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Student-Athletes and Their Willingness to Contribute Financially in the Future to Eastern Illinois University Athletics

Joseph Richard Ethington
Eastern Illinois University

This research is a product of the graduate program in Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University. Find out more about the program.

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STUDENT-ATHLETES AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO CONTRIBUTE FINANCIALLY IN THE FUTURE TO EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

BY

Joseph Richard Ethington

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Science in College Student Affairs

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

2011 YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

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STUDENT-ATHLETES AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO CONTRIBUTE FINANCIALLY IN THE FUTURE TO EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

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Thesis
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April 2011
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family. Mom, dad, Megan, Margaret, and Emily, you are the greatest family anyone could ask for. All of you have individually shaped me into the person I am today. Mom and dad you always believed in me, even when others did not. Your guidance and encouragement has allowed me to develop into the confident man I am today. Thank you and I love you all!

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my fiancé. Brittany, you are the love of my life and I would be honored if you would allow me to be with you forever. Your constant support has provided me with the motivation to achieve all that I have. I am truly grateful for everyday I have with you and know that the only way for me to be truly happy is to be with you forever.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Eastern Illinois University Athletic Department, specifically Amanda Bos, for providing me with the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of development. I would also like to thank all my committee members, especially Dr. James Wallace for pushing me when I wanted to give up. Dr. Wallace you have been a true mentor and without you I would not be where I am today.
ABSTRACT

The present study examines the perceptions of student-athletes at a mid-sized Midwest public university. The study relates the athletic, academic, and social experiences of student-athletes to their willingness to make financial contributions to the department of Athletics in the future. By knowing the degree of association to an athletic-department and/or sport team, predictors can be established to determine potential donors and their preferred recipient of support. In order to study these predictors, student-athletes were administered a survey and asked to participate in one-on-one interviews. Survey protocols were administered via a web-based survey instrument which received a response rate of 20%. Seven interviews were also conducted, representing nine different sports, in order to obtain more descriptive information regarding student-athlete experiences and perceived giving behavior.

Results showed that, on average, student-athletes considered financially contributing based on their overall collegiate experiences. According to the student-athlete sampled, a positive experience is directly related to the student-athletes' relationships with coaches and peers. The findings suggest that these positive experiences are directly related to a heightened perception of financially contributing in the future.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Due to the tough economic times that many universities are currently facing, donations from outside sources are being greatly sought. Between fiscal year 2009 and fiscal year 2010, the change in state support for higher education has declined 2.1 percent nationally (College Board: Advocacy, 2011). Current state investment of personal income has simultaneously dropped dramatically; totaling a decrease of $32.1 billion, significantly below that of 1980 levels (Weerts, & Ronca, 2007). In order to maintain prestige and competitiveness, colleges and universities are relying more heavily on private support.

One problem that many colleges and universities are facing is identifying potential donors and non-donors who are student-athletes. A key factor in determining potential donors among student-athlete alumni is the involvement individuals had during their days as student-athletes (Weerts, & Ronca, 2009). What this means is that student-athletes are generally thought of as potentially significant donors because of the unique relationships and involvement they experienced during their collegiate/athletic careers. Along with the time and physical investment that student-athletes put into an institution’s athletic teams, they often will have contributed just as much of an investment in an academic department.

In addition to student-athletes, institutions also need to examine or at least consider the much more diverse and complex group of the general student body. The characteristics that make this group so complex include the vast array of different
organizations and activities that create a connection between students and institutions. Philanthropy officers on campuses across the country have a very difficult job determining which former students developed strong enough relationships with their alma mater that they would actually be willing to provide financial support to the institution via an academic or athletic donation.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the present study is to predict the giving behaviors of currently enrolled, participating student-athletes at Eastern Illinois University (EIU). Using a mixed methods research design, the primary researcher sought to examine the potential giving behaviors of current student-athletes by sport. With the acquired data, the principle investigator compared the relationship between the proposed giving behaviors of current student-athletes with data compiled prior to the study by the university athletic department regarding giving behaviors of student-athlete alumni. The information gathered from the study contributes to the athletic department’s efforts to develop future donor solicitation campaigns while simultaneously increasing the giving behavior of future student-athlete alumni. The fiscal support raised in the future will, in turn, provide the necessary resources to guide EIU student-athletes to be loyal and dedicated contributors.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the present study.

1. To what extent do the connections a student-athlete makes with their sport determine their likelihood of being a potential donor?
2. At what time do student-athletes expect to contribute monetary gifts to EIU athletics?

3. Are student-athletes more likely to donate to the athletic department, or to non-athletic departments on EIU’s campus?

4. Are student-athletes more likely to donate financially to the general athletic fund or to the sport(s) in which they were involved (e.g., gifts to sport vs. general scholarship fund)?

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Though there is a great deal of research on giving behaviors of students, there is a dearth of information pertaining to the financial giving behaviors of the more specific group of student-athletes. Prior research has focused almost exclusively on the giving behaviors that already exist among student alumni and not the perceptions of current students’ financially giving behaviors. This study will benefit development staff by providing an understanding of the factors that influence student-athletes to financially contribute in the future. Increased understanding of the influences that guide a student-athlete to give, will guide the athletic department to develop new and more effective ways to solicit potential donors.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

While conducting the following research, the primary investigator acquired an internship within the athletic-department. The primary investigator was also a past student-athlete at the university where the study was conducted. Due to these connections with student-athletes and athletic-department staff, results of the study may be based on the participants’ biased opinions of the primary investigator. Prior knowledge that the findings will be shared with the athletic department for future
development of fundraising campaigns also could have influenced the self perceptions of participants regarding their future giving behaviors. No attempt should be made to generalize these results to other institutions or athletic departments. The results from the present study are based on a specific athletic-department that possesses a unique culture and structure, much different from other schools.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

EI Club – Donations that support sport reunions and the Hall of Fame Banquet

LAIR Fund – Eastern Illinois University’s General Athletic Scholarship Fund

LAIR - The acronym used to describe the attributes that EIU Athletics attempts to instill in its student-athletes (Leadership, Achievement, Integrity, Responsibility)

Legacy Fund – Major gifts over $10,000
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

History of Donations to Higher Education

Charitable giving has been a key component to the financing of higher education since the establishment of the first such institutions in the United States. The gifts from private donors allow colleges and universities to develop into what we characterize as superior higher education institutions. Although educational institutions in the past preferred cash donations, they were and still are happy to receive donations in the form of land, books, and food (Cohen, 1998).

