
Original Article

What's in it for me: A qualitative look into the mindset of young alumni non-donors

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J. Travis McDearmon

is a doctoral student in the Studies of Higher Education program at the University of Kentucky. Before starting work on his PhD, Mr McDearmon worked as the Assistant Director of Annual Giving at Purdue University where he was responsible for the young alumni program.

ABSTRACT This study analyzed the open-ended responses given by young alumni during an institutional survey conducted by the annual giving office at a large, public university. For this study, 204 responses from non-donors were analyzed and coded. Several key themes were identified in the analysis, including young alumni's attitudes regarding career services, how incentives may motivate this population to make gifts and the desire for this generation to specify how their donation will be used. All of these themes were evaluated in regards to how they may increase the giving behaviors of recent graduates.

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INTRODUCTION

Julie is a 23-year-old recent college graduate from the flagship institution in her home state. In the next 5–10 years, Julie will be faced with many new experiences that will shape her future both personally and professionally. Julie will get her first job, buy a house, get married and possibly even start a family. All of

these experiences are a part of Julie's plan and life goals that she wanted for herself after finally reaching the first obstacle of graduating with her degree.

In the next 5–10 years, Julie's alma mater has its own plan for her as an alumnae. The university's development office will work diligently in making sure Julie stays connected to the institution. They will send her newsletters, volunteer opportunities, alumni club information and gift solicitations, all with the hope of cultivating her to become a lifetime donor. When receiving these requests

Correspondence: J. Travis McDearmon
University of Kentucky, 306B Complex Commons,
Lexington, KY 40506, USA
E-mail: tmcdearmon@uky.edu

and solicitations, Julie, like many of her fellow graduates, must ask themselves several important questions before deciding to become a donor: Does the institution need the additional support; will my gift make a difference in the lives of students; and like many graduates of Julie's generation, what are the personal benefits that I can receive from making a contribution?

Julie's post-graduate situation is very common among the thousands of former college and university students who graduate every year. This is also a common scenario for the institutional development offices that continuously seek new donors. Both parties in this process have their own point of views that guide their behaviors toward the other. The purpose of this study is to investigate the thoughts and feelings of young alumni in regards to university development. Using qualitative methodology, this study evaluates the open-ended responses to an institutional survey on alumni giving to uncover the mindset that recent graduates possess about making financial contributions to their alma maters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research into higher education fundraising has identified both institutional and personal factors that can affect alumni willingness to make financial gifts to their respected college or university. Institutional factors that can be either externally or internally controlled have been shown to affect alumni giving rates over the years. In a study of 195 private institutions, Gunsalus (2005) found that first year retention rates, graduation rates, the percentage of students on campus and

tuition price were all positively correlated to donor participation. Private colleges and universities are not the only types of institutions that have been researched in regards to giving. Alumni giving data from a sample of 161 institutions of all types were studied by Liu (2006) who identified several factors that affect participation rates. In this study, institutional size indicated by fulltime-equivalent (FTE) students, endowment growth per FTE and drops in state appropriations showed positive effects on giving.

One interesting development that has been found to affect alumni giving was institutional prestige. According to Liu (2006), 'being ranked highly by the US News and World Report as quartiles 1 and 2 national universities is significantly positively associated with the proportion of total private giving' (p. 132). This suggests that the quality of the institution as seen by the outside world can affect alumni willingness to make contributions. Other research conducted by Baade and Sundberg (1996) found that the quality of the school, measured by the quality of the student body and instructional spending per student positively correlates with alumni giving. Although both of these studies analyzed data from all ages of alumni, Holmes (2009) found that institutional prestige had influence on recent graduates more than older generations. This suggests that how an institution is portrayed may affect the giving potential of college and university graduates for years to come.

In regards to the personal factors related to alumni giving, many, including age (Lindahl and Winship, 1992; Bruggink and Siddiqui, 1995), involvement in the institution and



overall satisfaction with their undergraduate experience (Clotfelter, 2003; Gaier, 2005), are generalized across all generations of alumni at many different institutional types. For the sake of this study, only factors that have been found to affect recent graduates giving behaviors will be discussed.

