



6-21-2017

## Western Michigan University Bronco Marching Band: Proposed Fundraising Plan

Elizabeth Mena

Western Michigan University, [elizabeth.c.mena@gmail.com](mailto:elizabeth.c.mena@gmail.com)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors\\_theses](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses)



Part of the Business Commons, and the Communication Commons

---

### Recommended Citation

Mena, Elizabeth, "Western Michigan University Bronco Marching Band: Proposed Fundraising Plan" (2017). *Honors Theses*. 2898.

[https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors\\_theses/2898](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/2898)

This Honors Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Lee Honors College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact [wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu](mailto:wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu).



**Western Michigan University**

**Bronco Marching Band:**

**Proposed Fundraising Plan**

Elizabeth Mena

Committee: Dr. David Montgomery and Suzanne Beals

## Overview

The Bronco Marching Band first began in 1915 as a men's only music ensemble, which played mainly seated concerts. After a brief hiatus due to a drop in membership because of the First World War, the band was listed as a student organization again in 1920. Since then it has consistently performed at community and University events. The band, now open to all students, has seen two world wars and multiple school name changes, soon approaches its 100th consecutive year. The band is known for its excellent and entertaining performances and unwavering support for the University and its athletic teams. Consisting of students of all majors, and comprising the most memorable moments in many students' college careers, many band members describe the BMB as the largest family on campus.

As with many areas in the University, funding continues to remain static and see declines, making it difficult for the Bronco Marching Band to operate and maintain its traditions and standards of excellence. The funds provided from the University are not efficient to cover operating costs, so there is now a need for the band to diversify its funding sources. In this thesis, I propose ideas and a plan, outlining suggestions for future funding sources.

## The Need

The Bronco Marching Band finished its 2016-2017 season on January 2nd, 2017 with its appearance at the Goodyear Cotton Bowl in Dallas, Texas. Preparations for this high profile appearance began long before the football team won the first of the required 6 games to become eligible for a Bowl Game. Rehearsals started with band camp on August 29, 2016. Every year the Band begins their season with a camp ranging from 5-14 days of twelve hour rehearsals. It is in this time that much of the band's pregame show and first halftime show are learned and practiced.

Because band students must be on campus up to two weeks before housing contracts begin, the Marching Band takes on the cost of students moving in early. In addition ensuring each student has a place to sleep during camp, the band previously compensated for dining halls that are not yet open by providing each student with at least one meal a day, from the beginning of camp until the dining halls open. Most years, first year students make up 35-40% of the band. Many of these students choose to live on campus, and many do not bring vehicles with them. Without access to dining halls or transportation to local restaurants on meal breaks, it can be extremely difficult for these new students to get the proper nutrition during band camp. Unfortunately with costs rising and budgets tightening, the band is no longer able to provide any meals for the students during camp. Worrying about how students will feed themselves adds stress to an already physically and mentally demanding week. These needs alone can cost the band upwards of \$25,000 a year.

In addition to these basic needs for students, the band requires funds for many other items. The Bronco Marching Band is proud of its reputation of excellent and entertaining halftime shows. In order to produce these halftime shows which can range in themes from classical to pop music, the rights to pieces must be purchased, professionals paid to arrange parts, instruments maintained and repaired, uniforms altered and cleaned, and colorguard props and equipment to be bought.

With a budget that has seen little increase over recent decades and membership that is hitting record breaking numbers, financially providing for all of the needs of the band has become difficult. Committed to the tradition of excellence, the Bronco Marching Band Directors over the years have worked creatively to maintain high standards on small budgets. From converting halftime show music into stand tunes, having students arrange pieces, and reusing music every few years, the financial hardships have been kept within the institution, not allowing budget concerns to affect the quality of performance for the public.

### **Suggestions**

While support from the University and community is often felt with words of praise, there is much the band can do to harness this support in monetary ways. A majority of the band's budget comes from the University, donations, sales of merchandise such as t-shirts on game days, and an endowment created by former President Dunn. With most of these pieces unlikely to see large changes, growth needs to be made to increase donations and fundraising.

When considering donations and fundraising, attention must be given to which populations are likely to be donors and who can be reached with fundraising. Likely donors can be separated into two basic groups; Alumni, and Friends.

### **Alumni Relations**

The Bronco Marching Band has almost 100 years worth of alumni. Each individual that has been a member of the band has made an impact through their participation, dedication, leadership and passion. The Bronco Marching Band owes its current success to each and every alumni.

Every year, thousands of WMU alumni return to campus for homecoming weekend. Among them, many alumni of the marching band return to once again perform with current band members in the football game pre-game show. Homecoming reignites feeling of nostalgia and facilitates the sharing of fond memories of some of the best times in their young adult lives. Alumni have the opportunity to see how much the University has grown and the growth of the organizations they were involved in. It is a wonderful time for all to see the progress being made and for current students to recognize alumni for their contributions, big and small.

