

Santa Ana College Foundation

HOW SAC FOUNDATION RAISED \$1 MILLION IN THE MIDDLE OF A PANDEMIC

For 100+ years, Santa Ana College in Orange County has helped students raise their game with top-notch instruction and professional resources. But the game has changed. The cost of living has never been higher, and even the most determined students can't raise their GPAs while working minimum-wage, full-time jobs to support their families.

That's why the SAC Foundation approached Interact for help developing a case statement and booklet to influence prospective donors and raise money for learners who need it most.

Interact stepped up to the plate, combining staggering facts with poignant, real-life stories to sway benefactors. Together, the team created a stunning marketing tool, hitting a home run for hard-working students.



Game On: 'Raising the Game' Builds a Strong Foundation

From research and writing to art direction support, Interact helped SAC Foundation craft an exquisite, 40-page, full-color booklet to persuade potential patrons.

It all started with research as Senior Copywriter Dr. Michael Mahin took a deep dive into the Foundation's economic stats. Mahin has a wealth of expertise in community college fundraising, so when it came to donor communications, he knew the data to deploy.

Facts like, "\$0.00: The amount of support half of all SAC students expect to receive from their families," and "41% of California community college students reported skipping or reducing meals for financial reasons in 2018," helped to drive the critical message home.

At the same time, Mahin helped articulate the College's vision by classifying donation areas into distinct student support buckets for streamlined giving to build a robust conceptual foundation for fundraising.

Finally, the potent "Raising the Game" tagline was born and paired with stories of sincere former students and donors to create messaging that could speak straight to the heart of seasoned donors and brand-new alumni alike. Carefully crafted writing captured

the SAC spirit while compelling alumni, community stakeholders and business leaders to heed the resounding call: "We invite you to join us as we raise our game, so more students can start raising theirs."

Nothing tugs at the heart (and purse) strings like stories where community members can picture themselves in a donor's shoes. For instance, take "game changer" Robin Follman-Otta, international operatic soprano and business executive at R.A. Industries, whose genuine story of community college success reaches right off of the page to readers.

As Follman says, "People often see community colleges as a second or third choice. But for me, SAC was my first choice...Today, R.A. Industries sends its employees to SAC when they need to upgrade their skills. It's a win-win for everybody — they receive a quality education, we get more qualified employees, and Orange County gets a more educated workforce that can afford to live here."

Finally, Interact's senior copywriter worked closely with the District's lead designer, offering extra assistance and artistic direction to not only get the book past the finish line but also into first place.

Final Score: SAC Students Ahead of the Game

The result was a tremendous touchdown for the College. The booklet earned a Gold Paragon and regional Silver Medallion from NCMPR and a Silver Award from CASE.

But the real win? Despite the economic challenges created by the COVID pandemic, SACF raised a million dollars last year during their silent giving phase, putting them solidly on the way to their \$6 million goal. That makes SAC students the real winners when it comes to raising the game.



Research: Interact helped collect and crunch data to show the College's impact on students, the workforce and the local economy. Bold stats established the high stakes, demonstrating how donations could abolish hurdles to higher ed and higher earnings.



Writing: From smithing a potent tagline to shaping the stories of donors, a compelling and personal narrative encouraged community leaders to cut checks. By putting out the call to become a game changer, the Foundation made an irresistible appeal to support equity, student success and a stronger regional economy.



Creative: When initial design concepts didn't pan out, Interact offered extra assistance, suggesting a new artistic direction and cutting-edge creativity to the District's designers.

The superb synergy was a smash from the first to last page. The cover's double-image became a visual story in itself, illustrating how the College represents the region with a fresh, eye-catching design. From engaging, personal student photos to a powerful typography and color treatment, the result was award- and heart-winning.



Raising the Roof

The booklet was so successful that the Foundation hired Interact again to help launch the "Raising the Game" website, increasing visibility and ease of giving at www.rtgcampaign.org. Plus, the Foundation recommended the company to their colleagues at the College of the Sequoias Foundation, where Interact continues to put forward the fundraising efforts of innovative community colleges.

It's always an honor to support student success, and Interact looks forward to more collaborations and celebrations to come.



"Interact Communications brought great expertise that involved articulating very clearly our case for support. The feedback and results were phenomenal.

"My team and I thoroughly enjoyed our time working with Michael Mahin on this project and came to know him as a truly valuable asset. He is creative, dependable and incredibly hard-working... His knowledge of the unique nuances involved with community college fundraising and expertise in donor communications were a huge advantage to our team.

"Without a doubt, I confidently recommend that you consider working with Interact Communications."

– **Christina Romero**, Executive Director, Santa Ana College Foundation