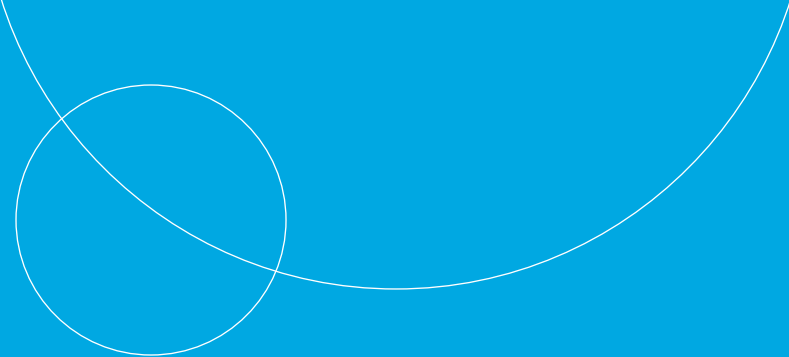




rnl national conference  
**leading ai innovation**  
**empowering higher education**



# **The Social Influencer Trend: How to Enhance Engagement Using Social Media Celebrities**

John Templeman, Director of Annual Giving, Cleveland State University  
Miranda Fagley, Vice President, RNL

# Team Presenting Today



**Miranda Fagley**  
*Vice President*  
**RNL**

Miranda joined RNL in 2021 after 10 years on campuses in the Pittsburgh region. During her tenure at RNL, Miranda spent two years as a client success director, followed by a year as a Senior Consultant.

Miranda is responsible for high-level strategy and planning and account management activities including structuring contracts and helping ensure client satisfaction.



**John Templeman**  
*Director of Annual Giving*  
**Cleveland State University**

John has 25 years of experience in Annual Giving within higher education. He's been at CSU for nearly three years, previously leading the Central Annual Giving Office at CWRU for nine years and working at Baldwin Wallace University. For the past two decades, John has also served on various boards and consulted for nonprofits helping local communities.

Outside the nonprofit world, John owns Jib Machine Records and is a producer/recording artist. He also moonlights as "DJ JT" for his company, The Ohio DJ.

# Agenda

1. State of Donor Decline
2. Generational Shifts & Changing Expectations
3. Leveraging Social Media Influencers
4. Lessons Learned & Future State

# State of Donor Decline



# Today's Landscape

## State of Donor Decline

OVER THE LAST DECADE

**70%** of  
institutions

experienced a  
**decline in donor  
counts**, with an  
**average loss  
of 30%**



SINCE THE PANDEMIC

**80%** of  
institutions

remain **down  
on donors**

# Alumni are philanthropic... but most aren't giving to their alma maters.

51% report volunteering and 68% report making charitable donations.

Of those who donate, 27% report giving to their alma mater. This drops to 13% among recent graduates.

Of those who donate to their college or university, just 20% rank their alma mater as a top giving priority.

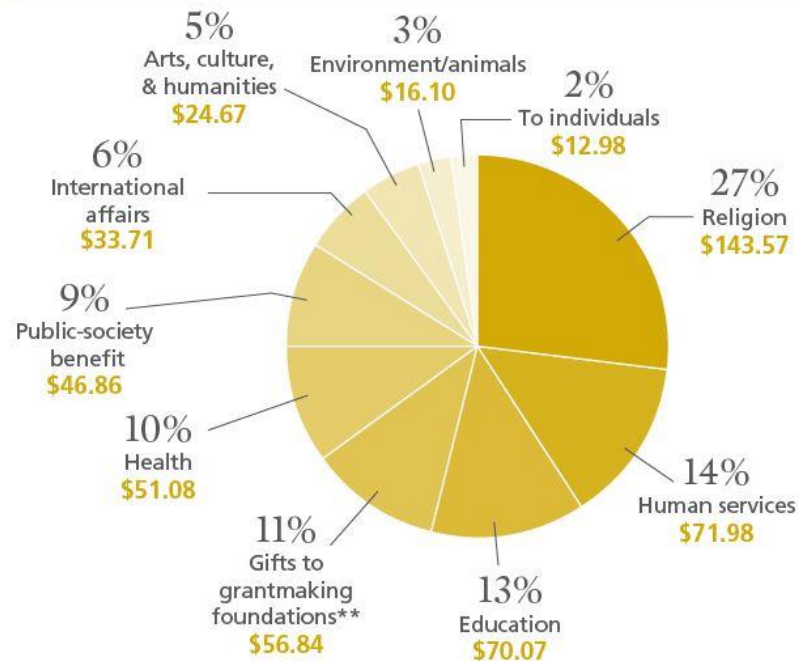
Of those who report *never* donating to their alma mater, 54% are actively supporting other charities.



