

March 13, 2015

The Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy, MS-035
The Heller School for Social Policy and Management
Brandeis University
415 South Street
Waltham, MA 02454-9110

Dear Members of the Generous U Application Committee,

Please accept this application on behalf of the University of Rhode Island (URI) Student Philanthropy Council (SPC) [www.urifoundation.org/StudentPhilanthropy]. The Council was formed in 2011 with the purpose of building a culture of student philanthropy where students are encouraged to give back to URI. The SPC is a collaborative effort of the URI Foundation and the URI Student Alumni Association (SAA) and has approximately 30 student members. The council is managed by a student chairperson (Hannah Zawia, '18, Pharm D. Major, [REDACTED]) and a staff advisor (Joanne Gemma, assistant director of Annual Giving at the URI Foundation, [REDACTED]). The SPC is being endorsed as a formal student group by Dr. Thomas R. Dougan, Vice President for Student Affairs ([REDACTED]). The SPC's operating budget for fiscal year 2015 is \$7,250 which underwrites materials and supplies for campus-wide awareness and solicitation activities.

The Council's main objectives are to educate students about the impact of donor support on the entire university community and to promote the concept of 'students helping students' by encouraging members of the student body to contribute to the URI Students First Fund (an emergency fund for URI students facing financial or academic hardship that has already helped 26 students since 2013). The Council hosts events for the campus community in order to inspire students to give back to their university.

The SPC's work positively impacts our campus community as the focus of our solicitation initiatives revolves around school spirit, helping others, and appreciating all the opportunities URI offers. Our main campaign, which began in 2014, is a perfect example of our campus-wide impact. The "I Heart URI" campaign has enabled the SPC to bring awareness to the needs of peers during times of crisis and highlight how the Students First Fund provides a helping hand. With campus-wide tabling/booths, themed events and education, our outreach efforts have been recognized by students and other community members. We have received great feedback from students who did not realize that there are URI students who might be in need, and that gifts of any size could make an impact. Being able to tell students how they can help has been a great way to spread knowledge

about philanthropy. As our focus is on participation and not gift size, we strive to increase positivity on campus by spreading the message that we are all here together and our collective support shows our love of URI and our Rhody spirit.

In our first year, we hosted events that introduced who we are as a group and why it's important to give back. Now, with three years under our belt, we typically host events tied to National Philanthropy Week and National Student Engagement and Philanthropy Week. We have also expanded our efforts to include several other events. These include a class year banner-signing event for freshmen during URI's First Night; Opening Doors Day to welcome students back to campus in the fall; and a student donor appreciation activity in the spring. All of these efforts are opportunities to promote student philanthropy at URI.

We have also created a social media presence to promote our events and update students on our activities. With every event, we also reach out to the university's social media coordinator to include photos and posts on our activities on URI's sites as these networks reach a wider audience. Other outreach activities include partnering with our academic colleges to table in high traffic buildings, rallying at basketball games, and working with various groups on campus to communicate our message.

Our Rhody Senior Challenge is another way we spread our message, specifically to graduating seniors. Through social media, tabling/booths, emails, webpage links, peer-to-peer solicitation, and flyers, we promote students making a gift in honor of their class year to support what's important to them.

We have been able to measure our success through student participation in solicitation and awareness activities. We can track our success by the number of students who make a donation. We also track the number of students who are engaged. For example, we have organized thank-a-donor days where we invite students to sign a giant thank you card to URI donors and we are able to tangibly measure participation through the number of signatures. We have also organized social media contests in an effort to boost our reach, which is something we can tangibly measure through Facebook 'likes', retweets, followers, and use of specific hashtags.

In 2014, we saw great success with our efforts; approximately 5% of the student body made gifts to URI, up from less than 1% the previous year. In addition, through all of our awareness events and social media engagement, approximately 50% of the student body learned about the SPC or participated in our events in some way. Our goal each year going forward is to consistently increase the number of student donors, as well as the number of students who learn about our mission.

Over the long-term, we will be planning more comprehensive education, collaboration, promotion, branding, social media, and stewardship activities. With these plans in place and the support of the Sillerman Prize and Generous U title, we anticipate greater participation in our solicitation campaigns amongst students in all class years. The ultimate goal is to build a program that continually inspires students to give. We also want to ensure that student donors feel good knowing that their gift impacted a peer in need.

We would be thrilled to receive the Sillerman Prize and Generous U title for fiscal year 2016. The funds will help underwrite a number of initiatives that will allow us to expand our outreach to freshmen, purchase SPC-branded promotional items to increase student engagement, help launch a senior challenge phonathon, and increase our recognition and stewardship efforts to students in all class years, most especially seniors.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions regarding our application or would like more information, please contact us using the information above.

Sincerely,



Hannah Zawia '18
Junior, Pharm.D.
SPC Chair



Joanne Gemma
Assistant Director, Annual Giving
SPC Staff Advisor