

PACE Fundraising Testimony: 09.02.26
ND Military Gallery – ND Legislature Special Session
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PACE Fundraising is honored to stand alongside the North Dakota National Guard Foundation in leading the private fundraising effort for the North Dakota Military Gallery. We respectfully ask the Legislature, during this Special Session, to provide the time and support necessary for this campaign to continue toward a successful conclusion, especially because North Dakota remains the only state in the country without an officially designated Military Museum.

History of our Efforts – The Prospect List

To establish a credible donor prospect list, we first had to account for the Foundation's unique starting point. The North Dakota National Guard Foundation's traditional mission is family emergency relief for its members, so its donor list did not include the major-donor prospects typically associated with a multi-million-dollar capital project. Even from that modest starting point, the Foundation chose to lead.

We identified industries and corporate entities operating in North Dakota with the capacity to make six- and seven-figure gifts. Because there was no historical connection between the donor prospects and the organization leading the effort, we could not rely on one common objective assessment tool: Recency, Frequency, and Monetary Value (RFM), an industry standard used to assess donor capacity.

PACE also applied a second assessment tool, Propensity, which evaluates the likelihood that a donor prospect will make a gift based on awareness of the project, historic interactions with the project owner, participation in events, and related indicators.

Finally, we consulted with the SHSND Foundation while respecting donor confidentiality. Rather than requesting or receiving a donor list, we used publicly available donor recognition information, compared it with our identified North Dakota Military Gallery prospects, and asked SHSND to identify prospects with current active commitments so we could pursue this campaign without interfering with existing SHSND relationships.

Cultivation Efforts

We began with a roster of approximately four hundred fifty (450) donor prospects identified by name only. Our assessments resulted in approximately one hundred fifty-six (156) qualified prospects. Of these, ninety-one (91) have been actively cultivated. We are currently engaged in sixty-five donor prospect conversations with ask goals totaling seventy-five million dollars (\$75M). Of this group, eighteen (18) prospects are considering formal proposals totaling twenty-seven million eight hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$27,825,000). To date, only three (3) prospects have formally declined to give.

Although our current results have been criticized, I am proud of the work PACE Fundraising has done to establish a donor prospect roster and lead the private fundraising effort. We built this prospect list from the ground up, and we are establishing and expanding relationships for SHSND that can last for decades.

More than just Donor Prospects

PACE established the look and feel of the campaign, developed campaign imagery, wrote the script questions, and hired the firm that produced the promotional video. We also built a high-powered center-of-influence roster—individuals who can open doors to corporate and family prospects and attend proposal meetings with us. This is not a traditional campaign; it began without an established base of major donors connected to the organization leading the effort, but PACE and the North Dakota National Guard Foundation have built a credible path forward and need sufficient time to complete the work.

Campaigns are Messy

I am proud of our firm and the effort we have made. PACE solves problems. I wish the late Senator Larry Robinson were here today to speak to that record. PACE worked with Senator Robinson for fifty-one months to complete Valley City State University's first private capital campaign, filling major-gift gaps by securing seventeen (17) first-time donors to the University for a total of more than three million dollars (\$3M) and helping achieve twenty-seven million dollars (\$27M) in combined state and private support.

PACE and its predecessor, GivingPoint, are responsible in part for successful hospital campaigns in Cooperstown, Grafton, Jamestown, and Warren, Minnesota. GiGi's Playhouse—Fargo turned to PACE to rebuild its facility after a fire destroyed it. We are also proud to represent three regional Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) that are either embarking on capital projects or shifting toward more private funding.

Capital campaigns and major projects are challenging. They are rarely linear; they involve ebbs and flows, obstacles, and adjustments. The private capital campaign for the North Dakota Military Gallery has not failed and is not failing. With the time necessary to continue donor cultivation and formal proposal work, it can succeed.

Thank you.

On behalf of our client, the North Dakota National Guard Foundation, and PACE Fundraising, thank you for your consideration and for the work you will do to help this campaign succeed. A positive decision will give us the time necessary to complete the fundraising effort and help North Dakota tell the full story of its military service.