

## Final Research Case:

Western State University – College of Engineering & Architecture

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## Research Overview

The College of Engineering and Architecture (CEA) at Western State University (WSU) is a highly-regarded institution with a reputation for ground breaking research and producing high-quality graduates. Faculty and staff raise millions of dollars in grants every year to conduct research covering a wide range of topics. The college provides degrees in engineering, architecture, computer science and construction management. Currently, there are about 20,000 CEA alumni in the workforce and only 20% give back to support the CEA.

The CEA uses an integrated marketing strategy combining traditional methods (print direct mail, magazines) and online channels (website, social). This strategy, along with new fundraising appeals, provides a plethora of research possibilities. However, time and budget constraints require that DR and CEA public relations staff identify the most important research topics. Together, we have identified the following topics to be most helpful for achieving donation goals:

- Identify messaging that will resonate with alumni and test the potential effectiveness of different fundraising appeals.
- Reveal alumni preferences in communication method and content, donation history, intention to donate, and demographics.

CEA development offices have set a goal of increasing the percentage of alumni who donate from 20% to 35%. To help achieve this goal, CEA has commissioned Daruma Research (DR) to design a comprehensive multi-modal research study including focus groups, a survey, and an experiment. This research project will produce qualitative and quantitative data that will help CEA staff members communicate more effectively with alumni, and improve fundraising efforts.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups will be used to test the potential effectiveness of two development appeal strategies - reinforcing the value of education received at WSU and recalling memories of when they were students. CEA research infers that fundraising appeals including these emotional appeals may be effective with alumni. We selected focus groups because they are powerful tools for testing conceptual ideas and will provide the CEA with genuine responses. The results of this study provide the CEA with the thoughts, opinions, values, and desires of their target demographic. They can then use the information gained to assist with continuing to develop and revise campaign messaging.

The sample we intend to use for this study is provided by the CEA publications team. They are equipped with a list of 20,000 alumni with their physical and e-mail addresses. This study will use a combination of quota and judgmental sampling methods. The targeted sample will consist of alumni, both male and female, ranging from 25 to 35 years old and 55 to 65 years old. We will host four focus groups, two in Seattle and two in Spokane.

### Survey

This strategy was selected due to the accuracy and high external validity surveys produce. An alumni survey will be used to identify content opportunities, measure alumni emotional connection to the CEA, communication style preferences, and philanthropic preferences. Question topics will specifically focus on: sentiment toward CEA, website usage, preferred communication methods, preferred content themes, donation history, reasons for donating, reason for not donating, and demographics. The results produced by this survey will be

beneficial as stand-alone data and when combined with the results from our multi-model research project.

CEA public relations staff will provide a probability based random sample from a list of 20,000 alumni contacts. DR calculates that to produce a 95% confidence level and a +/- 4% confidence interval, a sample size of 377 will be required. Anticipating a 15% response rate, 2,514 will be invited to participate. After thorough pretesting and revision, the survey will be sent to participants with an alumni sticker incentive. Participants will have six weeks to complete and return the survey.

### Experiment

An experiment will be used to test the effectiveness of the two fundraising appeal themes tested in our focus groups – reinforcing of the value of education received at WSU and recalling memories of when they were students. We have selected a between-group randomized posttest-only with control design.

The experiment will include two treatment groups and one control. The control group will receive the traditional CEA fundraising appeal, and the treatment groups will receive appeals featuring the emotional themes. The appeal will be sent to 300 randomly selected emails and recipients will be asked to make their donation online.

Results will be measured by tracking the number of donations, and by how far through the process potential donors made it. This experiment will provide insight into the accuracy of our focus groups as well as which appeal messaging is more effective with alumni. They can use these results to augment future messages, focus on one over another, or abandon the appeal altogether.

## **Focus Groups**

### **Focus Groups**

CEA public relations staff asked DR to test the potential effectiveness of two development appeal strategies - reinforcing of the value of education received at WSU and recalling memories of when they were students. The CEA believes that these appeals with these themes (not combined) may enhance the alumni's connection to the school and increase donations from alumni. As focus groups are useful during the exploration of a concept, DR proposes to use them to measure alumni opinion of the messaging and thoughts about the creative execution.

