not like Internationals but hey, honestly i have never felt too much so.”
- “My arriving was such a fantastic experience! Before I could wonder about my way out, somebody approached me with a smile asking me if I was not looking for a pick-up to CSU. Fort Collins was sunny and beautiful. I met welcoming people with smile on their faces. I loved it, I actually felt at home!”

The third insight was that as students, international alumni felt an appreciation for the beauty of CSU’s campus, as well as the natural beauty of the surrounding areas. Open-ended responses supported this insight:

- “Fort Collins is a very nice and beautiful city to live in and it provides numerous opportunities for foreigners to learn about the American culture. Also the natural beauty and wildlife provided by natural reserves within town and the nearby Rocky Mountain National Park is one of my all-time favorite living experience here.”
- “Safe and secure environment, excellent teaching and studying quality, beautiful landscape.”
- “It has a real good environment, and school is beautiful. People here are friendly and professors are real good.”

The fourth insight was that academics are of utmost importance to international students.

Open-ended responses supported this insight:

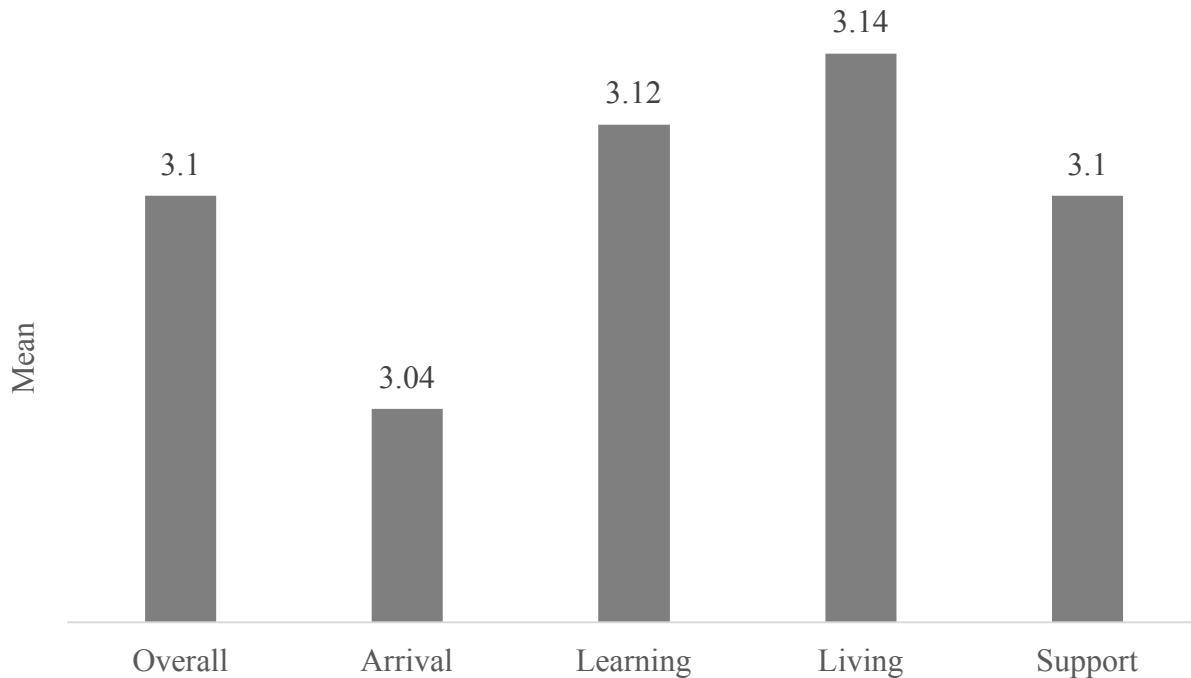
- “Overall my learning experience at CSU has been of great value to me. I have found the classes here to be very interactive between class members and the professor. I have been involved in many group projects and presentations that have provided me with essential skills that will benefit me in my future jobs and all aspects of life.”
- “The learning environment is of high quality and transparent. The faculty is highly supportive and always has time to meet and address my queries. The college's staff, particularly my academic adviser, in collaboration with my professors provide accommodative environment to enable me to participate in all study activities on an equal basis with other sighted students in my cohort.”
- “I really enjoy academic environment here. The facility of school is good. Professors are great. I have learnt a lot from them, that's why I love this school.”
- “The educational environment at the university is great, particularly with my department and the professor I've met. The level of expertise in the university is also one of the best and service and support provided by the teaching staff is extraordinary.”

The final insight was that most international students would recommend Colorado State University to future students. Open-ended responses supported this insight:

- “I have had the best year of my life at CSU and I am already actively encouraging other students from my home university to study abroad here.”
- “The university standards are high, education system is good and transparent, people in Fort Collins are very nice. This is a good place to start a career and the place is safe.”
- “CSU is a place for your quality life in both academic development and cultural experiences with beautiful nature and safe environment.”



Measures of five different points of international student satisfaction – overall, arrival, learning, and living – revealed means that averaged “satisfied” responses using a 4-point scale where 1 = Very Dissatisfied, 2 = Dissatisfied, 3 = Satisfied, and 4 = Very Satisfied (see **Figure 5**).



**Figure 5. Measures of International Student Satisfaction**

A closed-ended question also supported the insight that international students would recommend CSU, as 85% of survey respondents reported that at the time, they were either actively recommending the university, or would provide a recommendation if asked.

#### **Original Education Abroad Alumni Survey**

The education abroad survey yielded 499 responses, 72% of which were from women. All respondents were Colorado State University alumni who participated in an education abroad experience, defined as a for-credit or not-for-credit study, research, internship or service-learning experience in a foreign country. The average age of the respondents was 30, with the youngest

respondent being 21 and the oldest being 57. The majority of respondents were white (77%). The average annual household income of respondents was reported as \$50,000 - \$74,999.

### **Insights**

An analysis of the Education Abroad Alumni Survey data yielded important insights about alumni of education abroad, including their willingness to donate money if asked, and an unfamiliarity with the practice of donating money despite perceiving it as important. Data also showed that alumni feel education abroad is a significant financial burden, but one that is worth the expense and is a highlight of their college experience. Education abroad alumni also value international experiences' ability to broaden students' view/worldview, offer a new perspective, expose them to new things, and to allow students to step outside the "comfort zone" that is familiar to American college students. Though fewer than one in five CSU students currently participate, education abroad alumni think that everyone should have the opportunity to have an international experience.