Historically, the most notable donations to higher education were the Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890 (Cohen, 1998). These Acts provided for the establishment of universities via land grants from the federal government. The land given was used primarily to physically expand the institution’s physical plant or sold to increase the finances of the university (Cohen, 1998). Along with these two sizable donations, many other donations led to the establishments of Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Duke, and Harvard universities. After realizing that the only way to maintain an established institution was by receiving private donations, many institutions developed annual fundraising initiatives and development offices.

Funding of Higher Education

The most substantial forms of financing for public institutions are state appropriations, student fees, and tuition income. According to Caulkins (2002), 60% of state institution budgets rely heavily on funding from public tax support and student-
assessed tuition; the remaining 40% of funding for public, state supported institutions comes from many other smaller sources such as revenues from auxiliary services, gifts, and endowments.

Although significant funding comes from tuition and state and federal appropriations, institutions continue to rely heavily on private and corporate donations, which account for approximately 10% of funding annually (Caulkins et al., 2002). With the continuing trend of diminishing funds from state and federal governments, public colleges and universities are finding themselves experiencing greater societal demands for accountability and performance in fundraising (Eversden, 2003). The range of alumni and private giving across institutions is vast, ranging from $1,536,000 per year for two-year colleges to $85,539,000 per year for doctoral research institutions (Caulkins et al., 2002). The two primary beneficiaries of these funds were academic and intercollegiate athletic programs (Stinson, 2005). Eversden (2003) explained that the stability of fundraising is often tied to the stability and growth of the stock market (both domestic and international) and, in particular, the financial health of Fortune 500 companies. This predictor is prevalent in recent data that show a drop of 3.6% in private giving to education (The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, 2010). Despite the recent decline in the stock market, private giving to education still accounts for $40.01 billion; a large amount compared to other nonprofit entities (The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, 2010).

The fiscal break down for the financial support of many mid-size universities consists of 30% from non-alumni supporters, 20% from corporate donors, 25% from alumni, and the remainder coming from other sources (Caulkins et al., 2002). Together,
these funding sources greatly contribute to financing a mid-size university with a budget of approximately $100 million (Caulkins et al., 2002).

Funding of Eastern Illinois University Athletics

Eastern Illinois University athletics consists of 21 intercollegiate sports that all participate at the Division I level (About Eastern Illinois, 2010). Eastern Illinois University (EIU) is a member of the Ohio Valley Conference for 17 sports. Men's soccer is registered as an associate member of the Missouri Valley Conference; men's and women's swim teams compete as associate members of The Summit League; and women's rugby competes as a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I Independent (About Eastern Illinois, 2010).

Historically, a significant amount of the responsibility to support all athletic teams is placed on EIU and its athletic department. Donor financial support and student fees heavily subsidize EIU Athletics. Current donors to EIU athletics have many different options as to where their financial support will go within the department. A majority of the time, donors will contribute to the LAIR Fund, which is EIU’s general athletic scholarship fund. The Leadership, Achievement, Integrity, and Responsibility (LAIR) Fund provides annual funding for scholarships, academic support services, and leadership programs that provide EIU student-athletes with the resources they need to become well-rounded individuals; compete at the NCAA Division I level; and engage in lifelong pursuits of learning (About the Panther Club, 2010).

With approximately 450 student-athletes currently participating in EIU athletics, the potential to have significant support from donors with strong emotional ties is
considerable (About the Panther Club, 2010). With 5,858 EIU former student-athlete alumni, the pool of potential donors is a vast market that has not completely been tapped. Throughout the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 focal years, 540 of the student-athlete alumni have financially contributed to the athletic department. Although the ratio of contributors to non-contributors is low, the total fiscal donation is exceedingly high. For example, during the 2009-2010 fiscal year, former student-athletes contributed a total of $153,760. During the fiscal year 2010-11 (in progress at the time of this research study), $96,973 in fiscal support had been received from former student-athletes (EIU Dept. of Athletics, 2010). Athletic department officials projected that efforts to increase this amount via new philanthropic campaigns targeted at former student-athletes could result in double the amount received in previous years as well as the number of and percentage of former athletes who give on an annual basis (A. Bos, personal communication, August 13, 2010).

Predicting Alumni Donor Giving

Being aware of a need is one of many prerequisites when alumni decide to donate. Bryant et al. (2003) found that 85% of gifts were made following a single solicitation. According to Pearson (1999), a major deterrent to alumni giving is a feeling that the university does not need their gift as much as another organization. Two particular problems that many institutions encounter are (1) building relationships through continuous communication and (2) enhancing the relationships that were developed during the alumni’s institutional experience.
Along with the continuous development of new relationships, alumni contributions are heavily dependent on the amount of time and money put into the alumni during and after their time at the institution (Weerts, & Ronca, 2009). The array of psychological connections that an alumnus makes with their institution is the key to creating a loyal donor. Weerts and Ronca explained that giving is directly related to how alumni view their alma mater and the degree of satisfaction with their experience as a student (2009). One conclusion drawn from their study is that even though giving is directly related to involvement, larger gifts come from alumni who have strong feelings about the quality of academics and academic organizations in which they participated while a student (Weerts, & Ronca, 2009). These researchers identified these variables and provided a classification system to facilitate the determination of the likelihood of a former student to donate. Their classification tree is a survey instrument that guides the philanthropic officer to determine in which giving category a potential donor should be placed. This classification system bases an individual’s potential giving behavior on such items as salary range and age.

