Best Practices – Participation

・ **Identify and recruit volunteers:** Aim for a team that is large enough to cover your class or region or other group without anyone having to take an unreasonably large number of assignments. Look for volunteers who are enthusiastic, and who also represent as many connections as possible to the breadth of interests and activities among the group’s membership. Start the process of recruitment well in advance to allow enough time both to build a full team and to communicate the plan. Emphasize to prospective volunteers that Annual Giving is about connection and shared interest in Princeton, not arm-twisting, and that they will find the role to be enjoyable and meaningful.

・ **Goal setting:** Set participation goals that stretch the class, but are realistic.

・ **Start early:** Issue your appeal and activate your team as early as possible. Momentum spurs additional growth and sets a positive tone for the year.

・ **Personal touch:** Reflect on your Princeton experiences and share the reasons that motivate you to give and to serve as a volunteer. It has been said that “people give to people, not to institutions.” That may be overly simplistic, but the idea is important. Your personal example and commitment matter to those you are encouraging to join you.

・ **Understand the importance of Annual Giving:** Annual Giving seeks to provide current Princeton students with the same kinds of opportunities that earlier generations of alumni provided for each of us through their support of Annual Giving. Annual Giving provides the equivalent of the income from well over an additional billion dollars of endowment, and plays a critical part in the “margin of excellence” manifest in Princeton’s emphasis on undergraduate teaching, independent work, attracting and retaining top faculty, and full need-based financial aid to ensure access to the University to students from all backgrounds.

・ **You don’t have to have all of the answers:** If someone asks about something with which you aren’t familiar, regard it as an opportunity. This gives you time to find out the information, think about your reply, and then follow up. The staff is there to help you.

・ **Address concerns:** Become familiar with common objections (e.g., Princeton has a large endowment already, other causes need my support, my child didn’t get in) and be prepared to answer concerns with a reasoned, neutral voice. Acknowledge the concern, but stay genuine about your beliefs and the important role Princeton plays in educating the leaders of tomorrow. Try to keep the conversation on a high plane, and not to get bogged down in arguments or details. Even those who may be out of sorts about something at the moment usually appreciate that Princeton’s overall distinction remains extremely high.
· **Ask:** Make your own commitment first, in order to gain comfort in sharing why you are giving. Second, share your own story about what Princeton has meant to you and why you are volunteering. Think of yourself as an ambassador for Princeton. It is critical to ask for the gift. You cannot control whether or not someone gives, but you do have control over how they are asked. Listen carefully to their reply (especially if they are non-committal), thank them for their gift (or their consideration), and follow-up as appropriate.

· **Participation matters:** Explain that every gift is important. Cumulatively, gifts of modest size make a significant difference in the opportunities Princeton can offer its students. Gifts of $100 or less typically amount to more than $1,500,000. That is the equivalent of the income from a $30,000,000 endowment. In addition, every gift helps to lift the participation percentage, thereby stimulating and encouraging the support of others.

· **Encourage credit card gifts:** The most efficient way to make a gift is by credit card. If someone doesn’t feel comfortable giving you credit card information over the phone, suggest the secure Annual Giving website (www.princeton.edu/ag) or calling the Annual Giving gift line at 800-258-5421.

· **Thank:** Show gratitude with a personal, prompt, and thoughtful note or personal call. This critical step strengthens personal connectedness, makes the donor’s relationship with the University more current, and builds the foundation for additional giving in future years.

· **Combine multiple channels:** Mail, email, TigerCall, phone contacts, social media, and personal visits can all play a part in your outreach.

· **Stay in regular contact:** Report details about conversations or pledges to the appropriate person in your volunteer organization or to your staff liaison at the Annual Giving office. Regular contact among the volunteer team builds momentum, spirit, and motivation.