For the Bronco Marching Band, Homecoming is really the only day in which direct contact is formally made with alumni. In addition to the memories, alumni have much to offer the band. When someone has a positive life alternating experience, such as belonging to an organization such as the marching band, they are likely to want others to have similar positive experiences. If each alumni from over just the past 10 years gave \$10 it would easily add up to a few thousand dollars. Now imagine each giving \$20 or \$50, or some passionate alumni giving \$1000 or more. The large pool of alumni allows small gifts to multiply into many and the likelihood of multiple larger gifts great.

In order to solicit donations from alumni, care must be given to greater engage them. An annual alumni newsletter would allow alumni to stay up to date and invested in the current band. An annual reminder that their legacy lives on with each new year of the band encourages alumni to stay invested. Once alumni are engaged, they are more likely to make contributions.

## **Friends**

Potential supporters who are not alumni can fall under this category. This can include family and friends of current and alumni band members, other individuals and departments in the University and individuals and businesses in the greater Kalamazoo community. With the bands large presence in the university and the community, the number of supporters here can be endless. Anyone who attends football games or has an investment in WMU is a potential “friend” of the Bronco Marching Band. In order to engage this group, social media presence should be enhanced. Creation of a public newsletter could help with this as well.

## **Asks, fundraisers and sponsorships**

Three ways to categorize fundraisers are physical fundraisers, asks (donations), and sponsorships. Below is a list of possibilities for each, some of which have been used in the past and are likely to continue to be successful.

### **Fundraisers**

Good old fashioned bake sales are often what come to mind when when thinking of fundraisers, and while bake sales may not be a good fit for the Marching Band, there are some fundraisers that are and can be successful.

- Merchandise sales
  - Items are currently sold to the public at the Kanley Track, prior to the band’s pre-game concert. These include items such as t-shirts, mugs, lanyards and hats. In order to increase profit on this items, an online store would allow the band to reach a wider audience, including those who are not able to attend these pre-game concerts.

- Dinner
  - This can be done at anytime of the year, although may be most successful in July/August when the community is gearing up for the upcoming football and marching band season. Guests will purchase tickets to attend a dinner with proceeds directly benefiting the marching band, specifically band camp or other specified expenses. This would be aimed at community members and companies who wish to show their support for the band. Entertainment could include performances by marching band members. Alumni and current students could share stories about their experience to encourage additional donations to ticket purchases.
- Homecoming Dinner
  - This would be an event for alumni to gather the night before the homecoming game. Tickets are purchased ahead of time for a reunion type dinner. Pictures and videos of past BMB shows can be viewed and alumni can receive updates on the current endeavors of the band.
- Raffle
  - This can be done as part of a dinner event, or separately during homecoming or another game day. Prizes can range from football tickets to the opportunity to conduct a stand cheer during a game. Could also be done before/during pre-game concert.
- Golf Scramble
  - Entrance fees based on teams, with a prize of trophy, cash, football tickets, dinner with Dr. Montgomery, football coach or University President.
- BMB Tailgate
  - Tailgate specifically for friends and alumni of the BMB. This may be successful during homecoming or other games. Tickets or “memberships” are purchased for access to a designated tailgate area.
- Alumni Section Olympics
  - Similar to section olympics during band camp, sections would compete for the most donations from alumni. One option is to assign this to staff over the summer months. Each section can use a variety of methods to solicit donations, emails, phone calls, alumni facebook pages etc. Whichever section in the band receives the largest number or amount of donations has points added to their section olympic scores. A second option is to set up online giving options and format it like a penny war. Alumni choose which section they would like to donate to. Alumni who donate to the winning section (based on dollar amounts) receive bragging rights as belonging to the best alumni section and commemorative tshirts and/or section name on a plaque.

## Asks

These are ideas for soliciting donations, without a fundraiser in which donors are specifically receiving items in return. Thank you notes are customary to those responding with donations.

- Donor Card Mailing
  - These cards have been sent out in the past. Simple cards with performance schedule asking for a donation. This is all done through the mail, and donors are sent thank you cards hand written by a student.
- Phone Campaign Competition
  - As a part of section olympics, or separate competition, sections each contact their alumni to ask for donations. The section with the most donors or dollars earns bragging rights, or points to the coming year's section olympics
- Giving Day
  - The Tuesday after Thanksgiving is often known as Giving Tuesday. This is a perfect time to launch a social media campaign for donations. The University is considering a giving day campaign, that may or may not coincide with this day.
- Call Center
  - Suzanne Beals has offered to train students to make calls to donors. Partnering with the Office of Alumni Relations would give a location from which students can call potential donors, specifically alumni or other supporters of the band. Specifically calling for donations for the Bronco Marching Band is likely to result in an increase of donations directly to the band.
- Capital Campaign-
  - A large scale ask to any and all alumni and friends of the BMB. This can be done through a combination of calls, mailings and announcements at events. The campaign could last between 1 and 3 months, during which there is extra attention given to fundraising efforts.

## Sponsorships

Sponsorships offer supporters the opportunity to see their donations make an impact in very visible ways. Unless otherwise requested, sponsors will be made known, as the Marching Band will publicly thank them and encourage friends of the band to support their business in return.

