Sample Agent Letter

Fall 2006

Let's begin with the glad news that last year's Alumni Fund met both dollar and participation goals, and OUR CLASS was one of the nine classes which broke records for dollars raised!! We can be very proud of every one of our generous donors, and grateful for each gift, mite or mighty. Cheers, too, for our participation rate: 76.4% of us were donors—up from last year's 73%!! Check out the annual Report of Gifts. It lists us by class, and recognizes our donors. Kudos to all!

An evocative story in the June College Bulletin: A graduate of the class of 1997 tells about the successful problem-solving efforts of recent and current Swarthmore students— in Buffalo, NY, Darfur and North Philadelphia. From re-habbing homes—to fighting genocide—to bringing supermarkets to poor neighborhoods—these young people have been able to effect change. It's more than a great story, it epitomizes Swarthmore values—showing concern for social issues, along with the knowledge, ability, and willingness to make a difference.

How, then, can we each participate? How can we ensure that our alma mater continues to produce such caring, capable citizens? We ourselves may be past the volunteering stage, but our Alumni Fund gifts are a powerful contribution to the cause. Your help, as always, is needed, and your support for Swarthmore is very much appreciated.

The enclosed envelope will make it easy. Or, if you prefer, use the toll-free gift hotline: (800) 660-9714, (VISA/Discover/MasterCard/American Express) or visit the College's secure site at http://gift.swarthmore.edu.

With many thanks!
Sample Agent Letter

Fall 2006

Dear Classmates,

We recently heard that if you start out with one word, a piece of writing might follow. At least that is what Harold Pinter says he sometimes does. Now, he has a Nobel Prize in literature and we do not, but we’ll give it a try. “Blueberries” will be the key word.

So what do wild blueberries have to do with raising money for the Alumni Fund of Swarthmore College? One of us went picking blueberries recently. My friend and I set out, each with a gallon-sized plastic bucket attached to our belts, and walked thru the wetlands of a lovely part of the Poconos where she knew from previous years there were some blueberry bushes. We found some tall ones with a scattering of fruit and started picking. The first ones, less than a quarter inch in diameter, made a thud as they hit the empty bucket. I thought to myself, it will take forever to get a bucketful. Gradually there was a layer on the bottom. We moved out closer to the pond and there were some larger berries, well worth getting our shoes wet. With good conversation all along, it was soon time for our little picnic lunch.

Then we moved into a new area, and the bushes were laden with large clusters of blueberries beckoning to us. By now we each had gotten so many berries that the buckets were getting heavy, so we emptied them into other buckets and continued picking. The enthusiasm with which each cluster of berries was greeted, first by one of us, and then the other, was contagious. I found I had to call a stop at 3:00 pm so that we could get home and sort out the little leaves and stems to prepare three gallons of blueberries for freezing. Our husbands helped in that process and my friend made a delicious blueberry pie for supper. We all felt so good having been outside, seeing a rich variety of Mother Nature’s flora and fauna, with results that would be shared with friends and family in the future.

You can easily make the analogy of how important each contribution is to the College, no matter what its size, and how the class of ’51’s wonderfully steady giving is something that we can hope to continue, year after year. And, like the blueberries, we might even find some special places from which funds can be plucked and handed over to the staff at Swarthmore to sort and put to good use. The Swarthmore students and faculty who will benefit from our gifts will be smiling, knowing that we cared enough to share what we, too, have enjoyed.

Each fall brings a little sense of starting afresh, so we wish you a few new adventures as well as steadiness in maintaining ourselves in this challenging and ever evolving world. We hope stimulating conversation with friends supports you too.

Don't forget you can give with a check in the enclosed envelope or use your VISA, MasterCard, American Express, or Discover credit or debit card, using the College's secure online gift site: http://gift.swarthmore.edu, or call the 24-hour giftline, (800) 660-9714.
Sample Agent Letter

Fall 2006

Dear Classmates:

I hope this letter finds you well and in good spirits.

You know the old adage: The more things change the more they remain the same. To me, that’s Swarthmore.

The changes have been evolutionary but over time dramatic: many new and refurbished buildings, a substantially more diverse but still exceptional student body, more courses of study and research opportunities, a significantly greater percentage of students studying abroad and so many extracurricular activities it’s hard to imagine how students manage their time.

But at its core, Swarthmore remains the same. Quoting from President Bloom’s 2000 Commencement Address, it’s an education that not only “broadens and deepens knowledge” and “builds analytic and communicative skills, but ... also cultivates an invaluable set of habits of mind.” Swarthmore graduates have the “awesome ability and readiness ... to embrace conceptual complexity; to listen fairly and carefully to others' points of view; and to exercise ethical intelligence.” They have a “determined optimism over what can be accomplished” and a “willingness to demand of themselves the highest standards of excellence in whatever they pursue.” They “distinguish themselves as well by their resolve to combine professional accomplishment with personal contribution to a more informed, just, and generous world.”

His characterization could have been aptly read at our graduation. But ironically, to remain the same, Swarthmore had to change. In a rapidly changing world, the College would not be the same if it hadn’t made the many additions, improvements, and changes that it has. Moreover, it will need to change in similar and perhaps unforeseen ways to continue offering a complete and relevant education comparable to what we enjoyed.

Change, however, requires resources, usually a lot more than maintaining the status quo and usually in the form ultimately of money. That’s why we are asking you to contribute to the Alumni Fund as our way of helping the College remain the place we remember even as it continues to change in so many ways. Despite Swarthmore’s substantial endowment, it has a budget that’s stretched nearly to the limit because it’s trying to implement improvements (and maintain certain valued existing policies, such as need-blind admissions) in order to stay true to the values we all cherish.

