Soliciting Donations by letter

Why Seek Donations

Many Local Committees currently pay for items such as books, meal tickets, stationary, food, clothing, house-wares, personal effects and computers with funds from their student levy, fundraising activities or cash donations.

In many instances it is possible to get these items donated ‘in-kind’ by on- or off-campus groups or suppliers such as the university caterer, bookstore, superstore etc.

By extending the offer to the wider community to contribute to the SRP, you are giving them the opportunity to get involved in a worthwhile project and simultaneously raising awareness of the SRP beyond the borders of your Local Committee.

Who to Approach

Evaluate your budget
What are the big ticket items that are currently being paid for with cash from the student levy, fundraising or cash donations?

Evaluate your contacts
Based in your budget evaluation identify key people, groups or organisations on- or off-campus who support the SRP and/or who have links to businesses or university offices who could donate these items ‘in-kind’.

Evaluate your knowledge base
Ask SRP staff or contact other local committees for advice about how to successfully solicit donations.

What Kind of Approach to Take

A personal approach is always best if you have contacts who can make the introductions.

- In both cases come prepared with facts and figures (including WUSC SRP materials) and a clear, concise argument as to WHY they should support the SRP.
- Bring a current or formally sponsored student with you (ONLY if they want to)
- Follow up with a letter outlining the content of your discussion and suggesting next steps.

When and How to Write a Letter

If you don’t have a personal contact or a more formal approach is necessary then send a well thought out and structured letter (see sample letter below)

- Keep the letter concise, polite and to the point
- Take the time to get it right. Use the spell check function. Ask someone else to proof read it for you.
Ms. Jane Green
Campus Bookstore,
The University of the Miramichi
Miramichi, NB, E9P 3R7
22 March 2010
Dear Ms. Green:

Re: Request for the donation of bookstore credit to the WUSC sponsored refugee student

I am writing to you in my capacity as President of the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) Local Committee of the University of the Miramichi. WUSC is a non-profit network of individuals and postsecondary institutions who believe that all people are entitled to the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to a more equitable world. Our mission is to foster human development and global understanding through education and training.

Since 1997 we have been participating in the Student Refugee Program (which annually brings over 60 refugee students to study in Canada) and have successfully sponsored 10 refugee students to study at UMira free from fear of persecution. These students have gone on to contribute to the local community through working for ACOA, studying for a Masters Degrees in Social Work and joining the local Rotary Club.

Every year our Local Committee fundraises over $25,000 through a student levy, fundraising activities and tuition/residence waivers to support a refugee student to study at the University of the Miramichi. Our goal this year is to also pay for the sponsored student’s travel loan of $1500. Currently sponsored students at the UMira arrive in Canada with the burden of this debt which covers their travel expenses from their country of refuge to Canada.

We currently spend $800 per year on books for the sponsored student, using money from a student levy (every student on campus donates $5 to the sponsorship program). In order to help us find the money to pay off the sponsored students travel loan, we are requesting that you donate $800 in bookstore credit annually to the sponsored student during their first year of studies. This will enable the student to access the necessary course materials for their studies and also allow them to pay off over half of their travel loan. We will also be holding a grilled cheese sales and an international supper to fundraise for this cause and we would like to extend an invitation to you to attend both of these activities.

We will be happy to send you regular updates about how the sponsored students are faring in their new life in Canada and, if you like, we can ask them to meet with you in person to thank you for your kind support.

The University of the Miramichi President, Ms Cheryl McGrath agreed back in 1997 to waive the tuition and residence fees for the sponsored student saying that “They will both receive the benefit of an education free from fear and uncertainty and also bring with them a wealth of experience that all UMira students and staff can share in. It will be a pleasure to have them join our small but welcoming school”. We hope that you can help us to continue to offer a warm welcome to a student who has overcome overwhelming challenges to start a new life in Canada.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If it is convenient I will drop by at 11am on the 5th April to answer any further questions that you might have. In the mean time do not hesitate to contact me at WUSC@UMira.ca or (506) 456-7890.

I look forward to hearing from you soon,

A Lowry
President, WUSC UMira

What next?

- **Always follow up** on your request (at the date and time indicated in the letter).
- **If they say no** on this occasion, maintain contact, they may say be able to offer alternative forms of support, attend fundraising activities, or be in the position to say yes at a later date.
- **If they say yes**, offer sincere thanks, both written and verbal and follow through on your promises.