

# STEWARDSHIP MATTERS

A stewardship guide for staff and faculty

2015



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

**PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU SAID,  
PEOPLE WILL FORGET WHAT YOU DID,  
BUT **PEOPLE WILL NEVER FORGET**  
HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL.**

**–MAYA ANGELOU**

## **Donor Experience Guiding Principles**

### **Create joy.**

We provide experiences that are informative, unexpected, whimsical and captivating to inspire lifelong engagement with and support of Ohio State.

### **Make the BIG small.**

We know our donors and provide authentic, personalized experiences that allow connections with their university.

### **Show impact.**

We tell transformational stories that donors make possible.

Stewardship ensures the people who support Ohio State feel valued, respected, engaged and understood. Effective stewardship builds trust, fosters long-term engagement and inspires continued support for the university.

Results of national surveys demonstrate donors are looking for two things when they give — a prompt, meaningful thank you and communications about the impact of their gifts — and that doing these well influences their intentions to continue giving.

These themes hold true at Ohio State. An in-depth, interview-based survey conducted in 2009 illustrated opportunities to strengthen stewardship activity. Donors indicated personal acknowledgment letters, impact reports and the opportunity to build personal relationships were the most meaningful forms of engagement. More than 40 percent of the donors surveyed suggested there was growth potential in sharing information about the impact of gifts.

A 2014 survey of alumni donors participating in the Buckeye Room illustrates our continued opportunities to enhance stewardship. When asked if they felt appreciated when they made their gifts, 56 percent responded 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being appreciated. When asked if they felt aware of the impact of their gifts, 39 percent responded 4 or 5 on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being aware.

The principles, standards, programs and expectations described in this guide provide the framework for effective stewardship. Our stewardship work must ensure timely, accurate, personalized and regular involvement that reinforces the impact of the donor's generosity.

Together, we aim to deliver consistently positive experiences, keeping the donor at the center of our plans and being conscious of the donor's comprehensive relationship with Ohio State.

# Ohio State Stewardship Standards

## All Gifts

- Donors receive tax receipts from The Ohio State University Foundation at the time gifts are received and processed.
- ✳ Donors receive notes expressing thanks from those who benefit from gifts; these acknowledgments are sent within 24-48 hours from the time the gift — payment or commitment — is received.
- ✳ Donors who give gifts of **\$50,000 or more** receive highly personalized acknowledgments signed by the dean or director. Acknowledgments are sent within 24-48 hours.
- Donors who give gifts of **\$100,000 or more** also receive acknowledgments from the president of the foundation. Acknowledgments are sent within 24-48 hours.
- Donors who give gifts of **\$500,000 or more** also receive acknowledgments from the president of the university. Acknowledgments are sent within one week.

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Look for 

The Buckeye leaf indicates action items primarily **driven by the college or unit.**

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## First-Time Gifts

- Upon making a first gift to Ohio State, a donor receives a receipt, an acknowledgment from the college or unit, and a special thank-you message — a mailing and/or phone call from central Annual Giving. First-time donors will also receive a communication about the impact of gifts during the months following the first gift.
- ✦ In addition to sending an acknowledgment, colleges or units may choose to do something special for donors who make a first gift to the college or unit, whether or not it's the donor's first gift to the university. This is done in coordination with central Annual Giving efforts.

## Annual Gifts

- Alumni who give \$75 or more annually to Ohio State are recognized as Sustaining Members of the Alumni Association and continue the tradition of alumni paying forward. Among other special opportunities, Sustaining Members receive a print subscription to *Ohio State Alumni* magazine and are eligible to apply for the alumni football ticket lottery.
- By making gifts to the Buckeye Club, donors support scholarships for student athletes and receive benefits from the Department of Athletics. Giving levels range from \$250 (recent graduates and former letter winners) to \$25,000 or more per year. Benefits include access to athletics experiences and opportunities to apply to purchase season football tickets.

- President’s Club recognizes individuals who contribute personal annual gifts of \$3,000 or more to academics, health sciences or the arts (non-athletics). Donors receive a special welcome message, monthly e-news, “insider” tour and event experiences, and opportunities to apply to purchase season tickets for home football games, game day parking and on-campus parking.
- ✳ Colleges and units may offer additional recognition for annual gifts. Central partners are available to help review recognition programs for tax implications and fit within a broader context.
- Centrally coordinated stewardship communications include:
  - o appreciation for loyal donors and those making recurring gifts;
  - o messaging at the end of the calendar year that shares appreciation and illustrates the impact of gifts, including examples from the colleges and units;
  - o personalized summaries of gifts during the calendar year; and
  - o concentrated efforts to involve the campus community in showing appreciation for what donors make possible.

