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Million dollar plus donors within intercollegiate athletics: A qualitative analysis of donor motivations

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

MILLION DOLLOR PLUS DONORS WITHIN INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS: A
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF DONOR MOTIVATIONS.

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

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Division I athletics has become very big business with skyrocketing revenue from television deals, conference realignment dollars and revenue derived from third party media rights holders – not to mention gate sales, concessions and sponsorship income. The truth of today's Division I athletic landscape, however, tells a much different story of economic health as very few athletic programs actually make any money. Most operate in a deficit scenario and state funding allocated to higher education continues to decline. Fundraising and donor cultivation within intercollegiate athletics is more important than ever to help close the growing financial gap between revenues and expenses of higher education.

It is critical to understand the many varied factors that affect not only donor motivations but what unique motivations are present within this very exclusive donor segment of multi-million dollar major intercollegiate athletic donors.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the motivations of major gift donors at the \$1,000,000+ level within Division I intercollegiate athletics. Overall, seven themes of major gift donor motivations emerged from the interview data analysis: 1) history of family philanthropy, 2) thankful for the ability to give, 3) appreciation and

gratitude towards the institution, 4) lasting and sustainable giving, 5) inside knowledge of fundraising needs, 6) relationships, benefits and recognition, and finally, 7) winning and prestige.

This qualitative study sought to explore the motivational factors of \$100,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics. Based on data from participant interviews, seven themes of major gift donor motivation emerged from the data analysis. These themes provide insight into how major gift donors at the \$1,000,000+ level perceive their motivations to give to Division I intercollegiate athletics. An overview of findings revealed that many donors in this elite category have a history of philanthropy, that motivations are almost exclusively intrinsically based, that elements of sustainable giving are important and that prestige of the athletic department/institution is equally connected to winning as key motivations to make \$1,000,000+ gifts. These perceptions result in a very complicated and individualistic set of motives that in some ways, share motivational elements of smaller gift donors (alumni giving) and in others, are unique to \$1,000,000+ donors (sustainable giving needs). Specific recommendations for practice are provided for development officers, athletic directors and university presidents with the goal of understanding this elite donor segment within intercollegiate athletics which would ultimately result in increased fundraising efforts and contributions to Division I intercollegiate athletic programs.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Private giving to higher education in the form of charitable contributions continues to play an instrumental role in efforts to stabilize budgets as available state funding continues to decline. In response, higher education has turned to aggressive fundraising efforts to cope with the changing funding environment.

A good deal of attention has been given to the perceived counter-productive relationship between institutional academic fundraising and intercollegiate athletic fundraising. Research indicates that intercollegiate athletics plays an important role in the solicitation of donors to higher education overall. An exploration related to the current overview of philanthropy within the United States and higher education in general is presented, along with examining the role that intercollegiate athletics plays related to institutional fundraising efforts.

In 2010, Fulks noted that in today's economic environment, there is more of a burden on intercollegiate athletics to find ways to balance budgets. In 2009, only 14 programs in the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) generated revenues over expenses compared to 25 programs in 2008. The rising costs of coaches' salaries, facility upgrades, travel expenses and scholarship costs have pushed many Division I athletic programs into a deficit budget situation, while expenses continue to escalate. The median institutional allocation for athletic funding at the Football Bowl Series (FBS) level rose

from \$8.4 million during the 2007-2008 academic year to \$10.2 million in 2008-2009.

This sends a clear indication that institutions are committing more resources to maintain athletic programs even if revenues are no longer matching up to expenses (Brown, 2010). Intercollegiate athletic programs are challenged to find other means of revenue to sustain their current level of participation and are looking at increased fundraising dollars to address this need.

In 2003, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) commissioned a report on the financial condition of athletic departments at the nation's largest colleges and universities (NCAA, 2006). The Empirical Effects of Collegiate Athletics: An Interim Report found that athletic spending at over 100 of these institutions from 1985 to 2001 increased by an average of 4.5% annually while total educational and general spending increased only 2.7% (Litan, Orszag, and Orszag, 2003).

Quite simply, athletic-generated revenue is not keeping pace with costs. In 2006, the NCAA Expense/Revenue report warned that the "overspend and under-generate" trend is simply unsustainable especially in today's economic downturn, where outside funds are drying up (NCAA, 2006). In 2009, Mark Emmert, current president of the NCAA, noted that donations at Division I institutions are better than expected given the state of the economy, but are lagging behind where they need to be. Fundraising contributions are the second largest revenue source for Division I athletic programs, trailing only ticket sales, in economic impact to the bottom line (Fulks, 2002). Charitable contributions to intercollegiate athletics accounted for nearly five million dollars of the typical Division I athletic program's \$25 million in total revenue, and as such, is clearly a vital source of funding for intercollegiate athletic programs (McEvoy, 2005). Even in

uncertain economic times, the donor base within intercollegiate athletics continues to provide steady support in the way of charitable contributions.

Many scholars believe that the consistent increase in donor support within intercollegiate athletics is due to many motivational factors, and perhaps, constitutes a means by which people can identify with an institution and enhance the emotional ties with their alma mater (Smith, 1989). To gain a more detailed understanding of why people make charitable contributions to intercollegiate athletic programs, this research will focus on donor motives. Social identity theory, stakeholder theory, McClelland's Theory of Needs and Helping Behaviors, alumni vs. non-alumni giving, intrinsic vs. extrinsic benefits, and the success of athletic programs have all been explored in the literature as potential reasons why people give to intercollegiate athletics.

Statement of the Problem

In an effort to maintain the ever-growing financial needs of Division I intercollegiate athletic departments, finding new and expanded sources of revenue are paramount to sport administrators. State funding for higher education is drying up as is the portion of state dollars allocated to sustaining athletics. Season ticket sales, merchandising, media rights fees and sponsorship dollars can only provide a finite level of income. The greatest area of potential growth within athletics is seen at the private donor level and, in particular, the major gift donor who has the financial capacity to make a \$1,000,000+ gift to a specific institution. The purpose of this study was to investigate the behaviors and motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ intercollegiate athletic donors at the Division I level. The overarching goal of this research was to examine and understand the phenomenon of major gift athletic donors at the Division I level and how

their perceptions can provide valuable strategic planning information to development officers.

Research Questions

A substantial amount of literature exists related to the motivational factors of intercollegiate athletic donors. Social identity theory, stakeholder theory, McClelland's Theory of Needs and Helping Behaviors, donor characteristics, alumni vs. non-alumni giving, intrinsic vs. extrinsic benefits and the success of athletic programs have all been explored in the literature as potential reasons why people give to intercollegiate athletics (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Billing, Holt and Smith, 1985; Daughtrey and Stotlar, 2000; Holms, Meditz and Sommers, 2008; Shulman and Bowen, 2001; Stinson and Howard, 2010; Toma, 2003). However, the literature lacks research on major gift donors at the \$1,000,000+ level. An examination of this elite and impactful subset of intercollegiate athletic donors was achieved using a phenomenological constructivist theoretical framework methodology.

This specific methodology was chosen to highlight the many differing motivational factors and related behaviors of major donors. Crotty (2003) noted that each individual may construct specific meanings of the same phenomenon in differing ways. Participants in the study may evaluate their reasons for giving much differently than other donors who have given the same amount to intercollegiate athletics.

The following research questions were utilized:

- RQ 1 What are the motivational factors of donors making a one-time \$1,000,000+ gift to give?
- RQ 2 What role does a relationship with the athletic director, institution, president, head coach or development officers play in the decision to give?

- RQ 3 What role, if any, does being an alumni donor impact multi-million dollar donations?
- RQ 4 What are the most important donor cultivation elements/tactics utilized by intercollegiate athletic development officers?

Rationale for the Study

Through this study, I intended to explore the many unique and largely unknown characteristics of major gift athletic donors at the \$1,000,000+ level. Very little research within the sport administration/sport management literature addresses this vital donor segment. Additionally, few studies have taken a look at the complex motivational factors of donor behaviors using a qualitative approach.

The future of intercollegiate athletics may very well be in the hands of multi-million dollar private donors to help meet the escalating financial need most universities are facing. Coaching salaries will only increase, as will the need for state of the art facilities and the desire to remain competitive among other athletic programs. It is instrumental for development officers, athletics directors, university presidents and other institutional leaders to understand the motivational factors of these elite donors.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study were two-fold: 1) that only major gift athletic donor participants at the \$1,000,000+ level were studied, and 2) that only donors at the NCAA Division I institutional level were utilized.

Limitations

Limitations of the study include: 1) that individual perceptions and worldviews of each participant were fundamentally different, 2) that individual and unique motivational factors related to giving of participants were fundamentally different, 3) that participants were selected from differing institutions across the country with differing

customs, traditions and giving history, and finally, 4) that donors had differing levels of donor contributions (i.e. \$1,000,000 to perhaps \$10,000,000 individual giving).

Definition of Terms

Major gift donor – For the purpose of this specific study, a major gift donor will be defined as a donor who has made a minimum one-time gift of \$1,000,000 to intercollegiate athletics.

Athletic development officer – The role of an athletic development officer is to generate monetary gifts and revenue that directly support the mission of the intercollegiate athletic department and student-athletes participating in various intercollegiate athletic programs.

Bowl Championship Series – The Bowl Championship Series (BCS) is a five-game showcase of college football designed to ensure that the two top-rated teams in the country meet in the national championship game (www.bcsfootball.org, 2012).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature for the present study is divided into three specific sections. The first section provides an overview of philanthropy in the United States and fundraising within higher education. The literature on institutional development efforts is presented here. The second section focuses on the literature related to the fundraising relationship between higher education and intercollegiate athletics. The third and final section explores the literature on several aspects of intercollegiate athletic donor behaviors, such as athletic success and fundraising, alumni intercollegiate athletic giving, social motivational factors related to athletic giving and the correlation between benefit acquisition and intercollegiate athletic giving.

An Introduction to Philanthropy in the United States

Over the past 10 years, philanthropy in the United States has steadily increased and shows no foreseeable signs of slowing down. More than 1.4 million nonprofit organizations were registered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in 2009 (Roeger, Blackwood and Pettijohn, 2011) and the amount of giving within those nonprofit organizations has risen to \$290.89 billion in total private giving for fiscal year 2010 (Giving USA Foundation, 2011). Several major sectors of differing nonprofit organizations benefit from this philanthropic landscape to include religious, educational,

human services, arts and culture, international affairs, environment/animals, foundations and individual support initiatives.

By far, the largest contributing group to nonprofit organizations comes from individual donors, who collectively contributed \$227.41 billion in 2009 comprising 75 percent of the total giving (Giving USA Foundation, 2011). Following individual donors, foundation gifts contributed \$38.44 billion (13%), bequests at \$23.8 billion (8%), and corporate gifts at \$14.1 billion (4%). Approximately 65 percent of US households give to charity, with an average annual contribution of \$2,213 and mean of \$870 - with an astounding 98 percent of high-net-worth households giving to charity (Lyon, 2011). As a nation with an established culture of giving, there is no denying that Americans have agreed that supporting nonprofit organizations is a priority and that sustaining these worthy causes is important.

In an effort to better understand philanthropic motives, earlier research by Harvey (1990) and Schlegelmilch (1988) attempted to identify demographic, socioeconomic and psychographic variables that influence charitable giving and that differentiate donors from non-donors. The difficulty in identifying a definitive “donor” has been that donor motivation and behaviors differ greatly from individual to individual and from organization to organization. The heterogeneity of the contributing public, charitable organizations and types of gifts are among the factors contributing to these challenges (Webb, Green and Brashear, 2000).

The first empirical analysis of aggregate charitable giving appeared in the works of Taussig (1967) and Schwartz (1968) in the context of assessing the impact of a charitable tax deduction on the quantity of philanthropic contributions. Taussig and

Schwartz both examined the importance of a charitable tax deduction (which most 501c (3) organizations provide) on the occurrence and frequency of charitable giving. In later related research, the Filer Commission (Feldstein, 1975a, 1975b) concluded that charitable contributions are increased substantially by deductibility (Leslie and Ramey, 1988). Perhaps the importance placed on philanthropy in the United States is further substantiated by the tax deductible benefits received by the donor as individual altruistic donor motives are difficult to quantify.

Higher Education – The Economics of Philanthropy

Of all the philanthropic dollars raised in the United States, contributions to American colleges and universities increased 0.5 percent in 2010, reaching \$28 billion, according to results of the annual Voluntary Support of Education survey (Council for Aid to Education, 2011). Trailing only the religious sector (which captured the largest share of the total charitable contributions in 2010 with 35 percent) higher education came in second with 14 percent of the total contributions (Giving USA Foundation, 2011).

It should be noted that while \$28 billion in charitable contributions for higher education is a very large number, the disparity of dollars allocated to individual institutions is vast (supporting “the rich getting richer” effect). The top-10 academically rated institutions in the country raised \$4.25 billion (Council for Aid to Education, 2011). Charitable contributions at these 10 institutions accounted for almost 35 percent of the total charitable contributions within higher education. The need for higher education philanthropic contributions and fundraising dollars will continue to play a crucial role in the overall success of public and private institutions alike (Shapiro, 2008).

In addition to private gifts, other stakeholders who have historically contributed to higher education reported steady giving increases in certain areas and slight decreases in others. In 2010, corporate and foundation giving to higher education increased (by 2.4 percent and 2 percent, respectively), while at the same time, alumni giving decreased 0.4 percent and non-alumni personal giving declined 1.5 percent. These results, while disappointing, represent a significant improvement from 2009 which saw an 18 percent decrease in alumni giving and 18.4 percent decrease in non-alumni personal giving (Council for Aid to Education, 2011). Despite the fluctuating levels of giving related to alumni, over the past five years, alumni giving have increased by 25 percent in total (Wolverton, 2008). Of all stakeholders related to higher education philanthropy, alumni and non- alumni private giving shows the most vulnerability. Establishing a strong personal giving relationship with this donor group is perhaps one of the key elements to charitable giving stability.

Higher Education Fundraising Research

The literature related to higher education development has historically focused on two major concepts: the area of behavior, attitudes and characteristics of donors and on characteristics of the institution and their internal development programs (Azzaro, 2005). These two areas of research have provided a connection between the identification of individual donors to the unique characteristics of specific institutional development efforts. By far, the greatest area of research has focused upon higher education donor characteristics related to alumni contributions (Clotfelter, 2001; Okunade, Wunnava, and Walsh, 1994; Quigley, Bingham, and Murray, 2002; Tom and Elmer, 1994; Tsao and

Coll, 2005) along with overall donor motivational factors/characteristics (Gibbons, 1992; Leslie and Ramey, 1988).

In 1994, Okunade et al., studied the demographic profiles of 303 undergraduate alumni from a four-year institution in an effort to understand the motivational make-up of loyal contributors to higher education. Reported findings focused on three areas of significance: undergraduate alumni who also earned a graduate degree from the same institution gave significantly more, that multiple degrees from the same institution may play a significant role in commitment to the university and finally, that those donors who were involved in social organizations as a student gave more overall. In a later study, Clotfelter (2001) examined the patterns of alumni giving across several institutions and from different time periods (1951, 1976 and 1989). Higher levels of giving were associated with higher levels of income and most notably, that more than half of the total revenue generated via charitable contributions came from the most generous 1% of donors. Clotfelter concluded that income and the level of involvement comprised the two main factors that affect the decision to give and the overall giving amount.

The two previous studies looked at the characteristics of alumni giving and the predictors associated with such giving, but they do not address attitudes and perceptions of alumni donors towards institutional charitable contributions (Shapiro, 2008). Tom and Elmer (1994) were the first to examine not only donor demographics but also donor behaviors and attitudes. Of the 235 alumni who participated in the study, involvement, identification and being prepared for a future career were reported elements of increased institutional giving.

Taso and Coll (2005) identified variables of alumni intent to give and found a significant relationship between level of involvement, satisfaction with their specific program (journalism), communication and the external variable of personal income were all significant predictors of intent to give. Clotfelter (2001) noted that alumni who reported satisfaction as a student were more likely to become active donors and Quigley et al., (2002) noted that higher levels of personal communication from development acknowledgement programs led to greater levels of giving in donors with an established history of giving.

The research related to alumni giving characteristics and variables plays a major role in the higher education fundraising literature as alumni comprise a very viable and easily targeted potential donor segment. However, very little research has been conducted on the non-alumni donor segment within higher education and requires further exploration to fully understand motivations and characteristics to support strategic institutional development efforts. Gibbons (1992) and Leslie and Ramey (1988) have noted the lack of research related to general donor or the non-alumni population. Perhaps this underrepresented population is the result of convenience sampling or an assumption on the part of researchers that non-alumni do not make up a significant portion of the donor population (Hebing, 2004). This assumption appears to contradict the results collected by the Council for Aid to Education (CAE) in 2007 which reported that non-alumni make up 20.4 percent of the voluntary support to higher education (Shapiro, 2008). The findings from CAE support the need for further research of non-alumni giving characteristics.

A handful of studies have taken a look at the motivations of the non-alumni donor population. Gibbons (1992) examined 300 major non-alumni donors who gave \$100,000+ annually at two separate institutions and noted significant motivations as: overall support of the institution, tax incentives, respect for the institution and leadership, civic pride and religious considerations. As subsequent studies have proven, motivations to give greatly vary from low-level donors to high-level donors and the results from the Gibbons study are limited to major gift donors with unique motivations to give. Generalizations would be difficult to apply universally. Leslie and Ramey (1988) also looked at non-alumni donors finding a significant positive relationship between non-alumni donations and the social educational benefits provided by the institution. Prestige of being a donor and association with alumni status were not important factors with the non-alumni donor segment which is in complete contrast to reported alumni donor characteristics.

Such findings only help to solidify the need for specific and targeted development efforts within higher education that address the individualistic needs of alumni and non-alumni characteristics. Alumni status may play an important role in donor cultivation but such considerations must be made from institution to institution. A “one size fits all” approach may not prove successful as individual motivations per donor will be unique to the individual institution.

Higher Education Fundraising and Athletics

Despite the slight increases reflected in charitable contributions to higher education in the past, a 2006 federal report on funding for higher education indicates that state funding support continues to be at a 25-year-low (Federal Commission on the

Future of Higher Education, 2006) providing even greater need and emphasis on fundraising efforts to fill in the growing financial gap. Today, funding forecasts within higher education remains “bleak” and many public colleges and universities have turned to increased fundraising efforts to cope with continued declines in state funding (Stinson and Howard, 2010).

