

Development of a Donor Constraint Scale: Identifying Barriers for Former Student-Athletes' Contributions to Their Athletic Departments

Stephen Shapiro, University of Northern Colorado
Chrysostomos Giannoulakis, University of Northern Colorado
Joris Drayer, University of Northern Colorado
Chien-Hsin Wang, University of Northern Colorado

**Session 31: Finance
Presentation (25-minute)**

Saturday, June 2, 2007

2:30 PM - 2:55 PM

Fundraising has become an essential resource in funding college athletic department budgets. Athletic fundraising has grown from 5% of total annual revenue for athletic departments in the 1960s, to 18% of total annual revenue in 2003 (Fulks, 2003; Howard & Crompton, 2005). In addition, financial contributions from alumni to higher education have historically been one of the most important sources of voluntary support (Baade & Sundberg, 1996). Former student-athletes are not only alumni of their university, but they are, in essence, "alumni" of the athletic department. However, in the researchers' experience it seems that efforts to cultivate this segment of the donor market have been traditionally unsuccessful. Furthermore, there has been limited research in the area of former student-athlete donor behavior. Previous fundraising studies have focused on donor motivation (Billing, Holt, & Smith, 1985; Mahony, Gladden, & Funk 2003; Staurowsky, Parkhouse, & Sachs, 1996). However, the research on donor constraints in athletics seems to be non-existent. Both motivations and constraints can be used together to help better understand donor behavior (Alexandris, Tsorbatzoudis, & Grouios, 2002). Since a large portion of former student-athletes do not give back to athletic departments, focusing on donor constraints may be the most appropriate approach to investigating this topic.

The purpose of the study was to develop a scale to examine the constraints for the population of former student-athletes that do not give to athletics. Data collection is currently taking place and will end in November 2006. Ten to fifteen former collegiate student-athletes will be asked to take part in a 30-45 minute face-to-face semi-structured interview. Interview design is a standard procedure in the initial development of a formalized scale (Fowler, 1995). The in-depth interviews will help the researchers establish donor constraint themes that will create the foundation for the development of a former student-athlete donor constraint scale.

Preliminary findings, based on the first eight interviews, have identified four general themes that can be considered constraints for former student-athletes to give back to their athletic departments: Importance, Connection, Communication/Knowledge, and Experience. The Importance theme focuses on athletic alumni choosing to give to other organizations or causes that they feel are a priority in their life. Many of the participants choose to give their money to organizations (such as churches or hospitals) other than their former athletic department, because they do not think an athletic donation is as important. The Connection theme identified a disconnect due to factors such as living a far distance from the university, lack of friends or family currently attending their alma mater, and different coaches or administrators currently in place. A lack of connection between athletic alumni and their alma mater acts as a barrier for charitable donations. The Communication theme focuses on the limited contact from the athletic department and the lack of interest by the athletic department in the lives of student-athletes when they leave the university. In addition, the Knowledge aspect of this theme looks at the lack of pertinent information given to athletic alumni. Many participants did not understand the donor procedures, or they were not told how their money would be used. Finally, the Experience theme identified poor experiences as a student-athlete. Participants noted poor relationships with the team or negative treatment of student-athletes by the athletic department as whole. The remaining interviews will be completed by the end of November 2006 to add depth and breadth to the emerging themes. The former student-athlete constraint scale will be tested in the spring semester of 2007 to validate these initial findings.

In conclusion, the presentation will provide information on the importance of scale development through interview design (Fowler, 1995). The researchers will also discuss the importance of examining former student-athlete donor behavior and specifically constraints to donating. The emerging constraint themes and implications for athletic departments will be discussed. Finally, the completed former student-athlete donor constraint scale will be displayed. This research will offer valuable information to athletic departments to help identify athletic alumni attitudes and behaviors, and create effective strategies in order to attract and cultivate the largely untapped market of potential former student-athlete donors. In addition, this analysis will introduce to scholars and professionals the importance of identifying potential constraints/barriers for former student-athletes from a financial and cultural point of view.

2007 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2007)

References:

- Alexandris, K., Tsorbatzoudis, C., & Grouios, G. (2002). Perceived constraints on recreational sport participation: Investigating their relationship with intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and amotivation. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(3), 233-252.
- Baade, R.A., & Sundberg, J.O. (1996). Fourth down and goal to go? Assessing the link between athletics and alumni giving. *Social Science Quarterly*, 77(4), 789-803.
- Billing, J.E., Holt, D., & Smith, J. (1985). *Athletic fund-raising: Exploring the motives behind donations*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Fowler, F.J. (1995). *Improving survey questions: Design and evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fulks, D.L. (2003). Revenue and Expenses, Profits and Losses of Division I-A Intercollegiate Athletic Programs Aggregated by Conference - 2003 Fiscal Year. [Electronic Version]. Retrieved October 11, 2005, from http://www.ncaa.org/library/research/i_ii_rev_exp/2003/2003D1aConfReport.pdf.
- Howard, D.R., & Crompton, J.L. (2004). *Financing sport: 2nd edition*. Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology, Inc.
- Mahony, D.F., Gladden, J.M., & Funk, D.C. (2003). Examining athletic donors at NCAA division I institutions. *International Sports Journal*, 7(1), 9-27.
- Staurowski, E.J., Parkhouse, B., & Sachs, M. (1996). Developing an instrument to measure athletic donor behavior and motivation. *Journal of Sport Management*, 10, 262-277.