## **Planned Gifts**

The Neil Legacy Society — named in honor of the Neil family who made 361 acres of farmland available for the start of the university’s campus — recognizes donors who have given planned gifts of any amount.

- Donors are invited to at least one event per year and a stewardship communication is sent annually.
- ✳ Colleges and units are encouraged to include donors with planned gifts in their stewardship events and activities.

## **Major Gifts and Lifetime Giving**

Following any major gifts — and when total lifetime giving to Ohio State reaches or exceeds \$250,000 (including outstanding balances and planned gifts) — stewardship becomes increasingly personalized, tailored to the donor’s preferences and focused on the impact of specific gifts.

We steward donors who have given \$250,000 or more for life. Stewardship activities should collectively reflect the donor’s comprehensive impact.

- ✳ For managed prospects, the prospect manager is responsible for ensuring the required stewardship occurs.
- For non-managed prospects, the Donor Experience team is responsible for the required stewardship and will work in collaboration with colleges and units, including recommending assignments to colleges and units, as appropriate.

## **Required Stewardship for \$250,000 Total Lifetime Giving**

Donors will experience at least one stewardship contact each year. This is a required activity solely focused on thanking the donor for past giving and demonstrating the impact of the donor’s support.

- Whenever possible the stewardship activity occurs in person and involves a beneficiary of the donor's support.
- Activities could include a meeting with a beneficiary, a visit with a university leader or a letter from a beneficiary.
- Once a donor reaches \$250,000 a stewardship plan is created in The Advancement System (TAS). Annual stewardship activity should be recorded in this plan.

## **Required Stewardship for \$1 Million Total Lifetime Giving**

More customized and frequent stewardship is required when a donor reaches \$1 million total lifetime giving.

The stewardship plan should include multiple steps planned into the future, with activities coordinated appropriately across colleges or units and in the context of the overall relationship and potential future solicitations.

## **Oval Society**

Oval Society recognizes the university's most generous benefactors who have individually given \$1 million or more during their lifetimes. Outstanding balances and planned gifts do not count toward the \$1 million to qualify for Oval Society.

Oval Society stewardship highlights include:

- recognition at an annual event celebrating philanthropic leadership;



- highly personalized communications and exclusive opportunities to engage with the university and its leaders; and
- ✳ special experiences to connect donors with Ohio State’s academic mission and traditions.

## Gifts to Support Scholarships

- All scholarship donors receive messages about impact from students.
  - ✳ Donors with named scholarship funds are informed of the scholarship recipients, receive a note from the student(s) and have an opportunity to meet the student(s).
    - o Donors making annual gifts to support scholarships receive communications and opportunities to meet representative students.
- Donors supporting scholarships at any level have an opportunity to participate in a university-wide celebration of scholarships.

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## Endowed Funds

When an endowed fund is created, the donor(s) should be added in TAS as the stewardship contact(s) for that fund.

Stewardship contacts for endowed funds receive an annual report of the financial status of the fund and overall investment performance.

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## Gifts Establishing Endowed Chairs or Professorships

- ✦ The college hosts a small ceremonial event any time a new endowed chair or professorship is established.
- ✦ The donor has an opportunity to build a relationship with the appointed faculty member, including at least one opportunity annually to hear about the faculty member's work.
- There is a university-wide celebration involving and recognizing donors and the faculty members holding chairs and professorships.
- Information, accomplishments and stories about endowed faculty holders and the donors who make their work possible are promoted through various university communications.

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## Naming Opportunities

Per university guidelines, naming of an academic entity or physical space is subject to formal approval by The Ohio State University Board of Trustees.

Naming opportunities must be approved through a standard process before proposals are presented to donors. The Donor Experience team helps facilitate this process.

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## **Gifts Establishing Endowed Funds for Research or Programs**

- ✦ The donor has at least one opportunity to hear from or connect with the beneficiaries of the funds and to learn about the research and program accomplishments made possible by his or her support.

## **Gifts to Support Facilities**

- Donor recognition is considered and planned throughout the design and construction processes and within the context of Ohio State's environmental brand and signage guidelines.
- ✦ Standard guidelines are used as a starting point for determining how donors' names will be displayed on recognition signage.
- Donors are engaged in groundbreaking events, dedication ceremonies and opening events.
- ✦ Future steps are entered in stewardship plans in TAS. These steps should illustrate the impact of the facility in the years after the opening and at key milestones.