However, fundraising efforts for academics are only a part of the higher education revenue generation emphasis as fundraising for athletic programs has become an increasingly important part of the overall *institutional fundraising effort*. By 2003, athletics donations consumed 26 percent of the total institutional gifting revenue, up from 14.7 percent on average in 1998 (Fulks, 2005). The increased emphasis and need for funding by both academic and athletic programs can lead to tensions between the two groups of fundraisers and has prompted research into the complicated relationship between athletics fundraising and academic fundraising (Stinson and Howard, 2010).

In a case study of the University of Oregon, Stinson and Howard (2004) identified significant increases in private giving to athletics that were subsequently associated with significant decreases in private giving to academic programs over the same over a nine-year period and provides “strong support for the assumption that giving to athletics undermines giving to academics” (p. 136). Prior studies often referred to donor support of athletics at the expense of academics as the “crowding out effect”. Building upon their earlier research, Stinson and Howard (2008) also found that gains in athletic fundraising appeared to come at the expense of academic fundraising when studying Division I institutions falling outside of the top-tier academic ranking.

While some authors reported that athletic fundraising negatively impacts academic fundraising efforts, other authors have suggested a more symbiotic effect between increased athletic fundraising on increased academic donations. As growth in athletic charitable giving continues and the donor base expands, so does additional giving in support of other institutional programs overall. McCormick and Tinsley (1990) documented an increase in academic gifts to Clemson University that directly correlated with increases in athletic gifts – although the academic increases were smaller than the athletic increases.

Another well studied parameter of how athletic giving positively affects institutional giving links athletic success to increases in total institutional fundraising. Baade and Sundberg (1996), Grimes and Chressanthi (1994), Rhoads and Gerking (2000) and Stinson and Howard (2008) all studied the connection between the increased exposure (media coverage, alumni communications, merchandise sales, game attendance) that is associated with successful athletic teams and affects such exposure has on institutional fundraising. Increases of charitable contributions to academics were reported at institutions with successful intercollegiate athletic programs and were also reported to be successful tools for attracting new academic donors to the college in relation to winning national and conference championships (Daughtrey and Stotlar, 2000; Stinson and Howard, 2008).

One of the strongest reported connections between athletics and academic fundraising efforts stems from the dual-donor concept. Athletic donors who also make academic donations were documented as making larger total gifts to the institution over time and are retained at a much higher rate than donors who give exclusively to one or

the other. However this group represents only a third of all donors to higher education, Stinson & Howard (2004, 2008). In 2006, Bennett noted that major donors at the \$50,000+ level who make gifts to both athletics and academics give less to athletics overall than if giving a single large gift to either one if they had to choose. Simply put, making more frequent gifts to multiple programs may benefit the institution by increasing the total gift amounts as well as increasing opportunities to connect with donors - both of which may lead to higher long-term retention rates.

Because of the cross-cultivation opportunities available to both academic and athletic fundraising professionals, institutions have a very large incentive to cultivate donors from athletics to academics – and vice versa – as a natural marriage of philanthropy exists. Athletic and academic development offices can use research on donor characteristics to narrow the field of potential donors to personalize recruitment, solidify retention efforts, effectively communicate and ultimately create directed solicitation efforts to gain greater overall contribution (Shapiro, 2008).

Intercollegiate Athletics as an Institutional Fundraising Tool

One of the most visible elements, and perhaps best fundraising weapons that an institution can utilize, is through the exposure generated by their intercollegiate athletic department. On any given weekend, an institution of higher education is highlighted on national television for hours as their intercollegiate athletic teams compete. Such exposure, especially from a fundraising perspective, is instrumental to the overall development efforts of academic and athletic fundraisers alike. To better understand how intercollegiate athletics can be utilized as a strong institutional fundraising tool, Stinson

and Howard (2010) examined donor motivations within athletics and the natural cross-cultivation evolution of donor development towards long-term institutional support.

Stinson and Howard (2010) studied intercollegiate athletics as an institutional fundraising tool using qualitative methodology that identified four themes: 1) intercollegiate athletics acts as a socialization agent and “window” to the institution for both alumni and non-alumni, 2) initial support of athletics programs (and institutions) is often commercially motivated, resulting in ceiling effect on gift amounts, 3) successful cultivation can transition donors from commercial to philanthropic giving, reducing or removing ceiling effects, 4) academic units may benefit from leveraging the emotional connection generated by athletic programs to cultivate gifts. The study noted that gifts to intercollegiate athletics may be the preferred gift early in the donors giving cycle (for athletic ticket acquisition for example) but that larger academic gifts are made down the road when philanthropy plays a much larger role in their gifting decision making.

The concept of moving athletic donors to towards long-term institutional donors was also supported in the works of Gladden, Mahony and Apostolopoulou, (2005) concluding that commercial value through tickets and social access are primary motives for charitable gifts to athletic programs. Furthermore, the authors suggest that donors may initially give for commercial reasons (benefits), but may evolve into giving for philanthropic reasons. Schervish (1997) established this distinction in motives for giving as consumption philanthropy noting that athletic donations are often commercially motivated in nature (making contributions to gain access to premium tickets for instance) whereas academic donations are considered philanthropic gift opportunities by focusing on helping others.

Institutions are perhaps missing a huge opportunity by not cross-cultivating and soliciting these donors early in the gifting cycle. Stinson and Howard (2010) make an interesting observation that athletic development and university development would be better served if coordinated efforts were made between the two departments. By targeting donors who perhaps make smaller athletic gifts early on the athletic side of the house but may be developed into larger philanthropic donors to academics in the future could prove to be a very profitable use of time and talent paying long-range benefits to the institution as a whole. A fundraising structure that attracts donors to the institution through intercollegiate athletic programs only to later be cross-cultivated for philanthropic academic gifts could provide long-term financial support for the institution.

Higher education in the United States is at an important economic crossroads as the need for private donations and charitable contributions continues to rise in response to reductions in state funding and uncertain economic future. Intercollegiate athletics often thought of as a competitor to institutional fundraising efforts, can provide opportunities for cross-cultivation of donor bases as a potential catalyst to long-term academic support. Successful intercollegiate athletic programs also assist this effort by providing visibility for the institution as a whole, on regional and often national levels.

Perhaps the most important recommendation coming out of the literature speaks to the necessity of a unified development front from a global perspective in which athletic fundraisers are working in concert with university academic fundraisers. As noted by Stinson and Howard (2004, 2008), only a third of all athletic donors are also donors to academics, leaving a huge number of donors on the table to cultivate into long-term *institutional donors*. Intercollegiate athletic donors could and should be cross-cultivated

by university development so that philanthropic fundraising relationships can begin to be established early in the donor life cycle. If institutions of higher education commit to global fundraising efforts rather than academic vs. academic efforts independently, donor cultivation could be developed to support an evolutionary process of consumptive donor motivation to give towards philanthropic giving.

Intercollegiate Athletics Donor Behaviors

A substantial amount of literature exists within the sport management field related to athletic donor motivational factors. However, very few instruments have been utilized and little effort has been given to provide generalizations in these areas that would assist in the development of fundraising theory (Shapiro, 2008). The first of such instruments, developed by Billing, Holt and Smith (1985), provided a foundation of motivational giving elements using the Athletics Contributions Questionnaire (ACQUIRE). Billing, et al., established four motivational areas of donor behaviors using exploratory factor analysis: social motive, success motive, benefits motive and philanthropic motive. From this original framework, the ACQUIRE model was later expanded upon by Staurowsky, Parkhouse and Sachs (1996) to include two additional motivational elements - loyalty and image along with power (ACQUIRE II). The results showed that social opportunities, athletic success, philanthropic opportunities, benefits and power emerged as factors for motivation of athletic donors. Paired with Birch and Veroff's (1966) paradigm of human motivation, the ACQUIRE II model provided a theoretical base to the instrument (Strode, 2006).

In 1998, Verner, Hecht and Fransler created the Motivations for Athletics (MAD - 1) instrument which used differing comparison set of motives from the ACQUIRE II

model and identified 11 unique donor motivations; participating in secondary events, public recognition, giving of time and energy, access to inside information, priority treatment, philanthropy, collaboration, create, change, curiosity and power. Verner et al., (1998) used social cognitive theory to establish how the environment can shape donor motives and predict behavior of giving.

Utilizing donor behavior instruments to predict donor outcomes can help establish successful development efforts within intercollegiate athletics. Building upon the earlier models of donor behavior, Mahony, et al., (2003) developed the Donor Motivation Scale (DMS) using past factors of philanthropy, success and priority seating along with three new motives of giving behavior; escape, psychological commitment and business enhancement becoming the first study in the sport literature to examine the relationship between a donor motivational scale and actual donor behavior by examining construct effect on behavior items such as donor level, donation amount and season ticket holder status. Later, Gladden, et al., (2005) used a mixed methods approach to the DMS to further narrow donor motives which expanded the scope of donor motivational studies to include donor comparisons at three Division I institutions using open-ended questions rather than scale questions (Schaefer, 2011). The Gladden et al., study furthered the knowledge of donor behaviors by correlating previous scale models to actual reported donor motivations.

Overall, the literature within the field of sport management related to donor motives generally lacks a consistent development of instruments and notes several limitations. As Gladden, et al., (2005) argued, prior research has found relevant motives to donor behaviors, including success of the athletic program, but that Verner, et al.

(1998) neglected to include that motivational element into their study. University commitment vs. athletic department commitment (on behalf of the donor) could play an important motivational factor for donating, as could psychological commitment, but are not represented in the prior research (Mahony, Madrigal and Howard, 2000). Additional limitations include the significant differences among individual schools and individual donors along with the need for more expansive qualitative methodology to help uncover subconscious or socially desirable motivations that could not be evaluated in a scaled study.

In addition to the volume of research mentioned, a vast body of work related to donor motivations within intercollegiate athletics has been established. This work explores motives of giving related to overall athletic success of the athletic program, alumni vs. non-alumni giving, social motivational factors, and tangible/intangible benefits.

Athletic Success Equals Increased Donations

Scholars debate that athletic success, especially in relation to football and men's basketball, is directly associated with fluctuations in intercollegiate athletic giving (Daughtrey and Stotlar, 2000), whereas others report no association between winning and overall increases in fundraising (Shulman and Bowen, 2001, Covell, 2005). However, the majority of available literature substantiates a direct positive effect of winning intercollegiate athletic programs on charitable contributions (Tucker, 2004) and such effects can help to predict donor support.

Tucker (2004), examined football and basketball success and how such success related to alumni giving rates at 78 NCAA Division I institutions using 2001-2002 data.

Three measures of success were quantified: the winning percentage of games played, bowl and NCAA tournament appearances and final AP poll rankings. The findings indicated that success of the football team positively correlated with increased alumni giving. However, basketball success and increased alumni giving were found statistically insignificant. Perhaps one of the reasons for this reported difference is the increase in exposure related to Division I NCAA football in recent years. “The impact from increased television coverage of major conference football schools by ESPN, ESPN2, Time Warner, and the addition of Thursday night games, extra season games, new bowl games, conference playoff games and the BCS series” (Tucker, 2004, p. 661) have most certainly increased the level of exposure for Division I football above and beyond that which is given to men’s basketball.

In 2008, Stinson and Howard used linear mixed models to determine whether successful programs not only increased intercollegiate athletic donations, but also detract from academic giving. The results of the study indicated that successful intercollegiate athletic programs positively influence both the number of donors making gifts to an institution as well as the average dollar amount of those gifts. Winning football and men’s basketball teams have direct effects on both intercollegiate athletic and academic gifts to an institution. Rather than producing a “crowding-out effect”, athletic success appears to enhance support for both athletic and academic programs, (Stinson and Howard, 2008).

A case study of intercollegiate athletic giving at Clemson University indicated that increased winning by the football team led to increased donor support of athletic programs (McCormick and Tinsley, 1990). Winning percentages and the number of

television appearances were also identified as significant predictors of intercollegiate athletic giving at Mississippi State University (Grimes and Chressanthi, 1994). Other studies have linked appearances in, and outcomes of, post-season events (most notably football bowl games and the NCAA men's basketball tournament) to increased levels of intercollegiate athletic support and that athletic success has an immediate impact of alumni generosity (Baade and Sundberg, 1996; Humphreys and Mondello, 2007; Rhoads and Gerking, 2000). Daughtrey and Stotlar (2000) studied the winning of the Division I-AA football championship over an 11-year period beginning in 1987. The study found that the number of donors reported and the total dollars donated to intercollegiate athletics increased at each of the winning institutions.

Gaski and Etzel (1984) noted that successful athletic programs enhance a school's image which translates into increased athletic donations. Humphreys and Mondello (2007) suggested that athletic success in present day college sports appears to affect athletic donor behavior positively. Additionally, football attendance, conference affiliation, bowl participation, men's basketball winning percentages (all predictors of successful intercollegiate programs) were reported to be significant determinants of increased intercollegiate athletic contributions (McEvoy, 2005).

In 2005, the studies of Sigelman and Bookheimer (1983) and Coughlin and Erickson (1984, 1985) were replicated by McEvoy to further examine the relationship between winning athletic programs and increased intercollegiate athletic contributions. McEvoy (2005) supported the finding of the previous research and further concluded that Coughlin and Erickson's assertion that home football attendance and conference affiliation are also statistically significant predictors of annual fundraising contributions.

In contrast, other research finds that successful athletic programs *do not* correlate to higher giving rates. Frank (2004), performed a comprehensive literature review analyzing the relationship between intercollegiate athletic success and donor motivation concluding four common themes from the existing literature; 1) the studies used data drawn from a wide variety of sources – case studies from individual institutions, panel data, cross-sectional data that are not generalizable, 2) that the reported effect of athletic success and increased donations is mixed from positive, negative, to no effect, 3) the results appear sensitive to contact for unobservable heterogeneity across institutions and 4) that post-season appearances in football and men’s basketball were the only measures of success that appear to be correlated to increased donations (Frank, 2004). Research on winning programs and increased contributions within intercollegiate athletics are also disputed by Sack and Watkins (1985), Gaski and Etzel (1984), and Sigelman and Bookheimer (1983) as these studies detected no significant correlation between athletic success and increased donations.

Sigelman and Carter (1979) studied the impact of successful intercollegiate programs and the impact on alumni giving concluding that no evidence existed to support that alumni giving is responsive to changes in intercollegiate athletic success. Gaski and Etzel (1984) also found no impact on overall giving to intercollegiate athletics from alumni *or* non-alumni related to winning programs. Turner, Meserve, and Bowen (2000) stated, “more has been written about the purported ink between athletic success and alumni giving that is justified by the available empirical evidence and many have examined the question and found that they are far from conclusive.” And finally, Litan, et al (2003), claims that little research is supported that can accurately denote the increase

in giving related to athletic success and goes on to state that “athletic success only affects *some* types of donations at *some* institutions.”

Predictors of Future Giving – Donor Characteristics

Research on the determining factors and characteristics of athletic donors has been conducted which examined predictors of future giving (Ostlund and Brown, 1985), common characteristics of future athletic donors (Hammersmith, 1985), and the characteristics of athletic development programs/department structure and related impact of future donor behaviors (Isherwood, 1986).

Ostlund and Brown (1985) looked at the past giving patterns of alumni and non-alumni donors to help predict the likelihood of future giving. The results showed that a much greater percentage of alumni donors were season ticket holders, participated in groups and organizations as students, and lived in close proximity to the institution. The finding of Ostlund and Brown supported those of Shulman and Bowen (2001) which noted high involvement by donors as students as a significant predictor of future athletic giving.

In 1985, Hammersmith, developed an instrument to identify common characteristics of athletic donors finding that income level, attendance at football and men’s basketball games, attendance at post season games, purchasing season tickets, and number of years as an intercollegiate athletic contributor were significant indicators of future contribution level. These studies provided important information at athletic development personnel by identifying potential donors based on individual characteristics, demographics, and behavioral information (Shapiro, 2008) in the creation of strategic fundraising efforts.

Intercollegiate Athlete Alumni Giving

Although an abundant amount of data exists which analyses alumni giving, O'Neil and Schenke (2006) note that "less explored in this growing body of literature is an understanding of the motivations and attitudes of college athletes themselves" (p. 60). In a study of 2,711 former athletes at a Division I institution, they found that the overall giving amount (actual gifts and pledges) from athlete alumni is directly impacted by the student's experience while at the school. If the student-athlete experience was positive, then higher levels of giving were reported, and vice versa. Conversely, Shulman and Bowen (2001) and Rhoden (1997) reported that former student-athletes do not give back to their institution, even if the experience was positive, because of the perception that they have already given back via their athletic involvement as a student-athlete.

Holmes, Meditz and Sommers, (2008) analyzed 23,000 active donor alumni comprised of 7,316 former athletes and 16,025 non-athletes within the same Division III institution. Results indicated that former athlete alumni were 22 percent more likely to give to their alma mater either (athletically or institutionally) than non-athletes and that "alumni who were former athletes will respond favorably to fundraising appeals, both in their propensity to give and in their generosity, especially younger alumni who participated in a historically successful sports program" (p. 14). Future research in the area of alumni athlete giving behaviors is necessary to better understand this very valuable donor group to intercollegiate development officers.

Motivational Factors of Intercollegiate Athletics Giving

Earlier research related to social motives of intercollegiate athletic donors was analyzed using the Athletics Contributions Questionnaire Revised Edition II

(Staurowsky, Parkhouse and Sachs, 1996) and the Motivation of Athletics Donors (Verner et al., 1998) models both revealing a primary social motive for giving, defined by Staurowsky, et al., as “the social interaction that occurs for people who follow teams and attend games” (p. 270). Social motivations represent the intangible motives related to intercollegiate athletic fundraising. The studies investigated what intercollegiate-athletic donors value related to social motives, how allegiance and attachment was demonstrated to the sports program and how donors perceive the importance of winning when considering a charitable donation towards the institution’s athletic fund. The notion of why/how intercollegiate athletics fans align and attach themselves to specific properties has been the basis for scholarly research addressing this particular social motive.