According to Potuto and O’Hanion (2007), student-athletes express a generally positive picture of their college lives. Even though they generally enjoy their experience, they tend to regret not having time to be involved in activities outside of athletics. Yet, many student-athletes believe that the overall experiences they had in college prepared them for the experiences they would have in the real world. Due to the relationships that student-athletes develop with an athletic program, they tend to donate more than individuals who do not have as much involvement with the university (Potuto, & O’Hanion, 2007). With the intent to examine relationships between the students and
their institutions, Potuto and O’Hanion administered a survey to student-athletes at 18 Division IA schools. Their findings indicated that a positive correlation between student-athletes’ collegiate experiences and their willingness to donate exists. Along with the relationships that are created between the donor and institution, relationships between the teammates of the designated sport are also a determining factor in predicting potential donors (Willemain, & Goyal, 1994). Supporting this concept of teammate relationships, Wann and Somerville (2000) also suggested that relationships formed with the university and teammates creates an identity for the student-athlete. Some researchers can also see these relationships as a precursor to financial support from the individual.

Along with creating welcoming and enjoyable collegiate atmospheres, philanthropists also need to focus on maintaining the relationships with students once they become alumni. Primarily due to job status and financial stability, new graduates generally do not contribute substantial more than older alumni that are more secure in their career and have more of a means to financially contribute. Thomas and Smart’s results indicate that years since graduation, social activities, leadership, and education were able to distinguish donors from non-donors (2005).

Relationships among Student-Athletes

As student-athletes build relationships with teammates and coaches, strong ties with the team and athletic-department begin to emerge. Researchers have found that positive relationships were reflected in overall happiness among student-athletes (Donohue et al. 2007). Interestingly, overall happiness among student-athletes has been
shown to be stronger among student-athlete peers than with their coaches (Donohue et al. 2007). Although the level of happiness in relationships among coaches is lower than similar interpersonal relationships among student-athlete peers, student-athletes still expressed a strong connection between their awareness of the positive interpersonal relationships among coaches and their overall satisfaction with their athletic experience (Donohue et al. 2007). Data also shows that student-athletes participating in both individual and team sports have a stronger team cohesiveness when coaching leadership supports strong positive interpersonal relationships among student-athletes (Holmes et al. 2008).

Through strong relationships between student-athletes, coaches, teammates, and athletic department staff, student-athletes develop a stronger connection to both their team and the athletic department. As previously discussed, these positive relationships create an increased willingness to financially give back.

SUMMARY

Research regarding the funding of higher education, funding of EIU Athletics, predicting alumni donors, and the relationships formed between coaches and student-athletes have been reviewed in this chapter. The concepts discussed in this chapter relate to the findings of the current study. Further comparisons between prior research and the current study will be discussed in Chapter V.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The following research questions guided the present study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do the connections a student-athlete makes with their sport determine their likelihood of being a potential donor?

2. At what time do student-athletes expect to contribute monetary gifts to EIU athletics?

3. Are student-athletes more likely to donate to the athletic department, or to non-athletic departments on EIU’s campus?

4. Are student-athletes more likely to donate financially to the general athletic fund or to the sport(s) in which they were involved (e.g., gifts to sport vs. general scholarship fund)?

MIXED METHOD APPROACH TO DATA COLLECTION

The present study involved a mixed method approach for data collection. The use of a survey instrument for data acquisition in addition to one-on-one interviews were determined to be the best combination of methods to use due to the large number of potential participants (450 student-athletes) associated with the university’s athletic department. As explained by Patten (2001), the utility of surveys is in their usefulness in situations similar to those of the present study. Specifically, the need to obtain large amounts of information in an efficient way with time constraint associated with student athlete practice, travel and playing schedules created unique challenges in assessing this student population. One-on-one interviews are also widely used due to
the adaptability of questions and use of verbal interaction between individuals to acquire data (Borg, & Gall, 1983). Interviews allowed the primary researcher to obtain rich data and a better understanding of the social phenomenon of the topic through total immersion in the area of study (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2005).

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the present study were selected as a result of their association with Eastern Illinois University’s athletic department during the fall 2010 and spring 2011 academic terms. The selected athletic department sports consist of 21 Division I athletic teams (Appendix A): eleven female teams and ten male teams. Student athletes were solicited to participate in the present study regardless of their academic statuses which ranged from freshmen to graduate students.

Two different methods of data collection were utilized during the current research study. Survey protocols were administered to all student-athletes (404 student-athletes) from the selected mid-sized Midwest University. Student-athlete contact information was provided by the athletic department’s list serve, guaranteeing all student-athletes had the opportunity to complete the survey protocols.