# Giving USA 2023

## 2022 contributions: \$499.33 billion by type of recipient organization\*

(in billions for dollars – all figures are rounded)

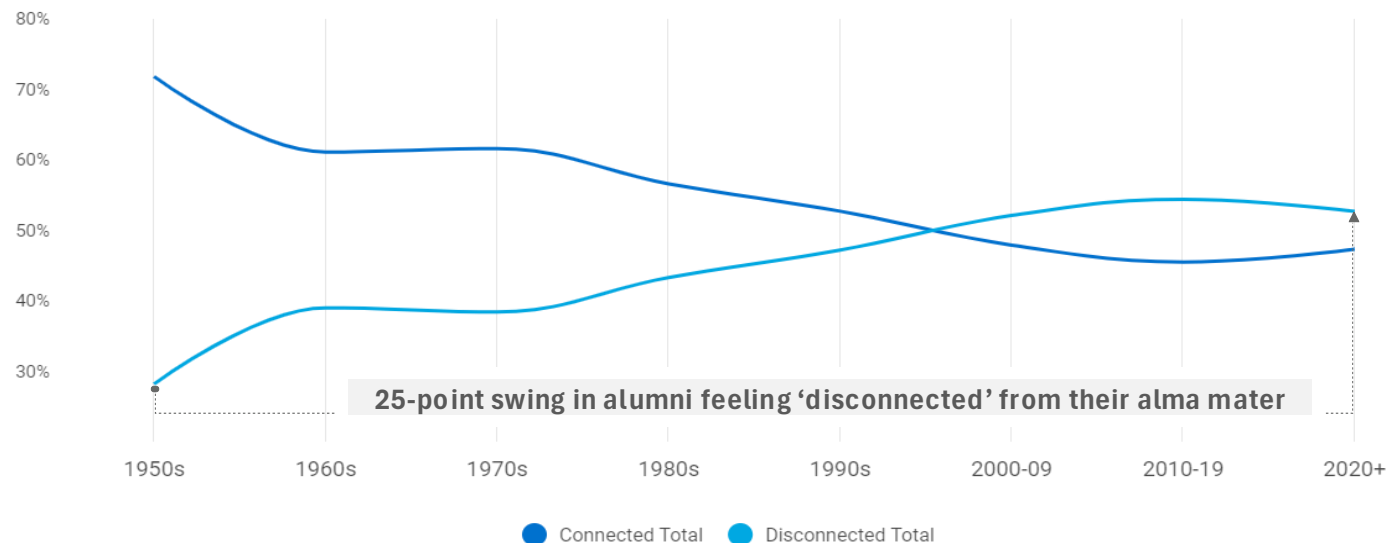


\* Total includes unallocated giving, which totaled -\$28.54 billion in 2022.

\*\* Estimates developed by the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy using data provided by Candid.

# Alumni sense of current connection and satisfaction with their alma maters is on the decline

Nearly three-quarters of alumni from the 1950s expressed a sense of current connection to their alma mater. We see an inflection point after the 1990s when alumni report feeling more disconnected than connected.



53% of recent undergrads feel disconnected from their alma mater



# Satisfaction and sense of current connection influence giving.

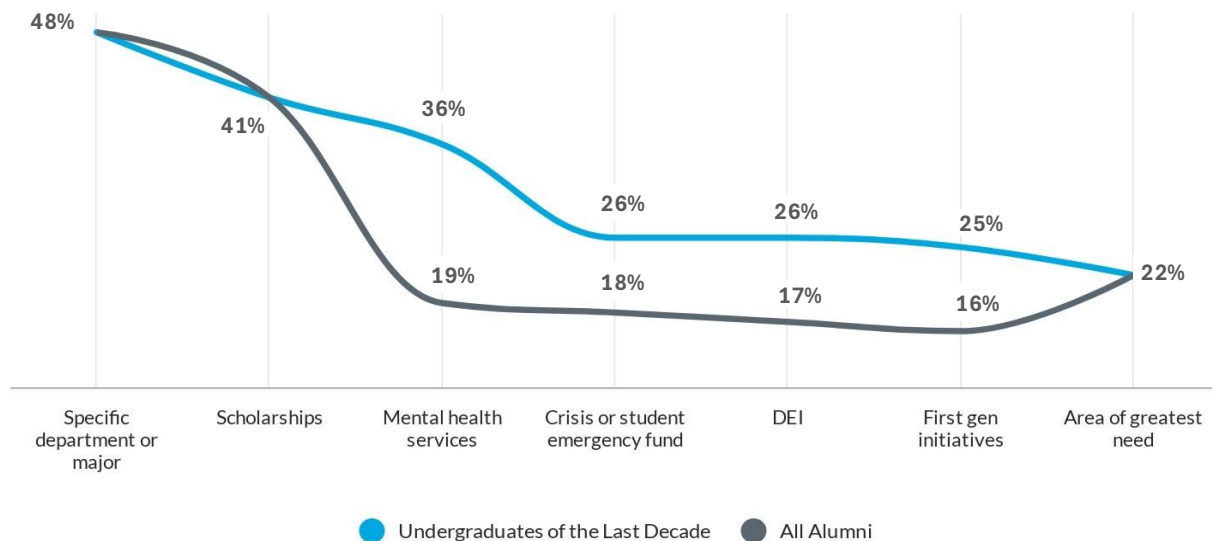
Alumni who report being **'very satisfied'** or **'somewhat satisfied'** with their student experience are **four times** more likely to have donated to their alma mater in the past year.

