

Understanding Alumni Giving: Theory and Predictors of Donor Status

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Abstract

The current study tests a theoretical model of alumni giving developed inductively from prior research. Donor status is directly predicted by willingness to give, alumni involvement, perceptions of the economic environment, perceived need, charitable preferences, receipt of a scholarship and capacity to give along with several indirect predictors.

General models of altruism and helping behavior have been applied to alumni research from several disciplines. For example, economists view altruism as a “strategic selfish activity” where donors “derive utility from the action of contributing” such as tax deductions, recognition, or positive self-regard (Radley and Kennedy, 1995; Spiegel, 1995, pp. 625-626). Sociological theories posit that people give in expectation of reciprocation or are influenced by modeling, social pressures and reinforcement, and desire for status (Hatfield, Walster, and Piliavin, 1978; Rosenhan, 1978; Wilmoth, 1990). The propensity to give may be affected by one’s cultural or religious background (Cohen, 1978; Wood and Hougland, 1990). Altruism can also be viewed from a biological perspective in that this behavior contributes to the survival of the species (Losco, 1986). Theories on the development of moral reasoning and cognitive processes are other contributions (Cohen, 1978; Krebs, 1978; Losco, 1986). Though useful, these perspectives fail to fully account for relevant factors that affect alumni giving in a higher education setting, including the unique person-environment interactions that take place on a college campus.

Volkwein and others (1989; 1999) offer the only theoretical model identified in the literature that considers the college environment and individual characteristics, capacity, and motivations that affect alumni giving. Mosser (1993) provided empirical support for aspects of the Volkwein model, yet the constructs of academic and social integration did not hold together

in the analysis. The model does not address altruistic values and preferences, the effect of solicitation, competing charitable organizations, and the economic environment.

An alternative model for individual alumni giving in higher education is presented in Figure 1. This theoretical model was developed inductively from the literature, building upon the findings of previous researchers. The current study not only tests this model but also has an applied focus in that research results are targeted for use by campus institutional advancement officers desiring to understand why alumni give or don't give to the college.

The alternative model postulates that alumni must attain a disposition of readiness or motivation to give before a donation will be granted to the institution. Motivation to give has been frequently evaluated in prior research and operationalized as willingness to invest money or time in programs (Mulugetta, Nash, and Murphy, 1999), intention to contribute or work for the alumni association (Diamond and Kashyap, 1997), willingness to contribute (Mosser, 1993), and interest in planned giving (Lindahl and Winship, 1994).

The proposed model identifies psychological factors that influence motivation to give: (1) altruistic values and preferences, (2) a sense of perceived need and efficacy, and (3) satisfaction with the educational institution. Three sets of outcomes affect these states of mind: (1) educational outcomes, (2) employment outcomes, and (3) level of alumni involvement. These outcomes are determined or influenced by the quality of educational experiences on campus, student background characteristics, and economic conditions. Solicitation efforts influence the psychology of alumni and also their post-graduate involvement. External charitable organizations compete for alumni involvement and donations. If alumni are motivated to give to the institution, and do so when the request is made, the giving cycle can become self-reinforcing and continuous with ongoing cultivation.

Place Figure 1 About Here

Studies in academic journals and dissertations are cited below to demonstrate the consistency of the proposed model with existing research. Dissertations have been frequently cited in alumni giving research because of the disparity of articles in peer-reviewed journals on the topic. The literature review focuses on relatively new dissertations (1995 forward). Mosser (1993), Taylor and Martin (1995), and Baker (1998) provide excellent reviews of dissertations prior to 1995. The literature review will be followed by discussion of the current study methods, test of the model and survey findings, and implications for future research and practice.

Literature Review

Psychological Factors and Alumni Giving

Prior research studies have incorporated various measures of what will be labeled, altruistic values and preferences. These measures include ideals of helping the next generation, improving the community, desiring to make a positive impact, feeling obligated to help, or grateful to the institution with a desire to give back, etc. (Ashcraft, 1995; Diamond and Kashyap, 1997; Klostermann, 1995; Patouillet, 2000; Simari, 1995; Taylor and Martin, 1995). There may be different forms of altruism, with some value systems more egoistic than others (requiring more recognition and personal rewards); nevertheless, this set of values disposes one to giving. Variables such as post-graduate community/civic service, donations to other charitable causes, or religiosity (church involvement, etc.) have been proxies or behavioral manifestations of altruism (Hunter, 1997; Pearson, 1996; Shim, 2001). Klostermann (1995) utilized an altruism subscale in

her research. With the exception of Taylor and Martin (1995) and Shim (2001), these measures were related to alumni giving.

It seems logical that one would desire to give to worthy causes that get results. Alumni, who give to their alma mater, generally believe that their donations will make a difference (Diamond and Kashyap, 1997; Klostermann, 1995; Prince and File, 1994), meet an institutional need (Connolly and Blanchette, 1986; Taylor and Martin, 1995; Diamond and Kashyap, 1997), and be used in an effective manner (Diamond and Kashyap, 1997).

Alumni, who are satisfied with their educational experiences or feel a positive emotional attachment to the institution, will be more likely to contribute, as evidenced by several studies (Baker, 1998; Calvario, 1996; Klostermann, 1995; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Melchiori, 1988; Miller and Casebeer, 1990; Patouillet, 2000; Pearson, 1996; Rosser, 1997; Simari, 1995). However, Hunter (1997) found no significance for resentment, and Ashcraft (1995) did not find significance for alumnus attachment to faculty members. Calvario (1996) defines several measures of satisfaction—the focus of his study.

