

Houston Community College Foundation Turns to Blackbaud Data Enrichment Services to Dramatically Boost Alumni Participation



The Houston Community College Foundation supports Houston Community College in its efforts to attract and educate Houston-area students with the desire and the dedication to learn — including many non-traditional students and those facing barriers to higher education.

Challenge

- The Houston Community College Foundation had only 200 names in its database, so staff faced a huge hurdle in creating an alumni association.
- While the alumni association was in the process of formalizing, it was placed under the direction of the Foundation. But during the discovery process, staff discovered that there was no alumni database. They had to start from scratch, with no records.
- The Foundation had its institutional researchers pull all records for anyone who received a degree or certificate from 1972 (the first year the College operated) on, as well as for anyone who completed 40 hours of study or more. Of course, addresses and phone numbers had most likely changed, and the majority probably now had email addresses, which needed to be identified. Staff needed a way to clean all the data and get it to a point where it could be used.

Solution

- The Foundation chose PeopleFinder™ to search and update donor and prospect records previously thought to be lost or unknown.
- The Foundation turned to EmailFinder™ to validate email addresses of their more than 70,000 alumni.
- DeceasedRecordFinder™ has also been invaluable; before, staff would mail without knowing that an alumnus was deceased, resulting in many unhappy replies from relatives.
- The Foundation chose PhoneFinder™ so the development officers would have valid phone numbers for prospects at their fingertips.
- AddressFinder™ has saved time and money on mailings by having up-to-date address information based on the United States Postal Service's National Change of Address® database.

Results

- The first time the Foundation ran PeopleFinder, 10,000 records were processed, and 97% returned had the highest match level.
- With EmailFinder, the Foundation has had amazing return rates averaging 27-28%!
- Since DeceasedRecordFinder was implemented, the Foundation no longer receives unhappy responses from loved ones of deceased alumni.
- The development officers no longer have to wait for researchers to find the phone numbers. PhoneFinder has streamlined that process and has been extremely helpful.
- With help from Blackbaud Data Enrichment Services, participation has increased by 216% from August 2009 to May 2010! “We feel that this is a huge accomplishment,” said Sophia Corey, “that could not have been done without Blackbaud.”

“There are so many community colleges out there trying to get to the point where Houston Community College Foundation is. Because of the success we’ve seen with Blackbaud Data Enrichment Services, I feel like we are a step ahead of everyone else. When I tell other institutions all that we’ve done, they are very impressed with the return rates we’ve received. I’ve heard so many horror stories about other colleges and universities going with other vendors and getting bad email address. With Blackbaud, I know we’re going to get good results.”

— Sophia Corey,
Manager of Development & Alumni Relations