

**Rutgers School of Social Work
New Brunswick, NJ**

TO: Generous U Selection Committee
FROM: The 2015 Students Supporting Students Committee
RE: Cover Letter | Generous U Contest
DATE: Friday, March 13, 2015

The Students Supporting Students Campaign Committee is a student group within the School of Social Work at Rutgers University. Our purpose is to (1) increase student scholarship support in order to reduce student debt, (2) engage students, faculty, and alumni in making an impact on MSW students, and (3) encourage sustained philanthropic giving. We accomplish this goal under a budget of \$500; \$250 of which is designated for annual meeting expenses, and the other \$250 designated for marketing and promotional expenses. We encourage you to visit socialwork.rutgers.edu/giving/StudentsSupportingStudents for more information. Our contact person and group advisor is Danielle Chirico, Development & Alumni Relations Assistant, who can be reached by email: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] A statement of confirmation has been provided by Cathleen Palace, Director of Development, who can be reached by email: [REDACTED]

OUR MISSION: STUDENT PHILANTHROPY

Students at the Rutgers School of Social Work come from different backgrounds, speak different languages, wear different clothes and have different personal lives, yet we all share the same space as we pursue our common dream of graduating with a Master's in Social Work (MSW) degree. We also share a common concern. With the average MSW student debt over \$36,000, an estimated starting salary of about \$44,000, and a lack of scholarship and other financial support, many social work students are living with a huge burden and are unsure of how they are going to pay for school. For this reason, Students Supporting Students was created by MSW students to provide financial support to our peers through fostering a culture of philanthropy within our graduating class, alumni, and faculty. The campaign encourages students and the Rutgers School of Social Work community to come together as one big family so we can build a strong support system that will help raise scholarship money for fellow social work students.

POSITIVE IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS

Our efforts have a large and meaningful impact on the community of student social workers who we are striving to serve. Through this campaign, 30 MSW students have benefited from scholarships as a direct result of our fundraising efforts. Laura Nager, a current student and recipient of the Students Supporting Students Scholarship wrote to us and said, "This scholarship will make a significant

difference in my life. Because I have a family, I continue to work part-time while I pursue my MSW. I recognize that many people have contributed to this scholarship, both students and faculty. Your generosity has greatly helped ease the burden of my Spring semester and I am truly grateful.”

We’ve also finally made a change in the alumni participation rate. For 10 years prior to the campaign’s inception in 2012, alumni giving was plateaued at a steady 3.5%. As students who participated in the campaign became alumni and continued to give back, we were able to finally see an increase in alumni giving. With a denominator of 13,000 that grows by about 500 each year, it can be quite a challenge to increase our alumni participation rate. But we are pleased to share that now 5% of our alumni give back, and we are expecting that to continue to rise with each class that participates in the campaign.

INCREASING PHILANTHROPY ON CAMPUS

Since the inception of the Student’s Supporting Students Campaign, the Committee has grown with each passing year, adding new members who are eager to share their innovative ideas. This year the committee extended membership to include alumni and non-graduating members. In addition, our general student body has become more involved in philanthropy by becoming donors and making a gift to prove they understand the importance of philanthropy and giving back to our school. Before the campaign, less than 1% of graduating students were making a gift to support those behind them. Now, 58% have proved their commitment to philanthropy by making a donation to support fellow students.

We use a variety of methods and build partnerships with other university leaders to spread the word about philanthropy and motivate students to give back to our school. This includes partnering with the Student Affairs office to send a series of emails to graduating MSW students, partnering with Instructors to allow us to come speak with classes in person, and partnering with the Dean to provide a matching gift based on the percent of student donors who make a gift. We also spread the word through social media, flyers, telethons, and our school newspaper. To ensure that the student’s first giving experience to the school is a good one, we provide all donors of \$1.00 or more with a social work pin, send them a personalized thank you card, publish their name on the website, and automatically enter their name to receive prizes secured by our committee.

OUR TEAM

The Students Supporting Students Campaign Committee is student-led, with three Co-Chairs who keep the team of 19 students on track and monitor weekly progress. Other student members take on leadership roles for specific projects, such as the Generous U application, or managing the social media content and strategy. There is a dedicated staff member in the school’s Development Office to provide the resources necessary to help the student committee achieve our goals. Since students are spread out between our three campuses which are in Northern, Central, and Southern New Jersey, our team uses the Sakai web platform as a tool to manage projects, facilitate communication, and share resources.

\$10,000: CURRENT AND FUTURE SUPPORT

If the Rutgers School of Social Work's Students Supporting Students Campaign were granted the \$10,000 Generous U award, the committee would divide it among three initiatives that would enhance our student philanthropy program. This would include providing support for student scholarships in the short-term, using a portion as seed money to begin building a long-term endowment, and providing support for direct fundraising and campaign management through a paid MSW student worker.

The committee would designate \$2,500 towards our short-term goal of providing scholarships to MSW students who apply for assistance in the fall of 2015. The Students Supporting Students Committee would be pleased to share the thank you letters from our student scholarship recipients with Generous U. Students on the planning committees from 2012-2015 have all agreed that long-term financial health of our scholarship funds should be a priority. We hope to build an endowment of \$50,000, so we can invest the principal and have a steady stream of scholarship support each year, regardless of how successful the committee is in fundraising for that particular year. For this reason we launched a crowd funding initiative geared towards young alumni that would help build this endowment. If granted the Generous U award, we would use \$5,000 to help grow our endowment to a sustainable level. Lastly, the final \$2,500 would be used to pay a student worker to provide management support for the Students Supporting Students Campaign over the next 2 years. After recognizing the importance for a student worker, the committee is confident the school would continue to support this position after the Generous U funding is exhausted.

CONCLUSION

We are extremely passionate about making a difference for our peers by creating a culture of philanthropy that will generate scholarships for continuing MSW students. Our campaign is becoming an integrated part of the culture at the School of Social Work, where students, alumni, and faculty all look forward to taking a part in this initiative. In addition, our campaign will gain more attention outside our school after an academic article that describes the need for student philanthropy and includes a detailed description of our fundraising model will be published in the Spring 2015 edition of the Journal of Social Work Education. The Students Supporting Students Campaign is so important to us because we want more and more students to be aware of the need for philanthropy, which we believe is key to a successful future in social work. We need scholarships to reduce our debt so we can focus our energy on the communities we serve without the financial stress that comes with an unrealistic amount of debt. It is our belief that this campaign will create the culture of philanthropy that is required to provide scholarships to students and enhance our MSW program and social work careers.

Thank you, Generous U, for your time and consideration!

