

Higher Education Institutions Support Fundraising And Alumni Engagement Using Salesforce For Education

A Forrester Total Economic Impact™ Spotlight
Commissioned By Salesforce

Higher Education Institutions Support Fundraising And Alumni Engagement Using Salesforce For Education

Salesforce provides educational institutions with an enterprise-level CRM platform to capture 360 degree views across prospective students, current students, and alumni, encompassing the entire constituent lifecycle.

Salesforce commissioned Forrester to interview 10 representatives across seven higher-education institutions in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia to conduct a Total Economic Impact™ (TEI) study and better understand the benefits, costs, and risks associated with Salesforce for Education.¹

This spotlight will focus on the value of Salesforce for Education for fundraising and alumni engagement at the interviewees' institutions.

2023 FUNDRAISING IN HIGHER EDUCATION MARKET OVERVIEW

Key findings from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education's survey of 781 higher education institutions in the United States show that gifts from all sources increased in 2022 over the previous year.² Educational institutions surveyed reported the following in the past year vs. 2021:

- A 10% increase in alumni donations.
- An 8% increase in non-alumni donations.
- A 14.6% increase in contributions from organizations, such as foundations or corporations.
- Charitable contributions to U.S. higher education institutions totaled \$59.50 billion in June 2022, an increase of 12.5% over 2021.



Return on investment (ROI)
153%



Net present value (NPV)
\$6.1M

However, 81% of the 667 institutions that participated in the survey over multiple years noted a reduction in donor count this year compared to previous years.³ While benefiting from an overall upward trend in gift volume, higher education institutions have a strong need to nurture new donors. Interviewees in the Forrester study identified keeping alumni actively engaged as a key strategy to strengthen relationships with future donors.

INVESTMENT DRIVERS

In the Forrester study, interviewees had several objectives that influenced their decision to leverage Salesforce for fundraising and alumni engagement, including:

- **New fundraising goals.** The associate vice president of enterprise systems at a private university in the US said that their university was not raising money at the level of its peer institutions. The university's board of directors set an ambitious goal to double the yield of the previous capital campaign, which amounted to



[READ THE FULL STUDY](#)

the equivalent of billions in donations over several years. To reach this goal, the university needed a new solution with higher capacity to track alumni data and provide insights.

- **Improving donor relationships and campaigns through the collection and storage of alumni information.** Each interviewee with a fundraising use case identified that their incomplete view of the student journey kept them from collecting and keeping potential donor information as individuals moved from prospect to student to alumni. Interviewees identified the importance of preserving alumni information as potential future donor contacts. Without a record of key alumni information, conversations with donors lacked consistency and institutions could not track the effectiveness of their messaging. Interviewees saw an opportunity to refine their campaign approaches with Salesforce.
- **Staff efficiencies with data centralization.** Decentralized data further expended already-limited resources at the interviewees' institutions. The CRM manager for an institution in the UK described a situation where teams needed to manually export and upload data related to donations and advancement to other systems because tools in the prior environment did not connect. They said, "For example, someone would set up a regular gift, which was captured on the website [and] set up in a separate system." Their team would then retrieve exports from the system on a regular basis that would have to be manually pushed into the old CRM. The CRM manager said: "Volunteer management, mentoring — it was all done in separate entities. So getting one view was quite difficult because you always wait for the next data load or the next import off a certain system."

KEY RESULTS

Results of the interviewees' institutions investments in Salesforce include:

- **Preservation of donor information vital to pipeline development.** Without Salesforce, alumni information was often no longer collected or preserved once a student graduated. Salesforce enabled the interviewees' institutions to gain a 360 view of the student lifecycle even after they became alumni and lifelong learners. The associate vice president of enterprise systems said: "There was so much that was being lost [about] a student's experience that wasn't ever carried forward. In the past, we spent so much time and energy trying to figure out exactly who these alumni were, what degree they had, what school they attended. We were spinning our wheels in the administrative overhead to prepare for a visit, to send an officer out on the road, or for the president to travel. And now all that information automatically is at our fingertips."

With information about an alumni's previous academic focuses and current career endeavors, interviewees' institutions could tailor messaging to match an alumni's interests and gauge their capacity to provide

"We built dashboards in Salesforce [for alumni info]. Now, there's no pulling reports, combining data in different databases, making pivot tables, adding them, checking them, [and] getting it approved. All the data is there and it's accurate and adaptive."

Associate vice president of enterprise systems, private university

professional connections or mentorship to current students.