Motives such as identification and emotional attachment with an institution or intercollegiate athletic program have also been established, (Spaeth and Greeley, 1970) which speaks to the most basic social motivation of belonging - fans identifying with a team or institution to feel connected and attached. Because of this connection, people with strong positive feelings toward an institution and/or athletic program are motivated to support them financially (Palmer, 1992). Feelings of identification (Smith, 1989) and empathy (Griffin, Babin, Attaway and Dardin, 1993) are also positively related with increased charitable donations to intercollegiate athletics. Covell (2004) investigated how fans/consumers demonstrate their personal attachment and allegiance to an intercollegiate athletic product, not only through financial contributions, but how the interests of the group can directly impact the management of intercollegiate athletic policy. Attachment and alignment are both very powerful intangible social motives that can help to establish strong donor identification within intercollegiate athletics.

Other studies have examined social motivations related to self-identity and the resulting correlation of charitable contributions made to intercollegiate athletic departments. The Identity Salience Model of Nonprofit Relationship Marketing Success offers a further explanation for intangible motives for giving (Arnett, German, and Hunt, 2003). Identity salience, a measure of the importance of an identity to self, has been proposed as a mediation factor between relationship-inducing factors and individual donating behavior. Ashforth and Mael, (1989) defined social identification as the self-categorization of an individual in relation to a group and can build a very strong bond between an individual donor and intercollegiate athletics - as social identity is a personally chosen descriptor of self. Sentiments of close attachment are a consistently loyal behavior and such social motivations are especially displayed as resistant, persistent and influential attitudes towards intercollegiate athletics (Funk, et al., 1999, and Mahony et al., 2003).

In 1998, Tsotsou identified seven factors that play an influential role in the overall donor decision making process when considering a contribution to an athletic department. The seven factors: values, socioeconomic status, involvement with athletics, sport experience, attendance of athletic events, emotional motivation and practical motivation comprise The Giving to Athletics Model. Using the structured equation model, statistical significance was reported when individuals were emotionally involved with specific athletic programs therefore creating a greater likelihood for them to donate. Tsotsou's model provides a theoretical foundational of why people give to intercollegiate athletics and that "fundraisers should identify people involved in sports as well as people having experience in sports as prospective athletic donors" (p.10). From

this study, Tsiaotso notes four distinct implications for intercollegiate development administrators to consider: 1) donors contribute because they identify with the institution, 2) donors trust the leadership and vision of the institution creating shared values, 3) donors feel prestige and increased self-esteem when financially contributing to successful programs, and finally, 4) donor seek tangible benefits as motives to donate such as priority seating and tax benefits, (Holiest, 2011).

Stakeholder Theory is another parameter that has been used to analyze and measure intercollegiate athletic donor behaviors stating that an organization must fundamentally understand the needs and wants of customers to succeed. Kilter and Armstrong's (1999) definition of relationship marketing makes specific reference to strong stakeholder relationships as such practice involves "creating, maintaining and enhancing strong relationships with customers equaling long-term customer satisfaction" (p. 5). Toma (2003) makes the case for stakeholder theory as well noting that intercollegiate athletics, and college football in particular, is used "in defining institutions and drawing people toward them in ways that serve the related ends – expanding resources (charitable contributions) and enhancing prestige" (p. 13).

By fostering and cultivating the stakeholders within intercollegiate athletics, research indicates that individuals will be motivated to support the institution's fundraising efforts in general (Cavell, 2005) as well as providing a platform of potential cross-cultivation for university development officers. Social motivations to give do not seem to be impacted by on-field outcomes as donor decisions are not driven by wins/losses and that they did not expect their donations to translate into more team victories. The choice to be a part of the stakeholder group is not because intercollegiate

athletic donors were attracted to a winning program nor were giving decisions made in these terms. Success is valued but not at all costs (Cavell, 2005).

Tangible Benefits & Intercollegiate Athletic Donor Motivation

Historically, one of the most visible predictors of athletic fundraising comes in the form of tangible benefits. Preferred seat locations, priority point accumulation, VIP parking, tax deductions, hospitality access, etc. have all been identified as donor motivational elements in the literature. Stinson and Howard (2004) suggested athletic success motivates donors because of a tangible exchange – success increases the demand for premium tickets and fans must contribute to the athletic department via donations to secure the most desirable seats. Studies investigating the motives of donors within intercollegiate athletics have found at least some component of tangible benefit to the donor as a main determinant of the donor's motivation. Mahony, et al., (2003) and Gladden, et al., (2005) identified priority seating for football and men's basketball as the most important tangible motive of donor consideration in making a contribution to the athletic department, overwhelming above any intangible social motive reported. In an environment of heavy competition for donors and their financial gifts, the ability for an intercollegiate athletic program to offer a valuable tangible benefit in exchange for a monetary donation may attract donors to athletics who might otherwise make an academic gift (Greenfield, 2002).

Conclusion

Despite the substantial body of literature related to athletic fundraising and donor motivational factors therein, a number of fundamental questions remain relatively unexplored and provide little insight into specific donor decision making processes and

individual motivations. Many of the assertions in the literature concerning intercollegiate athletic donor motivations center around how success on the field correlates to higher donor rates along with analyzing complicated and individualized motivational factors of donors - most of which offer contradictory findings.

The most significant gap in the existing literature related to intercollegiate athletics and the motivations of donors lies within the lack of representation of “major gift donors” at the Division I level. Examining the motivational factors within a qualitative framework of multi-million dollar intercollegiate athletic donors, who may very well be the key to future economic sustainability for many athletic departments, would provide an extremely valuable analysis for sport administrators, and particularly, athletic directors at Division I institutions across the country. Understanding the delicate and personal motivational behaviors of premier major donors would allow practitioners to implement an educated solicitation strategy tailored to reach this elite audience effectively.

Unique elements of future research related to this major donor subset could focus on the motivational factors of legacy/family gifts, “brick and mortar gifting”, naming rights gifting, exploration of the importance placed on the donor’s relationship with the university president, athletic director, head coach related to giving, and other unique motivational factors that are primarily embedded within \$1,000,000+ donors.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study was to explore and analyze the motivational factors and behaviors related to intercollegiate athletic giving among \$1,000,000+ donors. The literature does not address the motivational factors associated with this very elite donor segment nor has this group been evaluated in a qualitative manner. According to Crotty (2003) there are 4 basic elements to any research process that must be addressed. Crotty has framed each area using the following 4 questions:

- What *methods* do we propose to use?
- What *methodology* governs our choice and use of methods?
- What *theoretical perspective* lies behind the methodology in question?
- What *epistemology* informs this theoretical perspective?

For the purpose of this study, this chapter is primarily framed using the elements outlined by Crotty (2003), Epistemology, Theoretical Perspective, Methodology and Methods.

Epistemology

The epistemological stance taken in this study is constructionist whose central theme is the “meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (Crotty, 2003, p. 108). The constructionist approach was appropriate to use with this specific line of study as the motivational factors of individual donors at the elite \$1,000,000+ level certainly correlates to constructed meanings of common themes rather than definitive meanings

singularly. The constructionist view states that there are is no absolute or objective truth in the world, only the meaning constructed by individuals, based on their own interactions or experiences with the surroundings of the society that they live in (Crotty, 2003). Crotty goes on to say that “different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon” (p. 43). Individual donors construct meaning from the same shared phenomenon (of being \$1,000,000+ dollar intercollegiate athletic donor) in many differing ways, so constructing common meanings from these participants provide valuable information on the phenomenon.

The constructivist approach states that individuals develop subjective meaning of their experiences that relies heavily on participants’ views of the situation or phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, a key to the constructivist approach is to explore the implications multiple realities have on individuals’ lives as well as their interactions with others (Patton, 2002). The constructivist, interpretivist, or naturalistic research traditions that underlie the qualitative paradigm to knowledge development reflect a much greater interest in understanding than in explanation. Theory testing does not occur in this tradition through deductive processes but theory may emerge from the data by processes of induction (Brustad, 2008).

Theoretical Perspective

The stated purpose of this study followed an interpretivist approach as it “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Specifically, this study examined and explored the motivational factors, behaviors and beliefs of \$1,000,000+ donors who give to intercollegiate athletics. The challenge was to utilize appropriate research strategies that allowed participants to be

reflexive and reflective about their conscious and subconscious experiences (Smith and Schmidt, 2012). An interpretivist approach allowed for such reflection.

Methodology

The methodology that best framed this study is that of phenomenology. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce the experiences of persons with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (“a grasp of the very nature of the thing”), (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). Studying a phenomenon in its natural setting is essential because “realities are not wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of the parts” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 35). By exploring the motivational factors of major gift donors who have made a one-time gift of \$1,000,000 or more, the study aligns well with the key elements of a qualitative phenomenological research design.

Phenomenology has a strong philosophical component to it (Creswell, Hanson, Plano, and Morales, 2007) in which assumptions rest on studying peoples experiences as they are lived each day, viewing these experiences as conscious (van Manen, 1990), and arriving at a description of the essence of these experiences, not explanations or analysis (Moustakes, 1994). Through the development of the aforementioned elements, phenomenological design of this study aligns well with a constructivist approach which maintains that individuals have multiple realities (Denzin and Lincoln (2005); Lincoln and Guba, 1985) or that individuals have differing world views (Patton, 2002). People have unique experiences and the related perceptions of those experiences are unique as well.

Methods

Hartley (2004) defines the research design as the argument for the logical steps that were taken to link the research questions and issues to data collection, analysis, and interpretations in a coherent way. It is the plan of action on behalf of the researcher to implement the study. “It is the logical plan for getting here to there, where here may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and there is some set of conclusions” (Yin, 2003, p. 30). Within qualitative research, creating a definitive and detailed plan is not only difficult to accomplish, but also inappropriate to consider. Creswell (1998) noted that in a qualitative study the researcher typically plans a general approach to the study since a detailed plan would be inappropriate given the emerging issues that often develop during a field study. The methods of any study are particularly important to plan for and implement. Therefore this section describes the methods used through the following; sampling procedure and participants, procedures, data collection strategies and instruments, interviews, data analysis: constant comparative analysis, trustworthiness, and internal validity and credibility.

A purposeful sample technique is employed to select a closely defined group for whom the central phenomena of the study hold meaning and importance (Mahoney, 2011). A purposeful sample allowed for the direct selection of experience rich and specifically targeted individuals who have experienced the shared phenomenon or being a \$1,000,000+ donor to Division I intercollegiate athletics. Purposeful sampling was implemented through different strategies (Creswell, 2007) including criterion based sampling. Participants met specific criteria in order to participate in the study – all of which have been outlined above.

According to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003), “qualitative research is more flexible with respect to sampling techniques than quantitative research. This flexibility reflects the emergent nature of qualitative research design which allows researchers to modify methodologies as data is collected” (p. 177). Identifying the appropriate sample to use for a specific study is paramount as it considers the elements of observation: whom, what, when, and where. Creswell (1998) notes that for most qualitative research, non-probability sampling is the method of choice - and the most common form of non-probability sampling is called purposeful sampling.

Once institutional review board approval was attained (Appendix B), participants were purposefully selected to participate in this study based on criterion-based elements. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), the researcher establishes the necessary criteria to include in the study and then finds a sample that meets these established criteria. For this purpose, the following criteria were utilized for sample selection;

1. Must be an intercollegiate-athletic donor
2. Must be a donor at a Division I institution
3. Must have given a minimum one-time gift of \$1,000,000
4. Must be willing to participate in this study

All participants in the study remained anonymous in an effort to protect their identity and confidentially. This helps to protect not only the individual in the study, but also the academic institution, athletic department and personnel who may be acknowledged and potentially scrutinized in the study. Major \$1,000,000+ donors are an elite group and are hesitant to share personal financial behaviors, motivations and related outcomes. Moreover, donors at this level have a large amount of power within

intercollegiate athletics and it is a necessity for the participants to remain anonymous to protect all those involved. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to be used in the transcript, member check and interview. Informed consent forms were signed by each participant prior to the interview, and interview digital recordings were destroyed.

Procedures

Participants were recruited indirectly via my relationships with various athletic directors and senior development officers at Division I institutions. These athletic administrators were asked if they had a donor who; 1) fit the specific criteria, 2) were willing to participate in the study and 3) that the institution agreed to facilitate the introduction and felt comfortable enough to allow the interview to take place. Once the athletic administrator identified a qualified donor and received their initial agreement to participate, a personal phone call was placed to solidify the time, place and availability of a one-on-one interview.

Data Collection Strategy and Instruments

Data collection took place in a four-step process; personal interviews, peer examination, secondary phone interview and member checking interview. Qualitative interviews were conducted with one selected \$1,000,000+ athletic donor at seven different Division I institutions across the country. These participants were pre-selected by the athletic director or senior development officer at each institution that fit the criteria for participation.

Interviews

In line with the constructivist implications of phenomenology, this study employed qualitative interviewing as the primary source of data collection. Qualitative

methodology is essential for this study because it provides, “intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought process, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 11). This study was also supported by a phenomenological approach which focuses on exploring how individuals make sense of their experience (Patton, 2002) and for the purposes of this study, explored how \$1,000,000 dollar plus intercollegiate athletic donors are motivated to give and their perception of this experience.

Brenner (2006) noted that qualitative interviewing is utilized because it allows participants to express meaning in their own words and captures information about a participants’ reality by providing insight into how participants make meaning of their lives, experiences and cognitive processes. Often referred to open-ended questioning, qualitative interviewing provides a richer exploration of individual donor motives, psychological considerations of major gift giving, family history/traditions connecting to philanthropy and an individualistic overview of donor perceptions.

As noted, one of the most important sources of information is the interview (Yin, 2003) because it “allows us to find out things we cannot directly observe (feelings, thoughts, intentions) and allows us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 1990, p. 196). To explore the motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ athletic donors related to giving, individual, open-ended interviews were conducted with all seven participants. Interviews lasted approximately 60-90 minutes in length and were digitally recorded with the participants’ permission. Qualitative interviews were used to produce direct quotations from participants related to their experiences, knowledge, feelings and opinions (Patton, 2002). The use of open-ended questions provided an opportunity for

the participants to fully express their thoughts and perceptions without being limited to a specific response, such as presented in survey methodology (see Appendix A, p. 60).

When conducting interviews, maintaining an equitable relationship with participants is vitally important (Ortiz, 2003). Utilizing donors at various institutions across the country allowed for an equitable relation between researcher and participant. Individual donor motivations and perceptions at one institution played no direct role in the relationship to the researcher or their specific institution.

Interviews took place in person at the respective campuses of individual participants across the country and over the phone. An initial icebreaker question was asked of each participant to allow for the development of rapport (Creswell, 2009). Open-ended questions using “how” and “what” were created to encourage participants to share their perspectives in their own words (Brenner, 2006). After initial opening questions are given, specific questions were asked related their giving history the specific institution, intercollegiate athletics and the motivations, influences, behaviors that led them to donate a seven-figure gift to athletics. Immediately following each interview, a 15-20 minute “journaling” session took place to facilitate on-going reflection in the research process (Patton, 2002) in an effort to capture details and overall observations. And finally, digital-audio recordings were comprehensively transcribed.

Interviews were comprehensively transcribed and copies of individual interviews were sent electronically to each participant for review. As an initial member check, participants were then asked to verify the accuracy of their interview (Mahoney, 2011). Member checking can provide valuable information about the accuracy, completeness, fairness, and perceived validity of their data analysis by having the people described in

that analysis react to what is described and concluded” (Patton, 2002, p. 560). Once the accuracy of the transcripts was acknowledged by the participants, thematic codes, overarching themes and conceptual ordering (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) were constructed. An independent peer examiner analyzed the transcripts to make sure the themes are accurately being reflected in the participants’ voice. The peer examination was conducted by a current colleague of the researcher who has an extensive background in athletic development and donor relations. Using a peer examination adds validity to the findings because they provide an interpretation of the data separate from the researcher (Creswell, 2009). Patton (2002) further supports peer debriefing a way of triangulation analysis for those who independently analyze the same data and compare findings.

Data Analysis: Constant Comparative Method

The strength of constant comparative analysis is the reduction of data into meaningful constructs (Mahoney, 2011) that embody participants’ understandings and experiences (Ortiz, 2003) and involves interplay between the research and data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to flush out common themes. Perhaps the most impactful element of constant comparative analysis is the ability to approach a study without preconceived theories and constructs that allow themes to emerge from the data itself (Ortiz, 2003). From such analysis two thematic categories develop: constructed and emerged (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The constructed codes are created by the researcher and can be based on what the researcher expects to find based on literature on the specific topic of examination or common sense (Creswell, 2009). Emerged categories are central to this study because they develop from participants’ language, terminology, (Lincoln and

Guba) experiences, and thoughts thus allowing for an in-depth exploration of major gift donor motivational characteristics.

For the purpose of this study, data analysis was conducted through the constant comparative method. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that even though the constant comparative method was initially part of grounded theory research, it can also be utilized as a means to process qualitative data. Data analysis was conducted in a four-phase process including interviews, peer debriefing, secondary interviews and member check interviews.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the concept of validity carries different connotations than in quantitative research (Creswell, 2009) and those who conduct qualitative research are constantly being challenged to ensure that “the qualitative study is believable, accurate and right” (Creswell, 1998, p. 193). Within the academic community, considerable debate over using quantitative terminology to describe qualitative research related to validity and reliability continues. Some have supported the notion of closely mirroring and adopting quantitative concepts (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982; Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2003; Gall et al., 2003) while others argue that authors who continue to utilize positivist terminology facilitate the acceptance of qualitative research in a quantitative world (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner and Steinmetz, 1991; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Firestone, 1987). In addition to the opposing views of which terminology to use related to qualitative research, a third group has proposed that a completely different set of terminology should replace the positivist concepts altogether (Eisner, 1991; Lather, 1993; Richardson, 1990; Wolcott, 1994).

Whether or not qualitative researcher can truly be transferable and generalizable is one of the main criticism and concerns facing external validity. Schwandt (2001) defines how external validity can be attained through transferability as essentially the responsibility of the researcher to “provide readers with sufficient information so that a degree of similarity can be established and results transferred” (p. 258). Morse (1994) notes that the key to transferability is to focus on general, similar components of the study that would support findings that occur in like environmental conditions, contexts, or circumstances. Transferability of a study is the responsibility of the researcher and requires a breadth of detail involving “leaving the extent to which a study’s findings apply to other situations up to the people in those situations” (Merriam, 1998, p, 211). Reliability is achieved when future researchers can reproduce the exact procedures and then arrive at the identical findings (Yin, 2003) and ensures that the process was logical, traceable, and documented (Schwandt, 2001). However, the uniqueness of this study and the elite group of participants therein, make transferability and generalizability difficult if not impossible.