Student-athletes who participated in one-on-one interviews were selected based on their representation of sports regarding survey data. If the number of surveys completed amounted to less than a 20% response rate, one-on-one interviews were conducted with randomly selected student-athletes. Qualitative data were tabulated to ascertain correlations between student-athlete overall satisfaction with their collegiate careers and their perceptions of their own future financial contributing behaviors.
INSTRUMENTATION

Quantitative data for the present study were collected in order to understand the thoughts of current student-athletes in specific areas via an on-line survey. The survey was administered to all EIU student-athletes that participated on an athletic team during the fall 2010 through spring 2011 academic terms (see Appendix B attached). The survey was comprised of 17 protocols addressing student-athletes and their perceived future giving behavior. An additional protocol was designed by the primary researcher to better understand the perceptions of student-athlete who did not perceive themselves giving to EIU athletics as part of their future giving behaviors. The survey instrument solicited demographic information (e.g., sport and class standing) along with information regarding the willingness of the surveyed student-athletes to donate monetary gifts to the EIU athletic department; the student-athletes’ feelings for the sport in which they participated; and their general perceptions of the athletic department. Survey questions also asked the likelihood of the student-athlete to donate in the future and the amount of time the student-athlete expects to have passed before they begin donating. The final piece of information gathered were the thoughts of the student-athletes regarding donating to specific or general athletic funds or to the specific sport in which they participated.

The primary researcher for the purpose of obtaining additional feedback of student-athlete academic, athletic, and social experiences also developed qualitative interview protocols (Appendix C). All interviews were held in the department of Athletics conference room. The experiences expressed by one-on-one interview participants were used to generate a comparison between overall experience and future
giving behaviors found in survey data. Interview data were also compared to survey data to ensure a lateral relationship. The five interview protocols were comprised of open-ended questions which addressed the following items: student-athlete academic experience, student-athlete athletic experience, student-athlete social experience, perceived relationship with athletics after graduation, and perceived financial giving behavior after graduation.

Along with survey and one-on-one interview data, the primary researcher also used previously obtained student-athlete alumni giving data. The historical data were acquired during the primary researcher’s involvement within the athletic department. The data were used to relate the perceived giving behaviors of research participants with the current giving trends of student-athlete alumni.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site for the present study was Eastern Illinois University, a mid-size comprehensive institution with an enrollment of 11,630 students during the 2010-2011 academic year. Eastern Illinois University Athletics is a Division I institution that consists of 404 student-athletes.

DATA ANALYSIS

Students who responded to the survey were randomly offered an opportunity to participate in one-on-one interviews with the primary investigator. Interview data were transcribed and examined to document the expectations and feelings of student-athletes regarding their future giving behavior to EIU athletics. The degree of their
overall satisfaction with their collegiate experience was assessed. The surveys and interviews were also examined to determine whether current student-athletes will consider staying in touch with EIU and the athletic department post graduation.

Survey information is compared by sport to data previously compiled by the university athletic department regarding EIU student-athlete alumni giving behaviors. A comparison between the giving behaviors of former student-athletes and the financial giving expectations of the surveyed student athletes and those who participated in one-on-one interviews were juxtaposed to identify current and potential trends of financial donations from alumni student-athletes to EIU athletics.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS
INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the findings of both the survey and one-on-one interviews conducted for the present study. Data from the two instruments provides insight on the thoughts and experiences of the student-athlete participants. What follows are the findings of the survey instrument and one-on-one interviews and comparisons of these findings with previously obtained information regarding student-athlete alumni giving behaviors that were supplied by the department of Athletics.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Findings from student-athletes in 20 of the 21 intercollegiate sports teams are represented in data collected via an online survey. The sport not represented is Men’s Basketball. One likely reason for non-participation by members of the Men’s Basketball team in the on-line survey is that the survey was made available during the height of their travel season. Table 1 contains the actual count and percentage of participants in the on-line survey.

Of the 450 currently enrolled student-athletes, 74 participated in the survey. The largest percentages of student-athletes by sport were Women’s Indoor Track (13.5%, n=10); Women’s Outdoor track (14.9%, n=11); Men’s Indoor track (9.5%, n=7); and Men’s Outdoor track (9.5%, n=7).
Table 1
Demographics by Sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball-W</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Country-M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross Country-W</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf-M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf-W</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer-M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer-W</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming-M</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming-W</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor Track-M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor Track-W</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis-M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis-W</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Track-M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Track-W</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to academic standing, the sample population was comprised of 17.6% freshmen (n=13), 21.6% sophomore (n=16), 31.1% juniors (n=23), 28.4% seniors (n=21), and 1.4% graduate students (n=1). With 60.9% (n=45) of participants being upper-class students, results have a stronger representation of students with a greater commitment to personal career goals and awareness of their future ability for financial contribution.

Survey findings also indicated that of the 74 surveyed participants, 6.8% (n=5) had the status of a transfer student and the remaining 93.3% (n=69) were recruited out of high school (67.6%, n=50) or walked-on to an athletic team (25.7%, n=19). The years of athletic participation among the surveyed student-athletes were distributed fairly
evenly between one and four years, whereas the number of athletes having more than
four years of participation (including years as a Red Shirt) was low; which was expected
due to previous analysis and observation of Eastern Illinois athletic teams. The
combined mean years of participation totaled 2.4 years with a standard deviation of
1.09. Further analysis of survey data also shows that of the surveyed student-athletes, a
majority received some form of financial assistant from the department of Athletics
(77.1%, n=57).

In order to develop a better understanding of the experiences encountered by
the 74 surveyed student-athletes, the following data represents student-athletes’
perceptions of Eastern Illinois University and their experiences as student-athletes.

When specifically asked about their overall experiences at Eastern Illinois
University, 98.6% (n=73) described overall positive or neutral experiences while the
remaining 1.4% (n=1) was negative about their overall experience (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Overall Experience at EIU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptionally Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Good nor Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptionally Bad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings closely coincide with the athletic experiences that the same surveyed
student-athletes encountered. Findings indicated that 93.2% (n=69) of the student-
athletes had an exceptional, good, or neutral experience as a student-athlete, while
6.8% (n=5) noted bad or exceptionally bad experiences (Table 3).