Satisfaction has been found to be positively associated with undergraduate student involvement (Astin, 1985; Outcalt and Skewes-Cox, 2002; Pike, 1991), quality student affairs services (Graham and Gisi, 2000), social involvement and fulfilling peer relationships (Volkwein and Carbone, 1994), quality faculty interaction and instruction (Graham and Gisi, 2000; Pearson, 1999; Umbach and Porter, 2002; Volkwein and Carbone, 1994), and “perceived outcomes of that performance” such as skills learned or obtaining a job (Hartman and Schmidt, 1995, p. 197). Satisfaction ratings may vary by ethnicity (Helm and Sedlacik, 1998; Umbach and Porter, 2002), and gender (Adelman, 1991; Rienzi, Allen, Sarmiento, and McMillan, 1993; Umbach and Porter, 2002).

Effects of Educational and Employment Outcomes

Educational outcomes (level of degree received, career preparation, or knowledge and skills attained) are factors associated with increased levels of alumni giving in other studies (Ashcraft, 1995; Brittingham and Pezzulo, 1990; Hunter, 1997; Klostermann, 1995; Mosser, 1993; Pascarella and Terrenzini, 1991; Pearson, 1996; Schmidt, 2001; Taylor and Martin, 1995; Umbach and Porter, 2002; Violand, 1998). Mosser (1993) established an indirect relationship between number of degrees and capacity to give. Rosser (1997) found a positive relationship between academic success and capacity to give.

Learning outcomes and degree attainment are tied to the quality of educational experiences that students engage in on campus (Astin, 1985; Pascarella and Terrenzini, 1991; Umbach and Porter, 2002; Volkwein and Carbone, 1994). Patouillet (2000) reported higher levels of giving with higher ratings of faculty and quality of staff; however, Hunter (1997) did not find significance for similar measures. Pearson (1996) had conflicting results for image of the institution, but other inter-institutional studies found generally positive effects for measures of institutional prestige and quality (Baade and Sundberg, 1996a; Baade and Sundberg, 1996b; Cunningham and Cochi-Ficano, 2002; Harrison, 1995; Harrison, Mitchell, and Peterson, 1995; Leslie and Ramey, 1988; Mael and Ashforth, 1992).

Student involvement in extracurricular activities during college is seen by many as an integral part of a college education, associated with degree completion and increased student learning (Astin, 1985; Pascarella and Terrenzini, 1991). Results from several studies supported a relationship between various types of undergraduate involvement and alumni giving (Astin, Sax, and Avalos, 1999; Baker, 1998; Klostermann, 1995; Lindahl and Winship, 1994; Mulugetta, Nash, and Murphy, 1999; Pearson, 1996; Rosser, 1997; Taylor and Martin, 1995; Young and

Fischer, 1996). One study by Miller and Casebeer (1990) found that donors were less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities.

The positive relationship between capacity to give and donor status or level of giving is well established (Ashcraft, 1995; Brittingham and Pezzulo, 1990; Bruggink and Siddiqui, 1995; Connolly and Blanchette, 1986; Hunter, 1997; Lindahl and Winship, 1994; Melchiori, 1988; Mulugetta, Nash, and Murphy, 1999; Okunade, 1993; Okunade, 1996; Okunade and Berl, 1997; Okunade, Wunnava, and Walsh, 1994; Pearson, 1996; Schmidt, 2001; Taylor and Martin, 1995; Wunnava and Lauze, 2001; Young and Fischer, 1996). Measures were personal and household income level or other proxies such as major, occupation, or neighborhood rating. Older alumni give at higher levels until mortality becomes a factor (Ashcraft, 1995; Hunter, 1997, Lindahl and Winship, 1994; Pearson, 1996; Rosser, 1997; Schmidt, 2001; Violand, 1998). Mosser (1993) found a positive relationship between capacity and motivation to give. In contrast, Simari (1995) did not find significance for capacity to give.

Results have been conflicting on the effect of fellowships, grants or scholarships with studies showing a positive relationship with giving (Mulugetta, Nash, and Murphy, 1999), and no significance (Hunter, 1997; Rosser, 1997; Shim, 2001). Pearson (1996) reports a negative relationship between the need to repay student loans and alumni giving.

Alumni Involvement and Solicitation

Involving alumni in the life of the institution does not happen in a vacuum, and it requires institutional effort via alumni affairs and development office activities. According to Pearson (1999), “giving is influenced... by the quality of alumni relations and communications... and the messages conveyed in solicitations—not to mention the methods used and resources invested in

fundraising” (p. 8). Several studies supported the efficacy of alumni involvement on increasing donations (Baker, 1998; Hunter, 1997; Klostermann, 1995; Patouillet, 2000; Pearson, 1996; Rosser, 1997; Shim, 2001; Taylor and Martin, 1995; Violand, 1998; Young and Fischer, 1996). The case for solicitation (mailings, capital campaigns, phone and personal contact, etc.) being a major factor in alumni giving was also supported by several studies (Baade and Sundberg, 1996a; Harrison, 1995; Harrison, Mitchell, and Peterson, 1995; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Pearson, 1996; Rosser, 1997; Shim, 2001; Taylor and Martin, 1995; Turner, Meserve, and Bowen, 2001; Violand, 1998; Young and Fisher, 1996). Researchers identified increased giving during reunion years when alumni are often solicited for support (Bristol, 1990; Grant and Lindauer, 1986; Olsen, Smith, and Wunnava, 1989; Willemain et al., 1994; Wunnava and Lauze, 2001). Only a few studies found no significance for measures of solicitation (Cunningham and Cochi-Ficano, 2002; Hunter, 1997; Leslie and Ramey, 1988; Patouillet, 2000).