The CEA's target audience is the 20,000 alumni who live around the world. Thankfully for our purposes a large population of alumni live in Washington, predominantly in the urban areas of Seattle and Spokane. Since this population is relatively small, DR will pursue a combination of quota and judgmental sampling methods. Also, due to the small population size, our target audience is ideally homogeneous, which will potentially increase disclosure amongst participants. The targeted sample will consist of alumni, both male and female, ranging from 25 to 35 years old and 55 to 65 years old. By polarizing these two age groups we can gain a greater understanding of how sentiment may change over time.

The four focus groups we will host require 8-12 participants each, totaling 32 participants. Anticipating for no-shows, we will target recruiting at least 60 participants, 30 in each market. Our recruiting strategy is heavily based on nominations from the CEA alumni list. We request their nominations include alumni who they think would be good participants based on their familiarity with the topic, ability to communicate their opinion respectfully, and willing to volunteer their time. If we cannot recruit enough participants through nominations, we will

change to a snowball strategy and ask participants to recommend their CEA colleagues, friends, or family.

Once viable participants are identified, we will conduct outreach to confirm interest and availability. With secured verbal confirmation, we will provide them with details on the date and location of the focus groups. This will be in the form of a confirmation email and written letter.

To help ensure participants show up, we will provide an incentive. Each participant will receive a \$25 gift card for the alumni store at the completion of the focus group. We suspect that participants will be working in downtown areas so we will host the focus groups on a weekday evening at a centrally located facility.

## **Moderator's Guide**

Evaluation of the Western State University College of Engineering and Architecture

Development Appeal Strategies

Focus Group Protocol

### **Research objectives:**

This study aims to explore the thoughts, opinions, and reactions to conceptual fundraising campaign messaging. Furthermore, through a general discussion, we wish to learn more about your media consumption habits and preferences.

### **Procedure in detail:**

*Introduction and Ground Rules:* I would like to thank you all for attending this evening. My name is [INSERT NAME] and I will be moderating our discussion today. The purpose of today's focus group is to discuss your thoughts, opinions, and reactions to WSU's CEA conceptual fundraising campaign messaging. Our discussion will take approximately 2.5-hours. Before group discussion, we will have you view campaign copy and artwork on the computer and share your initial reaction and opinions to it via a questionnaire.

Before we start, let's review some ground rules you'll need to know and follow throughout our discussion.

- First, speak one at a time.
- Please feel free to respond to what someone else says, but try to stay focused and allow others to speak.
- We'd like to hear your candid thoughts. That means truthful and straight forward. We expect many of you will have different opinions and that's ok. There are no right or wrong answers.
- Finally, do not feel that you need to answer every question, but we would like to hear from each of you during our discussion.

*Recording Notification and Confidentiality:* This discussion is being recorded so that we can remember and review your comments later. In case there is an issue with our recording equipment, I have asked my colleague, [INSERT NAME], to take notes [MODERATOR GESTURE TO COLLEAGUE]. Please note that your identities or names will not be disclosed, so I hope you feel comfortable sharing with me.

### **Campaign Questionnaire:**

What we'll do now is spend about 10-minutes viewing the campaign messaging and artwork, and then have you rate them by answering the survey questions. While viewing the content, please think about whether you like it and if it holds your attention, and makes a connection. The survey software we're using will tally the results instantly, so we'll review the them during our discussion. Should you have any questions or difficulties during this portion, raise your hand and myself or my assistant will come to help. Any questions? If not, let's begin.  
*[Moderator allow participants to review campaign materials and to log answers.]*

### **Ice Breaker / Practice Questions:**

Before we get started with our discussion, are there any questions for me? If not, let's start our discussion with short introductions. Let's go around the table and share your name, the year you graduated and which program.

### **Key Questions:**

Thank you all for sharing! Next, we'll watch the ads from earlier again and discuss them and the answers you provided.

#### General Campaign Questions:

- How would you describe your connection to WSU?
- How would you describe your connection to WSU's CEA?
- Overall, what did you think of the campaign materials presented?

Ad Specific Questions:

Okay, now we're going to display each of the campaign materials and discuss each.

*Moderator: Display campaign materials for reinforcing of the value of education received at WSU CEA.*

- What was the meaning of this content?
- What meaning did this messaging have for you?
- Do you agree with the premise? That your education was valuable?
- Does it make you want to support the college?
- Did you like it?