Internal Validity and Credibility

Credibility, validity, dependability and trustworthiness were attained via the researcher’s skill, competence and rigor of research (Patton, 2002). Procedures were clearly defined and the accuracy of the findings were established using established protocols of qualitative research, such as internal validity, and rich, thick descriptions of the studied phenomenon. Lincoln and Guba (1985) substituted internal validity as a term within qualitative research for credibility and addresses the issue of the inquirer providing assurances of the fit between respondent’s’ views of their life way and the inquirer’s

reconstruction and representation of the same (Choi, 2006). To help establish trustworthiness, Merriam (1998) suggests six strategies used to enhance internal validity and credibility: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory or collaborative modes of research, and researcher's bias. For the purpose of this study, four of Merriam's techniques were utilized to establish internal validity: triangulation, member checking, peer examination and researcher bias.

Triangulation

To attain triangulation, Denzin (1984) outlines four different protocols: data source triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. For the purposes of this study, methodological triangulation was used via personal interviews, member checking, secondary interviews and peer examinations.

Member Checking

Member checking is a very important part of the triangulation process as it allows and invites the participant to assist in the clarification of the researchers' interpretations. Member checking is defined as "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible", Merriam (1998). Each participant was asked to review the official transcripts approximately two weeks after the initial interview took place to approve and/or amend the transcripts accordingly.

Secondary Interviews

From the initial member check, the option of a secondary follow-up interview with each participant was presented via phone to clarify or expand upon any item(s) that garner further detail and saturation. Each participant, via member check, felt their

comments were accurately represented and therefore, secondary interviews were not necessary.

Peer Examination

Peer examination helps to establish triangulation by allowing colleagues to evaluate the findings within a study and provide feedback related to expertise or common sense. Merriam (1998) establishes peer examination as the practice of engaging colleagues to critique findings as they emerge. Peer reviews were conducted in August of 2012 by an experienced sports administrator with 15 years of development experience and a colleague of the author. A second colleague was recruited as a peer examiner but declined. The use of one peer examiner was justified due to the unique qualifications surrounding those with experience in athletic development at the Division I level (which this individual possessed) and the comfort level between the researcher and peer examiner was also a justification. Thematic findings were supported via peer examination.

Researcher Bias

By clarifying the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study, the researcher's biases can be utilized to enhance internal validity and enables the reader to better understand how the data might have been interpreted (Merriam, 1998).

My connection to intercollegiate sport began as a scholarship athlete at Southern Illinois University (tennis player). I have been an athlete my entire life and have had the opportunity to see, first hand, what participation in sport can provide a young person related to hard work, team building, integrity, learning to win with honor and to lose with

grace. My younger brother was also a scholarship athlete at SIU as a football player. Therefore, the level of gratitude my family has for what intercollegiate sport gave us is immense.

Professionally, I have had the pleasure of working in the sports industry for the past 18 years at various levels – minor league baseball, regional sport commission and currently, within Division I athletics. I am currently the Associate Athletic Director for Development at the United States Air Force Academy with direct oversight of all fundraising efforts for intercollegiate athletics. My fundraising experience along with almost two decades of sports administration development expertise provide a unique lens of established opinions related to major gift donors and their motivations to give to intercollegiate athletics.

I also have the pleasure of sitting on various committees within the Mountain West Conference and participate as a moderator at an NCAA Development Directors national convention. Additionally, my husband is the Chief Operating Officer with Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association and my brother-in-law is an Associate Commissioner with the Mountain West Conference. Sport, and in particular, intercollegiate sport, plays a very large role in my life and with it, comes established views on athletic administration, development, fundraising and donor behaviors. I have maintained and established objectivity as a researcher related to my personal views.

Rich and Thick Description

Readers should be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred by providing enough

description (Choi, 2006). The reader acts as vicarious observer in determining the transferability of the findings.

Conclusion

This study explored the specific motivational factors related to athletic giving among \$1,000,000+ donors at the Division I level. Examining the perceptions of participants within the phenomenological framework, utilizing a purposeful sample, inductive data analysis with emergent design (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) provided a foundation for the study. This study used a constructivist approach in that individuals have different worldviews and that subjective meanings are developed through their experiences (Creswell, 2009). To explore participants' perceptions on donor motivations and behaviors, qualitative interviews were conducted and analyzed using the constant comparative method. Data collection methods and instruments were discussed. A detailed overview of procedures was presented along with the protection of participants, trustworthiness and the researcher's bias.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to explore the motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ major gift donors when giving to Division I intercollegiate athletics. Specifically, I investigated the unique motivational elements that major donors have in common related to this very specific and elite donor category.

To explore these motivational factors further, interviews were conducted with seven individual \$1,000,000+ Division I intercollegiate athletic donors at various institutions across the country. The minimum donation from this donor participation base was \$1,000,000 and the highest one-time donation represented from donor participants was \$15,000,000. Participants ranged in age from the mid-40's to the mid-80's. All were married, male individual donors with the exception of one who represented a family foundation. It should be noted that none of the participants were from one of the 22 Division I intercollegiate athletic departments that made money in 2010 (Berkowitz and Upton, 2011). Interviews revealed that participant views on major gift giving to Division I intercollegiate athletes shared similar experiences and backgrounds.

This qualitative study examined the motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics in attempt to answer the following questions:

- RQ 1 What are the motivational factors of donors making a one-time \$1,000,000+ gift to give?

- RQ 2 What role does a relationship with the athletic director, institution, president, head coach or development officer(s) play in the decision to give?
- RQ 3 What role, if any, does being an alumni donor impact multi-million dollar donations?
- RQ 4 What are the most important donor cultivation elements/tactics utilized by intercollegiate athletic development officers?

Analysis of these interviews revealed commonalities of their shared experiences as major gift donors, as well as, differing experiences of those who participated in this study. In some instances, participants expressed dichotomous views. Some believed their motivation to give a major gift would *decrease* if the athletic department were assessed NCAA sanctions for cheating or if perhaps, the coach embarrassed the institution by poor public behavior while others shared that their motivation to give a major gift would *increase*.

Overall, seven themes of major gift donor motivation emerged from the interview data analysis: 1) History of family philanthropy, 2) Thankful for the ability to give, 3) Appreciation and gratitude towards the institution, 4) Lasting and sustainable giving, 5) Inside knowledge of fundraising needs, 6) Relationships, benefits and recognition, and finally, 7) Winning and prestige. All names reported in this study are pseudonyms used to protect the participants' confidentiality as were the identities of individual Division I institutions and intercollegiate athletic departments. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of participant demographics and related pseudonyms.

Table 1

Table of Participants

Pseudonym	Date of Interview	Age	Geographic Location	BCS School Y/N
Jeff	June 21, 2012	46	Mid-west	N
Mike	June 25, 2012	83	South West Region	Y
Brad	July 3, 2012	78	Mountain Region	N
Clay	July 2, 2012	54	Mountain Region	Y
Joe	July 10, 2012	74	Western Region	N
Alex	July 15, 2012	70	South East Region	Y
Bill	July 23, 2012	61	West Coast Region	Y

History of Family Philanthropy

Philanthropic Role Models

One of the most connected concepts expressed by the participants was a shared history of family philanthropy. As participants described the role models in their lives related to stewardship, charity, and overall “giving,” overwhelmingly the response was that their father was responsible for setting the foundation of philanthropy in their family. Participants also shared how important having a philanthropic role model was for them as a child and young adult. Participants noted that that they plan to pass down the concept of giving to their own children by serving as philanthropic role models themselves to the next generation. Jeff spoke about the example of philanthropy set forth by his father. “My father was a very giving man. Very generous to his institutions, to schools and he also kept a very low profile about it. I did not know until years later of his giving, but

from a personal background standpoint, I think his example was very important to me.”

Bill also had a family history of giving and shared a story about his personal multi-generational background of philanthropy:

Philanthropy, especially university philanthropy has been a big part of my upbringing going back to my grandfather. And I would say the philosophy for my grandfather; he was a democrat, and a very socially conscious person. His belief was that education should be available to everyone and the background of his giving was to support schools in our area. That was something that continued with my father and now on to me. My family has always been very supportive in that regard.

Not all participants came from families who had traditional monetary wealth to give, but many spoke of stewardship in terms of giving time and talent. Clay stated “the example of giving was set for me by my parents. They gave of their time and expertise. Even though there was not much money given, I think the primary function of giving back, giving to the community, was developed in our home.” Mike shared a similar sentiment related to non-monetary philanthropy. “My dad was my role model. He was a hard working farmer and was always very involved in the community that I grew up in. And he gave up his time and services to a number of people – a very giving man.”

Whether participants came from families of traditional monetary wealth or not, a common established theme of the father or father figure making philanthropic decisions for the family made a sustaining impression on each individual. Jeff describes the affect of witnessing his father’s philanthropy:

My mother was certainly in line with his decision making but Dad was the one who really decided where our charitable donations went. We (my wife and I) are looking at the family foundation right now and plan to have our boys involved with it because we think that it is important for them to get involved and understand the affect my father had on me. We hope it will have the same affect on them some day.

A history of family philanthropy and the example set by their father played a large role when considering future philanthropic endeavors and are strong motivations when making contributions to intercollegiate athletics.

Philanthropic Decision Making

Building upon the element of family philanthropy expressed by participants centers on the decision making dynamics between husband and wife and the involvement (or lack thereof) of their children in the decision making process. Most major gift donor participants noted that they make philanthropic decisions together as a couple. However; the participant group was split on involving their children. The older the couple, the more aware of and involved in their children became in the major donation perhaps due to inheritance issues or the maturity level of their children. Brad, a donor in his 70's, explained that "for major gifts, my wife and I always talked about it in great detail and she was so much my partner in all of the things we did. Because of the size and level of gift, our children did know and were very supportive." Joe, who is approximately the same age as Brad, shares the same sentiment about making their children aware of their charitable contributions:

Our children are all very supportive. I have been very open with my finances with my kids. A lot of people don't do that but I do. It is just something I felt we were all in together. I made my money because I had the support of my family. They provided a stable home, a loving home, which allowed me to devote my energies to my business. So I felt that they contributed to the success and therefore had the right to express opinions about how we used that success.

Adding to the complexity for participants of whether or not to include children in \$1,000,000+ philanthropic decisions are several key factors; 1) the age of the children, 2) the public nature of the gift (naming rights, anonymous), and 3) the affect such

knowledge may have on the family dynamic. Mike, the oldest participant (mid-80's) represented in the study, conveyed his concern when he noted:

My children do not know about our gift and that is by design. I guess they will find out this fall as we go through the process. We have not discussed it with them yet and honestly, I do have questions about the whole thing. I am not sure what the best way to discuss it is, but I know they will be happy.

Participants shared personal stories of their family philanthropic histories and the important role that their fathers played in setting the foundation of charity. Monetary giving, as well as non-monetary giving, was reported as being equally impactful as it relates to establishing giving within the family dynamic. Such examples proved to be a motivational factor for future giving. Participants explained how important that history of philanthropy was to them and how they plan to pass the example of philanthropy on to their own children. Major gift giving decisions were mostly made equally (five out of seven reporting) between the husband and wife among the participants of this study. Finally, participants were split on what role, if any, telling their children about a major gift came into play. The older the participant, the more inclined they were to share the gift knowledge with their families. The younger the participant, the more reluctant they were to do so.

Thankful for the Ability to Give

Unlike the majority of literature on intercollegiate athletic donor motivational elements which focus on donor benefits, personal associations with a team, wins vs. losses related to football, etc., participants in this study expressed a commonality of extreme gratitude and thankfulness for the resources and their personal ability to make

\$1,000,000+ gifts and in some cases, multi-million dollar gifts to intercollegiate athletics.

Alex states:

Well I guess I am so grateful that I am able to make this large gift and to have the money to do it. I do know that I am not going to take anything with me when I die. I do know that. And many years ago by business partner who I adored said that the only purpose of money is for your personal enjoyment. He said you just have to make sure you don't run out! Being thankful and our many blessings are major motivational factors of giving. So we are thankful to give.....but we have to be sure it (the money) does not run out!

Jeff also shared that being blessed in their ability to give was a motivation to make a major monetary contribution. "We are so much more blessed than other people. And we have somewhat of a duty to reach out and share that. I have been in the family business for 26 years and we have been very blessed in our success." Brad concurred, "The latter stage of life is the time when you give back both in terms of resources that you have and in terms of the knowledge that you've gained. And as long as I can continue to do that I am very, very grateful." Mike told a story about how delighted he and his wife were because they had resources to give something back to athletics:

My wife and I wanted to do something together and wanted to give back something that we were not able to do years ago. I think that was a big motivation for us because we were thankful to have the resources. I wanted to say that we have been successful and this gift is something we wanted to do.

Participants shared a common theme of thankfulness – to be blessed as a family, to have been successful enough professionally that they can even make a \$1,000,000+ gift to athletics, and to have the opportunity as a couple to pass their good fortune on to someone or something else.

Appreciation and Gratitude for the Institution

Of the seven participants in this study, six were alumni of the institution they made a \$1,000,000+ gift to. Of these six, all were also intercollegiate student-athletes representing football (five participants) and men's basketball (one participant). The seventh participant was not an intercollegiate athlete but his family has had a multi-generational relationship with the institution/athletic department and currently sits as a member of the Board of Regents. Participants shared many stories of how thankful they were for the opportunities afforded them as alumni and intercollegiate athletes and how such thankfulness is a motivational factor of being a major gift donor to the institution.

Experiences as a Scholarship Athlete

Mike commented about the how his personal experiences of being an intercollegiate athlete and the ability to see athletes of today benefit from his gift was the ultimate motivation to give back financially. "I wanted to give back to athletics and I always felt that I have been taking away from the school. It was the greatest thing learning about athletics from the inside and it is gratifying to see to some of those kids – passing it forward today". Brad supported this notion as well by saying:

I also have come to believe that there is no better investment than allowing people to educate themselves and improve their lot in life by furthering their education. So I have a strong interest in giving opportunities for people who want it. Scholarships are a very important element for me.

Alex explained a similar experience:

I started to be halfway successful – and I had worked hard, even seven days a week. And it just dawned upon me one day how if it were not for having the chance to be a scholarship athlete (basketball) – it opened so many doors for me. Back in the sixties, if you had a college degree, you would get an interview you - but if you did not.....you would not get a

look. I realized how much the education, the opportunity to play and the school meant to me. I have great love for the institution.

Jeff expressed a similar motivation to donate because of his experiences as an intercollegiate athlete. “Our business was starting to grow and I was thinking specifically about how did I get here? What were some of the places that played a key role in my success? Certainly the athletic experience and institution played a role.”

Life Lessons

Much in the same vein, participants reported that the life lessons learned as a student-athlete play a large role in their motivation to give back. Brad spoke of the appreciation of the life experiences gained beyond being an intercollegiate athlete:

Well I am so grateful for all that I got from the institution. You know, an unbelievable education, friends that lasted a lifetime, training in honor – which I think is crucial to any success in any area. I was not the world’s greatest athlete so I got kicked around a lot on the fields of friendly strife and played the human dummy more times than I played. So I felt that I learned a lot of lessons about getting knocked down and getting back up again....keep trying. Persistence, I think, is one of the most important characteristics anyone can have and I learned a lot of that on the football fields. So the life lessons above and beyond the education motivate me to give.

Affiliation with Institution

Building upon the theme of thankfulness and shared blessings, participants expressed a tremendous appreciation for what the institution gave to them. Appreciation was expressed in many different aspects; the athletic experiences as a scholarship athlete, the life lessons gained as a college student, friendships attained, in a few cases, meeting their future wives and the affiliations they derived from being associated with a specific university/college.

Participants noted that appreciation and gratitude are heavily rooted in passion and pride for the institution as well. Proud to be a part of the institution as a student-athlete, learn valuable life lessons and to be affiliated with something you believe in provides another motive for participants to give. Jeff explained:

The institution and athletic department were really good to me so that was number one in my thinking as far as giving back to help the organization was concerned. The intercollegiate athletic experience, especially the past relationships with teammates and what the institution stands for are big factors. I believe so much in the mission of the institution and that is a big factor in my giving motivations.

Alex further supported this by explaining “I just appreciate what the university has done for me and I want my sport teams to be successful. So that really encourages me to give. I felt an affiliation and that is a big motivation to give back.” Such gratitude manifested in their willingness to give back to the intercollegiate athletic department and was a tremendous motivational factor in becoming a major gift donor.

Lasting & Sustainable Giving Elements

Million dollar plus donors make up an elite subset of Division I athletic giving. As we have learned, a key motivational element of giving is the concept of thankfulness for having the ability to give a major gift. Presumably, donors who have the resources to give a seven-figure gift to athletics have worked extremely hard for their financial success, have lived by high standards of fiduciary responsibility and believe in long-lasting wealth management. The expectation of major gift donors would most lie in the concept that their money should be used for enduring development efforts.

To support this notion, another very prominent theme emerged during the interview phase that is that of lasting and sustainable giving. Participants explained that

major gift giving to intercollegiate athletics often comes with the desire and expectation of long-term positive effects through legacy giving, endowed scholarships, facility upgrades, and lack of debt on behalf of the institution for specific projects. Brad explained that his approach to philanthropy is rooted in a strong investment approach.

The one thing that I have always done in any philanthropic thing is take an investment approach to the donation. I want to believe that any money I give, the return on that in terms of longer term benefits to some population or society, is greater than the money I put in. I made my career and my life in investing – I have an investment approach to everything I do.

Bill is a part of a large family foundation that has historically made multi-million donations to intercollegiate athletics. His perspective provides a unique look at how a family foundation, rather than an individual donor, is motivated to make major gifts and the expectations that come along with such giving. Their approach to giving is strongly rooted in the concept of sustainable legacy giving with family naming rights attached to their gift. He explained the motivation behind making a major gift for a specific athletic building on campus because of the long-range effects.