Influence of the External Environment

Research by economists, as expected, focused more on questions of whether economic conditions affect giving. Their research with longitudinal data sets demonstrated that changes in tax policies, recessions, unemployment rates, stock market crashes, and market confidence affect giving, with a positive economic environment associated with higher alumni participation rates and levels of giving (Bruggink and Siddiqui, 1995; Coltfelter, 1985; Okunade, 1996; Okunade, Wunnava, and Walsh, 1994; Olsen, Smith and Wunnava, 1989; Willemain et al., 1994).

The obligation to give to a college or university may be weakened by competing institutions such as a prestigious graduate school (Young and Fischer, 1996) or a favored undergraduate institution (Beeler, 1982; Miracle, 1977). Alumni commitment to an institution

may be increased by a spouse, parents, relatives, or children attending the same institution (Klostermann, 1995; Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Melchiori, 1988; Schmidt, 2001; Violand, 1998; Young and Fischer, 1996).

Demographic Characteristics

Finally, alumni demographic characteristics have been researched extensively, with ongoing debate as to whether these variables are valuable predictors of alumni giving (Connolly and Blanchette, 1986; Brittingham and Pezzulo, 1990). As discussed above, age has been shown to have a consistent relationship with alumni giving, however, results for number and age of children, residency status during college, parent's income level, location of current residence, marital status, sex, and ethnicity have been conflicting (Mosser, 1993; Rosser, 1997; Schmidt, 2001). Religion, parent socio-economic status, ethnicity or cultural background may impact one's value system (Nirschel, 1997).

Study Methods

In Spring 2004, the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) conducted a survey of degree alumni donors and non-donors. Degree alumni included those graduating with a diploma, certificate, associates, or bachelors degree during the years 1986 through 2003. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in the appendix.

Cronbach's alpha and factor analysis with Varimax rotation were used to assess the reliability of the in-house instrument. Intended scales measuring the quality of student services, social responsibility to give, and preference to give to other charitable organizations did not hold together. Due to many alumni, who could not recall the quality of specific student services or failed to use services, the associated scale was excluded from analysis. Other questions were

entered in the statistical tests as separate variables (see questions 10a, 10c, 10d, 10h, 10e, and 10j in the appendix). Question 10d, measuring the effect of recessions, was also included in the analysis. The variables from these questions were not normal and highly skewed and could not be successfully transformed; thus, they were recoded as dichotomous variables with a score of 5-7 being a 1 and 1-4 set to 0.

Other scales had a .7 or higher Cronbach's Alpha and high factor loadings as recommended by Spector (1992). The questions for these scales included quality of instruction (1a, 1d, 1f), alumni satisfaction (1b, 1e, 1g), student learning (3a-3g), and perceived need (10b, 10g, 10k). A simple summation of the scores was used to create a total score. Alumni involvement was measured as the total number of programs or activities participated in since graduation (4a-4c, 4e-4g), with level of solicitation being the total number of different types of solicitation experienced by alumni (5-7). Variables were reverse scored as needed.

Variables were transformed to approach normality. Quality of faculty instruction was squared, and level of solicitation was transformed taking the square root. Due to positive skew, alumni satisfaction was converted to a set of dichotomous variables (high satisfaction 1 = ≥ 20 , 0 = other, moderate-high satisfaction 1 = 18-19, 0 = other). Alumni involvement had to be recoded: moderate involvement 1 = participated in 1-2 alumni activities, 0 = no participation, high involvement 1 = participated in 3 or more alumni activities, 0 = lower level of involvement. Undergraduate involvement was also recoded: moderate student involvement 1 = 2-4, 0 = other, high student involvement 1 = 5-7, 0 = other.

Data from the alumni survey were joined with other variables available in the student information system (SIS) and from the National Student Loan Clearinghouse (NSLCH). Several dichotomous variables were as follows: sex 1 = male, 0 = female, proximity 1 = live in the

county 0 = lives outside the county, one adult employed 1 = yes, 0 = no, two adults employed 1 = yes, 0 = no, full-time employee 1 = former or current full-time college employee, 0 = not a former full-time employee, major 1 = nursing, computer science, or business major, 0 = other, degree other institution 1 = earned a degree from another institution, 0 = no degree from another institution, transfer-out 1 = subsequently attended another institution, 0 = no subsequent attendance, and top-tier 1 = attended another top-tier institution, 0 = did not attend.

Other continuous variables were recoded into dummy variables due to non-normal distributions: loans 1 = received student loans, 0 = no loans, receipt of scholarship 1 = received \$1,000 or more in scholarships, 0 = none or a lower amount, 2-3 children 1 = yes, 0 = no, 4 or more children 1 = yes, 0 = no, A GPA 1 = 3.7 or higher, 0 = lower, B GPA 1 = 2.7 and less than 3.7, 0 = lower. Age was successfully transformed with the log transformation.