- Sponsor A Section-
  - Individuals or a group of donors can donate \$1,000 to be the official sponsor of a section. Sections would write them a thank you note and give them a section shirt.

- Sponsor Band Camp-
  - This can be done a few ways. A group or company can opt to sponsor a specific meal for a specific day, or donations may be made in general to sponsor camp expenses.
- Game Day
  - Game day sponsors would mainly support the purchase of water to hydrate band members as well as snacks.
- Miller Show
  - Individuals or companies who choose to sponsor the Season in Review concert would cover the cost of renting The Miller Auditorium for the event. They would have their names printed in the program.
- Halftime show
  - Large donations to be taken in the name of supporting a specific halftime show. The donor/donors are to be recognized in the introduction of the show and receive a photo of the performance.
- Band Day
  - Donors are given the opportunity to sponsor High School Band day, an event in which high school students perform a halftime show with the BMB. Donating to this special event helps cultivate high school students' interest in WMU and college marching band in general. Many participants go on to become Broncos and members of college bands.
- End of year banquet
  - Sponsors of the banquet would be invited to the event in which the band celebrates the accomplishments and memories of the season.
- Friends of the BMB
  - For smaller donations of \$50-\$100, individuals or families can become members of the "Friends of the BMB" Those interested are likely to be family and friends of students and alumni. An item such as a car decal or invitation to BMB tailgate would be offered to those who choose this donation route.

## **Centennial Celebrations**

The Bronco Marching Band will celebrate its 100th birthday in 2020. This is the perfect opportunity to boost engagement and giving. A combination of fundraisers and donation campaigns can be used specifically through the theme of the band's centennial birthday.

- Bronco Marching Band Birthday Bash
  - A birthday party for the band! This would be best done as a casual picnic-like event in which tickets priced around \$15 are purchased to attend. Friends, family, alumni and current members would attend to celebrate the band's birthday. Events may include fair like games, performances by the band and ensembles, silent auction, Band Trivia, and a history tent/area where attendees can see pictures and items from the band's 100 years.



- Centennial Celebration
  - A formal evening complete with dinner for anyone purchasing tickets. This may be similar to a dinner that can be held every year, with the added focus and theme of the Band's centennial year. Possible theme of "Roaring Twenties" with live jazz music.
- \$100 for 100 campaign
  - Similar to sending out basic donor cards this campaign would encourage friends and alumni of the band to donate \$100 in honor of the 100 years of the band's existence. The band also used to be known as the Marching 100 in the 1950s, which could be tied in. Being a part of a special campaign is a great incentive to those who wouldn't normally donate money, or would normally give smaller amounts to participate at a greater level. Some sort of commemorative sticker/patch could be given as a thank you.
- Merchandise
  - New merchandise such as t-shirts, pins, coffee mugs, etc. commemorating the centennial should be created for alumni, friends and members to purchase as a way to claim a part of history.

### **Implementation**

Successful implementation will take the dedication of many individuals. The current structure of the band's staff does not allow much time to be put towards fundraising efforts. Because the Director and student staff have many responsibilities, it would be unrealistic for them to take on added duties. The creation of new student staff positions would most likely result in the success of new fundraising initiatives.

### **Alumni Staff**

This could be 2-4 students who have an interest in interacting with alumni. They may be students currently marching or those who have marched in the past and would like to contribute to the program in a different way. Main duties would be the creation of a newsletter, likely biannual, maintaining a database of alumni contacting information, planning and overseeing events and fundraising aimed specifically towards alumni.

### **Fundraising Staff**

This staff would require students to take on the responsibility of planning fundraising events. Planning would begin in early spring for the coming year. As with alumni staff, the first year or two will require a lot of groundwork to establish events and ideas that can be used each year. After the initial year or two, staff would be responsible for building off of the previous year's successes.

## **Internship**

Many students are required to complete internships as a part of their degree program, or opt do so to gain experience. One program that may have students interested in assisting with fundraising and alumni relations is the Nonprofit Leadership Minor Program. Students are required to complete 300 hour internships within the nonprofit realm to gain a variety of skills, one of which is fundraising and donor relations. A majority of internships are not paid, so a student assisting the band with fundraising would not expect monetary compensation. In addition, an opportunity to complete an fundraising focused internship with the band is attractive to students who wish to have a hands on experience with large responsibilities. Many times internships have students do more secretarial work then they bargain for, and this would not be the case.

## **Honors Students**

Honors college students are required to complete volunteer hours every year. Students in need of hours can be recruited directly from the Lee Honors College to assist with planning events, making phone calls and managing online merchandise sales. Students with a particular passion for band or fundraising are likely volunteers. Students are also able to receive Honors credit for an internship.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

This plan should serve as a guide for future fundraising efforts. The list of ideas is not inclusive of all possibilities. As fundraising efforts begin to take root, this plan can serve as a guide to be adapted, as needs and resources change. The Bronco Marching Band is a vibrant part of the Western Michigan University campus and culture. As it moves into its second century, it will continue to spread Bronco pride wherever is goes. With fundraising success, the possibilities of growth and innovation are endless!