Strengthening Long-Term Relationships:

Membership Program Strategies for Retention & Growth
The first thing that comes to my mind when I hear the term “membership program” is . . .

1. I don’t think about membership programs
2. A lot of work for little return on investment
3. A lot of work with the potential for a return on investment
4. A lot of work; I’m not sure if there is/would be a return on investment
In my organization, a “member” is best described as...

1. A board member who has oversight but does **NOT** contribute financially (donates)
2. A board member who has oversight and does provide at least some regular financial support (donates)
3. An adviser who has voting privileges and provides guidance and/or pro bono services
4. An individual donor who regularly attends our events or programs
5. An individual donor who does **NOT** regularly attend our events or programs
6. A corporate donor whose employees regularly attend our events or programs
7. A corporate donor whose employees do **NOT** regularly attend our events or programs
Ailey Organization- Overview

- Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater
- Ailey II
- The Ailey School
- The Ailey Extension
- Ailey Arts In Education and Community Programs

- Founded in 1958
- Has performed in 71 countries
- Typical season (pre-Covid): international tour, U.S. tour, and NYC home season
- Each year, the organization reaches @ 500K people around the world

Development Department (during my tenure)
- Raised $8-9Million each year for the annual operating budget
- Funds raised from corporate sponsorships, foundation & government grants, special events, and individuals (including memberships)
- $1.5Million raised from Memberships
- 2 full time staff dedicated to Membership
MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS
WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Friends
Family
Partners
Circle
Society
Ambassadors
Insiders
Investors

Belonging, Community, & Connection

Ongoing annual support
MOVING FROM TRANSACTIONAL TO RELATIONAL

2. See Donors as Investors - “Put Away the Tin Cup”
3. Build a Membership Program
https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en
SHARE THE “WHY” OF YOUR ORGANIZATION
In a few words or a short phrase describe your organization.

In a few words or a short phrase share how your donors would describe your organization.
NEW PARADIGMS

“Put away the Tin Cup.”
- Kay Sprinkel Grace

*Investors* rather than *Donors*

*Investment* rather than *Donation*

*Social Return on Investment* rather than *Return on Investment*
CREATING MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

- **Study** your patron base — interest and affinities, capacity, and propensity for involvement and giving.

- **Offer** a range of giving levels and benefits that align and complement patron interests, capacity, and propensity.

- **Build** connections and (ultimately) relationships with members through activities, events, and donor communications.

- **Connect** members with other members. Tip: engaged members are the best ambassadors for your organization.

- **Encourage** current members to become *more involved* — at a higher giving level.

- **Reach** potential new members.
Study your patron base: learn interests and affinities, capacity, and propensity for involvement and giving.

Build connections and (ultimately) relationships with members through activities, events, and donor communications.
**Friends of Alvin Ailey**

With the support of our Friends, Alvin Ailey reaches nearly 500,000 people around the world each year. Your annual gift will help bring breathtaking performances to communities around the world, provide students across the country the opportunity to unlock their creative potential through innovative outreach programs, and help make young dancers’ dreams become a reality.

Offer a range of giving levels and benefits that align and complement patron interests, capacity, and propensity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainer</td>
<td>Two passes to an open rehearsal at New York City Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Exclusive members-only information and updates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A complimentary Alvin Ailey Extension class at the Alvin Ailey studios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patron</td>
<td>Access to Friends of Alvin Ailey workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invitation to observe the Alvin II dancers in their daily technique class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor</td>
<td>Two passes to an open rehearsal at New York City Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclusive members-only information and updates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A complimentary Alvin Ailey Extension class at the Alvin Ailey studios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to Friends of Alvin Ailey workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invitation to observe the Alvin II dancers in their daily technique class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invitation to an exclusive Alvin II studio showing and a reception with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the dancers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognition in Alvin performance programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Season passes to Alvin’s VIP Lounge at New York City Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Invitation to an exclusive preview of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater’s new works</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Become a Sponsor, $800**
Connect members with other members. Tip: engaged members are the best ambassadors for your organization.

Encourage current members to become more involved – at a higher giving level.
Opportunities for Young Patrons

Join our dynamic group of supporters aged 21 to 40 committed to carrying on the legacy of visibility, representation, and access to the arts established by the visionary Alvin Alley. While the curtain stays down, we hope our dedicated Young Patrons Circle members will stay connected to the important work that we do. Members will continue to receive exclusive behind-the-scenes access along with professional development opportunities in a virtual format.

By joining or renewing today you will enjoy exclusive benefits while supporting Alvin Alley’s mission to inspire, educate, and uplift through dance.

- Young Patrons Circle Individual $250
- Young Patrons Circle Plus One $400
- Young Patrons Circle Platinum $1,000

✓ While the theater is dark, members can enjoy a virtual opportunity to network with the Alley Board of Trustees, a special Virtual Season Night, Virtual Masterclass, and other great occasions to connect with our cultural community.

Entitles members to bring a guest to all members-only events throughout the year.

Special opportunities throughout the year to engage in additional exclusive events.
PRO TIPS: MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

- **Cost to Benefit Ratio** is a “net positive” for both your members and your organization.

- **Sustainable** for your organization to deliver and **Usable** for your members to access.

- **Appropriate** to the level of donor support and comparable to benefits offered at peer organizations.

- **Connect to and Complement** your mission and programs.
MEMBERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

General Operating
When you support our General Operating expenses, you are funding all of the activities of the Ailey organization and creating a stable base from which Ailey can thrive financially, expand artistically and fulfill our mission – to provide dance performances, training and community programs for everyone.

New Works
You can provide underwriting support for Ailey’s New Works furthering our commitment to building a diverse repertory and nurturing the growth of talented dancers and choreographers.