connected alumni are **23X** more likely to give to their alma mater



# Younger generations are more inspired by purpose-driven campaigns than 'area of greatest need' or the annual fund.

Appeals for academic departments and scholarships resonate with alumni of all ages, but recent undergraduates are more likely to get behind mental health initiatives, student emergency funds, DEI campaigns and first-generation initiatives.



# **Generational Shifts & Changing Expectations**





“The ability to forge an authentic connection couldn’t be more important for companies targeting Gen-Z buyers.”

**- Forbes Magazine**

# Student Expectations have shifted and are impacting our delivery costs.

Past student expectations



  
"Me" centric  
view of the  
world

  
Rise in  
consumer  
mentalities

  
Need for  
speed

  
Meaningful  
connections



**73%** of users say they feel a deeper connection after interacting with a brand on TikTok.

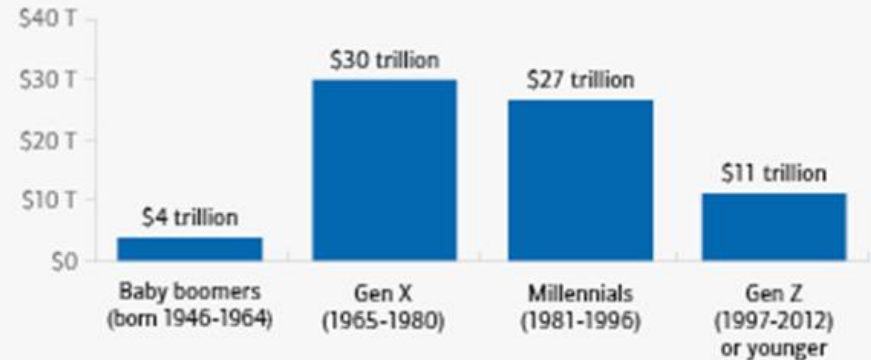
# Great Wealth Transfer

**\$84 Trillion will change hands in next 20 years**

- \$72 T will be transferred to heirs
  - Remaining to charity
  - Rising trend of “giving while living” and involving heirs in those gift decisions
- Millennials and Gen Z have less confidence in traditional investments and traditional gift vehicles

## By the numbers: The Great Wealth Transfer

Estimated wealth to be inherited through 2045, by generation:



# Generation Alpha – “The Decision Makers”

- Generation Alpha is the first generation raised alongside technology, and by technology adopters.
- 66% of Gen Alpha started using tablets before the age of 5.
- Their use of AI will be incomparable to any other generation, as they have been using it for years already.
- They are focused on connection & digital relationships.
  - Gaming, TikTok, and social media.







**64%**

**“I would rather be a  
YouTube/social media influencer  
than the President”**

Identify and Values of “Gen Alpha” – Big Village



By 2029, Generation Alpha's economic footprint will reach more than US \$5.46 trillion.

**- Mark McCrindle, Author of *Generation Alpha***

# Leveraging Social Media Influencers



# Nonprofits

## Leveraging All Species of Influencers

- Animal shelters are leveraging their furry influencers to spur giving for their organizations.
- Creating authentic stories to share with potential donors that also show the importance to give.
- Going live, creating online personas for animals, and creating a need for support.

---

**\$120K**

Raised on behalf of  
KC Pet Project on  
Giving Tuesday  
2023.



# **Where Do You Find Social Media Influencers?**

# Personal Connections

## Point Park University

- Small – Liberal Arts Institution
  - Enrollment: 3,929
- Location: Downtown Pittsburgh.
- Known For: Conservatory of Performing Arts
- Adrienne Reau: Dance Major, Class of 2016.
  - Student Call Center Ambassador



**ageorama**

Adrienne Reau

Follow


1801 Following

610.6K Followers

31.1M Likes

nyc

 gmakely@fordmodels.com

 linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?...