**Table 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceptionally Good</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite good</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither Good nor Bad</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite bad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparison to the overwhelming majority of student-athletes’ positive experiences, findings also represent that 98.6% (n=73) of the surveyed student-athletes felt that their experiences in Eastern Illinois University Athletics versus their overall collegiate experience provided them resources for a successful life after college.

Surveyed student-athletes were also asked to rank order (1=most important, 2=important, 3=least important) their personal perceptions of the importance of academic, athletic, and social experiences. The online survey instrument automatically calculated findings based on a predetermined weighted calculation. Items ranked first were valued higher than those with lower rankings. Whereas student-athletes expressed a strong focus on academics (Total Score=186), they also perceived athletics as only slightly less important (Total Score=153) than academic performance.

Student-athletes were also asked to give their perceptions of the department of Athletics’ focus for student-athlete athletic, academic and social developments. Unlike the student-athletes’ focus on academics, they generally perceived the department of Athletics as primarily focused on athletics (Total Score=177) and ranked academic
development as slightly less important (Total Score = 158) than academics. Student-athlete focus (Total Score = 101) and their perceived focus of the department of Athletics (Total Score = 100) shows that social life is of a lesser value in both categories.

Results also indicated an overwhelming number of student-athletes (96%, n=71) expressed that they would participate in athletics if they were to experience college all over again. Whereas 96% of survey participating student-athletes expressing they would definitely or maybe participate in athletics again, the remaining 4.1% (n=3) did not express a desire to participate if given another opportunity (Table 4). These results indicate that a large number of EIU student-athletes have developed a strong connection with the athletic department which is reflected in a very strong potential of student-athletes to financially donate in the future.

Table 4
Willingness to Participate Again in EIU Athletics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely Yes</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely Not</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Closely related to the desire to participate in athletics again, the findings of the survey indicate that 94.6% (n=70) of students-athlete would definitely (37.8%, n=28) or maybe (56.8%, n=42) donate to Eastern Illinois University in the future. The remaining 5.4% (n=4) indicated they would definitely not donate. The student-athletes that expressed they would not donate claimed they would not have the monetary stability to donate; they do not have a strong enough connection with Eastern Illinois University Athletics; they did not enjoy their time as an EIU student-athlete and feel no obligation to give
financial support; and they would rather donate to an organization or school other than EIU.

Of the student-athletes that expressed a desire to donate, 11.4% (n=8) indicated they would begin giving back between one and three years after graduation. As the years post graduation progress, many student-athletes indicated willingness / intentions to donate as their financial abilities increased. Findings indicate that 40% (n=28) perceived themselves giving back four to six years after graduation, 30% (n=21) giving back six to ten years after graduation, and the remaining 18.6% (n=13) perceived giving back more than ten years after graduation (Table 5). Therefore, the combined mean years after graduation that a student-athlete will likely begin donating totaled 4.3 years, with a standard deviation of 1.62.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With such a large population perceiving themselves giving back over a wide range of years, it is vital to know where these donations will likely be received. Survey findings, which indicate the individual or variety of perceived donations an individual will give, indicate that a majority of financial donations will be contributed as sport specific donations (92.9%, n=65). The remaining perceived financial supports are divided as follows: LAIR Fund (27.1%, n=19), EIU Athletic Building Fund (27.1%, n=19), The
Legacy Fund (4.3%, n=3), The EI Club (4.3%, n=3), university departments other than Athletics (17.1%, n=12), and 1.4% (n=1) of student-athletes desire to contribute to other entities outside of EIU (Table 6).

### Table 6

**Designation of Financial Gift Destination**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sport specific donation</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAIR Fund (EIU general athletic scholarship fund)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Legacy Fund (major gifts over $10,000)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The EI Club (supports sport reunions and the Hall of Fame Banquet)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIU Athletic Building Fund</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departments other than Athletics</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The final survey question asked how many times the student-athletes perceived themselves giving over a lifetime. Results indicated a majority being only one to three times (41.5%, n=34) or annually over a lifetime (38.6%, n=27). Surprisingly, the number of times an individual donates dropped from four times (7.1%, n=5) and five times per lifetime (5.7%, n=4) until they reach annually giving over a lifetime (38.6%, n=27) (Table 7). The average number of times the student-athletes indicated they will donate was a total of 2.4 times with a standard deviation of 1.33.

### Table 7

**Perceived Giving Over a Lifetime**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 time</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 times</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 times</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 times</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annually over a lifetime</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Five interview questions were asked of seven student-athlete participants, representing nine athletic teams (two multi-sport athletes). All interviews were conducted privately in the athletic department’s conference room. With written consent from interview participants (Appendix D), the primary researcher recorded all interviews. After the completion of each interview, the primary researcher transcribed the recording in order to further analyze participant’s responses (verbal and non-verbal) to interview protocols.

Interview questions one through four focused on the connections student-athletes made with their sport. The connections and experiences each student-athlete develops helps determine the likelihood of student-athletes to financially contribute in the future. Interview questions four and five provide the bulk of information with regards to the timing in which a student-athlete will donate and to what entity the donation will be designated.

Interview Question #1: Tell me about your academic experiences as an EIU student-athlete?

When responding to this query, each participant individually described slightly different but overall similar experiences. Most student-athletes expressed that although they had a more rigorous workload compared to the general student body, they perceived that the resources provided to them were designed to insure their academic success. The response to this question by Participant 3 was typical of most:
 Obviously, being an athlete takes up a lot of time, so it is a big commitment. Being able to have really good time management and balancing your activities is important. One thing that really helps student-athletes is the Student-Athlete Academic Center. It [Student-Athlete Academic Center] is always helpful when you need to find a tutor or a quite place to study.

