

## **Episode 17: Be a Part of the Heart of UD**

### **Introduction:**

You are listening to the UnDeniably Well podcast hosted by the University of Delaware's Employee Health and Wellbeing team. Keep listening to discover ways to be your best self each and every day.

On this episode of UnDeniably Well, we will be talking about I Heart UD Giving Day on May 4th, the University of Delaware has the power to come together to raise money for faculty, staff, and student projects. Last year, we raised over a million dollars for campus in one day. This day is a powerful reminder of what the UD community can do when it comes together. Listen in to learn more about I Heart UD Giving Day and what you can do to contribute to our students' success.

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### **Ryan Shuler:**

Hi, my name is Ryan Shuler. I am the Associate Director of Employee Health & Wellbeing at the University of Delaware and welcome to this episode of UnDeniably Well. Today, I am joined by Julie Donahue, Associate Director of Annual Giving with Development and Alumni Relations. And today we are here to talk about all things we love about UD and the I Heart UD Giving Day. Welcome Julie.

### **Julie Donohue:**

Hi, it's so nice to be here.

### **Ryan Shuler:**

Can you tell us a little bit about what I Heart UD Giving Day even is?

### **Julie Donohue:**

I Heart UD Giving Day is UD's biggest day of giving. It's our annual day of giving and gratitude at the university where we can support fundraising projects throughout the entire campus community, but also show your love for all things, blue and gold.

### **Ryan Shuler:**

How many years has I Heart UD giving day been happening.

### **Julie Donohue:**

So I Heart UD Day was established years ago, with just an on-campus presence, and then five years ago we decided to expand it and make it into a giving day. So this is our fifth year, so we're celebrating big. A lot of our messaging has to do with, everyone is the heart of UD and we're celebrating five years, so we're really excited for this milestone.

### **Ryan Shuler:**

I just have to say, as, a former student and alum and employee, I really love this day. It really brings

out like why we all came to UD in the first place. I can remember, and for those of you who can't see me, I am wearing my hoodie that I got freshman year of college almost 20 years ago, just so excited to be on campus. Just the feel of campus is amazing. The people that you meet on campus is amazing. And I just, I really feel like you all have done such a good job, but really trying to bring that essence, like really the day just amplifies that, blows it up. This is really what it means to be UD. I just love seeing everyone in their blue and gold. I think this year is pretty cool cause we're back on the Green. So can you just talk a little bit, for those who are not familiar with this, what are the types of fundraising projects or who are the fundraising projects for that we are funding on I Heart UD Day?

**Julie Donohue:**

So Ryan, first of all, I also am an alum and I love being on campus too, like back on campus. I also have my hoodie from freshman year as well from the Five and Dime. But really this day has always given me such great vibes every year, even the years that we aren't on campus, just seeing people coming together to make these projects happen. So we have over 130 projects this year, which is the biggest ever. So people really are understanding the importance of hosting a crowdfunding project and then asking their networks to help make it come alive. So anything from athletics to research projects to study abroad initiatives and everything in between, you'll find them to support on I Heart UD Giving Day.

**Ryan Shuler:**

So are they all projects driven by students or some of them driven by faculty and staff as

well? **Julie Donohue:**

It's a little bit of everything. So some of them are driven by faculty, staff. Some of them are driven by students, and some of them are driven by alum as well, who have an affinity for a certain group. So there's plenty to support and gifts can be amplified that day through challenges and matches that generous donors have given. Just large amounts to really amplify your gift to double your amount that you're giving or triple depending on what the challenge is for that day.

**Ryan Shuler:**

So I think one thing that I would like to make employees aware, who are listening to this, is you can fund any amount that you have capacity for on that day. This does not have to be like you're sending a thousand dollars to a project. You know, if there are 20 of us that are sending 10 bucks, well that's \$200 a student just got towards a project that they're working on. So I really think it's cool and we can talk a little bit about the website too, but sort of this live tracker on the website of how much money is being generated. Julie, on, average or on last year's numbers, how much money are we talking that is generated like just on this one day event?

**Julie Donohue:**

So we do open the platform for early giving about a few days ahead of time just in case you know, we just want to work out the kinks, but we also want to open up early challenges as well, so we can kind of extend the giving. But last year we raised over a million dollars, which was incredible and I was

crying. Like I was excited. I was crying because it's just, you know, you see these projects that, you know, really have awesome things that they're working on and to see them be able to be funded or come to life is just really incredible. But like you said earlier, like we have a \$5 donation minimum. So if \$5, if, you know, it's the essence of crowdfunding, a lot of small gifts, really adding up to create a bigger impact. And it's just really incredible what we can do when we all come together.

