

**VCU**

## Policy on annual giving solicitation

**Policy Type:** Local

**Responsible Office:** Office of Development and Alumni Relations

**Initial Policy Approved:** 01/2013

**Revised Policy Approved:** 05/2016

### Policy Statement and Purpose

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The Office of Annual Giving (OAG) is the central annual giving arm of Virginia Commonwealth University. The OAG promotes the VCU brand and raises annual gifts on behalf of the university and schools/units. The mission of the OAG is to broaden the base of support to the university by increasing the number of annual donors and the total dollar amount of annual gifts. Gifts are directed as the donor wishes and can be designated to a specific fund or used for unrestricted, universitywide purposes. OAG solicitations are conducted through multichannel direct marketing efforts.

Annual giving at VCU encompasses all current gifts attributable to annual solicitation efforts. For reporting purposes, the OAG tracks all gifts made to annual fund accounts held at any university-affiliated foundation. Gifts are typically less than \$25,000, are repeatable in nature and are not payments made on major, pledged commitments. Pledges for annual support are typically fulfilled within one year but can span multiple fiscal or calendar years.

The OAG is permitted to solicit any alumnus within the university database and to solicit all alumni on behalf of the university for the Fund for VCU and unit-specific alumni for unit-based annual funds. Additionally, the OAG, in consultation with the vice president of Development and Alumni Relations, will determine when all alumni are solicited for a unit-based designation, for example when a universally interesting opportunity arises or when timing is especially appropriate (for example, campaign priorities or a new building).

The OAG considers the impact of excluding from annual fund solicitations individuals flagged as Heritage Society, MCV Society and Founders Society members; prospects under management; individuals who have proposals in submission or development; individuals who have significant actions in the past 90 days; and individuals with open pledges or current fiscal-year gifts. These groups can be included in annual giving solicitations, unless otherwise requested by the director of development for a specific unit and approved by the vice president of Development and Alumni Relations.

If a solicitation from the university or donation from a donor is "bundled" to include an annual gift and an alumni membership, Gifts & Records Management must treat it as two separate transactions, splitting the gift into a membership deposit and a gift deposit, recording the two deposits accordingly.

School and units can distribute specific print and electronic appeals to target their constituents during the fiscal year. **All appeals, including the solicitation date, must be coordinated and approved by the OAG and executed using the DAR database of record, RADAR.** Units must [submit Direct Marketing Effort \(DME\) requests](#) to the DAR Help Desk following standard turnaround times. Solicitations and related collateral must be shared with the OAG and DAR Communications before a mailing/email list is released to unit to ensure proper use of branding, source codes and/or finder numbers.



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Adherence to this policy ensures the preservation of Virginia Commonwealth University’s credibility among its annual donors and the optimization of university resources.

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**Who Should Know this Policy?** \_\_\_\_\_

All university employees engaged in activities related to development and alumni relations are responsible for knowing this policy and familiarizing themselves with its contents and provisions.

**Definitions** \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual gift**

An annual gift is any charitable, current-use donation made in support of Virginia Commonwealth University made in response to a solicitation, such as direct mail, phone programs, emails, Web pages, social media appeals, face-to-face visits and individual annual giving proposals. An unsolicited gift of less than \$25,000 also is considered an annual gift. Multiyear, nonbookable pledges are annual gifts.

**Bundled solicitation**

A solicitation that includes a request for a constituent to join VCU Alumni and to make an annual gift.

**Direct marketing**

A form of brand messaging that allows Virginia Commonwealth University to communicate with its constituents via techniques such as mobile messaging, email, blogs, websites, mail and phone-a-thons. Direct marketing is designed to drive a specific call to action that emphasizes analytical, measureable responses from constituents, regardless of medium.

**Finder number**

A unique maximum 12-character alpha numeric string that is assigned and printed on every remittance piece associated with a solicitation. The number is specific to a constituent and the appeal it represents.

**Fund for VCU**

An annual fund account that is the overarching branding mechanism to encourage unrestricted or restricted



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current-use funds to any entity within the university. Gifts to the Fund for VCU are used where the need is greatest, such as scholarships, up-to-date technology, library resources, career counseling, academic support and more.

### Solicitation

Any correspondence that asks for a gift, either through a direct or indirect ask. This can be through a mailer reply card, business reply, courtesy reply, embedded website link, phone call, event registration, QR code, personal ask, etc.

### Source code

A 24-character alpha numeric string used to track and define the details of a particular segment within a direct marketing solicitation. Source codes are comprised of components that characterize the solicitation, such as the segment, package, timing of solicitation, etc.

## Related Documents

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Policy on Ethics

## Contacts

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The Office of Development and Alumni Relations officially interprets this policy. The Office of Development and Alumni Relations is responsible for obtaining approval for any revisions as required by the policy Creating and Maintaining Policies and Procedures through the appropriate governance structures. Direct policy questions to the director of annual giving.

## Procedures

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- Solicitation of annual giving prospects:** All annual giving solicitation efforts targeting Virginia Commonwealth University alumni, parents, friends, donors, faculty, staff or other university-affiliated entities must be submitted for scheduling and coordination through the [DME Request Ticket on the DAR Help Desk](#). This includes solicitations made via direct marketing or viral marketing, print or electronic.
  - Complete an online DME request form, defining solicitation segments. This form must be submitted through the DAR Help Desk at least 45 business days before the day the mailing/email list is needed.
  - Before a mailing/email list is provided to a unit, OAG and DAR Communications must receive a proof of the solicitation, including content, images and return mechanism, to ensure proper use of branding, identity, messaging, grammar and source codes or finder numbers.
  - OAG determines and publishes, on the DAR intranet calendar, the known annual solicitation schedules and strategies for all constituencies. The OAG and DAR Communications manage calendar conflicts with various units.
  - A unit can solicit alumni or donors from another unit on a case-by-case basis as approved by the vice president of Development and Alumni Relations.
- Annual giving appeal approval:** All annual giving solicitations must include the appropriate VCU nomenclature and branding. All requests made for mailing lists, data files containing names, addresses and/or email addresses of university alumni, parents, friends or other entities for the purposes of solicitation will be honored only after the requestor has received clearance from and shared the collateral for the direct or indirect appeal with the Office of Annual Giving and DAR Communications.



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3. **Changing source of annual gifts:** If a gift falls the under annual giving definition but is a result of a personal relationship or a face-to-face ask, the soliciting director of development must submit a request via the [Help Desk](#) to change the gift source field in RADAR to personal ask.

## Forms

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See the Direct Marketing Effort Online Request form at <http://staff.oda.vcu.edu/HelpDesk>.

## Revision History

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This policy was revised in May 2016, replacing the revisions made in August 2015, May 2015 and December 2013. The original policy was approved in January 2013.