



RESPONSIBLE ENDOWMENTS COALITION

Leveraging the Power of Alumni

Because alumni donate to the college, they can wield power over the administration. They can be important allies to utilize in your campaign!

Suggestions for reaching out to them:

- **The college's development office** -- the office may be willing to help you reach out to alumni you think would be interested in your campaign. For example: if running a fossil fuel campaign, you'd reach out to alumni working for clean energy firms, who work in environmental activist spaces, or are involved in responsible investing.
- **Responsible investment alumni networks** -- Some colleges have alumni organizations that work to support student campaigns and responsible investment practices. University of Rochester's Alums for Social Responsibility (ASR) and Wesleyan's Progressive Alumni Network (PAN) are strong examples.
- **Alumni conferences, reunions or other events** -- At events where you know a lot of alumni (and important donors) will be, set up a booth with information about your campaign and petitions to gather support. Show them our flyer on how alumni can get support your campaign. Get their contact information so you can utilize their support in the future and consider inviting them to an event you are hosting on campus.
- **Write an article in the student newspaper or alumni magazine** -- Some colleges and universities have written media sources that are well read by their alumni. Writing in it could help recruit and raise awareness about your campaign. Be sure to include contact and social media information.
- **Social media** -- Have a Facebook page or website so people can easily contact you, keep in touch, and help you reach a larger audience. Make a twitter account and tweet at your college, alumni organizations, and other well-trafficked accounts to get your name out there. Use hashtags that identify your campaign.

Suggestions for effectively utilizing alumni:

- **Understand how they can help** -- Our handout for alumni includes information on some of the ways they can leverage their power to support student campaigns. Choose the ideas that would most effectively forward your campaign, and how they should be implemented. For example, alumni can write a letter stating that they're withholding donations until a university meets student demands, and the handout gives suggestions on how to write and phrase these letters.
- **Keep a database of their information** -- Keeping a record of alumni's contact information, background (ie: what career they have indicates their strengths, which you could use for the future), and your interaction with them can be extremely helpful to refer back to in the future. It ensures that you never lose an ally and the potential support they offer once you've gained them.
- **Thank them!** -- Whenever an alumnus/a sends your information out to others or participates in your campaign in some way, go out of your way to thank them for their support. This will encourage them to help again in the future.

Your Power as an Alumnus/Alumna

As a potential donor, your role can be important to current students' campaigns and establishing responsible endowment practices. Whatever you do, REC is a resource for assistance and support.

How you can leverage your power:

- 1) **Ask what support students working on campaigns would need or like.** REC can help connect you to students working on campaigns you're interested in. Be sure to work in conjunction with their work, so you can productively add to their efforts. Some suggestions include:
 - Refuse to donate until specific demands are met. Tell the administration by writing a letter of non-giving. See our website for an example, and guidelines below.
 - Writing a letter of support for the student campaign to the administration. Consider making the letter public by publishing it in your school's newspaper.
 - Providing specific skills, such as finance consulting.
 - Make and circulate a petition for alumni. Consider a photo petition, where individuals or groups hold up posters that identify themselves as alumni and express support for the campaign. The photos are compiled and given to administrators.
 - Financially support a student to come to REC's conferences or retreats.
 - Attend student events and protests. Be sure to have your presence known, for example, by being photographed.

When writing a letter of non-giving or to an administrator, be sure that:

- The ask is SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, time-bound. Instead of saying "I won't donate until the endowment is invested responsibly," say "I won't donate until the university stops investing in fossil fuels and makes a public statement that it will divest within five years, reinvesting that 5% of the endowment in clean energy within five years."
 - You refute the argument you'd expect to hear back. Respond to the economic viability of divestment from fossil fuels (for example) and the school's continued ability to generate positive returns.
 - Whatever you do, be sure to reach out to other alumni and recruit their support. The more of you there are, the more convincing you'll be. REC can help connect you to other interested alumni.
- 2) **Serve on your school's committee for investor responsibility.** This committee discusses issues relating to endowment responsibility, votes on proxy ballots, and creates shareholder resolutions. Not all schools have one, and not all schools have alumni members on their committee. Ask the Investment Office for more information, or ask REC if we've worked with your school's committee in the past.
 - 3) **Donate to a Social Justice Fund.** Some universities have a separate donation fund that is specifically available to students for community organizing, start-ups, and service projects. Donate here instead of to the standard pool.
 - 4) **Create or serve on an alumni group for social responsibility.** Some universities have an organization of alumni who work to support student campaigns and responsible investment practices at their alma mater. University of Rochester's Alums for Social Responsibility (ASR) and Wesleyan's Progressive Alumni Network (PAN) are strong examples.
 - 5) **Support REC.** Speak at one of our events or conferences, sponsor a student to come to one of our retreats, or donate!