

**Gift Acceptance Policies and Committees - Bureaucracy, Burden, or Benefit?**  
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I have been speaking on this topic for over 20 years, and am constantly surprised when I ask for a show of hands to indicate if an organization either does not have a gift acceptance policy, has one that is over 10 years old, or has one but does not have a gift acceptance committee to vet whether to accept something “weird and bizarre.” In fact, some institutions believe that such policies/protocol are arduous and that we should be able to make nimble decisions “on the fly.”

I could not disagree more! In fact I think the opposite is true.

Ideally an institution should have a very short Board approved policy delegating gift acceptance authority to the Advancement unit. Our similar policy at NC State was all of 4 pages long. This keeps the Board “out of the weeds” and focusing on strategic matters. The Advancement Office can, then, issue a gift acceptance policy without having to go through an unnecessary review process. These policies can, and should be, updated *annually*. New gift vehicles come and go with great regularity – think about IRA rollovers and virtual currency. You do not want to have to go back to the Board every time your acceptance policy requires a change.

One exception to the Board involvement “rule” should, however, pertain to the infrequent development of Campaign Counting policies. Here we want to be completely transparent and adopt these policies a good 2 years before the launch of the pre-public phase of a campaign. While CASE has established guidelines here, CASE has left the door open in a number of counting areas that leave interpretation/counting rules up to us. Deferred gifts and bequest expectancies in particular. But there is also the discussion surround “reach back” gifts – something CASE frowns upon but something a great many institutions do. You want your Board on-board with these decisions.

When it comes to the establishment of a formal gift acceptance committee, I cannot think of a good reason NOT to have one. Your gift acceptance policy cannot possibly cover all situations/scenarios. And there are many times – such as with gifts of patents and intellectual property – that your gut just does not feel right about counting something at the appraised value. Leave these decisions to a committee – there is safety in numbers! When I was at Duke University this committee was appointed, by name, by the President and required to meet monthly – except when there was no new business to discuss. In December we often met weekly!

Policies can make life and decisions easier, especially when structured properly without an overly bureaucratic approval process. And gift acceptance committees can literally keep you out of jail or off the front page of the local paper. If you do not have current gift acceptance policies and a formal acceptance committee, now is the time to consider both.

For those of you needing suggestions for a gift acceptance policy, there’s an entire section dedicated to examples of these here under the Institution-Specific category:

<http://fundsvcs.org/modules/wfddownloads/>