



# Strengthening UC Berkeley’s Relationships with its Donors

## Sustaining Donor Engagement after a Successful Fundraising Campaign

When the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) needed to better understand its relationship with donors after concluding its largest fundraising campaign to date—raising \$3.13 billion from 281,855

- How can UC Berkeley ensure that all donors are excited to be part of its philanthropic community?
- How will UC Berkeley ascertain whether its donor relations efforts will lead to future engagement and giving?

### UC Berkeley at a Glance



Source: U.S. News & World Report, UC Berkeley

donors—Huron partnered with the top-ranked public university to effectively enable its advancement office to identify, prioritize, and allocate resources toward engaging a larger portion of their alumni network.

Even as a consistently top-ranked university in both the U.S. and globally, UC Berkeley was not immune to issues impacting the public university system at large, including varying levels of alumni engagement, inconsistent donor engagement, and dwindling state funding.

To continue the growth and support of its philanthropic efforts in the long-term, leveraging the momentum of its successful fundraising effort, UC Berkeley knew it needed to focus attention on better understanding its donors.

In particular, the institution aimed to determine what its donor expectations and motivations were across all giving levels.

Armed with Huron’s exhaustive qualitative and quantitative research, the university sought actionable insights and answers to the following questions:

- Who are UC Berkeley’s donors?
- What type of relationship do they expect to build with UC Berkeley?

### Exploring Qualitative and Quantitative Research Lenses

Huron took a listen-first approach to the UC Berkeley engagement, leading with a goal-synthesis session that engaged key stakeholders across all university levels.

*“Our Huron training provided a solid foundation from which we could design our discussions with donors. We learned from Huron experts how to develop questions and conduct conversations that could elicit actionable feedback and gain greater insights into our donors’ experiences, enabling UC Berkeley to further the research Huron carried out.”*

— Katherine Galli-Kreps  
Director, Donor Recognition, UC Berkeley

During the four-hour-long workshop, Huron and UC Berkeley focused on creating different hypotheses for some of its key research questions (as detailed above) and collaborating to come up with common goals and benchmarks of success.

Inspired by the goals and benchmarks identified in the goal-synthesis session, it became evident the university was particularly interested in uncovering critical factors contributing to donor satisfaction—particularly how an individual donor’s unique, internal perceptions and attitudes and external interactions with the UC Berkeley community at large impacts their overall satisfaction with the donor experience.

Armed with that information, Huron approached the research through two lenses: First, identifying the masses for quantitative data segmentation, and second, interviewing high-level donors for qualitative discovery.

With a custom interview guide and survey instrument, Huron invited more than 45,000 UC Berkeley donors to complete an exhaustive online survey, garnering about 3,000 responses, as well as interviewing 23 high-level donors with cumulative giving ranges of \$800,000 to \$27 million.

### Transforming Data Insights into Action

Huron’s donor-relationship research findings and analysis allowed for a breadth of long-term recommendations and even more opportunities for future discovery and donor engagement.

The focus throughout the data analysis remained on UC Berkeley’s donors’ cumulative giving level, graduation decade, donor type, geographic region, and designated giving unit, among other factors. By doing so, Huron was equipped to discern what its donor expectations and motivations were across all giving levels.

Huron also helped enable UC Berkeley’s advancement team to focus its time and resources on donor segments that were of particular concern



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## Taking Action

Through the survey and interview findings, Huron provided the following recommendations for building UC Berkeley donor relationships:



Focus on connecting with alumni and other potential donors sooner, building a robust pipeline



Create donor-preferred opportunities to connect through custom communications



Gather feedback from donors and track their experience over time



Create meaningful opportunities for donors to contribute across campus



Evaluate overall strategy for events with a focus on engaging donors directly with beneficiaries

through targeting donors contributing \$100,000 cumulatively, as well as donors from varying geographic regions.

### Empowering Berkeley with Data

UC Berkeley aimed to enable its advancement office to enact and promote long-term change. As such, Huron used its research findings and data analysis to drive sustainable change—long after the surveys and interviews were conducted and the findings reported.

Huron then trained a donor-relations task force, composed of a cross-campus group of individuals involved in university development and alumni relations, in qualitative research theory.

Empowered with data and a broader context for the research, UC Berkeley can continue to execute its own qualitative and quantitative exploration with their current, and future, donors.

*To learn more about Huron, and to contact us, visit our **Constituent Research** page.*