

RISE

Results in Independent Schools E-newsletter
Shining a Light on Fundraising

Alexander Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

First Things First



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from the organized desk of
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A Winning Approach for Atlanta Girls' School

When millions of students were sent home in March, the spring fundraising calendar for many independent schools suddenly changed. By April, it was very clear that galas, auctions, and school fundraisers could not go on as planned, soon to be followed by graduation ceremonies and other cherished rites of spring for students, teachers, and families.

For **Atlanta Girls' School** (AGS), the 2020 spring event was to be more than another fun evening. AGS opened its doors in 2000, and the *20th Anniversary Soirée* had been carefully planned for April 2020 as a celebration of two decades of educating girls to lead lives of purpose.

Luckily, the event itself could be rescheduled to a late fall date, but the immediate issue was the loss of spring donations—especially an auction paddle raise that benefitted the annual fund—so close to the end of the school and fiscal year.

The solution? Explain the situation and ask donors to step up to help on a designated *Online Giving Day* in May. The outcome? Donors came through with gifts large and small to make the day a success, well surpassing what had been projected for the paddle raise.

As you think about your own creative solutions for the coming year, here are some ideas that worked for the Atlanta Girls' School:

- Give donors the facts. The Soirée was the major fundraising project for the spring, and the loss of much-needed funds would be significant. At the same time, asking donors to make Soirée gifts now rather than later could hurt the fundraising potential for the fall rescheduling of the event. This was shared simply and in a straight-forward fashion.
- Communicate consistently in a short timeframe. Using email and social media,

a series of brief messages using videos and photos were sent in the week leading up to the Online Giving Day. This tactic helped make donors aware the day was around the corner without it becoming "old news." The videos were short, made at home, and came from the heart.

- Be creative! A long-time AGS volunteer leader and Board member decided to use the occasion of her birthday to celebrate AGS and penned a charming, clever poem that she emailed to friends and family asking for gifts to the School. Dozens of donors responded to her birthday wish, bringing in dollars for AGS and building awareness of the School and its mission.
- Be sensitive to the situation: In the weeks leading up to the Online Giving Day, several Board members and other donors pledged challenge gifts so that online donations of any size could be matched dollar-for-dollar. The day's message was that that gifts would be doubled, rather than promoting participation rates, competitions, or class totals, which seemed less important in these times.

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30
minute

fundraising
counsel*

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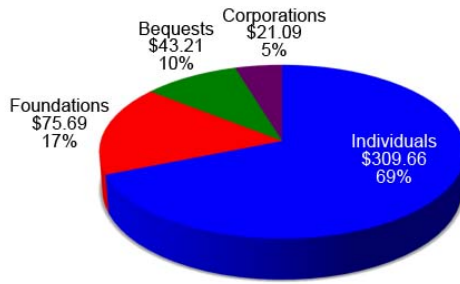
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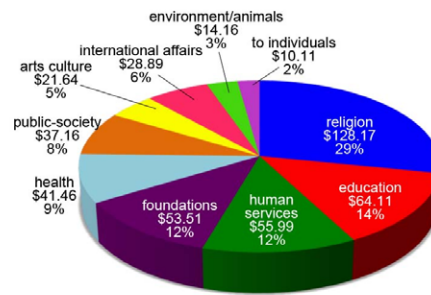
A Snapshot of Giving in 2019

Giving USA 2020: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2019, was released in June, and amid a complex climate, charitable giving showed solid growth, climbing to one of the highest years for giving on record at \$449.64 billion.

Giving by Source \$449.64 billion



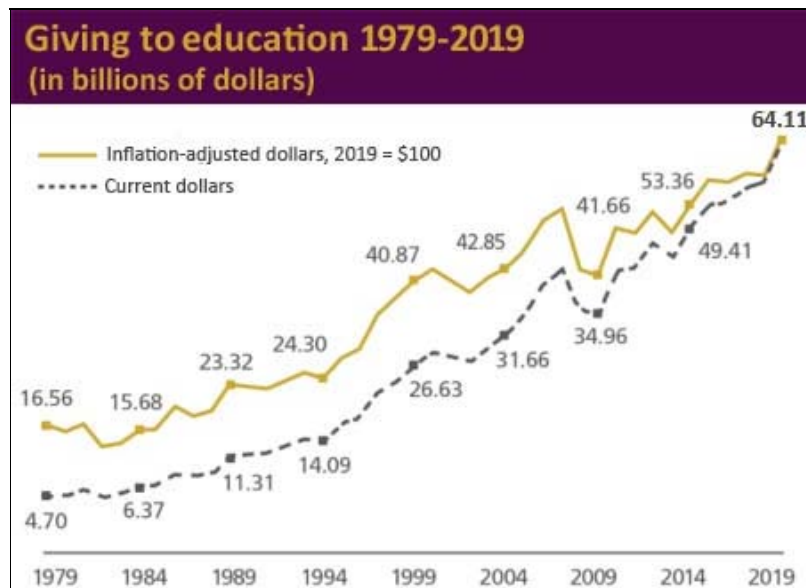
Giving by Recipient



Selected Highlights

- Giving by **individuals** achieved the second-highest total dollar amount on record at \$309.66 billion, rising 4.7% in 2019.
- Giving by **foundations** had a record-breaking year, reaching its highest-ever dollar amount at an estimated \$75.69 billion.
- Giving by **corporations** was estimated to have increased by 13.4% in 2019, totaling \$21.90 billion. The growth is indicative of this type of giving, and is highly responsive to changes in corporate pre-tax profits and GDP.
- Giving by **bequest** was essentially flat with a growth rate of 0.2% over 2018 at \$43.21 billion in 2019.

Giving to Education



- The education subsector comprised the second-largest portion of charitable dollars in 2019, receiving 14% of total gifts.
- Giving to the education subsector amounted to 14% of total giving in 2019.
- Contributions to education organizations grew 12.1% in current dollars from 2018 to \$64.11 billion in 2019. Adjusted for inflation, giving to education organizations increased 10.1%.
- In 2019, contributions to education totaled the highest inflation-adjusted value recorded to date
- According to the *Council for Advancement and Support of Education*, contributions to higher education institutions grew 6.1% in fiscal year 2019.

- Higher education institutions in Blackbaud Institute's Charitable Giving Report saw a 7.0% increase in online giving between 2018 and 2019.
- The education subsector has received between 11% and 14% of total recipient contributions in the past four decades. Giving to education has been at its strongest in the last four five-year periods.

We Think You Should Know

First Quarter 2020 Giving Drop But Early Signs of Uptick

Individual giving declined 6 percent in the first quarter of this year compared with last year, a trend that would lead to \$25 billion in lost revenue for nonprofits if it continues throughout 2020, according to a new survey.

Data shows the first two months of the year were good ones for fundraisers, followed by an 11% decline in March compared with March of 2019. However, there are early signs of a second-quarter rebound. At the end of March, data began to tick up. "I would be surprised if the 11% drop in March was anything that's going to hold," said Michael Nilsen, vice president of marketing, communications, and public policy at the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Another bright spot: Donations under \$250 rose 6%. The 2017 tax law means that millions fewer people see any tax benefit from giving, but Congress voted to allow people who don't itemize to deduct up to \$300 in cash charitable giving for one year only, on their 2020 taxes. According to research, the first-quarter fundraising has been declining year over year for several years across all categories of donors, so an increase in small-dollar donations was a surprise. More [here](#).

We'd Like You To Know

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