Let's discuss the other campaign materials now.

*Moderator: Display campaign materials about recalling memories of when they were students.*

- What was the meaning of this content?
- What meaning did this messaging have for you?
- Did it make you feel nostalgic?
- Does it make you want to support the college?
- Did you like it?

General Discussion:

Now let's discuss the things you mentioned earlier more generally.

- How many of you have donated to the CEA in the past?
  - What were your reasons for doing so?
  - What were your reasons for not doing so?
- Do the campaign materials make you want to consider donating?
- Any closing thoughts?

**Conclusion:**

Thank you all for sharing your opinions today. We appreciate your time and participation. Don't forget to pick up your gift card before you leave.

### Discussion Questions

*A. Discuss the internal and external validity (projectability), reliability and accuracy of study results.*

Internal validity is a primary consideration in this study as we are attempting to prove a causal relationship between the CEA fundraising appeals and increased donations. As participants cannot act on the conceptual messaging, internal validity will be difficult to achieve. However, we may be able to explore why they do or don't donate in great detail. Internal validity may also be compromised if the moderator is too strict or lenient with the group, or if some participants dominate the discussion or devalue the opinions of others. This may lead to results that are influenced by the study and not representative of the true situation.

Even though our participants will be comprised of alumni, we are not expecting the results of our focus groups to achieve high external validity. Focus groups are widely known for their inability to create results that are high in external validity. This is due to their small and homogenous samples. The survey which is discussed in the next section will help achieve results that are high in external validity.

Reliability is a major issue. We anticipate that while the focus groups may provide answers with similar themes, few answers will be the same. This does not mean that our results should not be trusted as they will be accurate, this simply means results will be different each time and will require more scrutiny.

*B. Given some of the limitations that exist, how will you use the results produced by the focus groups you conduct?*

The CEA can consider the information generated by this study as direct feedback from their target audience. The results of this study provide the CEA with the thoughts, opinions, values, and desires of their target demographic. They should use the information gained to assist with continuing to develop and revise campaign messaging. They should not use, nor consider, this information as proof that their campaign is effective on a large scale. The survey, discussed next, will provide further insight on the campaign themes which can be generalized to the total population.

## Survey

Due to their accuracy and high external validity, a survey will be an integral part of our multi-model research. An alumni survey will be used to identify content opportunities, measure alumni emotional connection to the CEA, communication style preferences, and philanthropic preferences. Question topics will specifically focus on: sentiment toward CEA, website usage, preferred communication methods, preferred content themes, donation history, reasons for donating, reason for not donating, and demographics.

A probability based random sample will be provided by CEA public relations staff. Assuming a list of 20,000 alumni contacts is available, DR calculates that to produce a 95% confidence level and a +/- 4% confidence interval, a sample size of 377 will be required. Anticipating a 15% response rate, 2,514 will be invited to participate.

Before distributing to our sample, the original cover letter and survey will be pretested. A total of 5-10 pretest participants, who have backgrounds similar to CEA alumni, will be selected to provide feedback. Feedback will focus on completion time, clarity, scales, likes and dislikes. Once feedback is received, the draft documents will be revised. Our pretest results and revisions are discussed following this section.

When the cover letter and survey are finalized they will be mailed to the random sample. Participants will have six weeks to finish and return the survey. Reminders will be sent out to arrive during weeks three and five. DR has also recommends including an alumni car sticker incentive to increase response rates. As surveys are returned, data will be collected, analyzed, and communicated to the CEA public relations team and senior leadership.

### Pretest Results

DR pretested the survey to gain feedback regarding cover letter clarity, time necessary to complete, instruction intuitiveness, clarity of questions and scales, and what people do and don't like. Our pre-test group consisted of five graduates of the Washington State University College of Engineering and Architecture. Of the five, four participants responded with feedback.

Overall, the survey took roughly 15-minutes to complete. Two participants thought the cover letter's introduction would benefit from some refinement. Others reported that survey questions were clear, however there were typos and redundancies in questions. One participant suggested reversing the Likert-type scales to range from 1-to-5 instead of 5-to-1. All pretest participants like the alumni sticker survey incentive.

Changes made to the survey were significant. After thorough proofing, grammatical and typographical errors were corrected. Several questions were removed due to redundancy. Questions with similar themes and common scales were grouped into single questions. Overall, the survey shrank from 37 to 30 questions.