### ***Willingness to Support***

Education abroad alumni reported that if asked, they would give money to help provide international opportunities to future students. Though only 29% of respondents said that they are likely to donate to CSU, more than half said that they would give to Education Abroad/Office of International Programs (55%) if they did. Most of these respondents said they would be willing to give up to \$50 (23.8%) or between \$50 and \$500 (18.3%), though a few said they would be willing to give \$500 - \$1000 (1.2%). Two people answered that they would be willing to give more – one said they would be willing to give more than \$1,000 (.2%), and one person said they would be willing to give more than \$10,000 (.2%). An overwhelming number of respondents

(98%) said that they think it is important for current/future CSU students to be able to have an education abroad experience.

Data also showed that 66% of alumni have not given money before. More than half of respondents (62%) think that financial contributions from private donors help make education abroad experiences possible for future generations of CSU students, with slightly less than half (46%) responding that contributions from people like them help make these experiences possible. Additionally, 40% of respondents felt neutral on the matter. In addition to giving money, most respondents (57%) said they would be willing to donate time volunteering.

### *Experience*

When asked about the cost of participating in education abroad, alumni reported that they do not regret the expense, but that it was a significant financial burden on them and their families. Most respondents reported that they used financial aid to fund their program (65%). The most popular forms of financial aid used were CSU financial aid (24%), federal financial aid (28%), and private financial aid (23%). Open-ended responses also supported this:

- “Although I was put in some compromising situations while abroad, mostly regarding lack of money, I feel like anything that I felt was negative in the moment has become a part of the journey and ended up being a positive learning experience.”
- “It was expensive! but worth the loans!”
- “The cost was high - but was worth it for the experiences I had while abroad.”
- “The only downside was the cost, and paying the loans but I would do it again even if it cost more!”

When asked about their education abroad experience, many alumni cited that it was a highlight of their college experience. A vast majority (99%) said they would go again, if given the opportunity, and 96% said that the experience enriched their academic experience at CSU. Open-ended responses also supported this:

- “The perspective gained from living abroad as a young adult is invaluable. It makes you appreciate other cultures while at the same time becoming more grateful to be a US citizen. Being pushed out of your comfort zone forces growth and deep, lasting friendships can be made along the way. I wouldn't trade it!”
- “I would give anything to get to experience that month again”

### ***Outcomes and satisfaction***

Questions about the outcomes of their experience elicited responses about the importance of international experiences in broadening students' view/worldview, offering a new perspective, and exposing them to new things. Most respondents said that their experience resulted in personal growth (97%), helped them gain a greater sense of independence (98%), provided them with a new perspective (99%), and resulted in new friends (91.6%). Open-ended responses also supported this insight:

- “Education abroad exposes participants to diverse global perspectives and experiences. I recommend an education abroad experience because it provides numerous opportunities for students to engage with other cultures and reflect and evaluate their own ethnocentric views.”
- “Exposure to other cultures, belief systems, lifestyles, and economic realities, is an eye-opening experience, one that cannot be gained by reading a book or participating in a lecture.”
- “I believe it's truly important to see the world, understand different cultures, and make connections globally. More than ever before, we need our young people to be understanding and aware of different cultural differences.”

Education abroad alumni think it is important to step outside the “comfort zone” that is familiar to American college students, as most said their experience required of them (95%).

Open-ended responses also supported this insight:

- “I think it is great for any person, introvert or extrovert, to broaden their horizons. It is challenging at times, but being outside of your comfort zone is when you grow and learn and that is exactly what education abroad does.”
- “Education abroad experiences provide so much more learning than what can be taught solely in a classroom. There is something to be said about stepping outside of one's comfort zone and truly expanding his/her understanding of the world around them. It does not matter what the subject you study, the opportunity to go

abroad, in a formalized setting or not, provides the traveler with a unique perspective that will not only change the way he or she learns, but hopefully changes the way he or she lives.”

- “The experience changed my life. I recommend this to everyone. I'd never left the country before studying abroad and grew up in Fort Collins so was close to family and friends and very comfortable while going to college. I'm also an introvert so it was not always a comfortable experience. Studying abroad and knowing no one really pushed me out of my comfort zone and I became more independent and confident. It was not all perfect but it's now such a core part of my identity so I'm grateful I took the risk.”

Though fewer than one in five CSU students currently participate, education abroad alumni believe that everyone should have the opportunity to have an international experience.

Almost all respondents (98.7%) would recommend an education abroad experience to current/future CSU students. Open-ended responses also supported this insight:

- “I HIGHLY recommend study abroad and think it should be required even. It is eye opening to see how the rest of the world lives and to see firsthand how other countries view Americans and the US as a whole. It also is a great way to immerse yourself in your program of study and also expose yourself to other aspects of your major that are not available at CSU.”
- “I think everyone should experience either a short or long term abroad experience. It opens up a world of possibilities in the form of travel, but more significantly is one of the most personally impactful things that I think a young person can undertake. I learned a lot about the world, south America and specifically Chile, but learned a lot more about myself. The person who I am today and in fact what I do for a living is directly because I studied abroad.”
- “I think it should be a requirement to graduate. My semester abroad was vital to my personal growth and global perspective and was more affordable than a semester at CSU, including the airfare to and from my country of study.”

## CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

This project took a theory-based approach to the development of a fundraising communication plan for the Office of International Programs at Colorado State University. The final product, a document outlining a recommended strategy for communicating with alumni and potential donors to foster meaningful relationships and prompt financial giving, is based on guidance from key CSU stakeholders, and draws on existing international student satisfaction data coupled with original survey data collected from education abroad alumni. Research was conducted over a one-year period, with final recommendations, in the form of a cohesive communication plan, made at the conclusion of the research. This project sought to do what few other university fundraising communication plans do – use scientifically-tested communication theory to identify the best ways to connect with and motivate potential donors.

Although this project drew on general communication theory and findings taken from studies of other campuses and in other contexts, it was tailored specifically to the needs of Colorado State University’s international programs and its alumni. The resulting document targets the specific barriers for CSU and outlines a communication plan to address them.

