

PROGRESS REPORT

Working Group Name: Gift Oversight

Working Group #: 29

Chair: Andy Acker

Date: March 11, 2022

Update on Actions Taken Since Last Report:

Consensus remains that the “centralization” for the Office of Gift Oversight (working title) is *not about people*, but more about the *centralization of accountability and processes*. We believe that the Office of Gift Oversight should serve as an *oversight hub* for (1) fiduciary spending - properly awarding charitable gifts and (2) stewarding gifts.

Before the Zoom meeting on Friday, March 4 we established three subgroups (scholarships and fellowships; faculty endowments; and other). Each subgroup has been able to identify certain challenges that this *oversight hub* will face, as well as great opportunities to serve the Texas A&M philanthropic community.

Since the last meeting, our group was also able to garner insights from Brian Hastings, CEO of the University of Nebraska Foundation. Comparable to the Texas A&M structure, Nebraska has an entirely self-supporting foundation that supports the UN System universities. Like our working group efforts, Brian said that his UN team’s focus to lessen the number of “underutilized funds” has resulted in them going from 40% of all accounts being underutilized in 2013 to 26% in 2019. He said several initiatives helped them to improve: They hired their own gift oversight professionals; helped to create reports to consistently bring attention to underutilized accounts; and increased/consistent communication helped bring awareness to the “underutilized funds” issue.

Next Major Issue to be Addressed:

During our last in-person meeting on March 11, Wes Wyatt, a data analyst within the HR team, gave us a demonstration of the Excel-based job family database created originally for Working Group #31. Within the database we can search for keywords (such as “gift administrator,” “philanthropic gifts,” “scholarships,” “endowments,” etc.) in the position descriptions.

For future communication, Wes will help our Working Group customize a report that identifies colleagues impacted with the formation of the new Office of Gift Oversight. As one of our Working Group members stated, after the report we should better “know our (philanthropic) community.”

Lastly, our group will have three organizational charts/options to discuss before our next meeting on March 25. This will help us decide the most applicable structure for the newly formed office.

Problems or Barriers Encountered and Solutions Identified:

Our customized report to identify individuals impacted with the formation of the new Office of Gift Oversight may have limitations. There is a concern that existing job descriptions may not include philanthropic words/phrases used to search for and identify the philanthropic community. Furthermore, some individuals may not be identified because their job duties have changed since their hire and do not include philanthropic words/phrases in their original job descriptions. Our group realizes that, over time, the original Office of Gift Oversight listserv will need to be edited to include individuals initially overlooked.

Deliverables Completed:

Define primary responsibilities of the new office:

1. Serve as an *oversight hub* for (a) fiduciary spending - properly awarding charitable gifts and (b) stewarding gifts.
2. In partnership with the Texas A&M Foundation and various colleges and units, report to donors the impact of their gifts through fund reports, scholarship programs, and other written donor information through comprehensive and integrated stewardship reporting. This office will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating these reports and programs while striving for continuous improvement.
3. Compliance-related, work closely with the designated “gift administrators” in each unit or college to ensure gifts are properly utilized.
4. Systematically examine awards to ensure the stipends are properly allocated.
5. Centralize all data (gift agreements, recipients, impact reports, etc.) for awarding and stewardship functions.
6. Create reports to consistently bring awareness to underutilized accounts; and increase communication helped bring awareness to the “underutilized funds” issue.
7. Serve as a resource for donors and development professionals; answer questions, as requested.

Timeline for Completion of Remaining Deliverables:

Our timeline is fluid, but we’ve created the following key milestones and delivery dates:

1. Define primary responsibilities of the office and create a job description for the leader of the new office of gift oversight by March 1.
2. Determine how many need to be hired; create an organizational chart by March 25.
3. For communication purposes, identify professionals impacted by the formation of the newly formed gift oversight unit, via a customized report from Wes Wynn by March 25.
4. Finalize implementation and communication plans by May 6.
5. Communicate to those affected by changes by June 1.
6. Post job description by June 8.
7. Leader of the new office starts by August 1.