Cover Letter

<LOGO>

July 24, 2017  
Daruma Research  
20361 1<sup>st</sup> Ave S  
Seattle, WA 91898

Dear Alumni,

Did you know, great things are happening at WSU's College of Engineering and Architecture (CEA)? That every year our faculty are awarded grants from public and private resources to conduct groundbreaking research? How about that our students are creating lasting and meaningful change in our communities? That alumni, like you, are leading successful businesses big and small across the world?

Unfortunately, most alumni don't. WSU's CEA is working to change that and we need your help! You have been randomly selected to participate in a research study about improving CEA communication and development efforts. The CEA has contracted Daruma Research (DR) to complete a survey with the purpose of measuring alumni connection to the CEA, communication preferences, and philanthropic preferences.

The survey will take approximately 15-minutes to complete, and your individual responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. Please complete the survey and return via U.S. mail with the included addressed and pre-stamped envelope. To thank you for completing our survey, we have included a WSU CEA Alumni sticker.

If you have any questions about the survey, please feel free to contact the Daruma Research team at (206) 229-9300 or via email at [wsucea-research@dr.com](mailto:wsucea-research@dr.com). Thank you for sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. Go Cougs!

Sincerely,

Bill Michie  
Research Director  
Daruma Research

Western State University – College of Engineering and Architecture – Alumni Survey

The WSU College of Engineering and Architecture is seeking to understand how we can better communicate and engage with our alumni. Specifically, we are seeking to measure alumni connection to the CEA, communication preferences, and philanthropic preferences. The following survey contains 30 questions and should take approximately 15-minutes to complete. Please follow the instructions preceding each section and answer to the best of your ability.

**This section will provide insight about your history and relationship with the CEA. Unless directed otherwise, please select one answer per question.**

Q1: What year did you graduate? \_\_\_\_\_

Q2: What degree did you complete at WSU? Pick as many that apply.

- Bachelor of Science  
 Master of Science  
 Doctorate

Q3: Which program did you complete? Pick as many that apply.

- Architecture  
 Engineering  
 Computer Science  
 Construction Management  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q4: Are you aware that the College of Engineering and Architecture has a Development and Alumni Affairs office?

- Yes                       No

Q5: Are you aware that WSU has an Alumni Association?

- Yes                       No

Q6: Are you a member of the WSU Alumni Association?

- Yes                       No

Q7: How satisfied are you with your education from WSU's CEA?

- Very Satisfied              Satisfied              Dissatisfied              Very Dissatisfied

Q8: How strongly do you feel a connection to the CEA?

- Very Strong              Strong              Moderate              Weak              None

Q9: What do you feel contributed to your connection with the CEA?

- Faculty
  Student relationships  
 Student activities/groups
  Program diversity (subjects)  
 Research opportunities
  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Q10: How strongly do you feel a connection to WSU?

- Very Strong 
 Strong 
 Moderate 
 Weak 
 None

Q11: Did you participate in campus activities/organizations while a student?

- Yes
  No

**The following questions will provide the CEA with a better understanding of your media and communication preferences. Unless directed otherwise, please select one answer per question.**

Q12: Did you know the CEA has a website?

- Yes
  No

Q13: In the past year, how many times have you visited the CEA website?

- 0
  1-3
  4-7
  8-10
  10+

Q14: How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am more likely to visit the CEA website if it contains articles about current CEA research.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am more likely to visit the CEA website if it contains articles about current faculty.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am more likely to visit the CEA website if it contains articles about student achievements.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q15: What social media platforms do you use?

- Facebook
  Twitter
  Instagram
  Snapchat  
 LinkedIn
  YouTube
  I do not use social media

Q16: Do you know the CEA is active on social media?

- Yes
  No

Q17: What platforms do you use to engage with the CEA?

- Facebook
  Twitter  
 Instagram
  I do not engage with the CEA on social media.

Q18: Which of the following methods would you prefer to use to stay connected to the college?  
(Check all that apply)

- E-zines                       Print magazine                       CEA Website                       E-mail  
 Social media                       Mail                       Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**The following questions will provide the CEA with a better understanding of your philanthropic preferences. Unless directed otherwise, please select one answer per question.**

Q19: Do you make philanthropic donations to non-profit organizations?