**Ryan Shuler:**

And I love this. Just sort of bringing this into the wellbeing space and why we even have this on an Employee Health & Wellbeing podcast is this day really does generate the essence of the UD community, and community is one of our foundational buckets within Employee Health & Wellbeing, that we are sort of stronger together. This whole concept of belonging has been huge lately. Do you really feel like you fit in? Are you an active part of your community? And to me, aside from anything else that UD does, this event, This I Heart UD Giving Day, really really showcases that essence of community. And to your point, it's not just faculty, staff, and students. It's alum who are living in California or another country who still were so impacted by UD, they still feel that sense of belonging and that sense of community and want to give back. So I just, I really loved the whole community aspect of all of this.

**Julie Donohue:**

Yeah. And it's all the warm and fuzzies that you'd get from giving, you know, like you give back and you feel like you are then part of that project because you've contributed to it. If you go on our website on I Heart UD Giving Day you'll see a map and you'll see little pins everywhere for where people have given, and you'll see it from all around the world. So, you'll see people giving from Australia and Europe and Asia everywhere across the United States as well. And it's just amazing to see all these Blue Hens or Blue Hens' networks coming together to make sure that this day is successful.

**Ryan Shuler:**

I'm like a total UD dork and I will probably work here for my whole life.

**Julie Donohue:**

Same. I'll be here with you.

**Ryan Shuler:**

I did my undergrad here. I did grad school here. I never thought I would come back to UD ever, like I was done. I've made my peace with Newark and then I got a job here. I met my husband here. We even lived on campus. We had a crazy housing situation during COVID, my son was two months old. We've lived right on campus in the UD employee housing. So to me personally, UD has given so much to me and to have a day like this, where we can all come together and give back. It's just really powerful.

**Julie Donohue:**

Absolutely. I also, I bleed blue and gold. I did my undergrad, grad. I've been an employee for eight years at UD. I have some stories to tell from when I was an undergrad student and I was struggling and I

received assistance. So being able to be an employee now and give back to the university, to students who also might be struggling or to projects that mean something to the students or faculty members that can make a difference in the community or in the world is just, it's just serious job satisfaction in that way, where I feel like I am making a difference. And I feel like everybody around campus can make a difference too, by either contributing to a project or championing a project, you know, spreading the word, finding something that you're passionate about, one of these projects and just sharing it on their social networks to get the word out.

**Ryan Shuler:**

There's sort of, I'm hearing two different capacities to this. So one is the actual act of the giving, which is through the website, you can make monetary donations. But is there anything happening on campus that day?

**Julie Donohue:**

Yeah, so we will have a physical event this year, which we're really excited about because we haven't been on campus for a physical event in a couple of years because of COVID-19. So this year, from 11 to 3 on May 4th, we are going to have a few pop-up stations on the Green on central green. The spirit team will be there, we'll have some food and prizes and lawn games, so that's something exciting to look forward to. We will have a thank you writing station for scholarship recipients to be able to write thank you notes to their donors. There'll be areas for activities and there'll also be a station to make a gift as well. But also throughout the entire campus, we have spirit stations as well. So projects that want to have their own table, that they want to talk more about their projects, you'll see them scattered throughout campus as well.

**Ryan Shuler:**

That's awesome. I think that's a good excuse. I think for those of us who have been working remotely, like this day is a wonderful reason to come back to campus. I know that we've talked about potentially this could be a day where you reconvene with your team. I know that there are employees who have been hired since COVID, who have never actually met their team in person. So this is a perfect reason to come to campus with your team, visit the spirit stations, give people a tour of campus if they've not been to campus before. And I think one thing that I have noticed being remote for the last couple years is that we all work at UD because we really love UD. And when we're on campus and the students are in our face all the time, everywhere we go, they're students, it's very easy to remember that you're there for the students. But I think since we've been working remotely and when we're removed from campus, we're removed from students, we forget some of that purpose or meaning behind why we're doing what we're doing. I work in Employee Health and Wellbeing. Yes, I work with faculty and staff, but my goal is to keep those faculty and staff healthy to make sure that the students have a positive experience. Same with someone in accounting. They may think they're just crunching numbers for campus, but they're crunching numbers so campus can stay open and efficient and effective, so students can have a good experience. So I, if you have the opportunity to come back to campus on this day, be with the students, be on campus, be in community with one another, we would, we would really love that.

