

SOME DETERMINANTS OF ALUMNI GIVING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

An Exploratory Study of Non-Giving Alumni

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ABSTRACT

Research in fund raising proposes that university alumni giving is correlated to scholastic achievement, age and income, as well as student satisfaction. Most research in this area has been conducted by analyzing alumni office data, either within or across universities, to find correlating factors to alumni giving. These studies were mainly based on readily available alumni databases and very few included non-giving alumni. This study conducted telephone interviews with non-giving alumni, trying to get more in-depth information from those alumni that have decided not to give to their alma mater. Alumni giving is a key source of income for most colleges and universities (Stutler and Calvario 1996). Alumni giving is also an important aspect in determining the reputation and quality of colleges and universities in this country. Given this importance of alumni giving to universities and faculty, it is not surprising that many researchers have explored the reasons why alumni give to their alma mater (Taylor and Martin 1995).

In this exploratory research initial results show that in this particular case student satisfaction did not correlate with giving. Over 80% of the surveyed alumni reported a positive or very positive student experience. Positive student experience was not significantly correlated with years since graduation. The main reason cited for not giving was lack of money. No correlation between major and lack of money was present. This study represented a wide cross section of alumni ranging from graduates from 1995 to 1950 with a representative regional and major distribution. Since many studies report that older alumni are significantly more likely to donate than more recent graduates (Okunade and Beri 1997), it is important to include recent and not so recent graduates. Future research is

needed to more fully explore the possibilities for universities to increase alumni participation in giving and to strengthen contacts with non-giving alumni.

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