## Management of Development Funds

- All development funds are reviewed annually for the purpose of ensuring the funds are being spent as donors intended.
- ✳ Spending plans are documented in TAS for any endowed funds where the available balances are three or more years of distribution.
- ✳ Spending plans are documented in TAS for any current use funds that have not had significant spending activity for two or more years.
- Funds with zero balance and no spending activity in the past two years will be reviewed for potential closure.

## Metrics

Key metrics for assessing the outcomes of stewardship work include:

- donor retention (one-year, five-year, etc.);
- donors' feedback about their experiences (particularly whether they feel appreciated and aware of the impact of their giving); and
- upgrades or increases in giving.

Key measures of stewardship activity include:

- acknowledgment turnaround times, and
- the completion of annual personalized stewardship activity for those with lifetime giving of \$250,000 or more.

# Roles and Responsibilities

Effective stewardship requires involvement from people throughout the university, especially those who benefit from donors' support.

Fundamental to the Donor Experience guiding principles — create joy, make the big small, and show impact — is a commitment to truly understanding the donor's values, motivations, giving history, relationships and preferences for recognition and engagement.

Effective stewardship is a team activity requiring communication, coordination and trust between colleagues. All staff use TAS to plan, coordinate and document stewardship preferences and activities.

## Central Stewardship Staff and Partners

- Establish guidelines and share best practices.
- Provide data and track overall stewardship activity.
- Offer support and consultation about specific stewardship matters.
- Lead and implement university-wide programs for recognition and stewardship related to first-time gifts, annual gifts and loyal giving, scholarships, endowed funds and campaigns.
- Coordinate required stewardship activity for donors with lifetime giving of \$250,000 or more, and who are not assigned to colleges or units.

## Prospect Managers

- Identify and document the donor's recognition and stewardship preferences; make sure all stewardship activity, by any Ohio State representative, is appropriate and meaningful for the donor.
- Make sure required stewardship activity is completed for all prospects with total lifetime giving exceeding \$250,000. Document the activity in TAS.
- When closing a major gift, identify specific stewardship steps related to recognizing and celebrating that particular gift.
- As appropriate, move a prospect to stewardship status based on the donor's future capacity and interest. Continue to manage the donor according to prospect management standards.
  - **Active Stewardship Status** refers to donors who have made a gift to Ohio State and retain the capacity and inclination to make another major gift to Ohio State in three to five years.
  - **Legacy Stewardship Status** refers to donors who are not likely to make another major gift to Ohio State.
- Ask donors about their experiences with stewardship and identify what could be done to better show appreciation and impact.

## **College and Unit-based Stewardship Staff**

- Know the guidelines and work with the chief advancement officer or development officer and central partners to align college or unit activity with standard practices.
- Ensure processes are in place for sending timely and meaningful acknowledgments.
- Know the donors who qualify for required stewardship and support prospect managers in ensuring required stewardship activity is completed.
- Lead efforts for the college or unit to participate in university-wide stewardship programs.
- Serve as primary liaison with stewardship colleagues across the university; identify opportunities and challenges associated with enhancing stewardship activities.

## **Deans, Chairs and Unit Leaders**

- Send acknowledgments within 24-48 hours of receiving gifts.
- Ensure gifts are spent as intended. Regularly review and address cases where there are significant spendable balances on endowed funds.
- Participate in activities and events to recognize and engage donors, and encourage faculty and students to do the same.

- Communicate breaking news to donors, including any anticipated changes in appointments to endowed faculty positions.
- Get to know the university's most generous donors and help ensure they have positive experiences engaging with all parts of the university.

## **Communications and Alumni Relations Staff**

- Understand stewardship principles and be aware of Ohio State standards.
- Consider opportunities for stewardship through, or in conjunction with, alumni engagement initiatives and events.
- Consider opportunities to engage and steward donors by telling their stories.
- Include donors when drafting communications plans to share college and unit news.
- Provide creative support for stewardship efforts.

## **Students, Faculty and Staff**

- Write thank-you notes that explain how gifts have made a difference to you or your program.
- Participate in meetings, activities or events to recognize and engage donors.



# Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to review and understand the Stewardship Matters guide. You are instrumental to our success in making sure those who support Ohio State feel valued, respected and engaged. When we all do this well, people will continue to support Ohio State, and many will do so at increasing levels.

My team and I look forward to partnering with you on this work and we welcome your ideas and input any time.

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# Notes