From my perspective and my personal involvement, usually most of the gifts we make are directed towards sustained or lasting giving elements. You are giving to a building that will last for a number of years. And I think the naming piece speaks to more of the same – it is something that will be there for a while. You can show it to your kids and your kids' kids. And I think that is a very big piece of why people give because there is an implied perpetual nature to them.

Several participants communicated how the fiduciary responsibility on behalf of the institution plays a role in their motivation to give a major gift. Mike expressed his concern about an institution or athletic department going into debt in order to complete a capital project for athletics. “We were part of rebuilding the football stadium. I think the institution has done a marvelous job of raising the money and not being in debt after.

That is a big thing for fans and donors alike – not being in debt.” Such statements speak to the necessity of athletic administrators to accurately provide realistic budgets and fundraising goals when soliciting \$1,000,000+ donations and to show a track record of responsible fundraising and project management.

One of the participants shared a personal example of his decision to make a \$1,000,000+ gift to intercollegiate athletics and how such a gift would provide a sustainable and long-term memorial for his beloved wife. Brad’s major gift to intercollegiate athletics came just after his wife was diagnosed with a terminal illness and they decided together to make a multi-million dollar named gift to intercollegiate athletics for a new facility.

My wife had just been diagnosed with a terminal illness and we knew that her time was limited. We decided that we wanted to have something that had our names linked that would last longer than we did. We had met in college in 1964 and this seemed like a wonderful project to do that as well as accomplish all the other things that we were trying to do philanthropically. So a very large part of that motivation was our desire to do something together before she died.

Another participant also supports the need for long-lasting and sustainable giving but chooses to do so anonymously. Most long-term and sustainable gifts come with some sort of naming rights, dedication or public recognition. Jeff, who has made several million-dollar donations to intercollegiate athletics (anonymously) over the years states that sustainable gifting plays a role in his motivation to give but that he does not need public recognition to do so. He shares:

The really interesting piece for me is that there is no greater philanthropy as far as I am concerned than someone who gives and needs nothing for it other than the satisfaction of knowing the money is being spent well and is going to support things for many years to come.

Presumably, individual donors have worked hard to establish a certain measure of success that would allow them to make a million dollar gift(s). The donors have had to be financially responsible, and therefore, it is expected for the intercollegiate athletic institution to show the same care and planning. Because of this, lasting and sustainable giving elements of \$1,000,000+ contributions to intercollegiate athletics were reported as motivations to give.

Inside Knowledge of Fundraising Needs

As members of a very unique group of \$1,000,000+ (or in some cases, multi-million dollar) donors, participants have the chance to spend time with a head coach, athletic director, lead development officer or university president due to their donor status. Because of such access, the opportunity to attain inside knowledge of fundraising needs can often times lead to greater participation on behalf of the major donor to not only give but to help in the fundraising efforts as well. Sitting on a board of directors, booster club participation, active in the board of regents, etc., can provide a “behind the scenes look” at intercollegiate athletic fundraising needs while also allowing active participation to solicit funds by taking part in the process.

Alex is a long-time major gift donor and has supported his institution for several decades. He has enjoyed personal relationships with athletic directors as well as a legendary head football coach. He shared a story about his experience with having the inside track related to fundraising needs at his university and how that is a motivational factor of his major gift decisions.

I headed up a booster club golf outing and the president mentioned that the athletic department was in need of a new facility, in a new location because the crime rate in that area was so bad where it was currently located that they even encouraged student not to go off campus after dark.

So I went to play golf and the president asked me to play with him. I said, tell me about the facility and he did. He told me what it was going to cost and I said can he take it in two payments? So one thing led to another and I paid it all upfront.

Alex was motivated to make a major gift because of his affiliation as a leader within the athletic booster club and the chance to spend time with the president which provided one-on-one, inside information. He attained information about a fundraising need without being formally solicited by a major gifts officer from the university because he was on the inside of the fundraising process.

Some participants sit on more formalized board of directors or committees for the athletic department (perhaps beyond booster club participation) which allows for greater access to athletic information, fundraising needs and how the institution plans to solicit those necessary funds. Bill has had a seat on the board of regents at his university for several years and speaks to what that kind of access means to him.

I have had a unique opportunity to get to know a lot more than most outsiders do about the functioning of Division I athletics and the programs that offer scholarships. I have inside knowledge of the ramifications of Title IV, what the financial picture looks like and look forward to giving money that it takes to run a Division I program. And what I take away from this inside information is that it is great to be able to support student athletics.

Other participants have explained that often this concept of inside information can happen simply out of being in the “right place, at the right time”. Joe shared a story about when he was on campus watching football practice with his grandchildren.

In the middle of practice, the head coach grabbed my grandson and gave him a hug. I could not believe how thoughtful that was – in the middle of everything. Then came the thunderstorms and it was lightening so practice had to be moved indoors. We followed coach and the team indoors – that is when I became aware of the need of a new indoor practice facility.

The fact that the head football coach spent personal time with his family and allowed this specific donor to get an insider perspective on the need for a new facility, a major gift decision to be made almost instantly merely because the donor had the chance to see the needs of the program first hand.

Jeff shared that he sits on a booster club board for the athletic department which provided an inside look at the vision of long-term plans of the head coach for future fundraising needs. “I was so impressed with the head coach’s vision and his ability to articulate that vision. Being on the inside tract with the head coach was absolutely fun and exciting and is a factor of my giving.” Spending time with the head coach in a voluntary booster position provided the behind-the-scenes knowledge of fundraising efforts necessary to motivate Jeff into making a \$1,000,000+ donation.

And finally, Alex shared his experience of having inside knowledge of an intercollegiate athletic fundraising campaign and the affect it had on his capacity to donate.

I headed up the campaign to build our football team a new indoor practice facility. The cost was 15 million dollars and we ended up raising 22 million....one guy gave five million alone. So I helped and it was nice to see the other side of the fundraising equation.

Only one participant in this study was formally approached to make a major gift donation. All others made the decision to donate at the \$1,000,000+ level on their own because they had inside information on funding needs. In some cases, donors had the chance to spend time with the head football coach and university president which lead to a personal conversation about a specific project need. Participants expressed that having the opportunity to be interconnected with the athletic department, an inside perspective, was a major motivational factor in their giving decision.

Benefits, Recognition and Relationships – Motivational Elements

Benefits

In the sports administration literature outlined in chapter two, a large volume has studied the motivational effects of donor benefits and how donor recognition impacts giving. Most of this previous literature, however, has looked at alumni giving, benefit driven giving (intrinsic vs. extrinsic), seat licensing and alumni development activities. Little research has focused on the motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics. Participants in this study vary in the amount of dollars given and institutional affiliation, as they do in their experiences related to donor benefits, recognition and relationships. These examples illustrate that the majority of participants noted that 1) extrinsic benefits, in the traditional sense, mean very little to them, 2) that recognition of major gift donors is heavily tied to naming rights (a publically recognized donation vs. anonymous gift) and finally, 3) that personal relationships with athletic department leaders, coaches, staff and fellow alumni are the most important benefit related to motivational factors to make a major gift.

Benefits in the traditions sense; access to the head football coach, commemorative donor gifts, sideline access during a football game, seat on the team charter, parking passes, VIP experiences, etc., were reported to mean very little to \$1,000,000+ donors in this study. As Brad noted, “benefits are not anything that I have ever thought about and as a donor, they are of no benefit to me. It is not an expectation that I have (to receive traditional benefits) and has nothing to do with my decision to donate.” Clay supports this by sharing:

Benefits in the way of gifts are not important. My wife was given a leather portfolio for making major gift years ago. It does not make sense. And my question back to the fundraisers is how many hats can I wear, how many shirts? As for access as a benefit, I want access to the associate athletic director not the athletic director. Send me the guy who is going to ask for ten, fifteen or twenty thousand dollars....not the guy who is going to ask me for the big money.

Both Brad and Bruce articulate a commonly held theme that benefits in the traditional sense are not important motivational factors for those who participated in this study; however other benefit categories that more closely align with intrinsic benefits were noted as important.

Building upon an earlier reported theme of sustainable and long-term giving opportunities, Bill shared his view on donor benefits as motivation for giving.

Look, I think benefits are important because people are looking for some sort of longer term aspect of the gift. So rather than writing a multi-million dollar check to the annual fund, most people are looking to have a gift that is going to sustain beyond their giving period.

The benefit comes from the sustainability aspect of the major gift giving intrinsically based in knowing that the gifted dollars will outlast, by many, many years, any benefit received today.

Joe shared that the biggest benefit of being an anonymous \$1,000,000+ major gift donor to intercollegiate athletics is knowing that he has the ability to provide without any recognition needed. He is proud of his altruistic view of giving. "I think the major benefit of being a large donor is in knowing that I helped provide something that was needed. I derive the most pleasure in knowing that I participated in providing a facility for a program I believe in."

Brad shared a story about the intrinsic benefits he derived from seeing the project in which he was the lead donor, be completed in a professional manner and in the fashion that would have made his wife proud.

The most fulfilling part for me was just seeing the structure (indoor practice facility) come up. And it seemed like because of the tragedy of my wife's situation everybody associated with it worked very constructively and effectively together to get the project done on time, on budget and create a wonderful facility. So I was incredibly gratified with the way the construction company, athletic department and the university came together to do a hell of a job.

Even though several study participants noted that the most fulfilling, motivational elements of being a major gift donor are derived from intrinsic factors, one participant who has had the unique opportunity to sit on both sides of the fundraising desk – making donations and soliciting funds – noted that athletic administrations should not overlook the power of traditional benefits if used strategically. Bill spoke of the powerful motivational factors associated with access.

The athletic department offers their top donors a chance to travel on the team charter. The ability to go and see something that I never had a chance to do – that is pretty unique. I really look forward to doing that every year – or even the chance to have a sideline pass before the game. I think there is a certain aura of mystique around a Division I athletic program. It is pretty cool to see it and provides very unique opportunities afforded to major donors. I definitely think people enjoy that.....and they write checks for that as well.

Recognition

Recognition played a key role for half of the participants in this study as a motivational factor of giving. About half of the donors chose to remain anonymous and the other half made public gifts that resulted in naming rights on facilities. Mike shared a story about the struggle he and his wife had to remain anonymous in their \$2 million gift or to allow public recognition from the university. Their gift was made this past spring

and so the upcoming football season will be the first time they will be publically recognized as a major donor to intercollegiate athletics.

In the beginning we were not going to have our names on the gift. But the more I found out about it and the other people who were also doing it, we decided to go ahead and have our names attached to it. But I don't know which is best. I don't know if it is better to stay away from it or go forward with letting everyone know. We had mixed emotions about going public and be so forthright about our gift.

On the flip side, Clay and his wife have decided years ago to keep their major gifts to athletics private and anonymous for them personally, however they have made major gifts in the names of other family members.

We give anonymously – the more you put your name out there the more people call you. We have learned that if we are not quiet about our giving, we are uncomfortable. We never want our names anywhere; however we have donated in her father's name as a memorial. So to us it is not important.

Alex shared that he also finds it uncomfortable with public recognition related to his athletic giving. "Most everything, gift wise, that we do we try to do quietly. I want to give because I do...and not for my name on it. I mean I don't like people knowing and I have not told many people that I am a major donor or that I have the capacity to give."

Another interesting point when speaking about donor recognition came from Joe who said that donors who can make \$1,000,000+ gifts are already recognized (in some away) in other areas of their lives and thus, not an important motivational factor when giving to intercollegiate athletics. "Everybody that can make a major donation – they have had recognition. They have most likely been successful all of their lives and have all the (recognition) they need."

Relationships

When asked to describe motivational factors to giving related to benefits, it became evident that each participant values relationships (with the institution, fellow alumni, staff, coach, etc.) well above traditional benefits and see it is an impactful motivation to give. Clay explained that “relationships have a lot to do with who you give to and the people you give to. That has always been a major driving force in our motivation to give.” When describing how important the benefit of relationships and associations are to his giving decisions, Joe told the following story:

Our decision to give is mainly about people. My lifelong friends or closest friends are still the fellows I went to school with, I played football with. I think it ties back to the institution and comes from the ties to the people you associated with. The merging of those relationships in many cases came through the training and experience that was so difficult. Friends and associations are the motivations.

Other participants also expressed that one the greatest benefit of being a \$1,000,000+ donor to intercollegiate athletics is the opportunity to build relationships with people whom you admire. Jeff noted, “The greatest benefit is getting closer to people within the athletic development department and the coaching staff. To me that is the greatest motivator. Have access to the athletic director of a regular basis is not important. My relationship with the coach is.” Participants felt that having a personal relationship with someone on the athletic staff is a great benefit associated with major gift giving and also provides a foundation for future giving.

However, relationships can be quite tricky especially when the expectations of major gift donors are concerned. If a special request was not handled properly or if the donor does not feel respected in some way, then the relationship between donor and institution may greatly suffer. Even if the request was handled by a junior member of the

ticket office or perhaps administrative assistant answering the phone, the relationship can take a negative turn. Clay shared a story where his relationship with the athletic department was tested because someone failed to pay attention to detail and respond in an appropriate manner.

There have been two occasions recently that have soured me. The athletic department has told me no twice related to a ticket purchase request for men's basketball. I had requested a handful of tickets....tickets that I would pay for of course, and was told they were not available because the university president and athletic director were using the schools allotment. I was then told to go online and try to find tickets on my own. Here is the disaster for the athletic department. I see the president and athletic director sitting in the seats with at least 10 to 15 open seats around them.

Major donors at the \$1,000,000+ level who participated in this study noted that traditional forms of benefits (e.g., VIP access, parking, premium seating) were not motivational factors of major gift giving. Most reported that the intrinsic benefits associated with having the ability to give and providing something that was needed were greater motivational factors. Related to recognition, participants were split on the level of motivation that played in their decision making as half were anonymous donors and the other half had naming rights associated with their gift. The difference of public vs. non-public giving played a large role in whether or not the donor was motivated by recognition. And finally, personal relationships with someone in the athletic department, head coach or fellow alumni, played a major role in the participants' motivation to give to intercollegiate athletics.

Winning & Prestige

One of the most well researched areas of donor motivation relates to the element of winning. A successful athletic team will bring in more development dollars than a team that is struggling. Alumni will be more inclined to give and the university

community will support the winning team. Almost overwhelmingly, the participants agreed that they are more inclined to support a winning athletic program than a losing program. But interestingly, the participants also noted that prestige factors (reputation of the institution, athletic department, Athletic Director, etc.) outweighs the wins and losses.

Mike explained his motivation to give to a winning program. “Winning is very important and I think that the older you get the important it gets. It is gratifying to rub shoulders with success.” Jeff concurs noting that “winning is important because at the end of the day, pride comes into play - pride in the fact that I attended the institution and also being associated with a winner.” Joe provides an even greater explanation of his motivation to give a major gift and how that related to wins and losses:

Winning, I think, is really important. Just the whole thing. I think it is always important that you be associated with a successful endeavor not matter where it is in life. And you need to be successful and I believe it is really important that you not only win but the people you associate with are winners and who also want to be associated with winners.

Participants also shared that even though winning is important, competitiveness is equally important. If being associated with and supporting a winning athletic program is not the number one reason for make a major gift donation, participants rated winning and/or athletic competitiveness at the top of their lists. Bill shared that winning is an important element to his giving motivations but not the most important. Pride and affiliation also come into play.

Winning is important but I don’t necessarily put it in the top two or three areas of importance. People don’t go to Division I sporting events to lose. Ticket sales will tell you that right? I don’t think winning is the most important. You have pride in a program and being able to say you are proud to be affiliated with a specific school is more important than winning.

Clay also explained that winning is not the most important motivational factor in his decision to give, that competitiveness is. “I don’t care if we win a game, I just want to be competitive and want it to be enjoyable. Competitive, respectful, good sportsmanship. absolutely. But the win-loss record is not important.” Alex also feels that the need for a Division I institution to be athletically competitive is a major motivational factor to major gift donors.

I just want us to be competitive and that motivates you because you can immediately help the program. Will it put us at a competitive disadvantage if we don’t have an indoor practice facility? You love your school and want to give and it motivates if there is a direct need.

Participants shared that various levels of success are important, ranging from very important to support a winning athletic program to moderately important to support a competitive program. However, participants also shared that in close relation to wins and losses is the concept of institutional prestige. Perhaps one is the product of another – winning will elevate institutional prestige. Many commented that even if their team were successful, the prestige factor is even a greater influence of giving not only on current donations but in their willingness to donate in the future. Participants were asked to comment on how they would react as a major gift donor to intercollegiate athletics if their school were hit with NCAA sanctions for illegal activity or if their head football coach embarrassed the program with off-field improprieties.

Bill explained that “certainly such behavior will influence my willingness to support athletics or the school for that matter because there are things that can be done outside of athletics – reputation is the most important.” Of all the participants in the study, Bill’s gift are perhaps the most publically visible as his family name has long been associated with a major athletic facility on campus. He provides the following story of

how the loss of institutional and athletic prestige would affect his donor status and willingness to give in the future.

If the issue severely tarnished my family name or legacy – that would be a very bad thing. And if the incident went in a negative manner I would expect the school to be taking the appropriate steps. If they did not and showed institutional unwillingness to deal with the issue, I think it would affect my willingness to donate in the future. I work for a living so the same standards that are applied to me in the work place I expect them to live up to in the athletic department.

Clay also explained how his future donations would be affected by loss of institutional and athletic prestige. “First of all, what has that athletic department done? Have we made changes? Have we brought someone in that I can be comfortable with to do the right thing? I would expect action.” Participants shared a common theme related to prestige and how the athletic administration would handle a negative situation. Joe shared that “most definitely if our university leadership handled a situation poorly and tarnished our reputation by doing the wrong thing, any future donations from me would suffer.” And connecting the wins/losses and prestige factors, Brad explained that he “would hate to see our school in a situation where we would be embarrassed. Prestige is more important than the win-loss record and it would negatively affect current and future donations.”

In contrast to the other participants, one interviewee shared a very unique view related to prestige. When asked to expand upon his thoughts as to how prestige plays a role in his motivation to give, even if the athletic department was embarrassed on a national level, Alex shared a very interesting story:

Even if it got bad, it is still my school. I would be really unhappy about it but it would not affect my giving. It would probably make me give more because that is my school and I want it to be successful. So it would be worth more to me to rebuild the prestige and honor of the athletic program by giving.