The study focused on three dependent variables: willingness to give (see question 8), donor status 1 = recorded as giving any gift, 0 = no gift, and current donor 1 = gave during spring 2001- spring 2004, 0 = no donation during this period.

Although missing values were few in number, they were replaced with the mean for each question, except for household income. Missing values for household income level were estimated using combined education level, number of adults employed, and resulting means.

The goal was to achieve a sample of 200 donors and 400 non-donors. The population of alumni donors was 512. Of the 512 donors, 193 (37.7%) responded to the survey. The total population of degree alumni non-donors was 21,106. Of these, the OIR randomly over-sampled 1,605 by cohort year, with 190 (11.8%) responding to the survey. The alumni office had not tracked alumni well in the past, and the lists were nearly exhausted to achieve these samples.

Despite the low response rate for non-donors, both samples represented the populations of donors and non-donors reasonably well, when considering sample characteristics. The sample of donors was 45% male, 3% students of color, 79% living in the county, and 21% transfer-outs. They were on average 41 years of age and had given \$288 to the college. There were only small differences between these sample characteristics and the total population; however, the population of donors was 49% male; thus, males were somewhat under-represented in the sample of donors. The sample of non-donors was 52% male, 4% students of color, 70% living in the county, 30% transfer-outs, and on average 36 years of age. The sample of non-donors was somewhat older than the population age of non-donors (average 33 years of age), and less represented by students of color (7%).

OIR experience with prior alumni surveys demonstrated that it was more difficult to obtain responses from older graduating classes. Thus, respondents were tracked by graduating cohort years with the final results as follows: 1986-1990 56 donors 54 non-donors, 1991-1995 42 donors 39 non-donors, 1996-2000 54 donors 56 non-donors, and 2001-2003 41 donors 41 non-donors. Despite this control, the donor group was made up of more non-traditional adults, who were older at the time of graduation.

Due to skewness in the data, path analysis was conducted versus structural equation modeling (Fouladi, 2000; Olsson et al., 2000) using MPLUS, a software program that is capable of handling continuous, dichotomous, or ordinal endogenous dependent variables (Muthen and Muthen, 2004). The program uses linear regression for continuous dependent variables, and probit regression for categorical dependent variables. The path analysis was supplemented with descriptive statistics, parametric and nonparametric t-test comparisons, t-tests for proportions, and logistic regression (SPSS). Sample sizes were appropriate for all statistical procedures and

exceeded 15 cases per estimated parameter for the path analysis and logistic regressions (Menard, 2002; University of Texas, 2004).

Study Findings

Differences Between Donors and Non-Donors

The mission of alumni offices is to maintain a connection or involvement between alumni and their alma mater, in part because involvement is related to donor status (Table 1). The percentage of alumni participating in alumni activities is significantly higher for current donors and all donors compared with non-donors. About a third of alumni maintain contact with faculty and staff on campus after graduation, which identifies a potential source for better tracking of degree alumni. Nevertheless, about nearly half of degree alumni at the college appear uninvolved in alumni activities after graduation.

Place Table 1 About Here

Donor status is also related to direct solicitation efforts and contact made by the alumni and institutional advancement offices (Table 2). Overall, 64% of non-donors report receiving some type of contact from these offices (mailings, phone, or personal contact); yet, 36% of degree alumni have not been contacted. The second most common reason that non-donors give for not contributing is that they have never been asked to do so by the college.

Place Table 2 About Here

Currently, only about 2% of degree alumni have given a donation to the college. About 8% of non-donors express that they are likely, very likely, or definitely willing to give this year compared with 45% of donors, and 83% of current donors. Only 1% of non-donors reported that they would definitely give during the current year, compared with 19% of donors, and 47% of current donors.

Significant differences between donor status groups also exist on several variables measuring various aspects of the educational experience at the college (Table 3). Although the differences are not large, donors are more likely to rate the quality of instruction higher and report a greater level of learning. They are more likely to have higher levels of undergraduate student involvement in campus life, and express higher overall satisfaction with their educational experience compared with non-donors. The most common response that donors report as a reason for making a donation is their high satisfaction with the education received at the institution. Alumni in the donor groups are much more likely to have cumulative grade point averages in the “A” range and receive a scholarship of \$1,000 or more. Open-ended responses indicate that receipt of a scholarship creates a desire on the part of alumni to give other students the same opportunity.

Place Table 3 About Here

Alumni with majors in higher paying occupations and with higher levels of education also have greater average household income levels, as expected. In turn, these alumni are more likely to be in the donor status groups. By far, the most common response that non-donors report as a reason for not contributing financially is that they don't have the money. However, it is important to point out that even alumni with low household incomes have given donations to the college through its policy of giving "any amount." This practice can encourage more recent alumni to establish a habit of giving.

Finally, alumni attitudes and preferences regarding donations to charitable causes also vary significantly by donor status (Table 4). Donors are more likely to perceive that the college needs their donations and has a worthy cause, and they are less likely to prefer giving to other charitable or religious causes versus to the college. Donors are more likely to prefer giving to the college than to other competing educational institutions, yet the percentage of non-donors who express a preference for the college is also very high (64%). The large majority of alumni are less likely to give during a recession, with current donors less influenced by this factor.