Participant 5 expressed similar thoughts regarding the rigorous time commitments placed upon student-athletes:

I was also able to maintain a 3.25 GPA throughout my schooling. Obviously, being an athlete takes up a lot of time, so it is a big commitment. Being able to have really good time management and balancing your activities is important, so managing time is probably the hardest thing.

This question also solicited positive perspectives on the individualized attention student-athletes receive in the classroom. Participant 4, a transfer student, explained the difficulties and lack of attention received from professors at institutions larger than the school being researched in the present study:

Academically, here [Eastern Illinois University] I have had much more individualized attention. At my previous school, it was a much larger institution, obviously, and I had large classes of 200 to 300 people. That wasn’t all the classes but here it is classrooms of 10 to 30. So, I have had a more positive experience simply because there are less students and more individual attention.

The participants were aware that with the additional commitment to athletics, they had to find efficient ways to manage time and their responsibilities. All interviewed
student-athletes accepted the additional responsibilities and knew of ways and resources to handle the additional workload. Student-athlete interviewees also stated that they found their involvement in athletics was known and sometimes expressed by professors and classmates. This acknowledgment from professors and classmates made the participants feel more welcomed and involved in the classroom and academics.

*Interview Question # 2: Tell me about your athletic experience as an EIU student-athlete?*

Responses to this inquiry varied and included both positive and negative experiences. Among the student-athletes who described positive athletic experiences, a common trend that influenced their like or dislike were the relationships formed with coaches and teammates. Participant 7, a two sport athlete, explained how both negative and positive experiences directly influence the experiences and relationships that are formed between the athlete department and student-athletes:

> With my first coach, I definitely had some issues. At one point we had to go to the athletic department and talk about countless issues. It wasn’t pleasant and our coach did not respect us. For the past month of training with the other sport I am involved in, the work outs are more demanding but at the same time you are respected and it is a whole different environment. I mean it is a family. That’s what we talk about, how we are a lot of different sports but we are one team.

Participant 2, a transfer student, expressed a very similar mindset regarding coach/student-athlete relationships:
My athletic experience has been really positive. The big reason I came here was because of the coach. I have really enjoyed the team and appreciated the coaches. Something I didn’t have at the school I was previously at was a team atmosphere, a team unity. Here, I had an instant connection to friends and stuff.

By creating a sense of family, coaches and teammates develop a positive environment for student-athletes. One problem that some teams face is the transition between multiple coaches. Participant 1 explains the difficulties of experiencing multiple coaches but the ability to still have an overall positive experience due to the relationships formed with teammates:

With the athletic department, my first two years were different than anyone else’s because I have had three coaches in four years. I think it took time to build a relationship with all the new coaches but at the end of their time here I could say they were all good relationships. And I love that this athletic department is like a family in that we are all on the same page. Like with walking through the halls or on campus and stuff and if you see another athlete you can say hello and feel comfortable about it.

The overall athletic experience of student-athletes was generally positive. With the sense of family, student-athletes seemed to develop strong relationships and ties with the athletic department and the specific sport in which they participated.

Coaching relationships also had a large influenced on the overall experience of student-athletes. Due to the strong relationships that many student-athletes had with
their coaches, their overall satisfaction was greatly expressed by interviewed student-athletes.

*Interview Question #3: Tell me about your social life as an EIU student-athlete?*

The responses of all interviewed student-athletes were very similar in regards to this question. Overall, the student-athletes were able to maintain active social lives during the intensive and extensive schedules many experienced. Interestingly, most interviewed student-athletes expressed that although they had a social life; interaction with non student-athletes was limited. Expressed by participant 8, student-athletes generally spend social experience with other student-athletes:

I think it [social life] is actually better. I have met so many athletes and I have made so many friends as athletes. It is not that bad because practice is usually during the day so you have the night to do whatever you want. I think it is pretty good because, like I said, I have met so many athletes.

Participant 1 also explains how being a part of an athletic team has provided an opportunity to develop strong relationships based on the commonality of athletic participation. Although this commonality provides relationship opportunities, it also creates a potential separation from non student-athletes:

Out of season, I most definitely have a strong social life. In season, it is tougher. But you know, living in the dorms helped create a lot of friends. These other relationships have helped create a lot of connections with people, especially other athletes.
Interview Question # 4: How do you think your experiences as an EIU student-athlete will affect your connection with athletics after you graduate?

Through interacting with other student-athletes, the bonds and ties with an athletic-department become stronger. Many athletic teams have reunions that re-engage and promote student-athlete alumni to reunite and give back. Participant 9 explains that reunions have provided the opportunity for many student-athlete alumni to reconnect with old friends and coaches:

This past year my team had a reunion. It was such an interesting and uplifting experience. The event made me look forward to the day I can come back to this school and experience college life again with old teammates. I think this is one of the ways I will stay in touch with the athletic departments and teammates.

Many of the interviewed student-athletes also expressed the ease of staying connected with teammates and coaches due to technology. Participant 7 explains that with social networks, such as Facebook, it is much easier to stay connected:

I definitely feel I will stay connected and I think it will be easy to do. With Facebook, I will always be able to see what teammates are up to and talk to them whenever I want. I definitely feel it will be much easier for me to stay connected to the athletic department compared to student-athletes of the past.

Participant 5 touches on the ease to stay connected due to technology, but also explained how the concept of family within a team creates a stronger desire to maintain a connection to a team/athletic department:
I definitely am going to stay in touch. Like I said, coaches and our team is basically a family. We talk to each other all during summer. We talk to each other before we come down to school. With email and Facebook, it makes it really easy.

