Guide to Effective Parent Outreach
2014-2015

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**Making Successful Phone Calls**

**Purpose of phone call**

Thank you for participating in this important outreach to fellow parents. The purpose of the outreach calls by PEC members is to:

- Engage in conversation about Colby with fellow parents.
- Highlight common experiences and impressions as a way of building a stronger sense of “Colby community” for your assigned family.
- Note questions or any concern/suggestion requiring staff follow-up.
- Be a resource about “why give to Colby” should the conversation turn to the recent appeal letter or to the Colby Fund for Parents in general. (You will reach out to these families starting in the fall about supporting Colby)

*Note: after making phone calls, we ask that you continue to check the MVP records of your assigned families in order to send them a brief thank you note for their gift.*
Making the Call—Steps to Success

1. **Introduce yourself** and let your fellow parent know you are calling on behalf of Colby and the Parents Executive Committee. (“I’m a parent, like you.”) The knowledge that you are a peer will help break down any potential telemarketer resistance.
   
   **Sample opening:** (if you don’t already know the person you’re calling)
   
   Hello, is this (use salutation/last name as listed in MVP record)? (pause)
   
   This is (your name) calling on behalf of Colby and the Parents Executive Committee. Like you, I’m a parent of a first year student which is why I’m calling this evening...

2. **Ask if it is a good time to talk.** If it is not, ask when it would be convenient for you to speak for five or ten minutes. Make an appointment to call back. It’s okay to leave a message on their answering machine.

3. **Begin the conversation by stating why you are calling at this time.**
   
   **Sample:** “It’s hard to believe that the first year at Colby is nearly over, so I thought this would be a good time to call and check in to find out how things have been going so far.”

4. **Ask about the parent’s Colby student.** Remember, one of the goals of the PEC is to strengthen parent-to-parent ties, and another is to strengthen the relationship between parents and the College. We want parents to feel valued and heard.

   **Tips:**
   - Use the names of your student and the parent’s student (you can find student names and information on MVP) and establish rapport by exploring commonalities (students play similar sports, are in same residence hall, have same major) so that you connect on a more personal level. Ask open-ended questions concerning their student. (See the Sample Ice-Breaker Questions for ideas.)
   - Listen carefully to each parent’s thoughts and experiences with Colby so that you can address any concerns in the course of the conversation and potentially resolve any negative feelings.
   - If their child loves Colby, the parent will feel excited about the school and being part of the community. (It is hoped, of course, that these positive feelings will strengthen the parent’s interest and enthusiasm for making a financial gift to the College.)

5. **Make note** of any questions or concerns that may need follow-up from our office or Colby administration and **SUBMIT** your notes via the **REPORT RESULTS** tab on MVP. Should there be an issue requiring immediate attention, please ALSO email parents@colby.edu or telephone Matt Mullen at 207-859-4322.
6. If the opportunity presents itself, share about your decision to support Colby with a leadership gift and for volunteering on behalf of the College. Remember, this isn’t a sales pitch; you are not begging or tricking them into giving. You are telling your story and explaining why you give and then inviting them to join you as a supporter of your students’ college.

**Sample:** “I volunteer because I believe so strongly in the mission and vision of the College and am delighted with my son’s/daughter’s experience.”

Remember, the appeal letter they recently received asked them to consider the specific amount that is also listed on the GIVING tab of their MVP record.

7. As a continuation to #6, listen to the ir response to you sharing why you give. Don’t assume someone who raises initial objections is saying “no” to their giving a gift. Few people will immediately say “yes” to a stretch commitment. The key is to have patience, to think out loud with the parents, and to tell them why you made your commitment.

8. Close the call by referencing a positive impression about Colby that you both shared during The conversation. Thank them for their time.

**After Your Calls:**

1. Submit your notes via the REPORT RESULTS tab on MVP. Note that if a parent requested another pledge card during your conversation, let us know and we will send them one with a return envelope right away.

2. Following your conversation, please take a moment to send a follow-up note thanking them for taking the time to speak with you. Remember, the purpose of these calls is to build a rapport and case for support when you follow-up.

3. If the parent agreed to make a gift during your phone conversation, please send them a thank you note as soon as possible. If they have already made a gift, be sure to mention this in your note. (Remember to check the box “thanked” next to their name after mailing the card to help keep track.)