Place Table 4 About Here

Primary reasons that donors give to explain their contribution is a sense of obligation or desire to give back to the college followed by altruistic values to help other students. However, there are no statistically significant differences on questions measuring these constructs between donors and non-donors.

The college also solicits employees for donations. Of the three groups, non-donors are only 3% former or current full-time college employees. About 36% of all donors and 74% of current donors are former or current college employees.

Factors Predicting Donor Status

The advantage of path analysis is the ability to test theoretical models and assess direct and indirect effects of several factors on a dependent variable. When estimating the path model for donor status, relationships among variables were deleted if the estimate to standard error ratio did not exceed 1.96. In the resulting model (excluding college employees), the value for the Chi-Square Test of Model Fit is 73.5, 53 degrees of freedom, with a p-value of .0329. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is .035. The Tucker Lewis Index is .93, and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is .94. The statistics would indicate mediocre fit approaching a well-fitting model, but not poor. Because the path model was modified, the procedure is considered to be exploratory and model generating.

The final path model is presented in Figure 1 along with the standardized path coefficients. As hypothesized, capacity to give (measured by household income level) is affected by educational outcomes and alumni characteristics and increases with education level, earning an academic major in higher paying fields, two-income earners in the family, and age. There is no statistically significant relationship between household income level and need for remedial education or cumulative GPA—hypothesized relationships dropped from the model.

Alumni satisfaction (high satisfaction) is positively related to educational experiences and educational outcomes (i.e. student learning and quality of instruction); however, alumni satisfaction is not significantly related to student involvement, household income level, GPA,

age, or sex. Student learning is positively associated with higher ratings of instructional quality and student involvement.

The literature emphasizes the importance of alumni involvement to encourage annual giving. The results support the hypothesis that alumni, who are more satisfied with their educational experience and outcomes, and who are more involved in student life as undergraduates, have greater involvement in alumni activities (high alumni involvement). Alumni, who have high satisfaction and are involved on campus, are more likely to perceive a college need for donations. As a result, these alumni are more likely to donate (all relationships statistically significant). As solicitation efforts become more personal, the level of alumni involvement also appears to increase. Proximity (living in the county) is not significantly associated with alumni involvement, contrary to a priori expectations.

The path model also provides empirical support for hypothesized relationships with the dependent variables of primary interest. Variables positively associated with willingness to give are age, capacity to give, receipt of a scholarship of \$1,000 or more, perceived need, and alumni involvement. As recent alumni age, their incomes generally rise resulting in an indirect effect via capacity; however, there also appears to be a direct effect. A few predictors in the model have negative relationships with current donor status: other religious donations, and less willingness to give during a recession. The latter is of particular note because the economy has been in a recession for several years.

Donor status is positively associated with willingness to give. The path diagram does not include solicitation as a predictor of current donor status (the effect is indirect), but rather donor status is predictive of higher levels of solicitation or more personalized solicitation.

Several variables are not statistically significant contrary to initial hypotheses. Level of solicitation does not have a significant direct relationship with willingness to give, and it is not a significant predictor of donor status directly, but again its effect is indirect through alumni involvement. Alumni satisfaction is not a significant predictor of willingness to give, but also has an indirect effect through alumni involvement. Measures of obligation to give did not achieve significance, along with preferences to give to other educational institutions or charitable causes, earning a degree at other educational institutions, transferring, subsequent attendance at a top-tier institution, loan aid, and other demographic variables. Larger sample sizes, improved measurement of variables, and alternative questions could possibly result in statistical significance for some of these variables.

When including college employees and predicting current donor status and donor status, the model fit improves for current donor status, and decreases somewhat for donor status. Relationships among the variables are generally consistent among the various models. However, solicitation has no significant relationship with perceived need when predicting current donor status. Solicitation has a negative and significant relationship with perceived need (in the opposite direction as hypothesized) in the donor status models. This relationship is dropped from the models predicting donor status on theoretical grounds, but it appears that a substantial number of degree alumni, who donated more than three years ago, do not perceive a current need for donations at the college. Degree alumni, who are college employees, have higher levels of involvement, satisfaction, and willingness to give.

R-Square values in the MPLUS output for dependent variables in the model (Figure 2) are as follows: .24 capacity, .12 student learning, .08 perceived need, and .24 solicitation. MPLUS does not provide R-Square equivalents for dichotomous dependent variables; however,

logistic regression has an R-Square equivalent, McFadden's Index (R^2_L), interpreted as the proportional reduction in the variance. Using the same indirect and direct predictors specified for each dichotomous dependent variable in the model, the R^2_L values for the dichotomous variables are: .37 alumni satisfaction, .24 alumni involvement (excluding donor status), .32 willingness to give (all variables excluding donor status), and .28 donor status (all variables). These results indicate that the model has explanatory value, but additional variables are needed.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The current study contributes to the development of a theoretical model of alumni giving in higher education. However, researchers need to test the model at other institutions and further refine its constructs. Institutions with greater success in tracking alumni and securing alumni donations could achieve larger sample sizes and possible significance for other factors in the model. Alternative questions measuring the effects of altruistic values and preferences could be explored further along with obligation to give, efficacy, and emotional attachment.