Several key variables that both positively and negatively affect young alumni willingness to make gifts have been identified. Alumni who received student loans to finance their degrees are less likely to make contributions (Monks, 2003; Marr *et al*, 2005). According to Monks' research, those who graduate with at least US\$10 000 in student loan debt will contribute 10 percent less than other alumni. Receiving financial awards has been found to have the opposite effect on alumni giving. According to Monks (2003) and Marr *et al* (2005), alumni who received awards such as scholarships and grants are more likely to be donors after graduation.

Other research has found that young alumni who indicated they were satisfied with their undergraduate experience were more likely to be donors after graduation (Monks, 2003; McDearmon and Shirley, 2009). According to Monks, this category of alumni actually contributed 2.6 times more than those who indicated less overall satisfaction. Clotfelter (2003) described 'satisfaction with one's undergraduate experience is a mark of approval that would be expected to induce feelings of gratitude or a desire to enhance the institution's chances of future good influences' (p. 114). Factors such as contact with faculty and staff, participating in student

organizations and academic success have also been found to be positively correlated with higher levels of alumni giving (Monks, 2003; Marr *et al*, 2005; Holmes, 2009). All of this research suggests that how alumni interpret their student experience can have effects on their willingness to become donors in the future.

The current study takes a different approach when analyzing the thoughts and behaviors of young alumni. Using qualitative techniques, this study analyzes open-ended data from a previously conducted survey on alumni giving to uncover the opinions of young alumni non-donors toward making contributions to their alma maters. It is the objective of the author of this study to discover new institutional and personal factors that may influence the most recent generation of college graduates to give back.

DATA AND METHOD

Data for this study was provided by the annual giving office at a large, public, land-grant university in the Midwest region of the United States. The annual giving office conducted a survey on its young alumni population, which in this university's standards consist of all graduates who are under the age of 35 years and have graduated less than 10 years before. The survey was conducted in the spring of 2008 and asked questions regarding experiences at the university, patterns of giving, student demographics and thoughts regarding different solicitation methods. At the end of the survey, an optional open-ended question was inserted, which gave participants the opportunity to leave feedback and other opinions for

the entire university development office. Only the responses to the open-ended question were used for this study.

Overall 377 out of the 2273 survey participants left a response to the open-ended question. For the purpose of this study, only those participants who indicated in the survey that they had not made a donation to the university were used. In this survey, 1158 answered 'no' when asked if they had made a gift. Out of this group, 204 participants left a response to the open-ended question, which was the total number used for the qualitative analysis in this study.

The qualitative methodology used for this study comes from the procedures and techniques in developing a grounded theory created by Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin (1998). This particular methodology was chosen because of its insistence on theoretical positions being derived from the data and not allowing the researcher to 'begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind' (p. 12). This is especially useful in this project as the analysis was conducted on existing data and not gathered for the sole purpose of a research study.

Strauss and Corbin's (1998) research method uses multiple levels of coding in which the data are analyzed and placed into categories before analyzing further. For this study, the researcher conducted a detailed line-by-line 'microanalysis' (p. 57) of the responses to the open-ended question and placed each response into categories for further analysis. Once the initial categories were compiled, the data were analyzed again using coding and conceptualizing techniques, which allowed for more structured

categorization and the development of central themes. The themes detailed in the results section of this article are the product of this multilevel coding and categorization process which can be considered representative of the overall sentiments from the survey respondents. The overarching relationships between categories and sub-categories that were formed from the data analysis are presented in the discussion section.

RESULTS

During the analysis and coding of the responses, several themes emerged that brought insight into the thoughts and feelings of young alumni non-donors. Themes regarding career services, incentives for making gifts and the desire to give to specific areas of the institution were the most prominent throughout the analysis. Each theme represents a large portion of remarks made in the open-ended responses. In order to showcase how each theme was developed, samples of individual responses related to each theme are presented in the following sections.

