

## CASE Europe Best of Region Award Winner

### Institution

University of Cambridge

### (Optional) School / Department / Unit

Development and Alumni Relations

## Page: Nomination Summary

### Title of Entry (10 words maximum)

Cambridge University Boat Club *Pulling Together* Campaign

### Select the award area:

Marketing > Marketing: Marketing Initiatives (More Than 25 Staff)

### Provide a concise overview of your entry that summarizes what you did, how and why you did it, and the results/impact (250 words)

Changing UK funding models mean diverse revenue streams are needed to ensure sporting competition continues at the highest level. A new integrated fundraising, communications, and engagement strategy for Cambridge University Boat Club (CUBC) represented a step change in developing relationships with alumni and supporters across multiple channels. 2023's Pulling Together campaign was designed to build both a sense of community and a culture of philanthropy through a public-facing appeal. It ran from January to April, engaged constituents in new ways, prioritised participation, rallied separate supporter constituencies from three historic University boat clubs around our primary annual event – The Boat Race, and converted a highly engaged constituency into a new donor base.

Event attendance, a 25% increase in newsletter click-to-open rates, increased engagement across all social channels, and significant growth in results from our digital fundraising demonstrated an engaged and growing supporter base. Revenue increased by 28% and participation by 32% with 368 gifts from 14 countries and across 58 crew years. Gifts supported the Club's most pressing priorities from training to equipment to coaching staff and athlete wellbeing. Every piece is crucial for the crew's success and ensures the Club is as well prepared as possible to beat Oxford.

Key elements contributing to success included: close collaboration with a wide variety of partners to align planning, segment messaging and amplify impact; bringing three very different alumni constituencies together through thoughtfully curated, inspiring content; and leveraging the strong affinity/high engagement to come together to invest in the future of the Club.

## What makes your entry distinctive? (250 words)

### Strategies

The tone of the campaign was critically important in building both a sense of community and a culture of philanthropy through this public-facing appeal. Philanthropic approaches to alumni, parents, and supporters have only recently been necessary and it was therefore important not only to *ask* but also to explain *why* we were fundraising and the *impact* of those donations. We embedded these messages into a larger alumni engagement strategy in an effort to bring three constituencies together around our primary annual event – The Boat Race.

### Concept

2020 saw the three separate rowing clubs of the University unite into one new club for men and women, openweight and lightweight, who represent Cambridge and race against Oxford. The concept of Pulling Together was particularly effective in rallying supporters and converting a highly engaged constituency into a new donor base. It also demonstrated a strong community with a shared common goal to current Cambridge rowers. 2023 saw a clean sweep of wins in the boat races for Cambridge.

### Innovation

We launched our annual giving programme in February 2022 and have developed integrated fundraising, comms, and engagement mass marketing strategies to develop relationships with our alumni across multiple channels.

### Creativity

Having introduced the concept of digital fundraising the previous year, we sought to significantly increase participation levels in this campaign. Campaign leaderboards by crew year and decade leveraged competition without dividing constituents by legacy club or gender. A world map highlighted the international reach of the campaign and engaged constituents regardless of location.

## Page: Goals and Outcomes (100 words)

Engage alumni and create excitement for the boat races

- 384 supporters attended the Boat Race Dinner
- 16 crews hosted reunions and 7 reunion stories were published
- Newsletter open rate increased to **69%** & click-to-open rate to **30%**
- Increased followers on Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter, increased reach and engagement on Facebook
- Healthy competition between crew years

Raise awareness of the need for philanthropy

- 43 volunteers drove peer-to-peer fundraising, a substantial increase from 2022
- Uplift in the number of gifts, unique donors, first-time donors, and 28% increase in total funds raised

See PowerPoint deck for further stats.