- Yes                       No

Q20: Have you made a financial donation to WSU in the past?

- Yes                       No

Q21: Have you made a financial donation to the CEA in the past?

- Yes                       No

Q22: In the past, what has prevented you from donating to the CEA? (Select all that apply)

- Not enough disposable income                       I prefer to donate within my community  
 Student loan debt                       My donation is too small to make a difference  
 The CEA has enough money                       I donated

Q23: How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am more likely to donate to the CEA if I can choose which program receives the funds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am more likely to donate to the CEA if I know how my donation will be used.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am more likely to donate to the CEA at a hosted event (gala, luncheon, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am more likely to donate to the CEA if I could make the donation online.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**The following questions are designed to provide WSU’s CEA with a better understanding of alumni community. We assure you that all information received will remain confidential.**

Q27: Which gender identity do you most identify:

- Male                       Female  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prefer not to answer

Q25: What is your age?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-27 years old      | <input type="checkbox"/> 28-35 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 36-45 years old      | <input type="checkbox"/> 46-54 years old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 55-64 years old      | <input type="checkbox"/> 65+             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer |  |

Q26: What is your ethnicity? Choose one.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian or Pacific Islander | <input type="checkbox"/> Black or African American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic or Latino        | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White, Caucasian          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer      |  |

Q27: What is your marital status? Choose one.

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single, never married | <input type="checkbox"/> Married   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partnered             | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed               | <input type="checkbox"/> Separated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer  |                                    |

Q28: What is your household income? Choose one.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$20,000   | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,000 to \$34,999   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35,000 to \$49,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,000 to \$74,999   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75,000 to \$99,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100,000 to \$114,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$115,000+           | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer   |

Q29: What is the highest level of education have you completed? If you are currently a student, please select the most recent level completed. Choose one.

- Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
- Master's degree (e.g. MA, MBA, Med)
- Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
- Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)
- Prefer not to answer

Q30: What is your current employment status? Choose one.

- Employed full-time (40 hours or more per week)
- Employed part-time (up to 39 hours per week)
- Self-employed
- Unemployed and looking for work
- Unemployed and not looking for work
- Student
- Retired
- Homemaker
- Unable to work
- Prefer not to answer

End of survey – Thank you! We hope you enjoy your WSU CEA alumni sticker!

### Discussion Questions

*A. Discuss the internal and external validity (projectability), reliability and accuracy of study results.?*

The survey designed by DR uses a probability-based sample which is comprised entirely of CEA alumni. We project that the use of this targeted probability based sample will yield results that are high in generalizability and accuracy. Furthermore, while we are planning for a 15% response rate, we anticipate one much higher which will increase generalizability and thus reliability of the survey.

When determining if a survey is internally valid, the researcher needs to look at whether the questions we ask can explain the outcome of what we want to research. In this case, identifying why alumni do or don't want to use the CEA website, or do or don't want to donate. DR has sought to increase internal validation through the drafting and pretesting process, by confirming the concepts we seek to measure are.

Due to the similarities of participants within the provided sample, the survey created will produce results that are reliable. This means that given to the same participant more than once, the same results would be produced. However, the lack of pre-testers (only 5) and absence of a test-retest experiment may cast doubt on the reliability of the alumni survey. To alleviate this concern, further pretesting can be completed prior to the survey distribution.

*B. Given some of the limitations that exist, how will you use the results produced by the survey you conduct?*

The results produced by this survey will be beneficial as stand-alone data and when combined with the results from our multi-model research project. When used in conjunction with the results from other studies, the survey results will help provide context and possibility

correlation to those results. For example, the focus group shows that participants don't feel emotionally connected to the CEA, the survey can show if most alumni feel the same. When the results are used on their own, the line of questioning will provide insight into alumni emotional connection to the university, preferred communication style, and philanthropic preferences. We will use this data, and the inferences it provides, to help CEA public relations and development staff provide alumni create more engaging content, streamlined communications, and more persuasive fundraising appeals.

## Experiment

DR has designed an experiment to test the effectiveness of the two fundraising appeals identified in our focus groups – reinforcing of the value of education received at WSU and recalling memories of when they were students. The focus groups were valuable informing the CEA of what alumni think of the messaging, but this experiment will demonstrate their effectiveness. Also of value, this experiment will use a random sampling method and assignment, which will provide results generalizable to the entire alumni population.

