Andrew P. Cuff

4000 Dauphin Street #215

Mobile, AL 36608

August 29, 2014

Department of Communication Arts

Spring Hill College

4000 Dauphin Street

Mobile, AL 36608

Communication Arts faculty:

Within the last decade, social media have morphed into a dominant force that influences everyday life not only across the nation, but around the world. Because of this shift, the importance of having a strong online presence is increasingly vital. Due to the increasing number of individuals interacting online, social media can be utilized as a strategic tool for online giving.

In February 2014, *Forbes* magazine reported an overall growth in charitable giving of 4.9 percent. Online giving also saw double-digit increases for the second consecutive year at 13.5 percent growth. Specific events, notably disasters, proved to be strongest force for online giving. The development of “#GivingTuesday” also played a key role in social media outreach for online giving. Because of this shift to social media, potential donors can now link their donation to a specific cause and share their donating experience online. Due to this public display of donating, a broader range a people can be influence.

While social media have proved to be a marketable tool, it is not perfect. The traditional United States Postal Service has continually suffered from the shift to the web in a variety of ways, notably the act of electronically donating. The question then arises, does online giving really fundraise more money? Or does the decrease in traditional donations offset the cost? In what ways is donating through social media more effective than the traditional donation through the postal service?

As a student with a background in non-profit public relations, I have witnessed the knowledge of social media effectiveness, but also a lack of resources. Currently at Spring Hill College, the Office of Campus Ministry has five staff members in charge of retreats, liturgy and spiritual guidance for a student body of 1,200. Subsequently, social media and fundraising are not always the primary focus. I am proposing a reorganization of the online giving program and a social media campaign for the 2014-2015 Spring Hill College International Service Immersion Program (ISIP).

This program consistently gains a multitude of student support and interest, but has previous financial concerns. Each participant in the program is required to send 10 letters to families, friends or individuals of their choice formally requesting a donation. Last year, the aspect of online giving was created in addition to the letters. While the online giving program did produce results, I believe it has not met its full potential. In addition, I plan on developing and managing the social media presence of the ISIP program. The program currently has a Facebook page that was created in the summer of 2014, but has fallen stagnant since the beginning of the 2014-2015 school year. I plan on developing a consistent social media plan to further increase the ISIP programs online presence and provide a link between the online giving website and social media platforms. After the initial period of implementation, I plan on utilizing quantitative data from the social media source and the online giving foundation to measure the results. After comparing the numeric results of the campaign to the previous fundraising outcomes, I will determine if the method was effective.

As a communications major with a concentration in public relations and advertising and a minor in international studies, this project is a perfect representation of what I have academically accomplished at Spring Hill College. Furthermore, during the summer of 2014 I interned at GlynnDevins, a senior living marketing agency in Overland Park, Kan. At this internship, I learned the integral roles social media can possess and what tactics to utilize to produce positive results. I also previously interned at Mobile Gas, a Sempra Company in the spring of 2013. There I was in charge of two social media campaigns, one in partnership with the American Red Cross. Additionally, I participated in the Spring Hill College ISIP program in the spring of 2014. I traveled to El Cercado, Dominican Republic with a group of 12 students and faculty advisors. We immersed ourselves in the culture of the small village, and traveled around the surrounding area educating ourselves on the lifestyle of those people. I believe all of these experiences provide a strong foundation that has provided me with a diverse range of skills to effectively complete this project.

Thank you for considering this proposal.

Sincerely,

Andrew P. Cuff

Andrew P. Cuff