Career services

The first theme to emerge from the data was participants' attitudes and feelings toward the career services received as students and as alumni. Many respondents made remarks concerning frustration with the lack of career-related assistance received from the university. This is surprising because the university used in this study has an extensive career services center that provides assistance to all students and alumni at no cost. Even with these services available, some respondents were not satisfied



including the one that made the following statement:

During my time at the university, I wish I would have had more instruction on how to successfully search and apply for employment.¹

This was a simple response but it sets up a general set of feelings toward this area of university operations. A similar respondent indicated that the university was not adequately using its resources to assist students with their careers. This respondent even went as far as comparing the institution's career services to another college:

The university would do well to focus less on alumni donations and more on job placement for graduates. My local community college had/had a better, more accessible job placement office. I have a degree from a 'world class' institution, yet have never held a job in my field of study.

Although not all responses related to career frustration made this type of comparison, it does raise the question as to whether students and alumni feel they are receiving the types of services they expect. Do today's students who enroll in larger institutions feel they are getting their money's worth in exchange for a quality education and career preparation?

Not all of the survey participants viewed the entire university as the source of career assistance. Some respondents specifically placed a level of blame for the lack of career preparation at the hands of the departments:

My department was not very helpful in bringing in potential employers or courting employers

and letting them know what the university grads can do.

This response suggests that the departments should have gone further in providing potential employers with details on the education its students are receiving. The expectation exhibited here suggests that the individual colleges and departments should bear the responsibility for student career preparation.

Respondents were not only frustrated with the career-related services received while they were students, some were generally upset with their present career situation. The following statement strongly represents this frustration:

My degree has been useless. Even though I was near the top of my class I get turned down for jobs and I am about to lose my current one because of a lack of funding.

Another respondent felt just as strongly about the relationship between their degree and possible careers:

My education from this institution has proved to be utterly worthless in helping me find a job in my state. If there were a way to sue the university to get all the money and time back that I wasted, I would do it.

These comments show that some alumni are placing the blame for current career failures on the institutions. One question that arises from these types of responses is: Do current students expect to be placed into adequate positions after they graduate? This could have impact on alumni donations as well as overall satisfaction with the university.

Some respondents who indicated a level of aggravation with their current careers or the university's career services specifically used it as a means to not be a donor. An example comes from this response:

I think I would be more apt to provide a donation to my program if I felt they were preparing students for the real world. My education was mostly based in theory instead of an actual, hands-on-type approach.

Another example comes with this response:

The problem I have with donating is that it is all you ever ask for. I never see any results from the donations. Also the university didn't help at all in finding me a job when I graduated with a diploma in political science that I was assured would have market value.

These responses suggest some individuals will not become donors specifically because of career-related aggravations. Slightly different from the last two, another respondent suggested they would withhold any donations until more career activities were integrated into their department:

Until progress is made on issues like supporting a more robust internship program geared toward students in my department exclusively and providing more diverse post-graduate opportunities like job fairs with attractive job opportunities, as well as further investment and development of graduate programs in this department,

I will not be inclined to donate money to the university.

This suggests that some alumni find career services for students so important that they will choose not to give until the issue is resolved.

All of the examples listed provide insight into one area of the university that could possibly cause this generation of alumni to withhold future donations. According to these survey responses, career preparation is something young alumni feel very strongly about and may affect their willingness to make financial contributions.

Incentives to give

Another theme that appeared throughout the analysis was the young alumni's insistence on receiving some sort of incentive to make donations to the university. These incentives could be tangible items such as a memento of appreciation or access to university services and alumni events. Other incentives suggested by the respondents were directed at how giving back to the university would enhance the value of their degree or how making gifts could positively impact their personal lives.

Some of the respondents suggested that providing university-related items in exchange for donations could encourage more giving by alumni. The following response implies that this idea may work:

University gear and items in exchange for donation levels would perhaps motivate alumni to donate. Ideas of items include sweatshirts, calendars with campus images, mugs, car 'clingy' stickers, etc.