The experiment proposed by DR will be conducted via email. 300 email addresses will be randomly chosen from the CEA’s list of 20,000. Recipients will receive appeal emails with differing messages. 100 participants will receive an email with an emotional appeal tied to the value of their education. 100 will receive an emotional appeal tied to their memories at WSU CEA. The remaining 100 will be our control group, and will receive the traditional appeal used by the CEA. Participants will be directed to donate on the website. The only thing that will change in each appeal is a paragraph that attempts to persuade the alumni to donate and the call-to-action. All other campaign elements – design, donation landing page – will remain the same.

*Experiment design:* To determine the effectiveness of the fundraising appeals we will use a between-group randomized posttest-only with control design.

CG: R            01

TG: R        T1    02

TG: R        T2    03

TG = Treatment Group

CG = Control Group

R = Random Assignment

T = Treatments/IV

01, 02, 03 = Posttest measurements

*Hypothesis:* The use of emotional messaging in fundraising appeals will result in higher donations than those without.

*Independent variables/treatments:* This experiment will use two treatments. The first treatment will be a fundraising appeal using emotional messaging based on reinforcing the value of education received at WSU. The second treatment will be a fundraising appeal using emotional messaging based on recalling memories of when they were students.

*Dependent variable:* Number of donations made as a result of the fundraising appeals.

*Sample and assignment:* This experiment will use a random sampling method and assignment. A sample of 300 alumni will randomly be selected from the CEA's alumni email list. Afterward, participants will randomly be assigned one of three fundraising appeals.

*Procedure:* The following procedure will be followed to execute the experiment. These instructions can be followed to replicate the experiment if necessary.

1. Create communications, one without treatment messaging and two with.
2. Select random sample of 300 participants from CEA public relations list.
3. Randomly assign each treatment to 100 participants.
4. Distribute email communication to participants.
5. Tally results of each communication.

*Results:* Results will be tallied in two ways. Our primary measurement tool will look at the number of donations received to determine the effectiveness of the messaging. Our secondary measurement tool will be the analytics of the website. Do participants with certain appeals click the links to the donation page? While they may not choose to donate, this will lead us to believe that the messaging may be, at a minimum, effective in creating interest in donating.

### Discussion Questions

*A. Discuss the internal and external validity (projectability), reliability and accuracy of study results.*

The experiment proposed by DR will provide results that are internally and externally valid, reliable, and accurate. The design of this study, between-group randomized posttest-only, will be able to determine that our treatment was (or was not) the cause of a change in behavior. Being a field test, internal validity of the experiment is at risk because it will be conducted in an uncontrolled environment and external influences may interfere. The uncontrolled environment also casts a shadow over the accuracy of the results. By not being able to observe who opens the appeal, or makes the donation, causation becomes harder to determine.

However, the uncontrolled environment benefits our external validity. Participants in their own selected environment are more natural and genuine in their feedback or actions. This improves the external validity of the experiment and reduces selectivity bias.

External validity is also enhanced by the sample selection. The source of our sample, CEA public relations database, ensured that all participants are alumni thus sharing common characteristics. By choosing to randomly select and assign participants, we ensure that none of the participants are too alike, which will create more generalizable results.

With the thorough procedure and instructions provided, the experiment can be easily replicated. Future researchers can take samples from the CEA database and repeat the test again. If the subsequent tests produce results like ours, it will help create trust in our validity and increase our generalization.

*B. Given some of the limitations that exist, how will you use the results produced by the experiment you conduct?*

The results of our experiment will be insightful and very useful for WSU's CEA. By seeing how participants react to the new fundraising appeals, we will be able to determine if the results of the focus groups were accurate. For example, if focus groups said they like it and it performs poorly, there may be issues with the focus group results. If necessary, we can use the experiment results to retest focus groups or augment the moderator's guide.

Furthermore, the results will provide the CEA with insights in to which appeal messaging is more effective with alumni. They can use these results to augment future messages, focus on one over another, or abandon the appeal altogether. They may also use these results to adjust messaging and create further experiments to find the right appeal. While one of the smaller parts of this research plan, experiment results can make a dramatic impact on the fundraising campaign moving forward.