

## **Dan Gura, University of Tampa**

Dan was quick to point out, “None of us are doing this as well as we should. It’s always the one thing that gets pushed off the table by budget and time constraint. We’ve been doing active stewardship of our major donors for less than 10 years. That’s not because it wasn’t the right thing to do back then, we just hadn’t gotten started.”

Stewardship of major donors at the University of Tampa now has a science to it – although it is one that is kept quiet by design. “Our president has been here for 16 years. He and his wife are able to host dinners in their home, they’re good at it and enjoy it. We keep these dinners small and informal. We invite 6 couples, max.”

A typical dinner party includes a recent donor (which comes across as a “thank you”), a past donor (re-cultivation), a prospect (cultivation), the President and an active volunteer or faculty member of interest to this group. Dan reminds us, “Include the spouse or significant other! People don’t make decisions at this level in isolation. The spouse should be included in all stewardship.”

The evenings begin early, allowing for 3 hours or more for the group to build attachments and commitments to the mission. The goal is to provide a social environment where everyone feels at ease, but also challenged by their peers. To safeguard the informality of the evenings, Dan and his team do not include the dinner parties in any stewardship plan seen by the donor. “This is not a promised activity; we work to avoid any implications that it is pre-planned.”

This successful model is specific to the current situation, Dan acknowledges. “If the president’s wife didn’t like to entertain, or if they had a bunch of little kids, we’d have to come up with a different scenario.”