Another respondent had a similar suggestion:

I suggest sending gifts for donations such as caps, t-shirts, or key chains. This could be encouraging.

These are simple suggestions and could possibly be a low-cost method of attracting new donors. Institutions that may use this tactic will have to determine if the giving totals from new donors outweigh the cost associated with sending these gifts.

Some of the incentives focused more on the university providing alumni access to various campus services in exchange for donations. For example, one respondent wished for services that could enhance their own career:

I would appreciate an alumnus access to the library resources and online databases. This is especially helpful for me as an academic.

Another example focused on communications:

One item that would encourage me to donate would be a permanent email account at the university allowing life-long communication with other students, alumni, professors and employers. This would enhance ties to the university which would encourage donations.

Both of these examples are interesting because they are specifically asking for alumni services that are mainly reserved for current students. This suggests that allowing access to these types of student privileges may arouse a feeling of connection to the

institution even after they have departed.

Other incentives suggested by the respondents were focused on ways to better service alumni, which could result in a greater amount of donations. The following response sums up this idea:

I think the university's alumni efforts would be more interesting if they were focused on serving the alumni rather than asking them for money every month and giving them news updates. Asking for money is very unattractive – and there is too much news out there already. Instead serve us by providing us access to an online alumni directory with full profiles, online access to the university's electronic library resources and the career center. Do that and I'm more likely to interact with the university and, if I'm kept happy, donate money.

This respondent asked for items in exchange for donations and more. Their insistence on 'serving alumni' suggests that this generation may have higher expectations from the university even after an individual graduates. Questions that arise from this type of response include: Do today's young alumni expect great benefits from their alma maters for making gifts; and how does this mindset compare to older generations of alumni?

Other respondents believe the university should do more in regards to keeping alumni connected with the institution as well as other graduates. Here is an example:

Build a strong alumni network. This will help greatly in keeping



people connected and increasing donations as more people are willing to give back. Universities can give much more than just the years of education. The alumni group is a lifelong connection.

Another respondent had a similar idea but was also frustrated as some services are only accessible by dues-paying alumni association members:

Did you realize alumni can't access the directory unless they are paying members of the Alumni Club? No offense but I feel no motivation for wanting to make any further financial contributions to the university because of it. Many alumni have lost touch with their classmates because of the lack of free access to this directory. Maybe it would foster more positive alumni relations to allow us this privilege.

Much like career services, the university used in this study has a large assortment of clubs, associations and events around the country that are designed to keep alumni connected to each other and the institution. But as the respondent indicated above, many of the services provided through these organizations are only open to alumni who pay association dues. The last response implies that the newest generation of alumni from colleges and universities may not be as open to joining and paying for alumni associations compared to those in the past.

The last incentive that was discovered throughout the analysis was more related to how giving back should somehow enhance the

individual both personally and professionally. Instead of asking for something like university items or access to services, these respondents were more interested in how making donations would positively impact their status both inside and outside of the institution. One respondent made this clear:

If you are going to ask me for money, tell me how are you going to add value to me as an alumnus?

This was one of the more boldly stated responses but it showcased the 'what's in it for me' attitude that was displayed throughout the data. Another respondent indicated how they need to see if the money spent on their degree will pay off before making the decision to donate:

Donating is something that I will do, however I still owe thousands of dollars for my education. I will need to get some of that investment back before considering sending more money to the university.

This respondent stated that they may eventually become a donor as long as their educational investment works out to their expectation. A different respondent indicated that even after having a positive experience at this institution, the 'brand name' may not be strong enough to personally assist them in the future. In this response, the alumnus compares this institution to another:

I enjoyed my time in there, though I went directly from this university to law school. The university name carries a modest



amount of weight in a field dominated by ivy league alumni. While I think the university prepared me tremendously I can't say that it was this institution versus my law school that put me where I am now. It's ambiguous whether the university name will continue helping me in the future.