## Page: Resources

**(If applicable) What was the total amount spent on the project/initiative?**

## Currency

GBP £2420

**Describe and detail how your resources (budget, people and time) were used (or attach a project budget below). Do not include staff salaries, but describe the number of staff and how they participated. (250 words)**

### Resources

We had a compact team working on this campaign at the Development and Alumni Relations office from January to April - two permanent members of staff and one temporary staff member. One led the overall strategy and fundraising activities, drafted communications, and managed volunteers and events (0.8 FTE). Another provided significant support with communications and took the lead on social media activities (0.3 FTE). The temporary staff member provided support over 8 weeks (FTE) in drafting communications for the website, particularly reunion stories.

The total spend above covers costs for the GiveCampus platform for the campaign period (£770), videography (£1500) and paid social media (£150) to target specific audiences.

We made judicious use of temporary resource for the campaign period and maximised a small budget by repurposing content across multiple channels where possible.

## Page: Strategy and Methodology

### How did you accomplish your goals? (250 words)

Multi-channel communications to engage alumni and raise awareness of the need for philanthropy:

- 16 digital mailings, segmented where possible, containing a careful balance of fundraising and other key messaging to build on race momentum rather than detract from it
- Promotion of races, dinners, supporter gatherings and crew reunions
- Volunteer-led communications to drive giving and trialling 'reunion giving'
- Philanthropic communications following the 'Expose, Impact, Ask, Stewardship' messaging structure with email and social media activity directed to the Campaign website
- Short, clear calls-to action in communications
- 59 social media posts across four channels (FB, IG, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Videos with diverse representation used in social media, emails and the campaign website
- Reunion and student stories and a Benefactors' page on the CUBC website
- Rich day-of content for crew announcements and race days including spectator information and results
- Coverage on University and Alumni channels for Lightweight and Openweight crew announcements, both race days, and a nostalgia/hype post
- Student, coach, and alumni stories linked to University strategic priorities
- Matches and challenges, demonstrating peer buy-in and providing friendly competition and sustained momentum. Campaign leaderboards by crew year and decade and a world map provided interactive engagement without dividing constituents by legacy club or gender

#### Examples:

- First £30,000 raised was matched £ for £ by an anonymous donor.
- Additional £5,000 unlocked with 50 donors.

Key to strategy and deployment:

- Integrated, long-term communications planning and scheduling using a comprehensive content calendar
- Collaborative working with multiple partners
- Temporary resource to create additional outstanding content

**Page: Supporting Materials**

**File Upload 1**

Example email showing messaging and call to action [Mark your calendars... \(cam.ac.uk\)](#)

**File Upload 2**

Example videos Ask: [link](#)

**File Upload 3**

[Volunteer toolkit](#)

**File Upload 4**

[GiveCampus page showing leaderboards and world map](#)

**File Upload 5**

CUBC *Pulling Together* supporting slides

Provide up to five hyperlinks (links to websites, videos, images, etc.) that show why your nomination is worthy of recognition.

**Hyperlink 1** [Support Us - Cambridge University Boat Club \(cubc.org.uk\)](https://cubc.org.uk)

**Hyperlink 2** [Cambridge University Boat Club: Pulling Together 2023 · GiveCampus](#)

**Hyperlink 3** <https://cubc.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/12/2023-24-Pulling-Together-Fund-Case-for-Support-Digital-1.pdf>

**Page: Additional Information**

The University of Cambridge landscape is complex with 31 Colleges that are 31 separate legal entities with their own comms sites and channels. This devolved landscape can already make information sharing challenging. When you factor in the additional partners for the boat race which include BRCL (Boat Race Company Limited), CUBC (Cambridge University Boat Club), AllMarkOne, Lightweight Races (Lwt races), Row360, the Development and Alumni Relations office and the Office for External Affairs and Communication, effective collaboration and early engagement is absolutely vital, with roles, responsibilities, aims and relationships between parties clearly outlined.

**Additional Information**

Nominations receiving global recognition (Grand Gold, Gold, Silver or Bronze) will be notified in June 2024. In the event your nomination receives an award, please provide some additional information. (500 words)

**Social media handle**

@YoursCambridge @Cambridge\_Uni #CambridgeUniversity @CUBCsquad #CUBC