Videos

 Liked

# Your Enrollment Colleagues

## Rollins College

- Small – Liberal Arts Institution
  - Enrollment: 3,272
- Location: Winter Park, Florida
- Known For: #1 college in south east, Financial aid
- Your Friend Curtis YouTube series



How to Make Friends in College | yourfriendcurtis

# Students Who are Gaining Attention & Followers

## University of Miami

- Known for lifestyle TikTok's that gained popularity while at U Miami.
- U Miami realized a six-figure gift within two months of Alix graduating.
- Posted heartfelt video commemorating the milestone.
- Inspired other recent alums to give.
- Media coverage from scholarship.







# **How Do You Leverage Influencers?**

# Key Times to Leverage Influencers

## Natural Pockets of Opportunity



Giving Day



Philanthropy Education



Ongoing Engagement & Volunteerism

# Leveraging Influencers On Giving Day & Philanthropy Education

- Sharing content around giving day that is engaging and asking them to act as giving day ambassadors to engage their peers.
- Sharing stories about their personal philanthropy (where appropriate) and causes they believe in on campus.
- Working with faculty and staff on campus to educate their audience on philanthropy.
  - Causes on campus like mental health services.
  - Sharing unique things on campus like service dog day.
  - Creating content that allows your team to collect interests from other alumni.

# Leveraging Influencers for Ongoing Engagement & Volunteerism

- Sharing at key times of the year for things happening on campus.
  - Example: a rivalry sports event that spurs excitement on campus and brings memories of your institution for them personally.
- Tagging in as part of your Alumni board.
- If there is a specific skill or focus on their content, matching campus opportunities.
  - Example: Alumni whose content is focused on dance, giving tips and tricks to others through audition circuit.



# **What Does This Look Like In Practice?**

# CSU'S 2024 Giving Day

- In order to educate our audience, we needed to ensure faculty and staff were up-to-speed first. So, a Giving Day Training Video was created and sent internally via a four-part email series throughout the fall semester and into the new year.
- Engaged our most loyal and active volunteers to influence others...
  - 85% of CSU's Alumni Association Board served as Ambassadors and 78% made gifts on Giving Day 2024.
  - Some members of the board worked directly with college dean's and representatives to share best practices and assist with outreach.
  - Young Alumni Council, along with Advancement's videographer and student marketing intern, created fun, light-hearted content to share on social media in the weeks leading up to the event.

# Cleveland State University



- “Leap Into Action” video series highlighted three diverse, successful students each with a unique story to tell. They were used to promote the event and shared via email and various social media channels in the weeks leading up to Giving Day.
- A fourth person, young alum Ryan Tobbe ‘18 aka Tobyrap, greatly assisted with a marketing concept to write, record and film a video for a Giving Day themed song. Ryan is an up-and-coming rap/hip hop artist with 11.2K Instagram followers and 15K+ monthly listeners on Spotify.

# “It’s Giving Day (Give It Up)” aka Giving Day Rap





# Results

- Total dollars were up 25.3% and donors 10.3% year over year!
- Online dollars increased 30.36% and revenue from \$1K and over gifts increased 80.3% year over year.
- Continued growth and excitement on campus...127 departments/programs participated and 190 funds were listed and/or contributed to.



# Lessons Learned & Future State



4

# Lessons Learned

- Annual Giving fundraising is becoming increasingly more challenging, but one should still aim to be creative, think outside the box and have fun!
- Utilize influencers and volunteers to promote areas on your campus that would be engaging to a wide range of constituents, such as a Therapy Dog Program or a Food Pantry. This could assist with reversing the declining donor trend.
- Starting the process when necessary early, some influencers have agencies they need to work through.
- As our alumni become more distrustful of institutions, we will need to be leveraging influencers to add legitimacy to our causes.

# Keys to Influencing Success

1. Be Authentic & Real
2. Storytelling that is casual.
3. Your audience can be broad – keep that in mind while filming.

# Future State – Questions and Considerations

1. How are we incentivizing – gifts in kind?
2. How are we measuring Success?
3. How will we measure wealth?
4. How do we continue to engage alumni in a digital era?

# Thank You!



**Miranda Fagley**

Vice President  
RNL

[https://www.linkedin.com/in/  
mirandafagley/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mirandafagley/)



**John Templeman**

Director of Annual Giving,  
Cleveland State University

[https://www.linkedin.com/in/  
johntempleman/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/johntempleman/)





rnl national conference  
**leading ai innovation**  
**empowering higher education**

ready to lead the way with RNL?

**schedule a quick  
consultation**



scan here



rnl national conference  
**leading ai innovation**  
**empowering higher education**

Dallas, Texas | July 23-25, 2024