Although this alumnus did not indicate whether or not he or she planned on donating, it can be implied from their statement that they do hold concerns regarding how the institution will assist them in the future. This response along with others throughout the analysis suggests that some young alumni may withhold donations if they feel the university will not assist them in future personal and professional development.

Specific areas to give

Not all the responses from this survey were related to why the young alumni respondents are choosing not to make gifts. Many of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to donate as long as they can choose where the gift will go and how it will be used. This theme, like career services, was a surprise as the university's development office does allow restrictions to be placed by the donors on any gift made to the institution. Some alumni may not be aware of this or are skeptical as to whether or not the restrictions will be honored.

Most of the responses were centered on giving to student experience-related initiatives. Many of the respondents were adamant that if they were to make gifts, they did not want it going to non-student-related projects. Here is

an example that highlights this way of thinking:

I would be inclined to give money if that donation were to go to specific special projects that affect the student experience, such as an improved student medical center, a larger recreation and fitness center, or an academic building that directly benefits students (not research facilities, administrative buildings or office buildings).

Another example of this type of response is below:

I feel that the university already receives a large number of donations from corporations and wealthy individuals. I don't think that this money is used effectively. I would donate to improving the student education experience.

Obviously, these alumni want to ensure that future students have a positive experience. That being said, it is interesting that these respondents feel many donations do not impact the students directly. One possible suggestion is the lack of education into how donations are used within the institution's budget.

Other respondents mentioned they would be likely to give if their donations would go either to their academic programs or, in some cases, student organizations. One respondent simply stated that they did not want to support the institution as a whole but just the department from where they graduated:

When I am ready to donate I will donate to my department, not the school in general.

Another respondent had a similar message but this time specified who they would give to and why:

The only places I would ever give to are athletics, student clubs and the audiology and speech sciences department because even though I did not pursue a career in that field, the professors were amazing.

Many other respondents had similar feelings toward giving only to certain areas including student organizations, research projects, scholarship opportunities and specific academic programs. Once again, not having the knowledge about how donations are used could have impacted this type of reasoning. One thing that was clear throughout this theme is that many young alumni did not see giving to the university in a general sense as a worthwhile cause for support.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the open-ended responses from an institutional survey regarding university fundraising. Using qualitative methodology as the primary means of analysis, this study investigated how one institution's young alumni population feels about making financial contributions to the university after graduation. Several key themes were identified in the analysis, including young alumni's attitudes regarding career services, how incentives may motivate this population to make gifts and the desire for this generation to specify how their donation will be used. All of these themes were evaluated in regards to how they may increase the giving behaviors of recent graduates.

The survey respondents' attitudes toward career services were one of the more interesting results found within the data. One reason for the surprise of this finding is that many of the complaints toward the lack of career preparation could have been extinguished if the individual would have visited the career services center on campus. As mentioned above, the university used in this study does possess an office on campus that is dedicated to providing career-related services. In a 2006 study, Fouad *et al* (2006) found that almost half of the students surveyed were not aware of any career services provided on campus. Even less students used the services for career counseling. Although none of the respondents in the current study indicated a lack of awareness of university career services, it does raise questions about the relationship between knowledge of student and alumni services and post-graduate giving. If students were more aware of the different types of services provided by the university, would it cause them to use the services and subsequently cause them to make donations as alumni? Further research is needed to determine if there is a link between these variables before conclusions can be drawn.

One way in which the attitudes toward career services could be examined in regards to alumni giving is its relationship with an individual's overall satisfaction with their university experience. As mentioned in the literature review, research has found positive correlations with satisfaction as a student and alumni giving (Clotfelter, 2003; Gaier, 2005). Many factors may be related to increases in satisfaction; however, one



study conducted by Gerald Hampton (1993) found that the college students' perceptions of how their education prepared them for a future career was the greatest factor in their overall evaluation of the institution. Although Hampton's study was not conducted on the most recent generation of college graduates, its application could still be relevant especially as the mindset of today's students and alumni is extremely career focused. In a study conducted by Pryor *et al* (2007), the authors found that 'getting a good job' and 'to make more money' were the top reasons students decided to attend college in the first place. These two studies suggest that today's students and alumni are highly motivated by factors related to financial prosperity and career success. The findings, along with the current study and Clotfelter and Gaier's research suggest that the level of career services provided by an institution may have an effect on alumni satisfaction with their college experience and therefore future alumni donations.

