

**Pride of CASE V Awards: Best Practices in Advancement Services
Miami University**

Title of Entry: Qualitative Portfolio Review: Fundraising Focus and Precision

Provide a concise description of your entry. If your entry is selected for an award, your summary will be used in award-related materials. Please limit response to 250 words.

To maximize our fundraising efforts, Miami University instituted sweeping changes in FY19 to our prospect management program. Prior to that, our development officers each managed prospect portfolios of up to 300 households, and were evaluated primarily on volume of visits, and cultivation of those prospects. Taking a cue from other successful programs, Miami launched a program we called Qualitative Portfolio Review (QPR), where we strategically and substantially reduced the number of managed households.

This was a serious shift in philosophy, and one designed to allow development officers to focus on a significantly smaller number of prospects, each of whom would be solicited for a major gift within three years. The goal of the QPR was to require development officers to manage higher-rated prospects and increase the number of asks, the dollar-amount of asks, and number of closes each year.

Describe your goals/objectives and how they were measured/met. If this is a recently launched program, describe your plans to evaluate it.

Miami University is in the early stages of the largest comprehensive campaign in school history, and while our fundraising staff has grown modestly in recent years, we wanted to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of gift officers. Based on a model put forth by David Lively (of Northwestern University), we dramatically changed the philosophy of how Development Officers at Miami manage, cultivate and solicit prospects.

In past years, Miami's fundraising focus was largely on Gift Officer activity; while this often resulted in high gift totals, we wanted to add greater consistency to the process. Before we instituted these changes, most Development Officers had over 100 households in their portfolios, and some carried close to 300. A closer inspection found that one-fourth of managed prospects had not been visited in five years or more, and one-fifth of them had never been seen. Officers were expected to make up to 200 personal visits a year.

More focus was needed, so during the spring of 2018, our Prospect Research staff and Development Officers carefully reviewed each portfolio and made sweeping changes. Gone were the days of 'hoarding' prospects and having limited engagement with them. Under the new criteria, Gift Officer portfolios would consist solely of prospects who would be solicited for a major gift (\$50,000 or more) in the next 36 months. Prospects would not be managed if they didn't fit that criteria. The idea was to not only reduce the number of managed prospects in each Development Officer's portfolio, but to ensure they had the highest quality of prospects: highly-

rated and highly-engaged. Pools were limited, and visit goals were reduced so Officers would spend more time cultivating, soliciting, and then closing the commitments.

We were hopeful that these changes would result in more consistent and strategic engagement with prospects, with deliberate moves, shorter solicitation cycles, and larger asks.

The contrast was striking. The overall number of managed households dropped from 4436 to 1381, and the average Development Officer portfolio shrank from 131 to 43 households. Two-thirds of those in the new overall pools have been visited within the past two years.

Throughout the year, working with those smaller and higher-quality pools, the Development Officers were able to strategically hone their visits and asks.

During FY19, Miami gift officers made 307 asks, totaling \$157 million. That compares with 259 solicitations of \$109.8 million in FY18, up 19-percent and 43-percent, respectively. The average ask amount was \$511,500 in FY19, versus \$424,000 in FY18, an increase of 21-percent. While the number of proposals granted was up 28-percent, we did not see a corresponding rise in dollars granted. However, we are confident that, under our new structure, we will continue to see marked increases in coming years. We also experienced a 107-percent increase in the average rating of managed prospects.

	FY19	FY18	% change
# Asks	307	259	19%
\$ Asks	\$157.0M	\$109.8M	43%
Avg Ask	\$511,450	\$423,860	21%
# Granted	152	119	28%
\$ Granted	\$40.3M	\$49.3M	-22%
Avg Rating	\$1.0M	\$483,268	107%

* Note that during FY18, Miami secured a \$30 million bequest commitment, which impacted fundraising totals that year.

We are excited to track our productivity in coming years as we maintain the same portfolio structure and philosophy. We will continue to review and analyze the quality of our managed households, the number of solicitations at the major gift level, the ask size, the number of closes and total dollars raised. In addition, we will keep a close eye on Officer visits (including assessments).

In the meantime, we tackled some topics that stemmed from the QPR process:

- Development Officers were concerned about what might happen with the prospects they don't manage anymore, so we created policies and best practice guidelines for management.
- We encouraged them to continue relationships, as appropriate, with those prospects, as a way to cultivate them for future gifts (and then management).

- We required extensive database documentation of any engagement.
- We formed a team to discuss and make recommendations on how to properly steward those donors who are paying off pledges, and those who've made their final gifts to Miami.
- We created a committee to establish Development Officer metrics, to tackle progress on their fundraising goals.
- We restructured our meetings between Development Officers and Prospect Development staff to address these new procedures.

Describe how the project fits into overall institutional and/or advancement goals.

Because Miami is in the early stages of a large campaign, it's crucial that we reach our commitment goals each year. Providing a structure where Development Officers can focus with precision on a smaller number of highly-qualified and capable prospects is key to campaign success. This restructuring addresses many goals within the development office, including:

- More frequent and meaningful engagement of prospects and key volunteers
- Increased opportunities for cultivation, solicitation and closure of commitments
- Reduction in "hoarding" of prospects by Development Officers
- More efficient travel planning

List the names, titles and roles of primary staff contributors, and note their significant contributions; please note the use of freelancers, outside agencies or volunteers.

- Emily Berry, Assistant Vice President of Development, Annual and Individual Giving – member of QPR team that helped develop, implement and refine process
- Brad Bundy, Senior Associate Director of University Advancement – supervisor of Development department
- Sarah Chernitsky, Director of Prospect Development – head of our Research team, coordinated activity to strategically reduce portfolios and make appropriate updates in timely manner
- Kevin Marks, Assistant Vice President of Development, Campaign Services – member of QPR team that helped develop, implement and refine process, oversees Prospect Development team
- Randy Pratt, Associate Vice President of Development, Principal Gifts and Presidential Priorities – member of QPR team that helped develop, implement and refine process
- Susie Sadler, Assistant Vice President of Development, Academic Programs and Projects – member of QPR team that helped develop, implement and refine process
- Amy Shaiman, IT Applications Team Leader – member of QPR team that helped develop, implement and refine process, lead IT team member involved

Briefly describe the entry's major budgetary components and amounts, excluding staff salaries. Include any expenses related to the use of vendors/consultants, and describe the work they did.

While we spent time working through the QPR process (notably Development managers and the Prospect Development staff), it did not result in any additional budgetary costs.

Why do you think your entry is distinctive? For example: unusual circumstances, resource limitations, and exceptional achievements or results. Please limit response to 500 words.

Going through the QPR process marked a dramatic shift in Miami University's fundraising philosophy. Like at many institutions, gift officers at Miami for years had focused primarily on relationships, visits and engagement with prospects and donors. Since putting our new structure in place, the officers now manage a much smaller number of prospects, and only those primed to be asked for a major gift in a short time span.

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