The data shows that student-athletes do desire to stay in contact with teammates, coaches, and the athletic departments. The general consensus of the interviewed student-athletes show that due to the ease of communication, student-athletes feel it will not be difficult to communicate and stay in touch with the athletic department after graduation.

*Interview Question #5: What do you think your monetary giving behavior will be toward EIU athletics after you graduate?*

The general consensus of the interviewed student-athletes shows that student-athletes are potential donors to their positive experiences and ties with the athletic department and specific sport in which they participated. The primary reason most participants gave for contributing in the future was due to their feeling of maintaining or improving the experiences they encountered. The response given by Participant 2 was typical of most interviewees:

I will definitely give back. The reason I will give back is to try and give them [future student-athletes] a better experience than I had. Even though I had a great experience, there is always room for improvement. . . Even if it comes down to getting better equipment or hiring better people so that a tradition can come or winning programs can will be established.
Participant 5 also provided the following comment:

I would love to give mats so we could practice in the gym when it isn’t nice out.

You know, help donate so students in the future will have a practice facility.

It was also expressed that participants will be more likely to give back if someone they know (i.e., coach) solicits them. Participant 6 shared his reasoning for giving back as follows:

I plan on giving back as much as I can. I really had a good experience here. As far as the way I will do it, it will probably be to the specific sport I am involved with.

You know, let’s say my coach is still here. I will feel a lot more comfortable giving it to a person I know and someone I have been involved with. It will make me feel better knowing it is going specifically to the program I want it to.

Overall, the interviews demonstrate that due to the strong connection student-athletes make with the athletic-department, a strong willingness to contribute is also developed. The interviews also provided additional feedback that related directly to the survey results. Together they demonstrate that both the survey and one-on-one interview results were accurate when compared to each other.

ALUMNI AND CURRENT STUDENT-ATHLETE COMPARISON

With previously obtained information, a relationship can be formed between giving behaviors of student-athlete alumni and the perceived giving behaviors of current student-athletes. Data indicate that of the 6,191 EIU former student-athletes, only 498 (8.04%) have contributed to EIU athletics after graduation. The current “Push Your Team
Forward” campaign is the first athletic department campaign specifically targeting student-athlete alumni. In response, the number of donations from student-athlete alumni have increased dramatically, which gives promise for increased future donations. Within the past year, donations from student-athlete alumni have increased 3.09%; an increase that has almost doubled that of all previous year student-athlete alumni donations.

SUMMARY

The findings from the present research indicate that current EIU student-athletes are willing to financially contribute to EIU athletics in the future. An overwhelming majority of the student-athletes who indicated they will financially contribute in the future suggests that they primarily desire giving back to the specific sport in which they participated. Findings also indicate that this desire to give back to a specific sport is directly related to the relationship formed primarily between the student-athlete and coach but secondarily between the student-athlete and his/her teammates. Previously obtained data also represent that student-athlete alumni are more likely to give back after a direct solicitation is made. Comparing the former student-athlete giving behaviors with the perceived giving behaviors of current student-athletes, it can be concluded that as long as a connection is maintained with the athletic department, alumni student-athlete support will continue to increase.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the present study was to explore the potential giving behaviors of current EIU student-athletes. Included in this chapter is a comparison of prior research to the findings from both the survey and one-on-one interviews conducted for the current study accompanied by recommendations for future researchers in development and fundraising and professionals who work directly with student-athletes.

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research Question One: To what extent do the connections a student-athlete makes with their sport determine their likelihood of becoming a potential donor?

Most student-athletes interviewed in the present study expressed that positive relationships formed with coaches would entice a strong desire to financially contribute in the future. Strong relationships formed with coaches and other student-athletes create a sense of belonging and loyalty to a specific sport and/or the athletic department. This concept is also supported by Holmes, McNeil, Adorna and Procaccino whose research findings have shown that student-athletes participating in both individual and team sports have a stronger team cohesiveness when coaching leadership supports strong positive interpersonal relationships with student-athletes (Holmes et al., 2008).
The hiring of coaches that focus on developing positive relationships and providing welcoming atmospheres for student-athletes needs to be addressed if athletic departments want to increase future donor support of student-athlete alumni. According to Bryant, Slaughter and Tax and feedback from one-on-one interviews, the probability of a financial contribution is increased greatly after a solicitation (2003). The probability is increased even more if the solicitation is administered from an individual that has a previously developed relationship with the potential donor (i.e., coaches, former teammates).

Research Question Two: At what time do student-athletes expect to contribute monetary gifts to EIU athletics?

When asking for donations, it is important to research potential donors and determine prior connections with the university, monetary stability, etc. According to the current study’s survey results, the majority of student-athletes do not perceive themselves giving back until four years after graduation (40% in four to six years; 30% in 17 years; and 18% expect to be able to contribute within ten years or longer). Although 11.4% of surveyed student-athletes perceived themselves giving before four years, the number of young donors compared to donors four years out of college is generally low. Both previous studies and the current study support the concept that financial contribution generally does not occur until the financial stability of an alumnus has been achieved (Weerts, & Ronca, 2009). The mindset and means to financially contribute generally require an extended period of time in an alumni’s career, where the obtainment of assets and discretionary incomes will be established.
Along with financial stability, a general perception of connection with a team / athletic department is also important when determining the expected contribution to be made. Very similar to the results of the current study, Wann and Somerville explained that donors who maintain positive connections and perceptions with a university are more willing to donate at a younger age (2000).

Research Question Three: Are student-athletes more likely to donate to the athletic department or to non-athletic departments on EIU’s campus?