### **Summary of Significant Findings**

The results of this study provided interesting findings on the Office of International Programs’ target audiences – international alumni and alumni of education abroad programs – offering context and insight for the development of a strategic fundraising communication plan. Data analysis revealed positive attitudes toward international experiences among both international alumni and American/U.S.-born alumni who participated in education abroad.

An analysis of existing data related to international students, taken from the 2013 International Student Barometer survey, revealed positive attitudes toward CSU's support services and feeling included in the campus and Fort Collins communities, an appreciation of the nature and beauty of campus and surrounding area, and a strong focus on academics. Overall, international students were satisfied with their experience at CSU, and 97.5% were either neutral or would recommend Colorado State University. Based on their positive attitudes and affinity for the CSU campus, community, and academic experience, international alumni may be willing to give back to the university to support these kinds of initiatives and programs. This corresponds to Fishbein & Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action, which correlates positive attitudes with behavior performance. However, future research is needed to understand more current alumni attitudes, and more specifically, attitudes and norms related to giving money back to the university. Cultural attitudes, norms and differences among this diverse population should be further examined using smaller, segmented sub-populations.

Education abroad alumni were also found to have positive attitudes about their experience as students. They held strong positive attitudes toward education abroad, and felt strongly about the impact that international experiences had on their time as students – 96% said it enriched their academic experience at CSU. Education abroad alumni strongly believe that international experiences broaden students' view/worldview, offer a new perspective, and expose them to new things. Although they do not regret the expense – education abroad was the highlight of their college experience, and 99% would do it again – alumni felt education abroad was a significant financial burden. About 64% of education abroad alumni used some form of financial aid themselves.

Alumni were willing to recommend an education abroad experience – 99% would recommend it to current/future CSU students – and believed that every student should have the opportunity to participate. More importantly for this research, it was found that education abroad alumni also had a positive attitude toward philanthropic giving, though they had never given back to the university personally – over 66% have never given money before, but 62% think that philanthropy is important for making international experiences available to students. Though these alumni hold positive attitudes toward giving, they feel hesitation about whether they themselves should give, because of their inexperience with it. However, 55% would be willing to give to support Education Abroad/CSU International Programs if they were convinced to give to CSU, because they believe that support from people like them makes a difference. These positive attitudes about education abroad and financial giving, coupled with social norms related to peer group giving impact, are supported by the Theory of Reasoned Action as strong predictors of behavior performance (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). More than 46% of alumni think that financial contributions from people like them help make education abroad possible for CSU students. Future research should test different communication strategies for their effectiveness in convincing this young alumni population that they can and should financially support the university’s international programs.

### **Implication of Findings**

The time-tested communication research used as a foundation for this project has proven that people’s attitudes and social norms related to a behavior drive their likelihood of performing that behavior. If you can change a person’s attitude about that behavior, or influence their social norms related to that behavior, you can change their behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In this case, the behavior is donating money to CSU and its international programs. Data collected



through the education abroad alumni survey shows that alumni hold positive attitudes toward CSU and their international experiences. Alumni also hold positive attitudes toward philanthropy and financial giving, and believe that people like them can make a difference through their financial support.

According to the theory, this data supports the potential for alumni to perform the behavior of donating money, if they can be persuaded and prompted to do so by targeting these positive attitudes and norms. This persuasion can be accomplished through strategic and intentional communication, including the use of narrative storytelling. Sharing stories with alumni through storytelling engages them and helps to build relationships without money being the focus. Storytelling should be used to connect with donors in new, innovative ways, since traditional university fundraising tactics are targeted at older generations, and need updated to appeal to a more tech-savvy Millennial audience. This online engagement connects alumni to each other and to current and future students, and builds potentially long-lasting and beneficial relationship.

This research revealed several important implications for both fundraising and communication for the Office of International Programs. For fundraising, there is a lot of opportunity to capitalize on alumni's positive attitudes and convert them into support for the programs and experiences that they have strong affinity for. This is especially true for alumni of education abroad, who are young and inexperienced with giving, but who value their education abroad experiences, and want future students to be able to have the same experiences. This population is willing to donate their time, which provides an opportunity to engage them and convert that willingness into a willingness to give money as well. Since their incomes are still growing as they progress in their careers, low-level giving opportunities could be introduced to

make giving seem more possible, and to convince them that any amount they are able to give can make a difference.

These findings revealed several significant communication implications. Communication should build on alumni passion for international experiences and illustrate private philanthropy's impact on lessening the financial burden and making these kinds of experiences possible for future students. Because of their inexperience with giving, communication should be directed at young alumni of education abroad in a clear manner so that they know that they are the ones being asked, and to persuade them that their support is needed and can make a difference. Requests should be clear and specific, offer low-level giving opportunities, and include action items and directions. Calls for donations can link to alumni beliefs that educational abroad has career and personal benefits for themselves and for others. Because of their young age, messages and solicitations directed at this audience should be digital and innovative, offering a non-traditional way for alumni to engage and donate.

### **Limitations of Study**

All projects have limitations. For this project, there were limitations in both the existing International Student Barometer data and original education abroad alumni survey data.

Though the data from the ISB provided insight into the international student experience at CSU and potential affinity points of international alumni, and served as a reference point for additional research, the survey was not conducted specifically for this project. This existing data did not address some key concepts of interest to the current project, such as attitudes about financial giving, which limited conclusions about this group's willingness to give. Because four years have passed since the data was collected, the students surveyed are likely now alumni, and their attitudes and perceptions may have changed over time. The ISB provided helpful insight for

the current project, but future research is needed to generate more comprehensive and recent data.

The original survey conducted for this project addressed concepts specific to developing a fundraising campaign, but the survey population of education abroad alumni skews young, as international programs have only been widely available to CSU students in recent years. Although this group is highly relevant to the Office of International Programs, younger alumni are not the main target market for traditional fundraising efforts. The fundraising communication plan addresses this by suggesting ways to foster engagement, build and maintain alumni relationships, and ways that this younger population can be motivated to make smaller, more manageable donations. In addition, the sample for this survey did not include all alumni; in particular, alumni who had a positive experience may be more likely to respond to such a survey, resulting in over-representation of those with this perspective. It is important to note that this survey is also not generalizable to other universities or populations.