   *In an age of mass mailings, flyers and email, your handwritten note will stand out and will be more appreciated.*
Frequently Asked Questions and Concerns: 
What You May Hear and How You Might Respond

While most Colby families will receive your call with warmth and will respond enthusiastically to you, some may need additional information or reassurance from you should your conversation involve specifics about giving to the Colby Fund for Parents. To assist you in your role, we have provided the following suggested responses to frequently asked questions and concerns.

Parent: “Why should I give more? I am paying full tuition for my Colby student.”
Caller: “I understand. Colby’s tuition is substantial and it places a burden on many families whose children attend the College. As difficult as it may be to believe, tuition revenues do not fully cover the actual cost of educating our children—every student’s education is subsidized through gifts from alumni, parents, and friends who believe in maintaining Colby’s excellence. Over 25 percent of Colby’s annual budget comes from endowment income and gifts made to support the College’s current operations. The Colby Fund for Parents is an important source of gift income for the College and parents account for over a third of all annual donations.”

Parent: “I can’t afford what was asked for in the letter,” or “I am not working,” or “I’m retired.”
Caller: “I know many parents are in a similar situation. When we think of Colby, though, what often comes to mind is the special experience that our son/daughter is having. I hope your child is having a good experience as well, and I hope you’ll consider making a modest commitment to the College. We’re trying to reach 40 percent participation from parents this year, and your gift, regardless of the amount, will help us reach this goal.”

Parent: “I’m involved with other projects this year, so I’ll have to say no to Colby.”
Caller: “It’s great to hear that you are involved with other projects. I/we are as well, and it is difficult to support so many deserving organizations at once! I hope that you can include Colby on the list of organizations you support and that you can make a modest gift to the College to help us reach our participation goal of 40 percent. Any size gift is a vote of confidence in a Colby education.”

Parent: “With tuition as high as it is, we shouldn’t have to give any more to Colby.”
Caller: “Tuition is a real burden for all Colby families—no question. I know that many parents make significant sacrifices to send their children to Colby and to other colleges like Colby. Many are sending more than one child to college at a time.”
Without charitable gifts, though, Colby’s tuition would be even higher—over twenty percent higher (nearly $17,000)! Parent gifts help to bridge the gap between our tuition payments and what the College spends each year to educate our children.”

Parent: “I can’t afford to give a large gift, so I am not going to give this year.”
Caller: “We all want our gifts to make as big an impact as possible, but it would be a mistake to think that small gifts won’t help the College. As we strive to reach 40-percent participation from parents, every gift counts, no matter the size. Our participation is important as it sends a positive message to those outside the Colby community about how we, as parents, value the College and our children’s experiences.”

Parent: “I’d like to contribute, but frankly, I’m upset with Colby because…”
Caller: In your role as a PEC member, you are serving as an advocate for Colby. You may stumble upon issues that other parents may have with the College (poor dorm selection, bad grades, not making a sports team). Your job is not to become embroiled in the issues but to listen and to relay the issues back to the Parents Program Office by noting the concern in the REPORT RESULTS tab (for immediate attention email parents@colby.edu or call Matt Mullen at 207-859-4322). In such cases, let the parents know you will get answers for them or you will have someone else respond. Sometimes parents just want to be heard, and your respectful listening will make them feel better. End by reminding them that any size gift is a vote of confidence in Colby, and see if they might like to make a gift for participation purposes.

Sample Ice-Breaker Questions

The following sample questions are designed to help you break the ice and learn more about the parent you’re calling. Review the information included about your parent. For most families, there will be some mutual connection between your student and theirs. Tailor them to the individual and your personal style.

- Tell me about your son/daughter? How did he/she make the decision to attend Colby?
- What activities is your son/daughter involved in at Colby? What residence hall does he/she live in?
- How would you describe your child’s experience so far at Colby? What are his/her favorite aspects of life on Mayflower Hill?
- Did you attend Family Homecoming Weekend? (Maybe you met at an event or attended the same presentation, etc.) What were your impressions of campus?
Making Your Case: Why Give to Colby

1) Colby’s mission is worthy of your support.

An investment in Colby’s rigorous academic environment is an investment in your child’s future. A gift to the Colby Fund for Parents is a vote of confidence in Colby.

2) Gifts directly benefit your child during his or her time at Colby.