Perhaps Bill explained it best, that major gift donors are motivated to give because they like to support the overall success of the team and appreciate the association they derive from being a part of a prestigious athletic program.

I think athletics is one where people do enjoy and are motivated to give to sports because they like their team. When I think about giving, it is two things, 1) writing a check to support your team makes you fulfilled and 2) you are supporting the success of your team (wins) from which you derive enjoyment.

This section discussed participants' views on successful athletic programs and how winning programs are strong motivational elements related to major gift donors. Most participants noted that they have given and will plan to give future major gifts to winning athletic programs and that overwhelmingly, winning is important. Even if winning was not rated by participants as the number one reason for giving, being institutionally competitive was a key factor. Participants were also asked to elaborate on the prestige factors of their athletic programs and how future giving would be impacted if something negative were to occur that might tarnish that prestige. Most noted that their future giving would be impacted especially if the athletic department administration did not handle the situation in an appropriate manner. One notable comment was shared in which the donor said they would be inclined to give more to the athletic department if embarrassed on a national level or hit with NCAA sanctions. He felt his dollars were more important than ever to help the athletic program move past a tough period and that his institutional pride motivated him to give even more.

Discussion

Although central themes were presented earlier, it is also important to present a finding base on the research questions. To explore the motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics, this qualitative study sought to answer the following research questions:

- RQ 1 What are the motivational factors of donors making a one-time \$1,000,000+ gift to give?
- RQ 2 What role does a relationship with the athletic director, institution, president, head coach or development officers play in the decision to give?
- RQ 3 What role, if any, does being an alumni donor impact multi-million dollar donations?
- RQ 4 What are the most important donor cultivation elements/tactics utilized by intercollegiate athletic development officers?

Very little is known about the specific motivational factors of such an elite donor segment as those in the \$1,000,000+ gift category. This donor segment has been greatly underrepresented in the literature and very little is known about their motives to give as traditional models of donor motives and behaviors could not be applied to such a unique group of donors where access is limited. The impetus for this study was to explore the motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics. Findings from this study revealed that participants share many consistent motivational elements. To further explore these motivational factors, a detailed comparison of previous works in relation to the findings of this study will be presented.

What are the motivational factors of donors making a one-time \$1,000,000+ gift to give?

When asked to expand upon their own personal motivational factors when making seven-figure donations to intercollegiate athletics at the Division I level, participants

provided a variety of factors and donor behaviors. Findings from this study revealed that major gift donors perceive their reasons for giving to be fundamentally rooted in their social identity and the level of success they have attained which allows them to make such a large gift in the first place.

Participants' stories and experiences indicate that a foundation of giving within their families was established at an early age. Philanthropy in general was a very big motivational element expressed by participants and is viewed as the foundation by which their intercollegiate athletic giving was based upon. The seminal work of Billing, et al., (1985) titled the Athletics Contributions Questionnaire (ACQUIRE) established four areas of donor behaviors. Social motive, success motive, benefits motive and philanthropic motive of giving were the four established areas of donor behaviors. While most participants would fall into the ACQUIRE model on the surface, it does not take into consideration the motivational factors behind each category nor how they relate to the end result of giving.

When discussing their history of giving and role models related to philanthropy, participants went into great detail about how their individual environments played a role in shaping their donor motivations. The parental father figure, in almost every case, set the tone for what philanthropy, charity and giving should look like. Verner et al., (1998) used social cognitive theory to establish how the environment can shape donor motives and predict behavior of giving. They contend that social cognitive roles within an established environment can be great predictors of future giving. The participants in this study reported an established environment of philanthropy and such giving behaviors witnessed in the household, helped to shape their personal philanthropic philosophy.

Participants grew up with a family structure of giving – either monetary or non-monetary – and resulted in a lifetime of motivations to give when they had the resources to do so themselves.

Participants shared that one of the strongest motivational factors related to \$1,000,000+ giving was simply being thankful for the ability to give. Most commented that their major gift donation was a direct reflection of the success they had attained in their respective businesses and they expressed true joy in the ability to write a seven-figure check. This is an interconnected motivational element to philanthropic role models, in that participants were raised with the understanding that it important to give back time, talent or treasure when possible and to share blessings with those less fortunate. Having this foundation of philanthropy is a common thread with all participants because the expectation of giving was set early in life and the thankfulness in the ability to do so is rooted in the fact that they could do so much. One participant shared that when he and his wife first got married, many times they would only have \$4.00 in their checking account after paying the bills and they are now worth \$40 million dollars. They are delighted that they have the resources to give a \$1,000,000+ to their favorite intercollegiate athletic program and another \$3,000,000 to their church. They established success and are thrilled to share it.

When discussing their personal appreciation and gratitude towards a specific institution, participants were motivated to give back as a tribute to the education that was given, opportunity to play as an intercollegiate athlete and were thankful that other donors before them contributed so that they could participate. Participants spoke of how appreciative they were of the life lessons they gained as an athletes, lifelong friendships

that were formed and in two cases, it was where they met their future wives. Such social motivations to give are not only difficult to define but are even harder to quantify.

Spaeth and Greeley (1970) defined social motivations as intangible benefits for giving with strong identification and emotional attachment elements. Participants in the study shared many stories about how being identified with a specific athletic program provides them with a sense of attachment ultimately resulting in motivations to donate back to that institution.

As noted earlier, most of the participants in this study were not only alumni, but intercollegiate student-athletes as well. Individual affiliations with their alma mater and athletic program provided a very strong foundation of social identification. Ashforth and Mael (1989) defined social identification as the self-categorization of an individual in relation to a group and note that such identification can build a very strong bond between an individual donor and intercollegiate athletics. Participants shared that a motivation to give back to their institution was due to the fact that they really enjoyed the experience of being a student athlete and wanted to provide the opportunity to participate at the Division I level to others. Being a scholarship athlete meant something to them; they identified with a specific group (football in most cases) and took pride in that social identification.

When discussing other key motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ donors to give to intercollegiate athletics, the success of the athletic program proved to be a very common theme among participants. The majority of available literature substantiates a direct positive effect of winning intercollegiate programs on charitable contributions (Daughtrey and Stotlar, 2000, Tucker, 2004). The responses shared by the participants in

this study support earlier studies that successful athletic programs do have a positive effect of charitable contributions. Participants, in almost every case, noted that they enjoy being associated with a winning program and their \$1,000,000 (or more) gift plays a role in that success. Even if winning was not rated by a participant as being the number one reason for giving, being competitive was. Some could argue that winning and being competitive could be viewed as the same thing. One participant mentioned that he gave \$2,000,000 to the football program because the school was moving to a new, more competitive conference and wanted to make sure the program would succeed.

In very close relation to athletic success and winning, the image and prestige of the institution were reported by participants as key elements to the motivations to give. A successful football program, for instance, elevates the prestige of the institution as a whole with various national televised games, bowl appearances, etc. that shine a spotlight on the entire school. Gaski and Etzel (1984), Humphreys and Mondello (2007), McEvoy (2005) noted that successful athletic programs enhance a school's image which translates into increased athletic donations. Participants shared that the image of the athletic program and academic institution do play a large role in their motivation and ultimate decision to make a seven figure gift to athletics.

What role does a relationship with the athletic director, institution, president, head coach or development officers play in the decision to give?

As a \$1,000,000+ donor to intercollegiate athletics, most participants shared that they do appreciate the relationships they have developed with the university president, athletic director, head coach or development officer, etc. and consider it a wonderful benefit, but it is not a motivational factor of making a major gift. Participants spoke at length about the personal relationships that naturally occur between a major gift donor

and members of the athletic department or institutional staff. Friendships were formed and special accesses were granted to major gift donors that make them feel a part of the athletic family.

Motivations to give were reported as coming from “inside knowledge” of fundraising needs by affiliations with a booster club organization, sitting on a board of directors or even a more formal role as a member of the board of regents. A participant noted that a conversation with the university president on the golf course resulted in a donation for a new indoor practice facility, or another sharing that because he came to practice and witnessed adverse weather that he then decided to make a donation for a new facility. These relationships and friendships were viewed as valuable to the participants but ultimately, the decision to make a million dollar or in some cases, multi-million dollar gifts were not significant motivational factors.

What role, if any, does being an alumni donor impact multi-million dollar donation?

Overall, participants explained that being an alum plays a very large role in their motivations to give to a specific athletic department – especially if they were student athletes as well. Each shared that their experiences as a student athlete while at a specific institution was extremely positive and the gratitude they have for the experience plays a large role in their motivation to give. O’Neil and Schenke (2006) found that giving amounts from athlete alumni is directly impacted by the student’s experience while at school.

When examining alumni donor motivations, participants shared their motivations to give also in relation to winning and how their personal philanthropy falls also support academics. Participants shared that supporting winning athletic programs was important

to them as an alumni donor, but were quick to explain that their philanthropy was not limited to athletics. Stinson and Howard (2008) noted that winning football and men's basketball teams have a direct effect on both intercollegiate athletic and academic giving. Rather than producing a "crowding-out effect" athletic success appears to enhance support for both athletic and academic programs. Participants reported that institutional support and pride for them is not limited in any way. One participant shared that his desire in making any major gift is that an underserved population has the opportunity to grow and succeed. That could be in the form of an endowed athletic scholarship or gift to the business school.

As noted earlier, six out of the seven participants are alumni donors. Previous research has stated that little has been found that can accurately denote that successful intercollegiate programs positively impact alumni giving (Sigelman and Carter, 1979, Gaski and Etzel, 1984, Turner et al., 2000, Litan et al., 2003). Each of the six participants who have given a \$1,000,000+ donation to their athletic departments noted that an important motivational factor for them to give was for the athletic programs to remain competitive and to win games. The pride, affiliation, social motives, intrinsic motives and identity derived by participants who attach themselves to successful programs should not be overlooked as a key motivation of major gift giving.

What are the most important donor cultivation elements/tactics utilized by intercollegiate athletic development officers?

When asked to discuss the best practices utilized by athletic development officers to secure a major \$1,000,000+ donor contribution, participants commented on elements of professionalism, hiring capable staff members, attention to detail, trustworthiness and willingness to go above and beyond as being key characteristics of development officers.

However, it should be noted, that the majority of donors who participated in this study shared that they were not formally approached by a major gift development officer with a formal ask. Most came to the giving decision on their own by having inside access to fundraising needs.

Several times during each interview, participants would make comments as to the level of service they receive as major gift donors that help to shed some light on what this donor segment is looking for in the way of fulfillment and communication from athletic department staff. The most consistently commented upon element was that of hiring appropriate staff members to make sure they are representing the athletic department in a professional manner, who pay attention to detail, are trustworthy and are committed to serving major gift donors in any capacity. One participant commented that he prefers to have a personal relationship with the development officer because they have more time on their hands to assist with anything they might need - more time than the athletic director does.

As the participants in this study shared their reasons for giving, it became clear that understanding the motivational needs of \$1,000,000+ donors is paramount to the success of athletic development administrators at all levels. In 1998, Tsiotsou developed the Giving to Athletics Model which established four distinct areas of donor development for athletic administrators to consider: 1) donors contribute because they identify with the institution, 2) donors trust the leadership and vision of the institution creating shared values, 3) donors feel prestige and increased self-esteem when financially contributing to successful programs and 4) donors seek tangible benefits as motives to donate such as priority seating (Holiest, 2011). Participants shared that they all have a strong identity

with a specific athletic department and that identification is key motivational element of giving, the vision and shared values of the institution, athletic department, and head coach motivates major gift giving and finally, that prestige derived from supporting a winning program motivates giving as well. Only the fourth element of seeking tangible benefits does not fit the findings of \$1,000,000+ intercollegiate athletic donors who participated in this study.

Conclusion

This qualitative study sought to explore the motivational factors of million dollar plus donors to intercollegiate athletics. Based on data from participant interviews, seven themes of major gift donor motivation emerged from the data analysis: 1) History of family philanthropy, 2) Thankful for the ability to give, 3) Appreciation and gratitude towards the institution, 4) Lasting and sustainable giving, 5) Inside knowledge of fundraising needs, 6) Relationships, benefits and recognition, and 7) Winning and prestige. These themes provide insight into how major gift donors at the \$1,000,000+ level perceive their motivations to give to Division I intercollegiate athletics. A discussion of how these overarching themes correlate to current athletic administration practice, provide recommendations for future athletic administration practice, donor development and institutional management of \$1,000,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics at the Division I level follows.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In today's economic environment, there is more of a burden on intercollegiate athletics to find ways to balance budgets (Fulks, 2010). The rising costs of coaches' salaries, facility upgrades, travel expenses and scholarship costs for student-athletes have pushed many Division I athletic programs into a deficit budget situation, while expenses continue to escalate. Intercollegiate athletic programs are challenged to find other means of revenue to sustain their current level of competition and are looking at increased fundraising dollars to address this need. The overarching goal of this research was to examine and understand the phenomenon of major gift athletic donors at the Division I level and how their perceptions can provide valuable strategic planning information to development officers, athletic directors and university presidents. The purpose of this study was to explore the motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ donors who give to intercollegiate athletics in order to provide a better understanding of this very unique donor segment.

Although intercollegiate athletic donor motivations and behaviors have been studied from a variety of perspectives, few studies have examined the unique motives, personal experiences, environmental affects and motivational elements of giving related to \$1,000,000+ donors in a qualitative manner. Therefore, this study's exploration of

participant perceptions yielded important insight into the reasons why major gift donors are motivated to give \$1,000,000+ to intercollegiate athletics.

For this study, qualitative interviews were conducted and analyzed employing the constant comparative analysis method to gain meaningful understanding of the very exclusive world of \$1,000,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics. Utilizing qualitative interviewing allowed the focal point of this study to be the participant's meaning of their own personal experiences (Brenner, 2006). Constant comparative analysis enabled the reduction of data into meaningful constructs that embody participants' understanding and experiences (Ortiz, 2003). This methodological design is fitting with the proposed research questions that seek to gain unique understanding of the common experiences shared by \$1,000,000+ donors and their motivational factors related to intercollegiate athletic giving.

Overview of Findings

The \$1,000,000+ donors in this study represent a very unique donor segment within Division I intercollegiate athletics. These major gift donors are increasingly becoming more and more important to the development efforts at the Division I level as the expenses associated with athletics continue to increase while revenues decrease. Securing major gifts to athletics and understanding the motivational behaviors of major donors are paramount to intercollegiate athletic fundraising efforts. However, very little is known about this elite group of donors because the majority of previous research has focused on donors representing much lower donor levels, quantitative methodology has been used that does not measure the nuances of individual motivational elements and

finally, that access to donors at the \$1,000,000+ is challenging as most donors at this level might be reluctant to share such personal information.

The \$1,000,000+ donors in this study view their ability to provide monetary support to an athletic department to which they hold strong ties as a blessing and are thankful for the opportunity to do so. A strong family history of giving provided the foundation of philanthropy which carried over to their adult lives. Even those participants who grew up in households with little opportunity to show charity in the traditional monetary sense, understood the value of giving. Whether it was in the form of time, talent or treasure, major gift donors were exposed to a culture of philanthropy throughout their lives that was set by the example demonstrated by their fathers. Very few major gift donors whose families made monetary gifts actually witnessed their father engaging in philanthropic activities. It was only after the passing of their father or very late in his life did they fully understand the level of support he gave to others as those gifts were kept private. Conversely, those major gift donors whose families gave of time and talent acknowledged that they were very aware of their father's philanthropic behavior from a very early age because it was witnessed. Regardless of the form in which the charity took place, a father's example of philanthropy in the home was very important to and valued by participants.

Based on participants' descriptions of decision making within their own families related to major gift giving, the desire to set an example for their children, as their fathers did for them, was a very strong motivation to give. The age range of participants, as mentioned previously in this study, spanned from the mid-40's to mid-80's. Participants expressed that their wives were very much involved in the decision to make a seven-

figure gift to athletics, but that ultimately the decision was theirs to make.

Generationally, differences were established among donors as older donors felt it was important to include their children in the decision making process or at least communicating such decisions. Inheritance issues played a role as did the public nature of some of the gifts (naming rights for a facility for instance). Children were included in philanthropic decisions because the parents wanted to make sure they had their permission to spend such large amounts of money that would have otherwise been inherited by the family.

Younger donor participants in the study chose to keep their philanthropic activities private and without the knowledge of their children. Most chose to donate anonymously without telling their children or even other members of their extended families. The concern expressed by participants centered on the general sense of being uncomfortable with the public, community, other classmates knowing how much money they donated or how much money they were worth. Another shared aspect of these anonymous major gift donors and their reasons behind wanting to keep their giving private, was that they simply did not want to be a “target” for other charities to come after.

Having the good fortune to create a successful business life and the privilege to share their wealth was one of the most rewarding aspects for participants and was a motivational element of giving. Many participants shared that they simply could not believe their success nor could they imagine that they would ever make enough money that they could comfortably *give away* a million dollars or more. Most were self-made

men who had worked very hard for their successes and were thankful for the opportunities that were given to them.

Building upon thankfulness, participants' also felt a very strong appreciation and level of gratitude towards the athletic program and institution that gave them so much more than an education. Believing in the mission of the institution, developing life-long friendships and learning to overcome adversity on the playing field proved to be very strong motives of giving. Many participants noted that they felt the opportunity to play an intercollegiate sport or even attend college was one of the biggest gifts ever given to them. They were provided the skills, education and experience to take with them and use throughout their lives. Many felt beholden to the institution because without the experience and knowledge gained as a student athlete (only one participant was not) they would not have attained the level of success they enjoy today. Additionally, the willingness noted by participants to "pay-it-forward" played a large role in their giving decisions as well (i.e. someone supported the scholarship fund years ago making it possible for them to play, so they should offer that same opportunity to others).

Participants shared intrinsic motivational factors of making \$1,000,000+ gifts to intercollegiate athletics, as noted above. From these motivational factors emerged a discussion related to lasting and sustainable giving. Successful individuals do not become so without solid business practices and investments. Major gift donors to athletics are looking for sustainability and sound business decisions as it related to their gift. They are making a very large investment and savvy donors are looking to ensure that their gift goes beyond a single project. Several key questions were shared by participants: 1) are the funds being handing professionally by athletic department staffing

2) are they showing a level of fiduciary responsibility, and 3) will the athletic department take on debt even after a major gift is given? An investment made by a donor in the seven-figure plus range is looking to hold the institution to the same level of scrutiny and responsibility that they themselves face in their own business.