The effectiveness of different solicitation strategies could also be examined in future research. Alumni frequently discussed solicitation methods, with division among respondents concerning preferences for mailings, phone calls, online options, or televised fundraisers, but there was consensus about the positive effects for incentives and need for more frequent solicitation.

Study findings substantiate a need for improvement in alumni solicitation at the college in that a large number of alumni have never been asked to give a donation, and few have given a donation. Asking for a donation is the most frequent suggestion for improvement given by alumni. Goals could be set annually to increase the percentage and numbers of alumni who give to the college and to increase the level of giving for current donors. In order to make such

solicitations, the alumni office needs to maintain current contact information on alumni and promote greater alumni involvement. The alumni office should send a mailing at least every six months to all degree alumni to maintain current contact information. Campus initiatives to contract out for alumni locator services should be supplemented with participation by alumni, faculty, and staff in finding former college graduates and consideration of a web-based alumni locator network. Communication with alumni should be more frequent, “strategically timed rather than occasional and fortuitous” (Pearson, 1999, p. 9). Attendance at homecoming/class reunions, and alumni association membership is extremely low and needs to be increased. Alumni feedback on how to specifically improve these services may prove valuable. An expansion of alumni services to include an alumni directory, lifetime e-mail, credit card, travel services, continuing education (targeted to alumni needs), and career placement services could increase participation rates.

The percentage of alumni, who express a willingness to give in the current year, is extremely low. Postponing a capital campaign until the recession ends may be prudent. Institutional advancement must make a convincing case regarding the need for donations and how these donations assist alumni and the community, as several other charitable organizations are requesting contributions from alumni. The second most common recommendation for improvement given by alumni is to show the need: identify where the money is going, and report on results. Having clearly stated goals to raise funds for specific buildings, specialized equipment, library acquisitions, scholarships, and other programs is essential, perhaps through a set of high-quality attractive brochures. Greater undergraduate involvement in campus life, fundraising, and educating undergraduate students while they are attending about the need for alumni donations could impact giving attitudes.

The campus community must continue to offer quality instruction and services and constantly improve upon those services. Assessing student satisfaction, responding to student feedback, and maintaining a student-centered approach are crucial. Expanding scholarship programs could have long-term benefits in terms of alumni giving and is ideal for alumni donations. Alumni want the institution to “keep up the excellence... [and] create a great educational experience for the students... so that when they leave they will want to give back.”

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Figure 1. Theoretical Model of Alumni Giving

