CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT
University of Central Missouri Alumni Foundation

UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL MISSOURI
ALUMNI • FOUNDATION

"Throughout the entire project—all the way through—I felt like it was a joint effort. It wasn't just our project. The team from Blackbaud came in with the approach that we're going to make this happen and we're here to help."

—Jenne Vanderbout,
Assistant Vice President for Alumni and Development

The mission of the University of Central Missouri Alumni Foundation (UCM Alumni Foundation) is to engage alumni and other constituents in support of the University through a variety of opportunities, including service and financial support.

UCM Foundation Improves Online Experience with Website Redesign

In July of 2015, the UCM Alumni Association and the UCM Foundation, two separate organizations, merged their operations and governing boards to create a singular focus on student success, called the UCM Alumni Foundation. As a part of the merger, the newly formed Foundation adopted Raiser's Edge to help manage its constituents and fundraising efforts. In addition, Jenne Vanderbout, the assistant vice president for alumni and development, chose Blackbaud NetCommunity to help transform the Foundation's website into a more user-friendly experience. "We did it all at once, moving to one database management system and online tools that could work together," she says.

Before the move, the Foundation's website wasn't telling the compelling story needed to draw in alumni and other supporters. "Our website was horrible," recalls Jenne. "It was hard to find things. We didn't feel that it focused on the things we needed to focus on, and we didn't feel that it told our story very well."

UCM Foundation is powered by:

➤ **Blackbaud NetCommunity**™

➤ **Blackbaud Merchant Services**™

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Because of this lack of captivating content and clarity, website traffic was extremely low and the Foundation team had trouble engaging alumni and supporters.

Designing and developing a new website is a huge task requiring lots of coordination and effort from all involved partners. Jenne appreciated having to only work with one vendor, because it kept the website redesign process running smoothly. "Blackbaud was the only company that could do it at the level we wanted it done," says Jenne. There were a lot of hands and opinions in the mix, but together they transformed the website into one that worked for the Foundation and its users. "Everybody throughout the entire project was fantastic. There are so many pieces and so many teams that came in at different points," says Jenne.

When the new website went live in July of 2016 it represented the first time that the UCM Foundation and UCM Alumni Association were housed on the same page as a single organization. With the website's eye-catching design and easy-to-use navigation, the Foundation is optimistic about the future of online engagement. "One thing that we've been excited about is the flexibility to deliver a clear concise message." With a stronger message and better flow, supporters are able to find the content they're looking for—including how to donate—much faster.

Now when supporters make gifts online, that information flows from Blackbaud NetCommunity directly into Raiser's Edge to keep donation history accurate and enable the best stewardship. And with Blackbaud Merchant Services, recurring gifts are simple too. "Previously we couldn't do any recurring gifts effectively online. It was a big mess. And now we're able to work with some of our academic areas to promote recurring gifts with their young alums and build giving programs," says Jenne.

Not only is it easier for supporters to use the website to give, but it's also easier for them to get involved in volunteering and connecting with fellow alumni. With this new increased engagement, the Foundation is thrilled to be able to share stories of people giving back and the huge impact these contributions have on the University. "The website gives us the opportunity to tell stories about what we're doing, how we're impacting students, and how alumni are giving back to the institution in a variety of ways," says Jenne.

The website has also contributed to better collaboration with various organizations on campus. "It really has helped people we're working with. They stand up and say 'Oh, wow you've made life so much better by implementing this. And it looks so good, and we're so excited to partner with you now,'" says Jenne.

The Foundation plans to build on that spirit of collaboration by reaching out to alumni to get them more excited about using the website too. Once someone signs into Blackbaud NetCommunity, the Foundation team can begin targeting specific constituents and delivering more effective, personal messaging. Plus, once they're involved, Blackbaud NetCommunity offers supporters a chance to tell their own stories too. This helps Jenne and her team learn more about their constituents so they can better communicate and build stronger relationships with them. The Foundation looks forward to continuing to create these deeper connections to increase sustained giving for the University.