Arts in Education
Supporting our unique educational initiatives across the country allow Ailey’s Arts In Education programs to reach nearly 100,000 youth each year.

Scholarships
Together we can provide vital financial assistance through Scholarships for The Ailey School’s most talented and deserving young dancers.

Simon Sinek: “People don’t buy what you do, they buy why you do it.”
MOVES MANAGEMENT & MEMBERSHIP
CONNECT

Finding
Prospective Members
Collect Contact Info:

- During ticket orders
  - phone
  - online
  - at the box office
- At special events
- On your website
- Insert in program/guide
- Visits to your organization
- Merchandise Purchases

- Opt-In/Permission Marketing
- Build trust
PROSPECTING RESOURCES

**Online**
- Google
- Social Media
- Data Overlays (demographics)
- Wealth Screening

**Advocates/Ambassadors**
- Connections
- Introductions
- Background Information
GET TO KNOW YOUR PROSPECTS

In-Person
● Events
● One-on-One Meetings

At the Theater/Venue
● At Their Seats
● Patrons’ Lounge
● Backstage Tours

Online
● Website
● Social Media
● Email/Text
● Online Events
COMMUNICATION CASCADE

- **Sign up for email**
  - Select email preferences

- **Receive auto response**
  - Immediate email introduction to your organization

- **Email "cascade" follows**
  - Based on location and preferences, automatically receives a series of emails over first 30 days after sign up

- **Special offers made**
  - Emails include offers on classes, merchandise at the Shop, and tickets for upcoming performances

- **Develop closer ties**
  - Requests for donations are made only after a period of other patron engagement via performances, classes, etc.
INGREDIENTS OF THE “ASK”

1. Inspiration
2. Information
3. Motivation

Source: “Putting Away the Tin Cup” in Beyond Fundraising by Kay Sprinkel Grace
Still, We Dance

“I believe that the dance came from the people and that it should always be delivered back to the people.” — Alvin Ailey

Thank you to our many supporters, the Ailey organization has maintained its commitment to bringing dance back to the people with initiatives like online streaming of workshops and new works and a continued focus on our attendance at dance and community programs. While we miss sharing the magic of the performance with you, we are finding new and innovative ways to our dance via a website, TV and live.

Through it all, we continue to be inspired by the strength and resilience of our Ailey community. From the students following online guidelines while learning their roles at the Ailey Studios, to the incredible dancers sharing their gifts through works created for film, and those moved by watching them honor the work of Alvin Ailey’s showing up to learn new skills virtually. Mr. Ailey’s vision continues as a symbol with a message of strength and hope.

Now more than ever, your generosity makes it possible for our work to continue despite these uncertain times. Please consider making a gift today to support Alvin Ailey’s inspiring initiatives. Your contribution, large or small, sustains the Ailey organization as we find new ways to inspire and uplift people all over the world through dance.

Thank you for your commitment to spreading Ailey’s inspiring message.

Make a Contribution
ENGAGE

Cultivate Relationships
SOCIAL CARE

- Personal customer-service
- Donor-centric/Donor-focused
- Responsive and Pro-Active

NEW MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM KICK OFF EVENT

• “Fun” Event Name
• Range of interactive activities
• Invitation to meet and mingle with other members
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

Robert Battle, Artistic Director
Maasumi Chaya, Associate Artistic Director

Admit 2 Open Rehearsal
You are cordially invited to attend

AN EVENING WITH
ROBERT BATTLE
AND SPECIAL GUEST RONALD K. BROWN
An event for Artistic Director’s Circle Members

Artistic Director Robert Battle will unveil new works for the upcoming 2013-14 season, followed by a conversation with choreographer Ronald K. Brown. The Alley Company will premiere Mr. Brown’s Four Corners at Lincoln Center on June 12th.

THURSDAY, JUNE 6TH
6:00 PM – 7:30 PM
AT THE HOME OF
ALLEY TRUSTEE DARIA FOSTER
62 WEST 62ND STREET, PENTHOUSE
NEW YORK

To RSVP or for more information, please contact
Curator Barbier-Phipps at 212.865.9037 or curatorial@alley.org.
This invitation is non-transferable.
Attract New Donors

Stream Video With Ailey All Access

Support Ailey With a Gift Today
SOCIAL MEDIA: AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT
INFOGRAPHIC: TELL A STORY THAT INSPIRES
SOCIAL MEDIA:
FUNDRAISING THROUGH FRIENDRAISING

Amanda, it's almost your birthday!
Donate your special day to support a cause you care about.
Kathy Weinstein, Glynis Rigsby and 54 other friends have donated to a fundraiser.

Select Nonprofit
INTEGRATED CAMPAIGNS

Digital and Direct Mail
Building Member Relationships for the Long-Term
em·pa·thy
/ˈempəθē/ ▪
noun
the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
synonyms: affinity with, rapport with, sympathy with, understanding of, sensitivity toward, sensibility to, identification with, awareness of, fellowship with, fellow feeling for, like-mindedness, togetherness, closeness to; informal chemistry
"what is really important about learning a language is learning empathy for another culture"
EMPATHY IN FUNDRAISING: VALUABLE INSIGHT & DEEPER CONNECTIONS
RECOGNITION AND STEWARDSHIP

- Thank You – video, phone, or text message from artistic staff
- Tweet to acknowledge a new donation
- Facebook post celebrating your members
- List names of supporters on website
- Ongoing engagement and communication
Sometimes building a membership program feels like...

You are trying to build the Great Wall of China.

Build it. They will come.
SOURCES

www.alvinailey.org

https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en

http://www.kaygrace.org/
Questions?

Amanda Nelson
amandajnelson@vt.edu