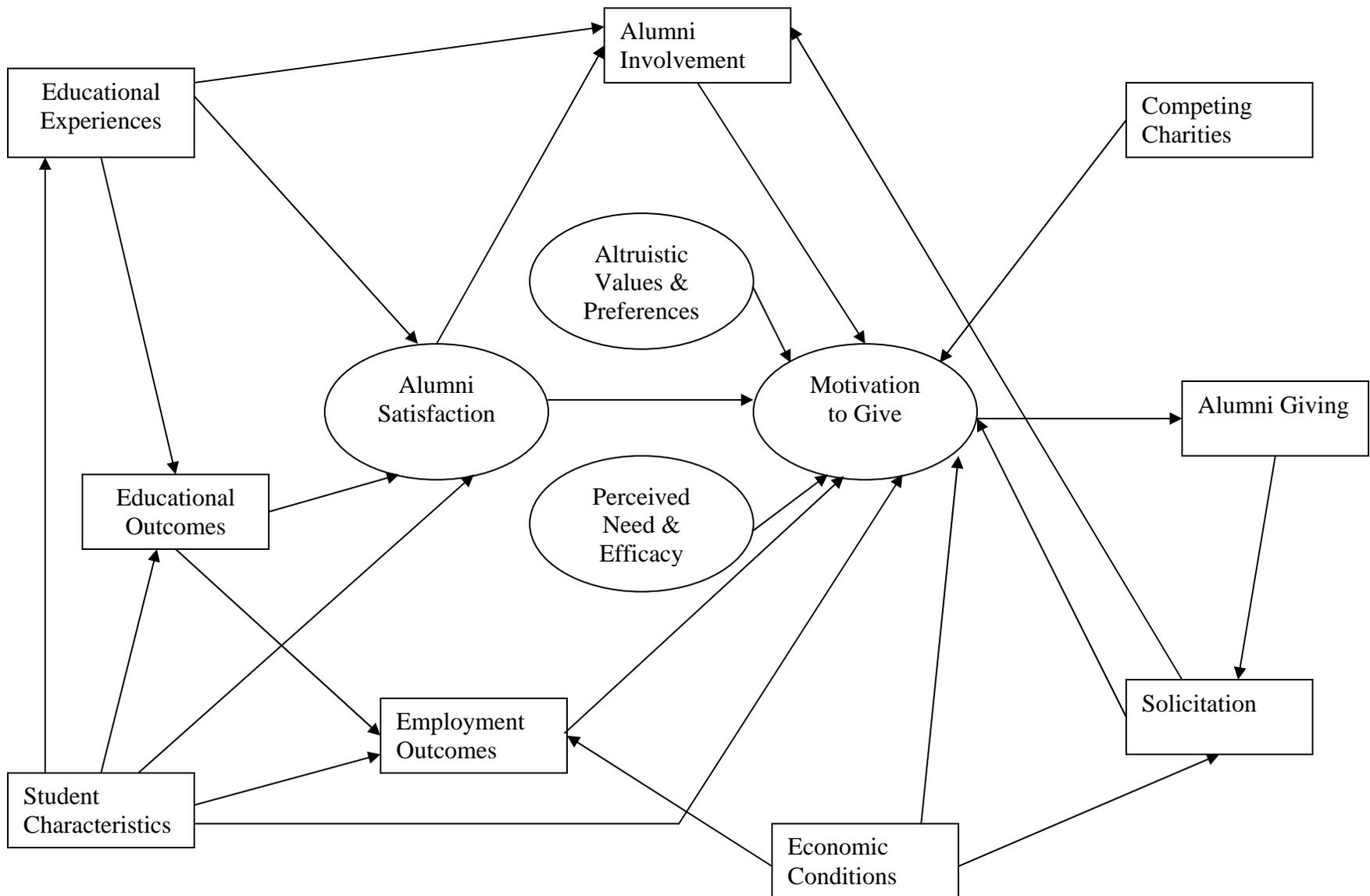


Table 1. Alumni Involvement

Variables	<i>Current Donor (N=57)</i>	<i>Donor (N=193)</i>	<i>Non-donor (N=190)</i>
Association Membership	19.3% **	15.0% **	2.1%
Event Attendance	77.2% **	62.7% **	33.7%
Homecoming/Reunions	24.6% **	11.4%	2.1%
Wolverine Club	8.8%	4.7%	0%
Career Exploration	14.0%	10.9%	1.6%
Faculty/Staff Contact	79.0% **	53.4% **	29.0%
Advisory Boards	35.1% **	15.5% **	1.6%
Any Involvement	89.5% **	73.6% **	49.0%

*p<.05, **p<.01

Table 2. Solicitation

Variables	<i>Current Donor (N=57)</i>	<i>Donor (N=193)</i>	<i>Non-donor (N=190)</i>
Sequel Magazine	94.7% **	78.2% **	43.7%
Other Mailings	70.2% **	69.4% **	37.9%
Phone Volunteer Request	31.6% **	19.7% *	7.9%
Phone Gift Request	54.4% **	54.9% **	19.5%
Personal Volunteer Request	31.6% **	15.5% *	4.7%
Personal Gift Request	47.4% **	23.3% **	1.6%
Any Solicitation	94.7% **	92.8% **	64.2%

*p<.05, **p<.01

Table 3. Educational Variables and Capacity

Variables	<i>Current Donor (N=57)</i>	<i>Donor (N=193)</i>	<i>Non-donor (N=190)</i>
Quality Instruction	358**	343**	312
Student Learning	21.9**	21.8**	20.8
High Student Involvement	35.1%*	29.5%	22.1%
High Satisfaction	61.4%**	51.8%**	25.8%
Receipt of Scholarship	35.1%**	21.8%	12.6%
A GPA	52.6%**	37.8%*	25.8%
Major	40.4%**	37.3%*	23.2%
Education Level	5.1**	4.4*	3.9
Income Level	4.4**	4.0**	3.4