Thanks for thinking of Swarthmore,
Sample Agent Letter

Fall 2006

Dear Classmates,

This past August, my oldest son, John, began his freshman year at Earlham College in Indiana. As we went through the college search process, I came across an interesting excerpt from Fisk’s Guide to Colleges that seemed to capture the Swarthmore experience.

Swatties are bright, hard working and eclectic in their interests, and campus life is fabled for its intensity. But it’s not the intensity that comes from huge amounts of course work (a la Yale) so much as the self-imposed drive of talented students who want to do lots of things simultaneously—from academics to social protest to rugby—and to do so at a high level. “We don’t have a lot of half-way people around here,” said one denizen. “We are intense about everything we do. To us, work is part of the fun.”

This reminded me why Swarthmore is such a special place, and why supporting it financially is so important. We all know that alumni provide the bulk of the financial support to a university. Our giving allows Swarthmore to maintain its need-blind admissions policy, and it also ensures that our endowment can continue to provide needed student financial aid and to fund the gap between the actual cost of a Swarthmore education ($69,200 this year), and what is charged ($43,532 in tuition, fees, room and board). By the way, extensive student financial aid and this gap between actual costs and what the students are charged has always existed; all of us have benefited from the contributions of alumni.

I am asking those of you who have never supported the College to consider making your first gift, and those of you who have supported the College to consider increasing your gift. The nice thing about giving to Swarthmore is that we know where the dollars are going, and how they are being used. Our class has been steadily increasing its participation in the Alumni Fund, in part, I suspect, because many of us have, over time, appreciated what a Swarthmore education has meant in our lives and want to pass the gift on to others.

I hope you will include Swarthmore in your philanthropic giving for this year. If applicable, please check to see if your employer has a matching gift program, which is a great way to increase our class giving totals. You may send a check in the enclosed envelope, make a gift with a credit card on the College’s web site (http://gift.swarthmore.edu), or call the 24-hour gift line at (800) 660-9714.

Please join me in contributing to the College that has changed our lives.

As always, best wishes,
Sample Agent Letter

Dear Classmates:

This letter finds us fresh off of our 20th reunion. About 70 of us were back at Swarthmore in June—catching up with each other and life at the College. Once I got over the unexpected hurdle of matching names with faces from twenty years past, I found myself amazed by the changes on campus—new and remodeled academic buildings, a snazzy new Parrish Hall for the 21st century, a new "green" dormitory. It was concrete evidence of the on-going development of College programs.

The College embodies the best practices in higher education.

- Swarthmore now offers small, intellectually stimulating first-year seminars to introduce students to college level thinking, writing, and conversation.
- Its professors are scholars/teachers who seamlessly blend the roles of cutting-edge researcher and stimulating, accessible instructor.
- The College provides its faculty with the resources necessary to remain top-level scholars and energized teachers—cutting-edge research facilities, generous sabbatical programs, and other essential infrastructure.
- Its students bridge the gap between theory and practice, and College and community, with significant contributions to local and extra-local civic life.

Even in my isolated outpost in Montana, I hear about the accomplishments of Swarthmore’s faculty and staff, students and alumni, and am inordinately proud to share in common with them the Swarthmore College experience.

Even as the campus—its buildings, programs, students and faculty—change, two things remain the same: The unsurpassed value of a Swarthmore education and the cost of providing that education to tomorrow’s leaders. As you probably know, student tuition only covers about 50% of the actual cost of a Swarthmore education. And to ensure diversity among students, central to the richness of the Swarthmore experience, the College must continue its long-time practice of need-blind admissions.

This is where we come in. I am acutely aware that when we attended Swarthmore in the 1980’s, we were blessed with support from earlier generations of Swarthmore alums. As old as it may make us feel, we are now one of those generations.

So, I ask for your financial support of the Alumni Fund, and hope that—as we begin the next twenty years—you will give generously to this place that means so much to so many people.

Sincerely,
Sample Agent Letter

Fall 2006

Dear Classmate,

I hope this letter finds you doing well and enjoying life. I write to you from Nashville, Tennessee, where I will be graduating from Vanderbilt Medical School in the springtime. As I contemplate my professional future, I often find myself comparing recent academic and life experiences to my time at Swarthmore. From what I have learned, I can honestly say that few institutions and student bodies can compare to Swarthmore’s unique greatness and mission. I have met many alumni from other colleges and universities and those who are aware enough to know about Swarthmore marvel at our closeness, intellect, and opportunity. It is a bond built not on late nights out (although there have been quite a few), but on our common heartfelt values. Few places in the world today promote such an appreciation of critical open-minded thinking and knowledge with an unyielding drive to make the world a better place. What we lack in numbers, we make up for with an enduring camaraderie. These are qualities that must not go unappreciated or unrecognized, although it is easy to take for granted the privilege we have been fortunate to enjoy in attending such an institution.

I believe it is our duty to act to preserve and improve the Swarthmore experience for many generations to come. I ask that you spare a few minutes to make a contribution and certainly give within your means. I ask that we continue to support the College, not merely by giving a lot, but by having a lot of people in our class give. Even a few dollars will make a huge difference. Mass participation is truly the key to a successful campaign for the class of 1999.

You may complete and mail the enclosed gift envelope, call the toll-free giftline at 800-660-9714, or visit the Alumni Fund’s secure web site at http://gift.swarthmore.edu.

Yours sincerely,

P.S. Please consider joining the Adirondack Associates Gift Society by contribute $100 for every year out from graduation. I strongly encourage you to join me in donating this amount during the current fiscal year, if you are able.