Each participant in this study has a unique relationship with the athletic department along with the knowledge of fundraising needs. By far, those donors who made the largest donations to athletics were those who were asked to participate in some fashion with a specific development activity or fundraising project. Being asked to chair a committee, sit on a board of directors or even being asked professional advice provides an opportunity to include a donor in the “process” of raising funds and developing a strategic plan on how to accomplish the task/project/facility. Participants shared that they had the opportunity to see what was needed by athletics from the inside, how their donation may positively impact student athletes, or to simply remain competitive within their conference. Participants noted that they appreciated the “inside access” and felt more a part of the athletic family which lead to greater motivation to give.

A tremendous amount of literature asserts that traditional benefits associated with intercollegiate athletics (parking, team gear, VIP events, travel on team charter, etc.) increase donor motivations to give. While that might hold true for donors investing in priority seating and club access, it does not seem to be the case for \$1,000,000+ donors. Most donors who have the capacity to give a seven-figure gift, have been identified by the athletic department as a major gift donor prospect or have made donations in smaller amounts and therefore, have access to many “traditional benefits” already. These are not deciding factors or motivational elements for major gift donors who participated in this

study. Recognition in terms of public acknowledgement was only important to those making gifts with naming rights attached to it – naming a facility, football field, basketball court, etc. Those making anonymous gifts receive no recognition and therefore provide no incentive or motivation to give. Relationships derived from associations, with an institution, fellow teammates, athletic department, coach or staff member are very important motivational factors for \$1,000,000+ donors. Supporting those whom you have personal relationship with and care about are the most important benefits derived from giving to athletics providing motivations to give.

When it comes to how winning and institutional prestige provides a motive to give, participants note that winning is a very important aspect of supporting intercollegiate athletics. People like to associate with winning athletic programs, especially those who were former student athletics. They have pride for their institution and believe that their gift is supporting sustainable future success. Even if winning was not the number one motive, supporting an athletic program to remain competitive was a close second. Having some level of success on the athletic field was a major factor for \$1,000,000+ donors to give. One participant shared that people rarely support a program that is not successful and that can easily be seen in ticket sales. The same is true for major donors; there is an expectation of a return on investment.

In conjunction with winning as a factor of giving, prestige of the athletic department and academic institution is paramount to maintaining donor support and can negatively impact future giving if tarnished. Participants took great pride in their athletic programs and explained that if something were to happen that would negatively impact the honor, integrity and reputation of the program, then future giving would suffer.

Interestingly, donors mentioned that their willingness to give would be negatively impacted if the athletic administration did not handle the situation in a swift and appropriate manner. If the infraction was secondary, it was more important from a major gift donor perspective that the athletic leadership be equipped to handle the situation from a public relations standpoint in an effort to help the institution suffer as little negative publicity as possible.

Implications

Findings from this study provide several implications for sport administrators at the Division I level when soliciting \$1,000,000+ donations for intercollegiate athletics. This qualitative study is unique among the existing literature as no other research has examined the motivational factors of donors who have given a minimum of a million dollars to intercollegiate athletics. Therefore it is difficult to match a theoretical framework that investigates how individuals perceive their unique experiences to giving a major gift to athletics.

That being said, elements of previous research do apply to the shared motivational factors presented in this study by participants. Higher education donor characteristics related to alumni contributions (Clotfelter, 2001; Okunade et al., 1994; Quigley et al., 2002; Tom and Elmer, 1994; Tsao and Coll, 2005) along with overall donor motivational factors/characteristics (Gibbons, 1992; Leslie and Ramey, 1988) have been extensively explored. Of these studies, only the works of Elmer (1994) and Taso and Coll (2005) identify a significant relationship between level of involvement and identification with a specific institution to be predictors of intent to give. Involvement and identification were reported as major motivational factors to give for those donors in the \$1,000,000+

category. Additionally, Gibbons (1992) examined the motivations of non-alumni donors who gave \$100,000 or more annually and found that respect for the institution and leadership were significant motivators. These elements, and overall donor motivational factors presented, were supported by the participants of this study. Respecting the institution as a whole and leaders within the athletic department was an important element in the non-alumni donor decision to give.

Universities across the country are under budget reductions and the increased emphasis and need for funding by both academic and athletic programs can lead to tensions between the two. Research into the complicated relationship between athletic fundraising and academic fundraising (Stinson and Howard, 2010) has suggested a “crowding out” effect that giving to athletics undermines giving to academics. In a separate study, Stinson and Howard (2008) found a connection between the increased media exposure that is associated with successful athletic teams and the correlating affect of increased institutional fundraising. Participants in this study shared that they do not perceive that giving to athletics detracts from academics because they view their gift as supporting both. Endowing an athletic scholarship supports both academics and athletics as does funding a building that perhaps hosts basketball, concerts, and graduation. However, it should be noted, that the majority of \$1,000,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics in this study have also given major gifts to specific *academic* projects as well. Major gift donors do not view their gifts or donor status as being mutually exclusive to athletics or academics.

A substantial amount of literature exists within the sports management field that substantiates a direct positive effect of winning intercollegiate athletic programs on

charitable contributions (Tucker, 2004) and how such effects can help predict donor support (McEvoy, 2005). Winning was reported to be a very important factor for \$1,000,000+ donors in this study as a motivation to give and plays an equally important role in their future giving considerations. Even if winning was not viewed as the most important element, remaining athletically competitive was a key motivational factor. Donors felt that having some measure of success was a direct reflection of a sound charitable investment and use of their funds.

Building upon the element of winning as a motivator to give, Gaski and Etzel (1984) noted that successful athletic programs enhance a school's image, which ultimately translates into increased athletic donations. Participants shared that the prestige factor of their athletic department and institution as a whole, which played a role in the decision to give. If tarnished, participants indicated it would detract from future giving. In almost every case, \$1,000,000+ donors commented that they believed their respective athletic departments were honorable, handled themselves with integrity and produced student athletes of character. They were happy to be associated with a quality program and felt good about their personal affiliation with the institution. Prestige of the athletic program and a positive school image was a strong motivational element for participants in this study. In fact, prestige played such an important role that if something or someone tarnished the reputation of the athletic program (NCAA violations, embarrassing situation implicating the coach, etc.) then these major gift donors were quick to share that future giving would be negatively impacted if the aforementioned transgressions were not handled appropriately.

As previously mentioned, the majority of participants in this study were former student athletes with most participating in football. O'Neil and Schenke (2006) explored donor motivations of alumni student athletes and noted that the overall giving amount from athlete alumni is directly impacted by the student's experience while at school. Having the opportunity to play Division I athletics as a scholarship athlete was viewed not only as a privilege, but a blessing by participants. Many shared that they created life-long friendships and learned valuable life lessons that helped them become successful later in life through their experiences on the playing field. Having a positive experience and being thankful for that experience played a major role in the decision to make a seven-figure donation to athletics.

Social motivations and self-identity have been explored as intangible motives for giving (Arnett, German, and Hunt, 2003). Ashforth and Mael (1989) defined social identification as the self-categorization of an individual in relation to a group and can build a very strong bond between an individual donor and intercollegiate athletics as social identity is a personally chosen descriptor of self. Identifying with a specific institution, athletic department or a member of a specific intercollegiate athletic team manifested in consistently loyal behavior on behalf of donors in this study. It was important for them to support athletics to provide opportunities for success on the playing field, to give back in appreciation for their own experiences, and most notably, to support their social attachments and attitudes towards athletics. Participants identified with the institution, supported the leadership and vision and felt personal prestige by contributing to intercollegiate athletic programs.

Studies investigating the motives of donors within intercollegiate athletics have found some component of tangible benefits. Stinson and Howard (2004) suggest that athletic success motivates donors because of a tangible exchange as desirable seats are secured via larger donations. Traditional benefits such as premium tickets, VIP access and team gear were viewed as being unimportant to the motivation of \$1,000,000+ donors to make a contribution to athletics. Participants in this study spoke of benefits in terms of intangible factors; the friendships they derive from athletic department staff/coaches/athletic directors and the opportunity to be associated with people of whom they respect. These intrinsic factors were more important to them as opposed to traditional benefits and that relationships/associations played a very large role in their motivations to give.

Recommendations for Practice

The study's findings and subsequent implications provide foundational recommendations for development officers, athletic directors and university presidents who actively engage, solicit and develop relationships with \$1,000,000+ donors within Division I intercollegiate athletics. This study provides a window into the motivational factors shared by major gift donors to give seven-figures (or more) to athletics and those who comprise this exclusive donor segment.

Development Officers

Development officers within Division I athletics will arguably have the greatest detailed interaction with \$1,000,000+ donors in the solicitation process, serve as a personal contact for donors and will ultimately be held responsible for the fulfillment of all donor requests, desires and needs. It is also imperative for development staff

members to understand the role that they play in relation to the major donor, the expectations that \$1,000,000+ donors have of development officers in the way of professionalism and work ethic and how they act as a conduit to the athletic director and/or university president.

In light of the findings that development officers are often viewed as those in a “serving role” within the athletic department, it is suggested that development officers have the appropriate skill set in which to handle \$1,000,000+ donor needs. Development officers are expected to uphold certain standards of professional excellence; to always do exactly what you are say you are going to do and always deliver more than promised. By missing details of a donor request, frustrations can arise that may negatively impact the donor trust factor. Having the necessary skills to professionally manage all details of the development process is instrumental to the success of development officers.

Major gift donors desire to have a link to the athletic department which falls below the athletic director or head coach. Therefore it is important for staff members to foster genuine relationships with \$1,000,000+ donors and to be accessible to this elite group at all times. The development officer fills that role – to act as someone to whom requests can be initiated for tickets, information, special favors and serve the role of athletic department “insider” for the donor. These requests and accesses are not viewed as benefits per se by the donor, but an extension of an overall relationship with the athletic department and institution as a whole.

Because the development staff provides an important relationship link between the \$1,000,000+ donor and the athletic department, development officers should establish high levels of customer service skills not only of themselves but of their entire

development staff. Typically with major gift donations, there will be an extensive amount of communication, follow-through and fulfillment elements that accompany the gift. It is the role of the development staff to oversee all of those details so that the donor feels that his/her wishes have been professionally managed with care. If not handled appropriately, this is the area in which a major gift donor can feel slighted or unappreciated if the smallest detail is overlooked (e.g. a name spelled incorrectly in game program, not returning a phone call in a timely manner or failure to respond to a ticket request). Customer service is expected and should be a major consideration in the management of the development business unit.

Finding and retaining appropriate staff within the development division is of the utmost importance in the successful maintenance of \$1,000,000+ donors. Based on the findings of this study, major gift donors have an expectation of professionalism and follow through when working with development officers of any level. This expectation is reflected in the understanding that development officers need to maintain a high level of communication and strong working relationships with their athletic director so that donor needs, concerns, desires or news can be shared at higher levels to maintain positive relationships.

Development officers play a crucial role in the care and management of \$1,000,000+ donors in that they serve as the front-line face of the athletic department. The relationship is viewed by major gift donors as important because they desire a senior level contact (below the athletic director or university president) that can fulfill needs and serve as the go-to person in the athletic department. Filling development positions with

staff who display the appropriate work ethic, personality, relationship skills and desire to serve will foster positive, long-lasting relationship with \$1,000,000+ donors.

Athletic Directors

While participants in this study noted that the role of development officers is key, by far the greatest area of responsibility falls upon the athletic director to manage \$1,000,000+ donors and to address the motivational elements that lead them to gift giving. In most cases, athletic directors lead the fundraising efforts on behalf of the entire division of intercollegiate athletics by maintaining high-profile relationships with \$1,000,000+ donors. They are called upon to handle the fiduciary management of not only the funds raised, but also of the projects associated with intercollegiate athletics. Major gift donors come with expectations of excellence in regards to their charitable contributions and it is the responsibility of the athletic director to accomplish this. Recommendations from this study for athletic directors centers on four key elements; surrounding themselves with experienced development staff members whom they can trust, maintaining a proactive public relations plan for the athletic department, developing a clear institutional fundraising plan related to donor inclusion and finally, providing a strategic development plan for the athletic department related to sustainable giving.

The element of staffing was explored in the recommendations for development officers, but it is perhaps an even more important consideration for athletic directors. Senior development staff members play a key role in the solicitation of major gifts, relationship management and day-to-day communication with donors at the \$1,000,000+ level. Athletic directors must have the confidence to know that valuable donor relationships are being maintained by their staff members and that the strategic vision of

the athletic department being appropriately conveyed. Additionally, athletic directors should work to surround themselves with staff who can act on their behalf to manage these valuable donors.

As mentioned previously, reputational pride and prestige are very important to \$1,000,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics. Athletic directors must create a very clear and concise public relations plan in an effort to handle the media. One participant made an interesting comment when he noted that without a clear communications plan; the Athletic Director is simply playing catch-up when it comes to the press. Without a proactive strategy for dealing with the media, a situation can quickly get out of hand and tarnish the reputation of the athletic department /institution. Donors at the \$1,000,000+ level have an expectation that athletic directors should be equipped with a proactive communications roadmap and be savvy enough to handle issues involving the media.

Athletic directors should develop very clear institutional fundraising plans that are inclusive of donor participation rather than taking an approach of making a formal “ask”. While professional solicitations of intercollegiate donors may work in specific circumstances, the \$1,000,000+ participants in this study made their decision to give because they enjoyed inside access to fundraising efforts. Identifying key perspective donors at the major gift level and then engaging them with booster club participation, exploratory committees or as a member of an athletic board of directors proved to be effective motivations for giving. Additionally, including \$1,000,000+ donors in the fundraising planning phase can provide athletic directors with key information on when the donor appetite for a specific program might be. By having the chance to be a part of

the fundraising process and to have information as to the need of a specific project allows major gift donors to make their decisions personally, privately and on their own timeline.

A final recommendation for athletic directors is to create a strategic development plan for sustainable giving opportunities. Donors who have the capacity to give a million dollars or more are looking for their dollars to go beyond a specific project or fund drive. They want to know that their investment will have long-term and long-range affects that positively enhance student athletes and the institution as a whole. Athletic directors should look to craft philanthropic strategies that address the needs of \$1,000,000+ donors: 1) take an investment approach to what their donation can do for the athletic department, 2) provide comprehensive financial analysis of giving outcomes and 3) take a more proactive stance related to how their contribution may impact not only the student athletes of today but of those in the next generation. Giving at the \$1,000,000+ level is much more than building a new indoor practice facility for football, it is knowing that the financial contribution will pay dividends in a lasting and sustainable manner.

In conjunction with providing solid investment-based giving strategies, athletic directors should also consider that major gift donors have a strong appreciation and gratitude towards what the institution and/or the opportunity to play intercollegiate sport. Athletic directors should look to provide avenues for these donors to expand upon how thankful they are for the ability to give and to show their thanks – beyond writing a check. Perhaps highlighting the stories of \$1,000,000+ donors as distinguished alumni, presidents circle, legacy wall, etc., not only give a voice to a thankful donor, but pay dividends by getting others to reflect on what the institution meant to them well.

University President

Recommendations for those at the university president level are reflected in the elements of prestige, integrity, honor and having the skill set necessary to handle any situation, no matter how unflattering, in a professional and appropriate manner. Donors who give a \$1,000,000+ donation to intercollegiate athletes trust that university leadership will manage the reputation of the overall institution with great care even if something within athletes were to have caused the negative publicity. University presidents are looked upon to uphold a high moral standard for all but to also have the capacity to handle a situation in a manner that does not tarnish the institution further. University presidents are looked upon to conduct themselves professionally with the media, to make difficult decisions if necessary (such as removing an athletic director or head coach), and to uphold the reputation of the institution and thus, are very strong motivational factors of major gift donors related to current and future giving.

It is also imperative for a university president to understand that the mindset of a \$1,000,000+ donor is different today than of donors 30 or 40 years ago. The electronic global nature of the media has created an environment of news in which athletic departments, athletes and coaches can be scrutinized instantaneously. Major-gift donors may question whether their major gift dollars to a specific program are being spent appropriately. University presidents must be well equipped to handle the instant media concerns that could negatively impact institutional prestige and \$1,000,000+ donations to intercollegiate athletics.

Recommendations for Further Study

Because differences do exist between individual donors, levels of giving, location of the Division I institution, history of giving and alumni vs. non-alumni donor status, replicating this study can provide additional insight into \$1,000,000+ intercollegiate athletic donors perceptions of motivational factors which led them to making a major gift donation. Additionally, since this study examined seven donors who have given a minimum of one million dollars to intercollegiate athletics, a broader qualitative study involving donors beyond these seven participants, including private Division I institutions and seek to find female donors would provide insight on themes related to donor motivations on a much larger scale.

Further exploration of findings associated with history of family philanthropy could provide insight into the solicitation of major donor gifts, the expectations that come with acknowledgement of such gifts (anonymous vs. public recognition) and how current major-gift donors plan to pass along that history of philanthropy to future generations. Understanding this intrinsic motivation among \$1,000,000+ donors can help athletic administrators prepare more impactful donor opportunities related to legacy giving.

Participants reported that they are thankful for the ability to give and such a funding would greatly benefit from future research. This intrinsic motive has gone relatively unexplored and although perhaps difficult to report, would provide sport administrators a better understanding of \$1,000,000+ donors and what it means to them to have attained so much financial success and how delighted they are for the ability to make such a large gift. Much like historical philanthropy exploration, expanding upon

the element of thanks provides a rich source of information that athletic administrators can use to better serve this donor motive.

The finding that participants appreciate and have gratitude towards the institution would benefit from greater research. Examining these intrinsic motivations to give would provide the sports administration field a wealth of knowledge related to life-lessons learned as a student athlete and the motives to give back. An exploration of how major-gift donors appreciate the opportunity to play an intercollegiate sport and earn a college degree – and how such experiences were viewed as being key elements to their later success – might provide a platform for future development campaigns.

The finding that \$1,000,000+ donors to intercollegiate athletics are looking for lasting and sustainable giving options would greatly benefit from further exploration. Such research could bring to light whether major gift donors are looking for investment approaches to philanthropy, or indicative of the need for greater fiduciary responsibility on behalf of the institution and athletic department. Further investigation of how lasting and sustainable giving elements related to athletics could shed light on the need for more formalized giving plans on behalf of intercollegiate athletic departments and how development staffing may need to change to address it.