The next theme discovered throughout the analysis was the young alumni's attitudes on receiving possible incentives for donations. Receiving some sort of incentive is not a new phenomenon in fundraising. Incentives such as tax deductions for charitable contributions to many non-profit organizations as well as colleges and universities have been shown to increase donations (Feldstein and Clotfelter, 1976; Holmes, 2009). Although none of the responses from this survey indicated the desire for tax breaks, they do show that some individuals may need some sort of exchange in order to become donors. Other incentives including receiving

news updates from the institutions and being granted access to alumni events have also been shown to increase contributions (Berkshire, 2006; Sun *et al*, 2007; Laguilles, 2008). This suggests that continually providing something in exchange for donations may impact young alumnae's willingness to give.

Research related to organizations providing incentives to donors has revealed some interesting findings. A 2002 study conducted by Holmes *et al* explored the psychological reasoning behind why some individuals prefer to receive incentives in exchange for donations. The authors found that a person is more likely to contribute to a charity when they receive some sort of product for their contribution but do so as an excuse to give. The author's rationale for these results was that many individuals do not want the psychological burden associated with an ongoing relationship donations can create with a particular charity. These individuals may accept the incentive as a cover for their altruistic behavior. This research has not been replicated exclusively for giving in higher education but it does raise some interesting questions on the motivations for young alumni to receive incentives in exchange for financial gifts. Do today's college graduates desire not to be emotionally involved with their alma maters to the point of feeling obligated to provide financial support? How does this behavior compare to older generations of college and university alumni? Further research is needed to provide definite answers to these questions, which may cause fundraising professionals to rethink their strategies for this generation of potential donors.

Giving to specific areas of the university was the last theme to emerge throughout the analysis. Much like career services providing assistance to alumni, placing restrictions on how the institution can use a donation is an option available to all potential donors. Once again, a lack of knowledge of this practice could be one reason this theme appeared in the first place. Even with a lack of education into the different methods of giving, the desire to allocate their money to specific departments or causes may provide a significant glimpse into the mindset of young alumni in regards to their relationship with the overall institution.

Literature into alumni giving has virtually ignored restricted giving and focused on whether or not an individual will at all. Previous research has found that attachment to the institution itself is a strong determinant of whether an alumnus will become a donor (Diamond and Kashyap, 1997). The results from the current study suggest that the attachment may be changing from the overall institution to specific departments within each college or university. What may have caused the shift in attachment and/or loyalty from the overall institution to specific areas is the missing link that needs pursuing. One possible explanation may be the relationship between alumni giving and satisfaction with their experience as a student. This may be especially relevant as many of the survey respondents indicated their desire to enhance the student experience with their gifts. Several studies have concluded that an alumnus who expresses higher levels of satisfaction with their college or university experience is more likely to

become a donor (Clotfelter, 2003; Monks, 2003; Gaier, 2005; McDearmon and Shirley, 2009). Following these findings both Clotfelter and Gaier also found that interpersonal relationships with members of the faculty and staff were related to satisfaction and giving. This, along with the current results, suggest that the most recent generation of students and alumni may be internally relating their overall satisfaction with the institution based on their experience within the academic departments. More research is needed before a direct connection can be established, but this does show how procedures within the departments could have dramatic effects on the financial well-being of the entire institution.

