Top Tips from Bryn Mawr Fund and Reunion Gift Chairs

1. I email my classmates first, telling them that I will be calling (and why), and ask them to let me know what the best times are for me to call. I tend to get two kinds of responses. One is an email reply providing the information I need—whether they were planning to come to reunion, and whether/how much they were planning to give. The other response is to give me some call back times, which pretty much eliminated the telephone tag. (from the Class of ’62)

2. Several weeks before calling, I write to each classmate letting her know that I will be calling. In the letter, I begin the discussion of coming to reunion and making a donation before the end of the year. (from the Class of ’63)

3. For reunions, it is always preferable to talk to people by phone, and it helps to send an email asking for a good time to call. That doesn't always work, but whether I am talking on the phone or by email, I always start with schmoozing, i.e. giving an update of what's happening in my life and asking about an update in theirs. My first ask is to encourage them to come to reunion (if they come they will give—always!), and then I ask if they would make a contribution to the [annual fund] Bryn Mawr Fund. It is rare to have someone you are talking to on the phone refuse to give at least a small contribution. It's easier to ignore an email request. Nowadays I would also encourage them to make a multi-year pledge. This is especially true in the reunion year, as the current College bookkeeping allows the whole pledge to count for the reunion, and of course the pledge payment after the reunion counts for each of those years and the next reunion. Who can resist that bargain? (from the Class of ’67)

4. We use our Facebook page, and it gets credit for our success in the October challenge. You can post your updates, and no single classmate feels persecuted (classmates can turn off the alerts if they want) – it's also easy to build real-time momentum on how your class is performing. Not sure if every class has a facebook page but I highly recommend setting one up. (from the Class of '06)

5. Be aware of your friends/classmates' life schedule (graduate school, work hours) - they don't want to talk during finals or deadlines at work. The best time to talk about volunteering or donating is when it feels natural to do so, such as when you're talking about Bryn Mawr memories or if a tradition is coming up. (from the Class of ’09)

6. Encourage all donors to become monthly givers. Invite them personally to events that they don't have to pay for. Thank them promptly. Ask at tax time! (from the Class of ’97)
7. Don't be too pushy. I have found that a simple request during an email or phone call gets a response. (from the Class of '52)

8. Show interest in each person that you contact....if you know something about them, then, inquire as to their family and their interests....everyone likes to be asked about something dear to their heart. (from the Class of '52)

9. I try to connect my classmate's experience to that of students currently at the College. Sometimes I include a hotlink to an undergraduate blog or a description of something I learned in a recent visit to the campus. (from the Class of '64)

10. I identify myself right away in order to personalize the call: "This is (name), one of your Bryn Mawr classmates. You might remember me as (former name)." I then try to say something I remember about the person before moving on to the purpose of the call, which I identify first as encouraging them to come to reunion, and secondly as encouraging them to be one of the contributors to the class gift. (from the Class of '63)

11. When speaking to classmates regarding the benefits of donating, remind them that U. S. News World Report rankings, and other reports that rank colleges, are participation-based rather than dollar amount-based, so I emphasize the motto "Every Mawrter. Every Year. Any Amount." (from the Class of '05)

12. I think personalizing as much as possible is very important even if it's just a brief handwritten note on the appeal letter. In addition to what the college does, thanking your classmates by writing personal or email thank-you notes (or texts for the younger generations) is also effective. Even better is picking up the phone and simply calling a classmate to say thank you. (from the Class of '60)

13. It helps to have enough class volunteers so each person doesn't have too many people to ask. This means that the Chair needs to find people who a) are not too uncomfortable asking other people to support BMC and b) diverse people who had at least partially different groups of friends, so each person has some friends or people they know on their lists. Having class volunteers from different dorms or geographic areas helps too. (from the Class of '67)

14. Ask your classmate to increase her gift, and then to use her increased matching gift to move her gift to a higher gift club category. Ask if her spouse or partner has a matching gift program that might be used for her matching gift. (from the Class of '82)

15. Start by saying that you are calling for The Bryn Mawr Fund, but want to catch up with each other lives' first. (from the Class of '62)

16. For non-reunion years, we contact Lybunts in the spring. (from the Class of '67)

17. At the end of each calendar year, I always write a short email to members of our class to remember the tax advantages of making a donation to Bryn Mawr, and I include the link for giving online. Several of my classmates have told me via an email response and in person later that they are grateful for the reminder and online link. (from the Class of '68)

For more information, contact the Bryn Mawr Fund office:
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