With additional assessment, adjustments can be made in the future to tailor the plan to an international audience. Future research projects should continue to examine ways that this campaign and others related to alumni fundraising can be adjusted to maximize impact among populations of various other regions and countries across the world.

An overarching assumption of this exploratory project is that the fundraising communication plan will be implemented by the Office of International Programs, carried out by the Vice Provost for International Affairs, Communications Manager, and other key internal staff members. Though there is currently no reason to believe otherwise, operating under this assumption carries the risk that changes in financial, time or staff resources may pose challenges

for implementation. Should this be the case, the plan can be scaled back, or held for future updates and later implementation.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Because this project focused more on American/U.S.-born alumni of CSU's international programs, there is opportunity to conduct further research among foreign-born alumni (former international students). International alumni require different considerations and communication than American/U.S.-born alumni, but with some care and strategy, they could and should also be targeted to communicate, build relationships, and ultimately, solicit and raise money. To do so, more specific research should be conducted using demographic and contact data contained within CSU's Advance fundraising database, measuring attitudes, norms, affinity, and potential for giving. Additional research can provide more insight into international alumni as a group, as well as specific populations. For a more strategic approach, research and communication should be segmented to target a specific population that has a large representation, such as alumni from India who studied engineering, to allow for a better understanding of that culture and their attitudes about philanthropy.

In addition to exploring communication with a different population, future research could be done among the American/U.S.-born alumni, including the implementation and testing of the effectiveness of the messages and materials included in this plan. Additional research could also be done among alumni who are already giving to international programs, whether American/U.S.-born or international, to better understand their motivations, affinity, and communication preferences.

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## APPENDIX A: Questions for Stakeholder Meetings

1. What is your long-term vision for Colorado State University?
  - a. How do the activities conducted through the Office of International Programs fit into that vision?
2. What are Colorado State University's main fundraising priorities through the *State Your Purpose* campaign?
  - a. How do the activities conducted through the Office of International Programs fit into those priorities?
3. How do you think CSU students and alumni benefit from international experiences?
4. Which of CSU's international programs are you most proud of?
5. Which of CSU's international programs could most benefit from private funding?
6. What are some ideas for newly-created programs that might be made possible by private funding?
7. What are some potential challenges in communicating with alumni to convert them to donors?
8. What are some best practices for initiating communication with alumni after an extended period of non-contact?
  - a. What is the recommended first step in initiating this type of communication? (i.e., email, mailer, personal contact, etc.)
9. How can we best identify potential donors through communication?
10. What are some of the unique challenges in communication with international alumni?



## APPENDIX B: Recruitment Letter for Education Abroad Survey

**Subject:** [TEST] CSU Education Abroad research Survey  
**Date:** Thursday, March 2, 2017 at 12:56:06 PM Mountain Standard Time  
**From:** CSU Office of International Programs  
**To:** Gerber,Anna



Dear \$salutation\$,

My name is Anna Gerber and I am the communications manager for the Office of International Programs at Colorado State University. I am also a graduate student in CSU's Journalism and Media Communication Department, where I am conducting a survey among CSU education abroad alumni as part of a research project on fundraising. You are receiving this email because you participated in an international study, research, internship or service-learning experience during your time as a CSU student.

To assist me in my research, I am asking you to take an anonymous online survey, which should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

### [SURVEY](#)

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, but your response provides valuable insight that helps ensure the continued success of international programs at CSU. Please complete the survey before March 29.

If you choose to participate, you may provide your email address at the end of the survey to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card.

[Please contact me if you have any questions.](#)

Thank you for your time.

**Anna Gerber**

Colorado State University  
Communications Manager, Office of International Programs  
M.S. Candidate, Department of Public Communication and Technology

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You are receiving this message because of your affiliation with or support of Colorado State University. If you would like to be removed from this mailing list, you may [unsubscribe online](#).  
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## APPENDIX C: Education Abroad Survey

The following anonymous survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary, but your response provides valuable insight that helps ensure the continued success of international programs at CSU. Please complete the survey before March 29. If you choose to participate, you may provide your email address at the end of the survey to be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card.

What year did you graduate from Colorado State University?

If you did not graduate, what year did you last attend CSU?

What was your program of study at Colorado State University?

During your time as a student at Colorado State University, did you participate in an education abroad experience? (Defined as a for-credit or not-for-credit study, research, internship or service-learning experience in a foreign country.)

- Yes
- No

If you participated in more than one education abroad experience, answer the questions with your most memorable experience in mind.

During which year(s) did you study abroad?

In which country/countries did you study? (e.g., France, China, Mexico, etc.)

Name of program or foreign institution: (e.g., University of Lincoln - New Zealand, Grand Challenges in Engineering - China, Semester at Sea, etc.)

Duration of time spent abroad:

- Academic year (> 6 months)
- Calendar year (> 10 months)
- Semester (> 2 months)
- Summer (> 2 months)
- Short-term (< 4 weeks)
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

What kind of financial aid did you use to fund your education abroad experience? (check all that apply)

- CSU scholarship (e.g., education abroad-specific funds from Office of International Programs, college/academic department, etc.)
- Affiliate/program provider scholarship (e.g., Semester at Sea, CEA, ISA, etc.)
- Federal scholarship (e.g., Gilman, Boren, Fulbright, etc.)
- Private scholarship (e.g., Rotary International, Diversity Abroad, etc.)
- CSU financial aid (general scholarships, grants, etc.)
- Federal financial aid (scholarships, grants, military aid, etc.)
- Private financial aid (bank loan, family loan, fundraising, etc.)
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Did not use financial aid

Given the opportunity, would you participate in an education abroad experience again?

- Yes
- No

Why not?

If given the opportunity again, what would you change?

- I would do it all the same.
- Different location
- Different duration of stay
- Different academic course of study
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

I would recommend an education abroad experience to current/future CSU students.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

My international experience(s) enhanced my time as a CSU student.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree

Strongly disagree

Any other thoughts on why you would or would not recommend an education abroad experience to current/future CSU students?

For the following questions, please rate your satisfaction with each aspect of your education abroad experience. (responses Extremely satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, Somewhat dissatisfied, Extremely dissatisfied, N/A)

- Transition to foreign country
- Accommodations
- Cost/value
- Location
- Academics
- Support from CSU
- Relationships with locals while abroad
- Relationships with other internationals while abroad
- Relationships with other Americans while abroad

Do you have any other thoughts about what was or was not especially satisfying or fulfilling during your education abroad experience?

