UC SANTA BARBARA

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Hoping to reach alumni in their regular hangouts and foster closer connections that inspire lifelong philanthropic support of the campus, UC Santa Barbara is holding its first-ever one-day digital donation drive.

UCSB Give Day, set for 4/8/16, marks the university's official full-scale entrée into social media fundraising. It's also a tip of the hat to its massive base of young alumni — 45% of Gaucho alums graduated after 2000. The campus hopes to bolster private giving among this key group by meeting them where they are: on social media.

"Give Day is a 24-hour event where we'll use social media channels and other digital tools to connect to our UCSB communities, but especially this younger community of alumni," said Beverly Colgate, UCSB's associate vice chancellor for development and the executive director of the UCSB Foundation. "Reaching out to younger alumni in the social media space is vital because it's where they routinely socialize — it's a space where they go for business and for pleasure. Social media outreach is being used at many institutions, so we're right in the middle of this wave. This is a way to reach a constituency that is involved in non-traditional fundraising."

A central aim of Give Day is to grow UCSB's ranks of new donors — the goal is to increase that number by 30 percent — and alumni are a key part of the equation. Alumni giving is indicative of how graduates view their alma mater and an important factor in overall institutional excellence, according to Colgate.

That’s why, in a sense, Give Day is emphasizing new donors over new dollars, hoping to grow a bigger donor base that can be sustained well into the future. The inaugural effort is perhaps less about that single day than it is about what 4/8/16 will usher in: a whole new era of fundraising at UCSB.

“On top of increasing the number of donations we’re launching a new outreach for annual fundraising,” Colgate said. “Next we must sustain these donations from younger alumni annually. This is a beginning of social media fundraising for UCSB.

“For a while, email outreach seemed to be the end-all be-all,” she continued. “This is something completely different because on social media people are discussing issues and opinions — it’s a really engaged community online and results in a community conversation, which is very powerful. We want to do it right.”

The desire to do it right, and do it well, informed the core goals for Give Day, which also include building excitement within UCSB’s diverse digital communities about their experiences with the campus, and increasing participation among all campus constituencies — parents, friends and the community, in addition to alumni.

Give Day will promote the notion of Gauchos as a global community by taking the message beyond the physical space to the vast and connected network of UCSB alumni online. Gauchos are spread across the world, but in social media they’re always together, bound by shared memories of their time at UCSB.

Celebrating experience and memories as a means of honoring the Gaucho spirit, Give Day is also intended to rekindle and reinforce connections to UCSB and, ideally, to revitalize a sense of pride in the university that inspires philanthropy to the campus for years to come.

“Social media outreach is becoming an essential tool for connecting alumni, sharing inspirational stories and, most importantly, for sparking donations,” Colgate said. “By seeking increased participation and building community, we are building the next generation of UCSB philanthropists. Give Day is only the beginning.”

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.