$10M+ Gifts to Higher Education

February 2018
A Strong Year of Leadership Giving

A look back tells us that 2017 was a big year for $10M+ giving to higher education – in number of gifts and particularly in dollars gifted. The total value of $10M+ gifts to higher education in 2017 was up 25 percent over the previous year.

The increase is due entirely to more gifts at the $50M-$99M and $100M+ levels, which increased in number by 70 percent and in total value by 47 percent from 2016. During the same period, gifts in the $10M-$24M range declined both in number and total value.

Some have speculated that the changes implemented by the new tax policy sparked a rush to give at the end of 2017. We can’t be sure that is the case; however, we do know that Schwab Charitable announced that its number of new Donor Advised Funds nearly doubled in the second half of the year, up 91 percent compared to July-December 2016. The change in donor behavior was attributed to tax reform and a strong stock market. Though only time will tell as to $10M+ giving in response to these two factors, the sharp rise in DAFs may be an indication that mega-giving could have been sparked as well.

While 2018 is likely to be a period of some uncertainty in philanthropy, particularly in new bequest commitments, Marts & Lundy is studying the effects of public policy on philanthropy and will be reporting insights throughout the year. Our continued examination of the driving forces of charitable giving, along with The Philanthropy Outlook 2018 & 2019 and the Giving USA annual report, will provide a data-driven view of Higher Education philanthropy that can significantly inform fundraising strategy.

Donald M. Fellows
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Summary of Findings

**Total $10M+ Gift Count to Higher Education** | 2016 compared to 2017

+6%  
194 gifts in 2016 vs. 204 gifts in 2017

**Total $10M Value of Gifts to Higher Education** | 2016 compared to 2017

+25%  
$6.16B in 2016 vs. $7.72B in 2017

**$10M+ Giving to Higher Education by Recipient State**

#1 California  
California received $1.42B in $10M+ gifts followed by New York with $1.22B. The next closest state was Illinois, which received $570M.

#2 New York

**Percentage of Total $10M+ Giving to Higher Education** | 2016 compared to 2017

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<td>66%</td>
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Data Source

Our analysis focuses on gifts and commitments of $10M or more from primarily one source: The Chronicle of Philanthropy “Big Charitable Gifts” database. The Chronicle’s list has been supplemented with additional $10M+ gifts and commitments identified through an automated search of gift announcements on Twitter. All gift types have been included in this analysis: Non-Cash/Gifts-in-Kind, Bequests, Challenge and Matching, and Gifts (including pledges). This analysis reflects only gifts and commitments made by individuals, directly or through family foundations, to recipient organizations within the United States. Gifts made to academic medical centers are generally included as gifts to Higher Education.

Figure 1: $10M+ Giving to Education through 2017

All dollars in billions.
Line represents year-end value of Dow Jones Industrial Average.

$10M+ giving to Higher Education is up by 25 percent from 2016 and 39 percent from 2015. This increase tracks with the dramatic stock market increases toward the end of 2017. The count of $10M+ gifts to Higher Education increased more modestly from 194 in 2016 to 206 in 2017, a 6 percent increase.
A 13 percent decline in the number of gifts from $10M-$24M was alleviated by increases in each of the other gift levels: $25M-$49M, $50M-$99M, $100M+. While gifts of $50M or more made up only 19 percent of the $10M+ gifts to Higher Education, they created over 60 percent of the total dollar value of these gifts for 2017. Total $10M+ giving in 2016 and 2015 was less heavily weighted toward gifts of $50M or more.
California and New York typically lead the other states in US $10M+ giving to Higher Education, but in 2017, giving to institutions in New York was more closely matched to California than in 2015 and 2016. Other top recipient states include Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Texas, and Washington.
In 2017, giving to Higher Education represented 74 percent of total $10M+ giving, compared to 66 percent in 2016. While Schools and Arts, Culture, & Environment organizations held on to a similar percentage of $10M+ dollars from 2016, Health organizations and giving to causes outside of the four main categories absorbed a smaller percentage of these dollars than in 2016.
Thank you to Alison Rane, Consultant and Director, Research and Development, for her work on this report. A special thanks to Nelson Lees, who for many years made this report possible. Though he has retired, we are pleased to ensure that the good work he began will continue in earnest.