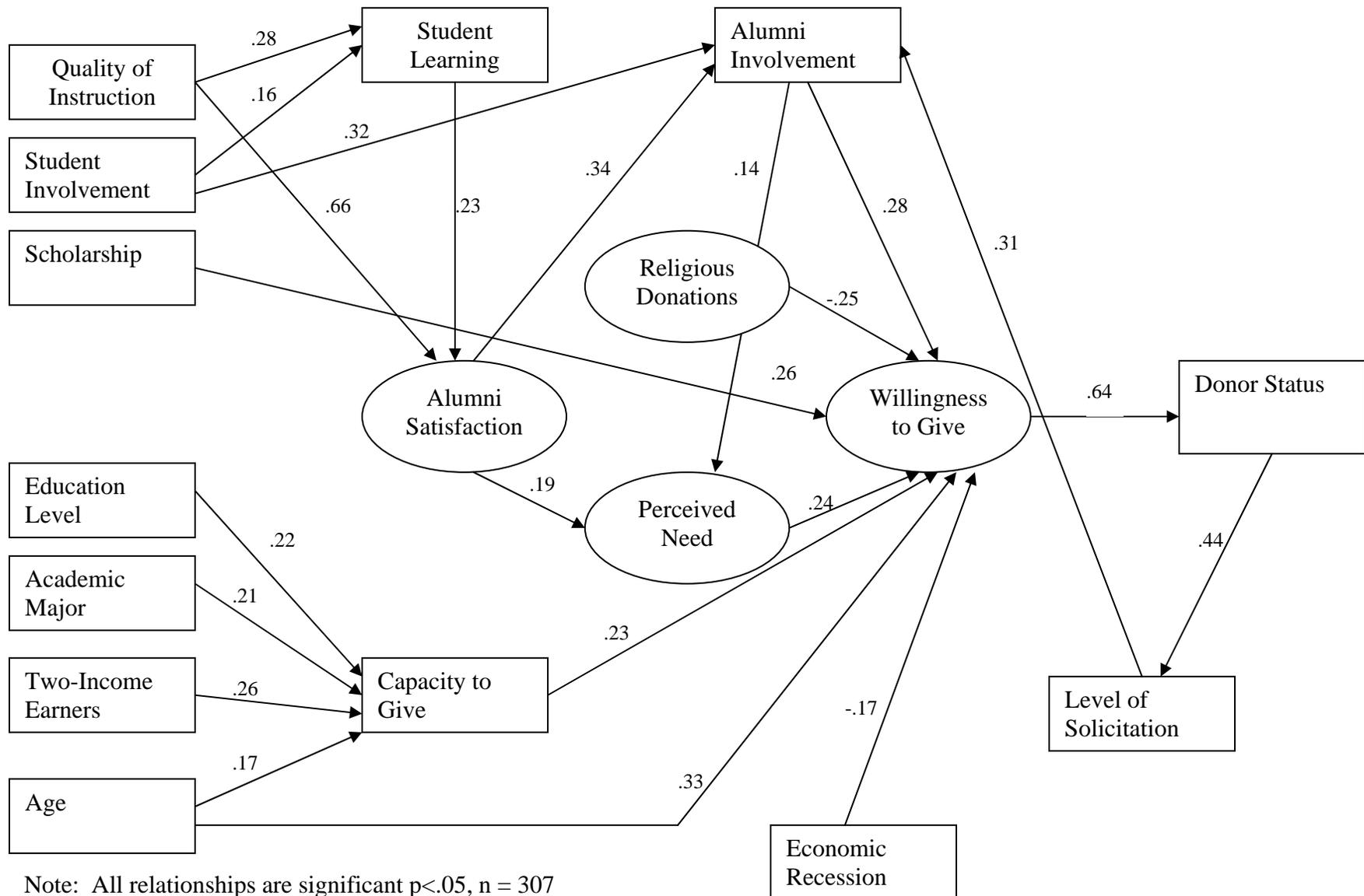
*p<.05, **p<.01

Table 4. Giving Attitudes, Preferences, and Economic Perceptions

Variables	<i>Current Donor (N=57)</i>	<i>Donor (N=193)</i>	<i>Non-donor (N=190)</i>
Perceived Need	14.0**	13.3**	12.4
College Preference	73.7%*	73.1%*	63.7%
Transfer-out	15.8%*	20.2%	30.0%
Degree Other Institution	45.6%*	36.3%	32.6%
Charitable Preference	12.3%**	29.5%**	47.9%
Religious Donations	31.6%**	39.4%*	50.5%
Recession	64.9%**	74.6%	79.0%

*p<.05, **p<.01

Figure 2. Path Analysis Model of Alumni Giving



Alumni Donor Survey

Hello, I am calling from XXXX, and we are conducting a survey to understand why alumni give and don't give donations to the college. This is not a solicitation, and the information will be used for research purposes only. This survey is voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any question. Your responses will be kept confidential by the Office of Institutional Research on campus and it will not be given to anyone else on campus in a way that identifies you personally. After analyzing it, we will destroy any information that identifies you. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. Would you be willing to do the survey?

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Instructions

- Use a No. 2 pencil only. The scanner can **only** read pencil.
- **Make solid marks that fill the response completely.** No ✓'s or X's
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.

Example: CORRECT: ● INCORRECT: ○

1. Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements about your undergraduate experience at XXXX. Possible answers range from strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree or disagree, somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A. Faculty at XXXX were outstanding teachers.							
B. I am very satisfied with my educational experience at XXXX.							
C. I often took advantage of the social activities or joined student organizations and clubs while attending XXXX.							
D. Faculty at XXXX cared about students and did their best to help them learn.							
E. I would recommend XXXX to others planning on college.							
F. The quality of instruction was excellent at XXXX.							
G. If I had to do it all over again, I would attend XXXX.							

2. Please rate the quality of the following student services that you received at XXXX. Responses range from extremely poor, very poor, poor, adequate, good, very good, excellent.

What was the quality of:	Extremely Poor	Very Poor	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Good	Excellent
A. Academic advising							
B. Career counseling							
C. Financial aid							
D. Job placement services							
E. The process of registering for courses							

3. Please indicate the extent to which your education at XXXX increased your growth or development in the following areas. Responses range from none, very little, some, moderate, a lot.

	None	Very Little	Some	Moderate	A Lot
A. Communication/interpersonal skills					
B. Computer/technology skills					
C. Critical thinking/problem solving					
D. Job preparation					
E. Knowledge in major					
F. Mathematics/computational skills					
G. Writing ability					

4. Which of the following XXXX activities or programs have you participated in since graduation?

- Alumni association membership
- Attended performances and other events on campus
- Attended Homecoming/Class reunions
- Became a member of the Wolverine Club (athletic booster club)
- Facilitated XXXX student career exploration visits to your firm/business
- Maintained contact with faculty or staff
- Served on campus advisory boards

5. Have you received...

- XXXX's Alumni Magazine, XXXX
- brochures or letters about the alumni association, class reunions, or giving to XXXX

6. Have you been contacted on the phone to...

- give of your time or do volunteer work for XXXX
- give a financial donation to XXXX

7. Have you been asked in person to...

- give of your time or do volunteer work for XXXX
- give a financial donation to XXXX

8. What is the likelihood that you will make a financial donation to XXXX *this year*?

- Definitely not
- Probably
- Very Unlikely
- Very likely
- Probably not
- Definitely
- Undecided

9. What is the likelihood that you will make a financial contribution to XXXX at some time *in the future*?

- Definitely not
- Probably
- Very Unlikely
- Very likely
- Probably not
- Definitely
- Undecided

-Continued-