What was the most important thing you learned during your education abroad experience (academic or personal)?

What is your favorite memory from your education abroad experience?

What elements of international culture from your education abroad are still part of your life today? (e.g., food, clothing, home furnishings, etc.)

Did you or your family incur student loan or other debt as a means to fund your education abroad experience?

- Yes
- No

Did you experience any downsides to participating in your education abroad experience?

Please select how much you agree or disagree with each statement. Participating in an education abroad experience: (responses Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree)

- Resulted in personal growth.
- Resulted in a greater sense of independence.
- Helped me gain a greater sense of independence.
- Helped me gain employment after graduation.
- Enriched my academic experience.

- Helped me determine my career path.
- Resulted in increased motivation.
- Resulted in new friends.
- Provided me with a new perspective.
- Resulted in strong connections with faculty.
- Helped me step out of my comfort zone.

How have you spent time abroad since completing your education abroad experience? (Check all that apply)

- Personal travel
- Study or research (e.g., another program/experience, graduate study, etc.)
- Living
- Working (e.g., internship or work abroad, business travel, etc.)
- Service (e.g., service/mission trip, volunteering with an organization like the Peace Corps, etc.)
- Have not spent additional time abroad

Some people donate to Colorado State University to help support the university and its students. Have you ever donated money to CSU?

- Yes
- No
- No

If you were to donate money to CSU, to which causes would you direct the funds? (Check all that apply)

- Academics (e.g., a specific college, department or academic program)
- Research
- Campus facilities/infrastructure
- Athletics
- Scholarships
- Faculty/staff support and recruitment
- Endowment
- Student Affairs
- Library
- Diversity initiatives
- Education Abroad/Office of International Programs
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

How likely are you to give your time to help current students learn about and participate in education abroad experiences (e.g., volunteer at the annual Education Abroad fair, sit on an alumni panel, be interviewed for a story, etc.)

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

How likely are you to donate your money to help make education abroad experiences possible for current/future CSU students?

- Extremely likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Extremely unlikely

It is important that current/future CSU students be able to have an education abroad experience.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Financial contributions from private donors help to make education abroad experiences possible for future generations of CSU students.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Financial contributions from people like me help to make education abroad experiences possible for future generations of CSU students.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree

- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

How much money are you likely to donate to help make education abroad experiences possible for current and future CSU students?

- Up to \$50
- Between \$50 and \$500
- Between \$500 and \$1,000
- More than \$1,000
- More than \$10,000
- I am not likely to donate

It is important for us to understand who participates in CSU's education abroad programs. Please answer the following demographic questions.

Age

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer not to answer

What is your total annual household income?

- Less than \$25,000
- \$25,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

What is your race? (Check all that apply)

- White/Caucasian/European
- Black/African
- East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, South-East Asian)

- Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or any other Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino
- Arabian, Egyptian or Maghreb
- Native American/American Indian
- Australian Aboriginal
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Enter your email here for a chance to win a \$50 Amazon gift card.



APPENDIX D: Fundraising Communication Plan



STRATEGIC FUNDRAISING  
COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR  
EDUCATION ABROAD ALUMNI



INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS  
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

2017

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

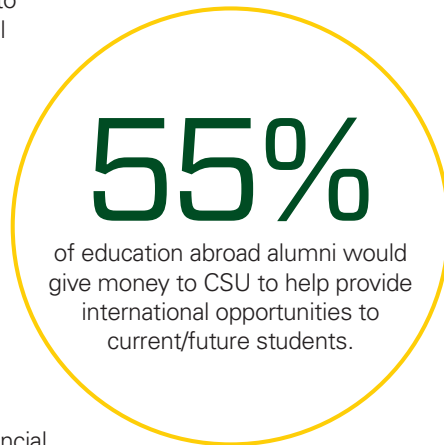


**By soliciting financial support from private donors, Colorado State University can expand international opportunities for students, equipping them to become globally-competent graduates poised to address the world's challenges.**

At present, communication from the university does not tap into the overwhelmingly positive experiences of CSU's education abroad alumni. This affinity group is willing to give so that future students can have international experiences, but they don't know how – more than a third don't realize that their financial support can make a difference.

To address this gap, the Office of International Programs, in conjunction with CSU Advancement, should target American/U.S.-born alumni who participated in an education abroad experience during their time as a student. Communication should foster engagement with those alumni to establish long-term relationships that include financial support for the Office of International Programs. A survey of CSU education abroad alumni conducted in spring 2017 shows that communication can build on wide-spread enthusiasm for international opportunities and a desire to encourage future students to experience education abroad.

Though alumni of education abroad tend to be young and inexperienced with financial giving, they feel positively about philanthropy and are open to supporting CSU International Programs by giving their time, expertise, and small amounts of money. Over 66% of education abroad alumni have never given money before, but 62% think that philanthropy is important for making international experiences available to students. About 64% of education abroad alumni used some form of financial aid themselves. These connections provide an opportunity in the long-term to convert this support into financial giving to benefit future students and programs.



Though fewer than  
**1 in 5**  
 CSU students currently participate, alumni think everyone should have an international experience

Education abroad alumni strongly believe that international experiences broaden students' view/worldview, offer a new perspective, and expose them to new things. Although they don't regret the expense – education abroad was the highlight of their college experience, and 99% would do it again – alumni felt education abroad was a significant financial burden.

In addition to original research that shows alumni's positive attitudes toward international experiences, as well as positive attitudes and norms related to financial giving, this project draws on time-tested communication theory that

supports its feasibility. Drawing on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), this communication plan, its strategy, and messages aim to prompt alumni to donate money to Colorado State University by targeting their positive attitudes and norms, and appealing to their nostalgic memories and emotions related to their own experience.

### **Strategic insights about communicating with education abroad alumni**

Giving to education abroad programs:

- Helps more students step outside the "comfort zone" that is familiar to American college students
- Helps everyone see things from new perspectives
- Can be done with time and involvement as well as money
- Provides global connections, personal and career development, and invaluable experiences students wouldn't otherwise get

Additional data from international students studying at CSU from a 2013 survey also shows that international students are equally enthusiastic about international education and about their CSU experience. This suggests these students they can also be an effective future target for fundraising research and efforts.