It is important to investigate further the finding that donors at the \$1,000,000+ level to intercollegiate were not formally approach to make a major gift. The decision to donate came from having inside access to the program and inside information related to fundraising needs and goals. Additional research on the inclusion of perspective major gift donors to the fundraising process should be considered and would perhaps provide sports administrators with the opportunity to present specific fundraising needs in a

different manner. Another key benefit of this concept of donor inclusion is that the athletic department could absolutely benefit from the expertise and knowledge successful business persons can bring to the table. By including major gift donors in the fundraising process, it is also easier for them to work on behalf of the institution by soliciting friends, colleagues and former teammates to join them in their philanthropic efforts for athletics. The need for a formalized university development or athletic development program may be eliminated in the future but most certainly, would change to include major gift donors in the funding process rather than the “ask and receive” model currently used.

An interesting finding of this study was that traditional benefits mean little or nothing at all to major gift donors at the \$1,000,000+ level. Relationships with members of the athletic department and the opportunity to be associated with people donors admire were key motivational factors of giving. The issue of recognition was also found to play a role in giving no matter if the donor decided to remain anonymous or desired naming rights on a building. These findings warrant further investigation and could provide a wealth of knowledge to sport administrators on many levels. If traditional tangible benefits were seen unnecessary, then investigating the intrinsic motives to give may shed light on what “relationships” really mean, how attachment and affiliation with an athletic department or institution are perceived and finally, how athletic development needs to change to address these needs.

Lastly, it is important to investigate the reasons why \$1,000,000+ donors make such large gifts to winning or competitive program and how winning and prestige together are viewed as motives to give. Major gift donors are motivated to give to winning programs, but view the prestige of the institution as being an equal part of their

decision to give. The connection between the two should be further explored to better understand how prestige (in terms of honor, respect in the industry and how senior leadership handles tough/negative situation) plays a role in major donor decision making. Additionally, further investigation should look at why donors at the \$1,000,000+ level may give *more* to an athletic program even when negative publicity or perhaps NCAA violations (impacting prestige) affects the institution. The “fix-it” concept among major gift donors could provide athletic administrators with an understanding of how negative publicity can be an opportunity to increase fundraising efforts.

Conclusion

This qualitative study explored the motivational factors of major gift donors at the \$1,000,000+ level to intercollegiate athletics to give. An overview of findings revealed that many donors in this elite category have a history of philanthropy, that motivations are almost exclusively intrinsically based, that elements of sustainable giving are important and that prestige of the athletic department/institution is equally connected to winning as key motivations to make \$1,000,000+ gifts. These perceptions result in a very complicated and individualistic set of motives that in some ways, share motivational elements of smaller gift donors (alumni giving) and in others, are unique to \$1,000,000+ donors (sustainable giving needs). Specific recommendations for practice are provided for development officers, athletic directors and university presidents with the goal of understanding this elite donor segment within intercollegiate athletics which would ultimately result in increased fundraising efforts and contributions to Division I intercollegiate athletic programs.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How has philanthropy, in general, played a role in your life and what are your overall beliefs related to giving?
2. Can you tell me about any role models or perhaps family influences that helped to establish your charitable nature?
3. Please describe for me the process you follow in making philanthropic gift decisions?

Potential follow up questions:

- a. Individual decision made with your significant other?
 - b. Generations of family giving?
 - c. Any other?
4. Describe your relationship or affiliation with this specific athletic department or institution (alumni, former athlete, longtime family donor, etc) and to what extent does it affect your motivation to make a donation?
 5. Please tell me about the first time you made a gift to intercollegiate athletics at _____ (insert name of school here).
 - a. At what giving level of donor did you start at?
 - b. What was your motivation to give? (tickets/benefits/scholarship fund driven)
 - c. Or was it something else?

6. Can you please elaborate on the motivations you and perhaps your family have related to the decision to give a major gift to an athletic department?
7. What was your motivation to make such a large gift? (Prompted categories if necessary)
 - a. Family history of giving?
 - b. Long-time donor/season ticket holder?
 - c. Former student-athlete?
 - d. Other family member was an athlete or associated with the institution in some way?
8. How were you approached to make a large contribution to athletics?
 - a. Please describe the overall experience related to “the ask”?
9. What level of importance does “legacy giving” or “brick and mortar” giving play when deciding to make a major donation to athletics? *(Skip this question if already answered earlier)*
10. How important are the following related to your motivation to give a major gift to this specific athletic department:
 - a. Naming rights?
 - b. Program development?
 - c. Scholarship endowed?
11. As an athletic donor, how do you feel about the benefits you derived from your donor status?
12. How important is it to have access to the Athletic Director on a regular basis?
13. What is your relationship with the head football or men’s basketball coach?

14. Are all the other benefits – team charter, golf, sideline passes, personal recognition, etc also important to you? Why?
15. What prompted you to make a \$1,000,000+ plus donation to intercollegiate athletics? *Follow up questions if necessary:*
 - a. Describe the timeline you took when deciding to make the gift?
 - b. Was the decision to give needs based (project) or for the greater good for the AD to use at their discretion?
16. What is the most fulfilling part of donating such a large amount towards athletics?
 - a. How has your family (if applicable) reacted to your donation?
17. (From a prestige standpoint), how important is it for you personally to be associated with a winning athletic program?
18. As a large donor, how would future donations be impacted if a team/program was recognized for NCAA violations or perhaps embarrassed by a head coach (or other personnel related to athletics) because of unethical behavior?
19. To the best of your recollection, how much you have donated to this specific athletic department over the years?
20. If you could recommend anything to the athletic development staff in general related to major gift donor cultivation, what would that be? *Prompted follow up questions if necessary:*
 - a. Staffing/personnel?
 - b. Amount of personal time with each donor?
 - c. Access to staff 24/7?

21. What characteristics, wants, and needs do you believe athletic directors need to know about major gift donor motivations that they are perhaps missing?

Secondary Phone Interview Follow-up – Allows for an optional follow-up phone interview to take place to gather further detail on a specific question or questions. By establishing this option, the author will help establish triangulation and saturation detail to support thick, rich description.

APPENDIX B

IRB APPLICATION AND APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHERN COLORADO



Institutional Review Board

May 9, 2012


TO: Gary Heise
School of Sport and Exercise Science

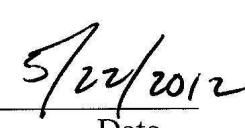
FROM: The Office of Sponsored Programs

RE: Exempt Review of *Million Dollar plus Donors within Intercollegiate Athletics: a Qualitative Analysis of Donor Motivations*, submitted by Nancy Hixson (Research Advisor: David Stotlar)

The above proposal is being submitted to you for exemption review. When approved, return the proposal to Sherry May in the Office of Sponsored Programs.

I recommend approval.


Signature of Co-Chair


Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is that the project is exempt from further review.

IT IS THE ADVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO NOTIFY THE STUDENT OF THIS STATUS.

Comments: *emailed 5/22/2012*

Research Involving Human Participants Coversheet for UNC IRB Application



Project Title: Million Dollar Plus Donors Within Intercollegiate Athletics: A Qualitative Analysis of Donor Motivations

Contact Information (reviewers will communicate via e-mail)

Lead Investigator: Nancy Hixson phone: 719-243-4217

School: University of Northern Colorado UNC e-mail: hixs3753@bears.unco.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. David Stotlar UNC e-mail: david.stotlar@unco.edu
(required for students)

CERTIFICATION OF LEAD INVESTIGATOR

I certify that this application accurately reflects the proposed research and that I and all researchers who will have contact with the participants or access to the data have reviewed this application and the Guidelines of the UNC IRB and will comply with the letter and spirit of these policies. I understand that any changes in procedure which affect participants must be submitted to the IRB (using the Request for Change in Protocol Form) for written approval prior to their implementation. I further understand that any adverse events and significant changes in risk for participants must be immediately reported in writing to the UNC IRB.

Nancy Hixson
Signature of Lead Investigator

May 2, 2012
Date of Signature

CERTIFICATION OF RESEARCH ADVISOR (If Lead Investigator is a Student)

I certify that I have thoroughly reviewed this application, confirm its accuracy, and accept responsibility for monitoring the conduct of this research, the maintenance of any consent documents as required by the IRB, and, in the case of expedited reviews, the continuation review of this project in approximately one year.

David Stotlar
Signature of Research Advisor

5-2-12
Date of Signature

Summary Information (to be completed by Lead Investigator)

Review Category: ☒ Exempt (2-3 weeks) ☐ Expedited (3-4 weeks) ☐ Full-Board (4-6 weeks)

Research participants will be:
(e.g., adults, elderly, children,
healthy, unhealthy, etc.)

Research participants will consist of adults who have given a minimum of \$1,000,000 to a Division I intercollegiate athletic department.

Type of data collected will be:
(e.g., survey responses, interviews,
blood samples, existing data, etc.)

Data collection will consist of personal interviews, member check and peer examination.

Location of data collection:

The data will be collected at various Division I institutions across the country to include by not limited to: The United States Air Force Academy, University of California Los Angeles, University of Arizona, Texas Christian University and Florida State University.

Is standard consent documentation used? ☒ YES ☐ NO If NO, must be addressed within application.

Is permission required (e.g., school district)? ☐ YES ☒ NO If YES, must include letter (this is not consent).

Is this a funded research project? ☐ YES ☒ NO If YES, must provide source within application.

Submit the original and one copy of the cover page, narrative, and all attachments to OSP, Kepner Hall #25, Attn: Sherry May

Clear Form

NARRATIVE – HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Million Dollar Plus Donors Within Intercollegiate Athletics: A Qualitative Analysis of Donor Motivations
 Researcher: Nancy Hixson, PhD Candidate, Sport and Exercise Science
 Phone: 719-243-4217
 E-mail: hixs3753@bears.unco.edu

A. **Purpose and Description:**

1. The primary purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore, describe and understand the motivations and behaviors of \$1,000,000+ major gift donors to intercollegiate athletic programs at the Division I level. The primary research question will be ‘What are the general attitudes, perceptions and experiences regarding major gift giving to athletics’ with supporting emphasis on the tradition of philanthropy, intrinsic/ extrinsic benefits, and relationship between the donor and a specific institution of higher education.

Division I athletics has become very big business with skyrocketing revenue from television deals, conference realignment dollars and revenue derived from third party media rights holders – not to mention gate sales, concessions and sponsorship income. The truth of today’s Division I athletic landscape, however, tells a much different story of economic health as very few athletic programs actually make any money. Most operate in a deficit scenario and state funding allocated to higher education continues to decline. Fundraising and donor cultivation within intercollegiate athletics is more important than ever to help close the growing financial gap between revenues and expenses of higher education.

It is critical to understand the many varied factors that affect not only donor motivations but what unique motivations are present within this very exclusive donor segment of multi-million dollar major intercollegiate athletic donors. Generally, the literature is lacking related to the exploration of major gift donors and their motivations to give. In an effort to better understand this very unique and important donor segment within intercollegiate athletics, more research is needed on this topic.

2. This study is exempt as the use of interview procedures will be the primary data collection method. The research will not disrupt or manipulate the normal life experiences of the participants nor will it incorporate any intrusive procedures.

B. **Methods:**

According to Crotty (2003) there are 4 basic elements to any qualitative research process that must be addressed. Crotty (p.2) has framed each area using the following 4 questions: What *methods* do we propose to use, what *methodology* governs our choice and use of methods, what *theoretical perspective* lies behind the methodology in question, and what *epistemology* informs this theoretical perspective? For the purpose of this study, these four elements will be used to frame the methodology.

1. Participants –

Participants were purposefully selected to participate in this study based on criterion-based elements. According to Goetz and LeCompte (1984), the researcher establishes the necessary criteria to include in the study and then finds a sample that meets these established criteria. For this purpose, the following criteria were utilized for sample selection; must be an intercollegiate-athletic donor, must be a donor at a Division I institution, must have given a minimum one-time gift of \$1,000,000+, and must be willing to participate in this study.

Participants will be recruited indirectly via my relationships with various athletic directors and senior development officers at Division I institutions. These athletic administrators were asked if they had a donor who; 1) fit the specific criteria, 2) would be willing to participate in the study and 3) that the institution would agree to facilitate the introduction and feel comfortable enough to allow the interview to take place. Once the athletic administrator identifies a qualified donor and receives their initial agreement to participate, a personal phone call will be placed to solidify the time, place and availability of a one-on-one interview

2. Data Collection Procedures –

Data collection will take place in a three-step process; personal interviews, peer examination and member checking interview. Qualitative interviews will be conducted with five \$1,000,000+ athletic donors at five different Division I

institutions across the country. These participants will be pre-selected by the athletic director or senior development officer at each institution that fit the criteria for participation.

One of the most important sources of information is the interview (Yin, 2003) because it “allows us to find out things we cannot directly observe (feelings, thoughts, intentions) and allows us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 1990, p. 196). To explore the motivational factors of \$1,000,000+ athletic donors related to giving, individual, open-ended interviews will be conducted with all five participants. Interviews will last approximately 60-90 minutes in length and will be digitally recorded with the participants’ permission. Qualitative interviews will be used to produce direct quotations from participants related to their experiences, knowledge, feelings and opinions (Patton, 2002). The use of open-ended questions will provide an opportunity for the participants to fully express their thoughts and perceptions without being limited to a specific response, such as presented in survey methodology (see Appendix A).

Interviews will take place in person at the respective campuses of individual participants across the country. After initial opening questions are given, specific questions will be asked related to their giving history, the specific institution, intercollegiate athletics and the motivations, influences, behaviors that led them to donate a seven-figure gift to athletics. Immediately following each interview, a 15-20 minute “memoing” session will take place to facilitate on-going reflection in the research process (Patton, 2002) in an effort to capture details and overall observations. And finally, digital- audio recordings will be comprehensively transcribed.

Data analysis will be conducted in a three-phase process including interviews, peer debriefing and member check interviews. As an initial member check, participants will be asked to verify only the accuracy of their interview, not to edit or comment further (Mahoney, 2011). An independent peer examination will then analyze the transcripts to make sure the themes are accurately being reflected in the participants’ voice. The peer examination will be a current colleague of the researcher who has an extensive background in athletic development and donor relations. Trustworthiness and transferability of a study is the responsibility of the researcher and requires a breadth of detail involving “leaving the extent to which a study’s findings apply to other situations up to the people in those situations” (Merriam, 1998, p. 211).

3. Data Analysis Procedures –

Constant comparative analysis will be used. The strength of constant comparative analysis is the reduction of data into meaningful constructs (Mahoney, 2011) that embody participants' understandings and experiences (Ortiz, 2003) and involves interplay between the research and data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to flush out common themes.

Credibility, validity, dependability and trustworthiness will be attained via the researcher's skill, competence and rigor of research (Patton, 2002).

Procedures are clearly defined and the accuracy of the findings will be established using established protocols of qualitative research, such as internal validity, and rich, thick descriptions of the studied phenomenon. Readers should be able to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence, whether findings can be transferred by providing enough description (Choi, 2006). The reader should act as vicarious observer in determining the transferability of the findings.

To help establish trustworthiness, Merriam (1998) suggests six strategies be used to enhance internal validity and credibility: triangulation, member checks, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory or collaborative modes of research, and researcher's bias. For the purpose of this study, four of Merriam's techniques will be utilized to establish internal validity: triangulation, member checking, peer examination and researcher bias. Member checking is a very important part of the triangulation process as it allows and invites the participant to assist in the clarification of the researchers' interpretations. Member checking is defined as "taking data and tentative interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible", Merriam (1998). Peer examination helps to establish triangulation by allowing colleagues to evaluate the findings within a study and provide feedback related to expertise or common sense. Researcher bias is established by clarifying the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study, the researcher's biases can be utilized to enhance internal validity and enables the reader to better understand how the data might have been interpreted (Merriam, 1998). I am a former Division I student-athlete and current Division I sports administrator in athletic development. Sport, and in particular, intercollegiate sport plays, a very large role in my life and with it, comes established views on athletic administration, development, fundraising and donor behaviors. I will maintain and establish objectivity as a researcher related to my personal views.

4. Data Handling Procedures –

Data will be stored initially on a hand held digital recording device and then transcribed into text on a laptop computer. No one will have access to the data as interview files will be protected. All data will be kept in a locked cabinet and/or locked office. As the subject matter does not involve sensitive information or children, the participants will not remain fully anonymous. For the purpose of the study, only first names will be use. Additionally, no special arrangements need to be made as the population is not atypical.

C. Risks, Discomforts and Benefits:

1. Risks of participation are no greater than those of normal, daily activity and pose no foreseeable risk to the participants. Direct benefits from participation in the study will include benefits extending to an expanded knowledge base through the findings of the research project.

D. Costs and Compensations –

1. There are no costs to the participant for participation in the research project. Compensation will be provided in the form of refreshments and/or meal dependent upon the time of day the interview takes place.

E. Grant Information – Not Applicable

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APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORMS



CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Million Dollar Plus Donors Within Intercollegiate Athletics: A Qualitative Analysis of Donor Motivations
 Researcher: Nancy Hixson, PhD Candidate, Sport and Exercise Science
 Phone: 719-243-4217
 E-mail: hixs3753@bears.unco.edu
 (Advisor: Dr. David Stotlar; david.stotlar@unco.edu; 970-351-2535)

Purpose and Description: The primary purpose of this phenomenological study is to describe and explore the motivations, behaviors and attitudes \$1,000,000+ intercollegiate athletic donors have related to their personal giving process.

As a participant in this research, you will be asked a variety of interview questions pertaining to your personal views, motivations, attitudes and experiences related to making a major gift (at the \$1,000,000+ level) towards intercollegiate athletics. The length of the interview will last no longer than 90 minutes and your answers will be captured on a digital recorder. The personal interview will be conducted by the lead investigator and the use of your first name only will be employed.

Potential risks in this project are minimal and are no greater than normal, daily activities.

Participation is voluntary and therefore you may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

Please feel free to phone me if you have any questions or concerns about this research. A signed copy of this consent letter will be given to you for your personal records.

Thank you very much for assisting me with my research.

Participant Signature

Date

Researcher Signature

Date