Gifts to the Colby Fund for Parents are for current needs and directly benefit your child during his or her time at Colby. Parent giving supports outstanding faculty, expands student programming, and enhances academic opportunities, significantly affecting all students’ experiences. When you donate to the fund, you support every component of a Colby education by augmenting the annual resources available.

3) Colby cannot maintain its high standards without parent support.

For generations the extraordinary faculty has been acknowledged as Colby’s greatest asset. Distinguished scholars, researchers, and authors from around the world, these faculty members have chosen Colby because they love teaching and because they are eager to work closely with students. The College competes with top universities to recruit new faculty members who are committed to excellence in both teaching and research. Colby must provide attractive compensation and benefits, along with opportunities for research and professional advancement, in order to recruit and retain the highest quality faculty.

Colby is also committed to meeting the calculated need of all admitted students. This school year, roughly 60% of all students received financial assistance of some kind, with 40% of students receiving outright scholarships averaging $38,000. Colby is not what it is simply because of the faculty and facilities, but because of the unique and diverse student body it attracts.

4) The Colby Fund for Parents is an opportunity to join alumni and friends in bridging the gap between tuition and the actual cost of a Colby education.

It may be difficult to imagine, but the price of tuition, room, and board only covers approximately 75% of the cost of a Colby education. This gap (currently over $17,000) between tuition and the actual cost per student to attend means that every student receives some level of subsidy.
Unrestricted gifts each year from Colby parents, alumni, and friends, along with endowment income, help make up the difference and ensure that no student, whether they receive financial aid or not, pay the full cost of a Colby education.

**Common Pitfalls**

Your job as a volunteer will be more enjoyable and more successful if you avoid some of the following common pitfalls:

- Avoid talking too much or not listening enough.
- Do not interrupt or judge when objections are expressed. Let them express their concern but do not allow extensive discussion of a controversial issue to overshadow the call.
- Avoid relying on just phone messages (nonetheless, it’s good to leave one introducing yourself so they will recognize your phone number the next time you reach out). Everyone you call is busy. It takes your personal touch to make a difference in how connected this family feels towards Colby.

**Sample Thank You Messages:**

Please contact the Office of Parent Giving & Programs to request Colby notecards by contacting Jody Dickey at parents@colby.edu or call 207-859-4323.

Please use/adapt the following or write your own template. If you use a template that works well, we invite you to share it with Parent Office (parents@colby.edu) so that we can add it to this page of sample messages!

**Sample #1: Acknowledges phone conversation**

Dear First name,

How nice it was to meet you “by phone” earlier this evening and to have an opportunity to learn about (name of student’s) time so far at Colby. [Sentence that references something mentioned/discussed during the conversation.] I’m sure our paths will cross throughout the coming years on Mayflower Hill. Again, thank you again for your time and very best wishes for the remainder of freshman year.

Sincerely,
Sample #2: Acknowledges donation

Dear Dr. Colby Parent:

On behalf of the Parents Executive Committee, we would like to thank you for your generous gift to the Colby Fund for Parents. Our gifts help Colby continue its high level of academic excellence. Our class has an ambitious goal and your contribution is very much appreciated.

Best wishes to you and your daughter/son Julie/John for the remainder of the school year and upcoming summer. Thanks again for your support.

Sincerely,

Sample #3: Acknowledges your call and when prospect said gift would be made

Dear First name and Spouse name,

Thanks so much for your generous support of the Colby Fund for Parents. I have advised the Office of Parent Giving & Programs that you plan to make your contribution in April (specify month). I enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your daughter/son Julie/John’s experience at Colby. I very much appreciate your courtesy, kindness and support.

Sincerely,

Mule Volunteer Portal (MVP) Recap:

Please refer to the “Quick Reference Guide to MVP for Parents” for more detailed instructions regarding access and use of MVP.

The best way to share specifics about your conversation is to enter notes in the “Additional Information” section under the REPORT RESULTS tab. Feel free to also use this section for suggesting follow-up or to communicate directly with Colby Fund staff members. PLEASE NOTE, anything submitted through REPORT RESULTS will not be saved on this page.

For saving notes to yourself as reminders, use the AGENT NOTES tab. Remember, these notes are only for your use and are not part of your reporting back.

Thank you for volunteering!