The themes presented in this article are distinguishable in nature but also share some very significant relationships. One relationship that appears is how most of the issues that emerged in the responses could be resolved simply by greater marketing by the university. For example, at the institution used in this study, alumni do have access to career and other services that may be perceived as only available to current students. Alumni are also allowed to designate their gifts to specific areas of the university instead of being forced to give only to a general fund. Both of these cases along with many of the incentives sought by alumni could have been avoided by greater communication efforts by the university. One implication that can be taken from this study is that fundraising professionals and university administrators should ensure that alumni are aware of the services available to them, as well as educate



graduating students on their options toward giving. This may be a simple way of avoiding any abandonment issues young alumni may be experiencing and provide them the initiative to guide their own donations.

Another relationship that emerges from the themes in this analysis was the evidence that many young alumni do not fully understand the financial impact donations have on colleges and universities. Several survey participants indicated that alumni donations did not affect them personally, which made them reluctant to give back. This attitude among young alumni is related to their desire to see results from both donations they make as well as those made by others. Many survey respondents commented on how they wish to see results from donations either through personal incentives or evidence of each gift's impact on the institution. Development offices and other university officials could use this finding to develop methods to educate young alumni and current students about the importance of giving. Creating programs that both educate and involve students in the fundraising process has been found to be successful at some institutions (Nayman, 1993). Showing students how gifts impact them directly may affect the giving attitudes and behaviors of young alumni. More research is needed into this type of programming before any conclusions can be established.

LIMITATIONS

Throughout the analysis the author was cognizant of the limitations that could affect the outcome of the study. First, the data used for this study were collected for the purpose of one

university seeking new ways of soliciting donations from its young alumni population. These data were not collected for a thorough qualitative research analysis. Although the themes of the original survey did center around alumni giving, the question used to collect the open-ended responses did not specifically ask for the participant's attitude or reasoning for making or not making donations. Only after the data had been collected did the surveyors recognize that many respondents shared specific feelings toward giving back to the institution.

Another limitation also relates to the collection of the data and its relationship to the methodology used in the analysis. Strauss and Corbin (1998) provide examples on how the coding process can be enhanced during the actual data-gathering process. In one section of the book, the authors wrote 'doing microanalysis compels the analyst to listen closely to what the interviewees are saying and how they are saying it' (p. 65). This allows the researcher to use the tone and disposition of the interviewee as an integral part of the coding process. Although this was just a suggestion given by the authors, the current study lacks those atmospheric variables that could have affected the analysis.

CONCLUSION

It is important for both public and private institutions to possess a strong understanding of what impacts alumni of all ages to give. It is also important for these institutions to know what possible factors may cause alumni to not give back. This study provides some insights into how the most recent generation of college and university alumni feel about donating back to

their alma maters. The factors uncovered in this analysis may only be a small part of why young alumni may or may not become donors after graduation.

The results of this study can be used in many ways by both researchers who are interested in further study of alumni giving as well as fundraising professionals who are looking to secure more gifts from recent graduates. The desire for enhanced career preparation, seeking incentives in exchange for gifts and only showing interest in giving to specific areas of an institution were the major themes revealed throughout this analysis. Although those themes are significant and warrant further investigation, a deeper understanding of why young alumni share these sentiments remains the real mystery. Looking into the relationships between the listed factors raises some hard questions that need further exploration. Are colleges and universities failing in their communication efforts directed at alumni? Do young alumni not fully understand the impact that donations had on their own educational experience? Do current students feel they are not receiving the necessary services which may translate into lower satisfaction towards their institution? All these questions are serious matters that could have major impacts on the giving behaviors of today's alumni as well as the future generations.

The current study both adds to the growing body of research dedicated to alumni giving and adds new dimensions of thinking regarding recent college graduates. One overarching issue that still remains after this analysis: Do today's young

alumni expect more in return for making donations to their respected institutions? Enhanced alumni services and tangible items in exchange for gifts may only be the 'tip of the iceberg' in regards to the expectations of recent graduates. Although more research is needed to investigate this possible phenomenon, one thing that this study makes clear is that receiving donations from young alumni will be a new challenge facing colleges and universities well into the future.

NOTE

- 1 Some of the responses used in the results section were altered for grammatical errors. The actual university name was also changed.

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