This plan integrates the goals and strategies of the university's overall communication, fundraising, and international strategies with recommendations for targeting education abroad alumni through digital communication, including social media, email, and web.



# PROJECT OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

This fundraising communication plan was developed for the Colorado State University Office of International Programs through an evidence-driven analysis of survey data conducted among alumni of CSU's international programs, including former international students and students who participated in education abroad programs. Original survey data was collected specifically for this project from education abroad alumni, while international alumni data used was collected during a previous project. Prior to formal data collection, informal meetings with campus stakeholders provided project guidance and insight into fundraising practice and communication, campus international initiatives and fundraising priorities, and special considerations related to communicating with international alumni.

## COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Office of International Programs at Colorado State University creates and fosters international teaching, learning, research and engagement activities on campus and around the world. Through OIP, CSU plans to increase international student enrollment to comprise 10% of the student body, and to increase education abroad participation by 100 students annually until 2020. This will allow the university to produce more globally-minded citizens who are positive contributors to a sustainable and cooperative global future. To sustain CSU's international programs long-term, private funding from alumni and friends of the University with an affinity for CSU's international programs is necessary.

To facilitate fundraising to support initiatives within the Office of International Programs and contribute to CSU's overall fundraising goal, OIP should solicit donors through cohesive fundraising communication materials to lay the groundwork for a successful and sustainable fundraising campaign.

## PROJECT PURPOSE AND GOALS

The purpose of this plan is to launch a strategic, targeted, fundraising communication strategy to support the financial goals of the Office of International Programs, the *State Your Purpose* campaign, and Colorado State University.

Goals:

1. Solicit private funds from U.S.-born alumni of CSU's international programs through relationships, communication and engagement.
2. Using a data-driven approach, establish key messages that will foster relationships with U.S.-born education abroad alumni to engage them with the university, current students, and OIP.
3. Recommend implementation strategies and considerations for future expansion to international students.

## DESCRIPTION OF PLAN

This plan provides a blueprint for fundraising communication for the Office of International Programs. It is focused on American/U.S.-born alumni who participated in an education abroad program. Also included are future considerations, including communication with international alumni, and communication tools beyond print and digital materials.

The information provided includes guidelines and suggestions for:

- Storytelling
- Graphics & Imagery
- Messaging
- Sample materials

## TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience of this communication plan was derived from the education abroad alumni survey and its respondents, and is understood to be:

- American/U.S.-born
- Women (72% of respondents, 66% of participants in 2015)
- White (77%)
- Average age 30
- Average income \$50,000 - \$74,999

Members of the target audience are graduates of Colorado State University who participated in an education abroad experience during their time as a student. The audience is fairly homogenous – the average age is 30 years old, and the majority are white women. This young demographic makeup reflects an increase in popularity and growth in availability of international opportunities to CSU students in the recent past.

This audience is largely Millennials (born between the early 1980s and the early 2000s), who tend to be educated, tech savvy, globally minded, civic oriented, socially conscious, pragmatic, and adventurous. Millennials are also known to carry unprecedented student loan debt, eschew big financial purchases like home ownership, delay marriage and children to a later age, and live more mobile, entrepreneurial and nontraditional lives. Communication to this group should reflect these characteristics by using extensive mobile platforms such as social media, providing non-financial opportunities for supporting OIP, and making donations easy and quick.



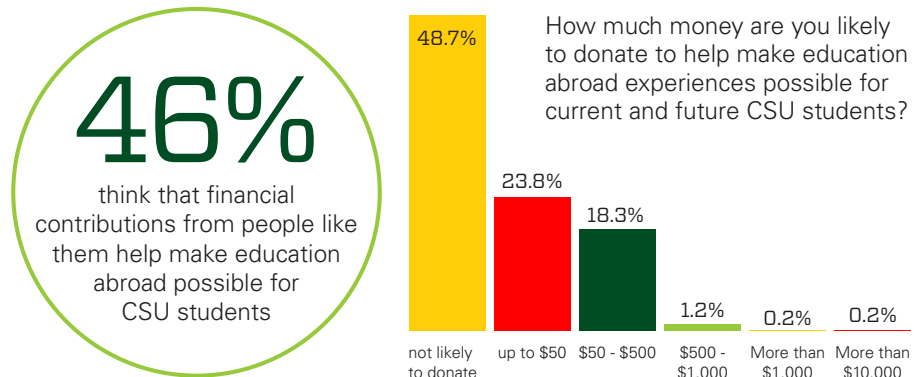
# CONSUMER INSIGHTS

A survey conducted among 499 education abroad alumni offered insight into their attitudes and norms related to philanthropy and financial giving, as well as their attitudes, satisfaction and outcomes related their international experiences.

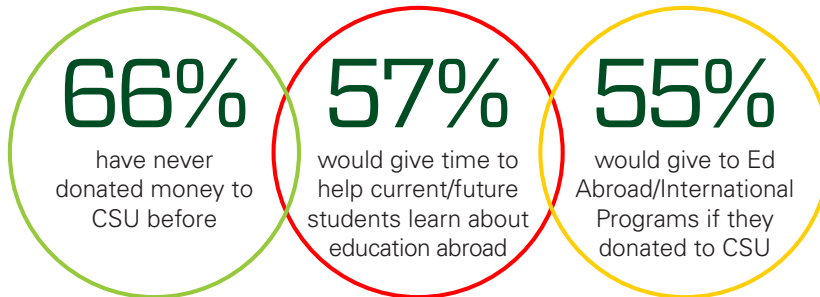
Though they have never given money before, education abroad alumni hold positive attitudes about philanthropy, and think that people like them can make a difference through giving. Most alumni are willing to donate their time, and if they do ultimately decide to donate money, would consider directing the funds to international programs. Education abroad was a highlight of alumni's college experience, and though most alumni agree that their experience was a financial burden, they highly recommend it and do not regret the expense. International experiences are seen by alumni as important for expanding a person's perspective and stepping out of their comfort zone, and they think that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in education abroad. An overwhelming majority of alumni would recommend education abroad to current and future CSU students.

This data provides a foundation for building messages and strategies to persuade alumni to financially contribute to Colorado State University and its international programs.