- **Consistency in relationship management.**

With Salesforce, interviewees' institutions could ensure a consistency in fundraising campaign messaging and alumni outreach that was previously absent. The CRM manager at a public university in the UK called their pipeline development for fundraising very important and noted that Salesforce improved their visibility from initial contacts through the rest of the pipeline. They said: "[With Salesforce] it's a consistent approach and process, which means in the longer term we can really see the benefit of that relationship management. It lends rigor and consistency to the way we work using the system, [whether it's] guidance for success or just the stages within the opportunity. We can ensure that from an audit point of view, we're doing the right things." This expanded the university's outlook for future donations.

The CRM manager also described a reduction in manual effort pertaining to communications and follow-ups, which ultimately led to consistent messaging: "Every time there's a donation, [the team] would have been sending out manual thank you notes and certain confirmations that you would have to put through regulations, whether it's gift aid, direct debits, or just general thanks. That's all automated, which

obviously gives us that consistent approach as well."

- **Increased variety in and success of donation campaign approaches.**

Interviewees' institutions gained the ability to track how messaging campaigns performed with alumni and adjust new campaigns accordingly to maximize engagement. In the silent phase of the capital campaign at a US university, its associate vice president of enterprise systems initially expected to achieve 25% to 33% of its goal. With Salesforce, the institution had reached 50% of its goal in the silent phase, with a projection to exceed the goal over the multiyear fundraising period.

Salesforce provided a platform that helped institutions not only succeed in larger and more ambitious capital campaigns, but also in smaller campaigns that could have just as much of an impact. The associate vice president of enterprise systems said: "Salesforce gives us the tools to shift more towards a model in which if everyone gives \$5, you have just as much money as three or four big donors. If we can have a little bit of your time, a little bit of your attention, a little bit of your decision making, we can automate a lot of the campaign in order to raise significant funds, \$5 at a time."

- **Improved administrative productivity for advancement teams.** The CRM manager explained that their prior multisystem environment forced their online advancement employee to handle a lot of manual data processes. They told Forrester that by moving to one system and using integrations with their CRM, their employee could run regular reports and conduct high level checks instead of working more manually with the data, allowing them to focus on other things like alumni communications.

Increase in fundraising contributions:

10%



TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

For more information, download the full study: “The Total Economic Impact™ Of Salesforce For Education,” a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Salesforce, April 2023.

STUDY FINDINGS

While the value story above is based on four interviews across three institutions, Forrester interviewed 10 total representatives at seven institutions with experience using Salesforce and combined the results into a three-year financial analysis for a composite institution. Risk-adjusted present value (PV) quantified benefits for the composite institution by Year 3 include:

- 15% improvement in first-year retention rate.
- 5.5% post-pandemic return-to-school enrollment.
- 12% productivity improvement for administrative and academic teams.
- \$1.6 million of legacy environment savings.
- 10% increase in fundraising contributions.



Return on investment (ROI)

153%



Net present value (NPV)

\$6.1M

Appendix A: Endnotes

¹ Total Economic Impact is a methodology developed by Forrester Research that enhances a company’s technology decision-making processes and assists vendors in communicating the value proposition of their products and services to clients. The TEI methodology helps companies demonstrate, justify, and realize the tangible value of IT initiatives to both senior management and other key business stakeholders.

² Source: [CASE Insights on Voluntary Support of Education Data & Research Findings](#), 2022.

³ Ibid

DISCLOSURES

The reader should be aware of the following:

- The study is commissioned by Salesforce and delivered by Forrester Consulting. It is not meant to be a competitive analysis.
- Forrester makes no assumptions as to the potential ROI that other organizations will receive. Forrester strongly advises that readers use their own estimates within the framework provided in the report to determine the appropriateness of an investment in Salesforce for Education.
- Salesforce reviewed and provided feedback to Forrester. Forrester maintains editorial control over the study and its findings and does not accept changes to the study that contradict Forrester’s findings or obscure the meaning.
- Salesforce provided the customer names for the interview(s) but did not participate in the interviews.

ABOUT TEI

Total Economic Impact™ (TEI) is a methodology developed by Forrester Research that enhances a company’s technology decision-making processes and assists vendors in communicating the value proposition of their products and services to clients. The TEI methodology helps companies demonstrate, justify, and realize the tangible value of IT initiatives to both senior management and other key business stakeholders. The TEI methodology consists of four components to evaluate investment value: benefits, costs, risks, and flexibility.

FORRESTER®