**Julie Donohue:**

Let me tell you, I have been hybrid for a couple of months now, and anytime that I get a chance to come on campus, the two days that I'm on in the office, it feels so medicinal for me. Like it's just the pick me up that I really needed to get through the week. Whether it's seeing my fellow colleagues or seeing people on the green playing Frisbee, it's everything that I need to get the positive vibes in my life of UD and feeling back at home again, and feeling like a little bit normal as well. So this is the best way to introduce yourself back on the campus, if you haven't been because it is such a joyful day. If maybe you enjoy working from home and you haven't made it back to campus yet, this is the perfect opportunity to. And hey, we got activities and food and all that stuff. What other, you know, reason you come back. But if you do happen to make your way on campus, you should definitely come out to the green with your team and take a picture and make sure you #IHeartUD and #WorkingatUD because we'll repost and we love to see our spirited employees for sure.

**Ryan Shuler:**

And one other thing to add. I think Julia and I probably could both speak to a million reasons why we love UD because we were here as students as well so we got full experience. But even if you are not a student, even if you started working here a year ago, or sometime in your adult life, this day really is powerful to show what the student experience is like. And these projects really can show what the students are passionate about. So again, you may be disengaged from that, you know, fully immersive experience, but this day really gets you in the thick of it and really shows you, what are students passionate about? What are they looking to change in the world? You get to hear from students and see students and talk to students about their projects. And it really just brings again that sense of community and that sense of belonging. It really amplifies it on this day if you've not been fully vested in the UD experience as a student yourself.

**Julie Donohue:**

And I respect so much, all of these project leaders who put the time and effort to create a fundraising page, to create a marketing calendar of how they're going to get the word out about their projects. They really put a lot of time and effort into fundraising for their projects. So we are hoping that all 130 plus projects get some sort of support that day, feel the love. But also, you know, it's a good pay off to show like I've worked hard to get this funding and I want my project to come to life.

**Ryan Shuler:**

Do you have any examples off the top of your head of what types of projects are happening this year? **Julie Donohue:**

Actually, if you go to [udel.edu/iheartUD](http://udel.edu/iheartUD), we have a preview of all of the projects on there. So you can at least browse and start to decide, you know, what might I support that day? And then we will open for early giving as of the 29th, so people can start making gifts and we'll have challenges available as well. I can't believe it, it's coming up so soon. But some of these projects include, accounting and MIS peer tutoring program, blue hen bounty, which is a food pantry on campus, the clothing coop, which is cool because, you know, if students don't have something to wear to an interview, they can go and get professional clothing and be able to go on to interviews, and so many other great projects. So if you go

to [udel.edu/iheartUD](http://udel.edu/iheartUD), you'll be able to see the projects and kind of create a plan in your head of what you would like to support that day. And then what's great, it's like I said earlier, the challenge piece, if there's a project that seems to be in the lead for winning a challenge and you'd like to help them, you know, you can support them and they could possibly receive extra funding that day.

**Ryan Shuler:**

So I'm just curious, what is the, what is the difference or help me understand, I Heart UD Giving Day versus like an annual faculty and staff giving. What is the dynamic? Does this count towards our faculty and staff giving? Or how does that work?

**Julie Donohue:**

So yes, this will count towards faculty and staff giving. We hope that you will also be part of the faculty and staff campaign, but this is a great way to support the University. This will go towards faculty staff giving, if you decide to contribute on I Heart UD Day. But this day really is a great opportunity to amplify your gifts because of these amazing donors who have contributed so much to be able to provide additional funding for projects as well.

**Ryan Shuler:**

So I think just bottom line here is we all really love UD and I think Julia and myself very much bleed blue and gold here. So we're asking you to come out and support campus, support our students. Again, I Heart UD Giving Day is May 4th, from 11 to 3 is the event on the Green. But as Julie mentioned, the, the website will be open a few days before if you have an opportunity to make donations. But May 4th is that big day where you can go in and, and fund a project. Again, we encourage people to go on and just look at really the power of crowdfunding and what this can do for our campus. Just the amount of money raised for these projects is amazing. So any little amount you can give, we would appreciate and would be helpful. The students would appreciate it. So we hope to see you on May 4th.

**Julie Donohue:**

Yes. Thank you so much, Ryan. We all heart UD, and you all are the heart of UD, so thank you so much. **Ryan Shuler:**

Thanks, Julie. We'll talk to you soon.

**Outro:**

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