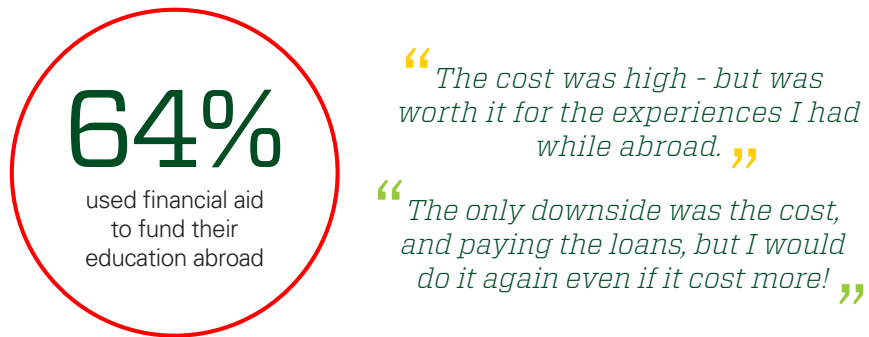
## Education abroad alumni say they would give money to help provide international opportunities to future students



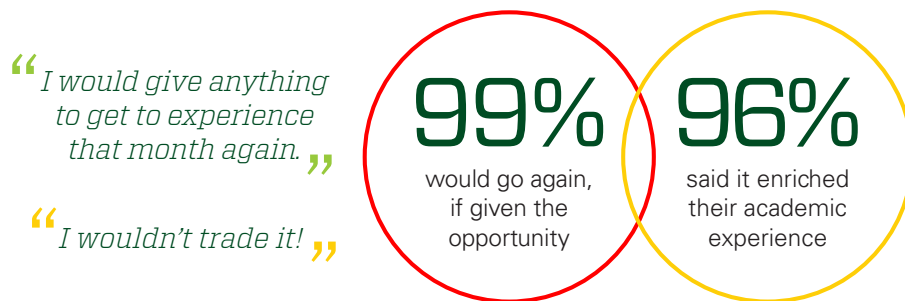
**Most education abroad alumni have never given money before, but think that philanthropy is important**



**Though they don't regret the expense, most alumni felt education abroad was a significant financial burden**



**Education abroad is a highlight of CSU alumni participants' college experience**



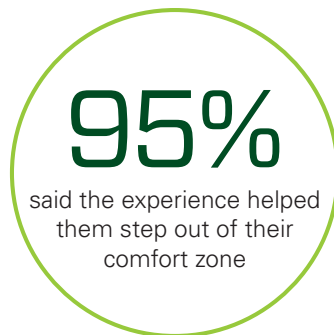


**International experiences broaden students' view/worldview, offer a new perspective, and expose students to new things**



*“It’s truly important to see the world, understand different cultures, and make connections globally. More than ever, we need young people to understand and be aware of cultural differences.”*

**Education abroad alumni think it is important to step outside the “comfort zone” that is familiar to American college students**



*“Education abroad experiences provide more learning than in a classroom. The opportunity to go abroad provides a unique perspective that will not only change the way you learn, but change the way you live.”*

**Though fewer than 1 in 5 CSU students currently participate, alumni think everyone should have an international experience**

*“Everyone should experience education abroad. It opens up a world of possibilities, and is one of the most impactful things a young person can undertake. Who I am today is directly because I studied abroad.”*



# IMPLICATIONS



This study is a first step in building powerful, lasting relationships with education abroad alumni that can grow into substantial financial contributions to support the university and its international programs.

This project zeros in on the attitudes of CSU education abroad alumni to recommend the most powerful and effective message strategies to motivate giving. That strategy is to change attitudes about donating to CSU.



## Why will this work?

Because decades of communication theory and research have shown that the fastest path to behavior change is through people's attitudes.



## How can we change attitudes and increase giving?



**These insights will help the Office of International Programs craft exciting materials that tap into what alumni think and feel about CSU, education abroad, and themselves.**



# COMMUNICATION PLAN

Characterized as tech savvy, mobile and pragmatic, the Millennial generation demands different communication than the standard university fundraising tactics used with older generations. Meeting them where they are – online – and incorporating innovative and emotional storytelling appeals will help foster meaningful relationships that convert young education alumni into long-term donors.

Communication with alumni should:

- Engage:
  - o Encourage participation in CSU's global community and foster a feeling of connection with current students
  - o Keep alumni involved year-round, not just when asking for money
- Invite participation:
  - o Offer non-monetary ways to donate, like time (e.g., sitting on an alumni panel, attending the education abroad fair)
- Educate:
  - o Demonstrate the value of giving at any amount
  - o Illustrate the impact of private giving
- Tell a story:
  - o Inspire giving with nostalgic stories



Campaign messaging should:

- Sound young, optimistic, reflective
- Be inspirational
- Reflect the true educational value of international experiences
- Be purpose-driven and action-oriented
- Go beyond the obvious, illustrate impact

This plan is designed to offer guidelines and ideas for implementation of strategies and messaging that will engage alumni and prompt them to donate to Colorado State University. The goals, style, and visual representations of CSU, the *State Your Purpose* campaign, and the Office of International Programs should be carefully combined for use when communicating with alumni and soliciting donations to the Office of International Programs. Consistent branding will help ensure the success of the campaign.

## STORYTELLING

Storytelling is a versatile and powerful communication tool to engage audiences through sharing authentic narrative experiences. Storytelling should be used to demonstrate the challenges and successes of CSU students and programs, share the impact of gifts, and transport alumni back to their experiences. For education abroad alumni, emotional storytelling prompts can be used as a persuasive tool to convince them to become donors.

Sample of storytelling through email:



My semester in New Zealand transformed the way I see the world, and my place in it. Graduates like me who have global experience are better equipped to make an immediate impact on the world. Every student should have access to life-changing opportunities abroad.

Just as education abroad impacted our lives, our support can impact theirs. A financial gift, no matter how small, can make a difference.

- Kristina Gee '16

For more information or to make a gift, visit [advancing.colostate.edu/OIPEducationAbroad](http://advancing.colostate.edu/OIPEducationAbroad)



Education Abroad | Office of International Programs | Colorado State University  
Laurel Hall, 1024 Campus Delivery | Fort Collins, CO 80523-1024  
+1 970 491 6342 | [educationabroad@colostate.edu](mailto:educationabroad@colostate.edu) | [educationabroad.colostate.edu](http://educationabroad.colostate.edu)



Sharing stories with alumni in this way engages them and helps to build relationships without money being the focus. In addition to sharing, it is important to involve alumni in the storytelling process by asking them to contribute their own narrative. Reframing donating in this way, as a form of volunteering, appeals to the Millennial audience by using a digital platform to tap into their willingness to donate their time.

Storytelling should also be used to connect with donors in new, innovative ways. Traditional university fundraising tactics are targeted at older generations, and need updated to appeal to a more tech-savvy Millennial audience. A crowdsourced travel blog that features education abroad alumni stories offers alumni a simple way to contribute, read and share stories, and to donate financially, if they are interested. This online engagement connects alumni to each other and to current and future students, and builds potentially long-lasting and beneficial relationships.

Sample of online portal for reading and sharing alumni stories:

## STORIES from ABROAD



## 🌐 GRAPHICS & IMAGERY

- Simple, bold, straightforward photography and color
- Strong body language – Illustrates confidence, boldness, assertiveness, strength, pride
- Tell a visual story to draw on feelings of nostalgia to connect alumni back to their experiences and inspire them to give to support future students
  - Independence – pensive, reflective, adventurous
  - Interaction – with a host family, with locals, with friends, etc.



## MESSAGING

To persuade alumni to donate, messaging should be focused and targeted, so that the audience knows it is being directed at them. The main priority is to illustrate the importance and impact of donations from alumni like them, no matter how small the donation might be.

Approach:

- Demonstrate the value of giving at any amount – Donating even a small amount of money can have a big impact on helping current and future students have an education abroad experience.
- Frame alumni memories and positive outcomes from their own education abroad experience as an opportunity to provide support for current/future students' similar experiences.
- Incorporate alumni's favorite memories/experiences, including food, local culture, and new relationships (with other students, locals), into messaging and imagery to foster a sense of nostalgia and connection.

Key ideas/concepts:

- Bravery, humility, change, searching/finding, appreciation, understanding, seeing a different way of doing things, acceptance, awareness
- Experience/change of perspective/step out of comfort zone

Personal touch:

- Incorporate foreign colloquial language/lingo/slang
- Reference foreign lifestyles/attitudes

Message content should utilize the campaign tone to sound relatable and optimistic, illustrate impact, and inspire action.

### ***Give CSU students the whole world in one little book.***

*A passport is a gateway to new experiences, perspectives, friends, and opportunities. For only \$135, the current cost of passport processing, you can help current students clear the first hurdle to a once-in-a-lifetime international experience.*

*For more information or to make a gift, visit [advancing.colostate.edu/OIPEducationAbroad](http://advancing.colostate.edu/OIPEducationAbroad).*

### ***Offer CSU students a different view... of the world, and of themselves.***

*International experiences, like the one you had as a student, transform the way people see the world and their place in it. Graduates with global experience are equipped to make an immediate impact on the world, and every student should have access to these life-changing opportunities.*

*Just as education abroad impacted your life, your support can impact theirs. Every gift, no matter how small, makes a difference.*

*For more information or to make a gift, visit [advancing.colostate.edu/OIPEducationAbroad](http://advancing.colostate.edu/OIPEducationAbroad).*

# LOOKING AHEAD



## INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI

International alumni require different considerations and communication, but with care and strategy, could and should be targeted to communicate, build relationships, and ultimately, solicit money. Like education abroad alumni, international alumni hold positive attitudes related to their experiences as CSU students. Data from the 2013 International Student Barometer student satisfaction survey, and anecdotal evidence from stakeholder meetings, offer consumer insights about international alumni.

Strategic insights about communicating with international alumni:

- They felt supported at CSU, especially by the Office of International Programs, community volunteers, and their professors/academic advisors
- As students, they felt safe, welcome and connected to Fort Collins/CSU
- They feel an appreciation for the beauty of campus, as well as the natural beauty of the surrounding areas
- Academics are of utmost importance to them
- Most alumni recommend Colorado State University to future students

Specific research related to fundraising should be conducted among this population. Using the Advance database to obtain demographic and contact information, a survey like the one conducted for this project should be replicated and tailored to this population. Sub-populations can be isolated for even further research and segmented communication. For a strategic approach, communication should be segmented to target a specific population that has a large representation, such as alumni from India who studied engineering, to allow for a better understanding of that culture and their attitudes about philanthropy.

How to target:

- Engage alumni to actively participate in CSU's global community
  - Use communication to foster a connection with current students
  - Make them feel like CSU is more than just Fort Collins
- Rely on digital communication, since audience spends significant time online, and physical addresses are hard to track/maintain
- Host events abroad
  - Schedule alumni visits or events/receptions as part of official CSU international travel
  - Connect alumni and prospective students internationally
- Support and build international alumni groups
  - Provide groups with funding, care packages, recognition
  - Encourage establishment of new alumni groups, especially in emerging locations like Saudi Arabia, China and Vietnam





# CONCLUSIONS

This document lays the groundwork for implementing a successful communication strategy to prompt financial giving from alumni to the Office of International Programs at Colorado State University, both American/U.S.-born and international.

Original research conducted for this project revealed important implications for both fundraising and communication. The time-tested communication research used as a foundation for this project shows that people's attitudes and social norms drive their likelihood to performing specific behaviors, in this case, donating money. This theory, coupled with the research data showing alumni's positive attitudes and social norms toward giving, indicates that there is strong potential for alumni to perform the behavior of donating money, if they can be persuaded and prompted to do so by targeting these positive attitudes and norms. This persuasion can be accomplished through strategic and intentional communication.

Future communication from the university should tap into the overwhelmingly positive experiences of CSU's education abroad alumni to foster engagement and long-term relationships that include financial support for international opportunities for students. Because of alumni's inexperience with giving, communication should be clearly directed at young alumni of education abroad to persuade them that their support is needed and can make a difference.

After implementation, opportunities exist for further research to expand this strategy to include international alumni of CSU, a population that requires different considerations and communication, but is larger and may hold even more potential.

Successful implementation of this plan is important in supporting Colorado State University's overall fundraising strategy and for providing students with international opportunities that prepare them to become the next generation of globally-minded problem-solvers.