According to Potuto and O’Hanion (2007), a positive correlation between student-athletes’ collegiate experiences and their willingness to donate exists. Additionally, due to the relationships that student-athletes develop within an athletic program, they tend to donate more than individuals who do not have as much involvement with the university (Potuto, & O’Hanion 2007). Along with a stronger connection to the University, student-athletes also have the tendency to develop even stronger relationships with the athletic department personnel (Donohue et al. 2007).

Findings of prior and the current study show that due to extended periods of interactions with coaches, teammates, and athletic department staff, student-athletes tend to develop a sense of commitment and “family bond.” According to one interviewed student-athlete, “the bonds created among other student-athletes are much like those of a family.” These family-like relationships with others provide student athletes with a sense of belonging and pride in being a part of the larger organization.

Supporting this concept of teammate relationships, Wann and Somerville (2000) also suggested that relationships formed with the university and teammates create an identity for the student-athlete. The current study’s survey findings indicate
that existence of a team identity has developed among the athletes surveyed along with an overwhelming potential of student-athletes to give financially in the future to EIU athletics (81.5%).

Research Question Four: Are student-athletes more likely to donate financially to the general athletic fund or to the sport(s) in which they were involved (e.g., gifts to sport vs. general scholarship fund)?

As trends indicate, strong positive relationships create strong ties between a student-athlete and his/her team and athletic-department. Donohue et al. (2007) found that positive relationships created an overall happiness among student-athletes. In developing a positive experience for student-athletes to relate to, athletic departments and individual teams can develop a desire for student-athletes to financially contribute in the future.

According to the current survey’s results, a majority of student-athletes desire to provide financial support to the specific sport in which they were involved (92.9%). Although a majority of surveyed student-athletes desired to give back to their sport, 27.1% (some included in the 92.9%) desired to financially contribute to the general athletic fund (i.e., LAIR Fund). One reason for the strong desire to financially contribute to a specific sport is due to the student-athletes’ many interactions with coaches and teammates (Donohue et al. 2007). Based on their numerous interactions, student-athletes could very well perceive themselves as more a member of a specific team than a member of the athletic department. According to both Palmer and Koenig-Lewis (2008) and the current study’s findings, positive and negative emotional experiences relate to an alum’s willingness to contribute to a specific entity. Knowing the importance
of emotional influences, it is a strong probability that experiences EIU student-athletes encounter with their sport determined their perceived connection to the overall organizational structure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Future Researchers in Development and Fundraising

Future researchers in the field of development and fundraising should give serious consideration to various components of the current research. For example, department of Athletic researchers who elects to reexamine participants in the present study should attempt to determine whether the perceived giving expectations represent the actual financial contributions of the studied EIU student-athletes in the future. Due to the focus of the present study on the anticipated giving behaviors of current student-athletes, the giving behaviors of the participants can only be viewed as hypothetical donations. The majority of surveyed student-athletes expressed their anticipated giving to start four years after graduation, because of this; it is recommended that examining the behavior of the current participants in the year 2015 be undertaken.

Along with the reexamination of student-athletes, the recommendation to use a pre-developed survey instrument is recommended. Following the distribution of a self-developed survey, the principal researcher found a scale to measure the degree to which college athletic donations exist for former student-athletes. The Former Student-Athlete Donor Constraint Scale (FSADCS) was created to further examine donor constraint themes found in previous qualitative research (Shapiro et al., 2010). The FSADCS was developed through thematic content analysis, item generation, expert
review, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and additional validity and reliability testing. By utilizing aspects of the FSADCA, the principal researchers could have increased validity.

The final recommendation is to further examine the influences coaching and teammate relationships have on student-athlete connections to a team and/or athletic department. By further examining the relationships that are developed, a better understanding for the reasons student-athlete alumni give should be possible. It is recommended that future researchers also focus on factors other than sport participation that develop a student-athlete’s future intentions of financially contributing. An example of a potential influence on student-athlete’s giving behavior could be family wealth / giving behaviors. A student-athlete raised in a household with discretionary funds could view financial contributions not as an option but a way of life.

**Recommendations for Coaches and Athletic Department Staff**

Findings in the present research study suggest that a great deal of correlation regarding the development of coaching/student-athlete relationships and the cultivation of future financial contributors. It would be helpful for coaches and Athletic Department staff to further examine the efforts being make toward continuous communication with student-athlete alumni. Regarding the increase in donor support, it is recommended that individuals who work with student-athletes need to determine what strategies facilitate the greatest degree of connection between a student-athlete and the Athletic Department. Although the examination of all EIU sports provided adequate findings in the present study, future researchers may want to consider
focusing their research efforts on a specific team. By limiting the research population, more extensive and detailed results could be obtained.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to research the future and financial giving behaviors of current EIU student-athletes. The researcher was interested in determining the factors that influence student-athletes to financially contribute in the future. Results of this study indicated that the experiences and relationships formed between coaching staffs and student-athlete peers are experienced as a sense of “family” for a majority of student-athletes. This sense generates an internal connection between a student-athlete and a specific sport and/or athletic department. Through the development of a very strong sense of belonging, many current student-athletes perceive themselves as having an overall positive experience as a student-athlete which portends their contributing financially in the future.
REFERENCES

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About the panther club. (2010, August). Retrieved from


Appendix A

Twenty-one Athletic Teams:

- Baseball
- Basketball-M
- Basketball-W
- Cross Country-M
- Cross Country-W
- Football
- Golf-M
- Golf-W
- Indoor Track – M
- Indoor Track – W
- Outdoor Track – M
- Outdoor Track - W
- Rugby
- Soccer-M
- Soccer-W
- Softball
- Swimming-M
- Swimming-W
- Tennis –M
- Tennis- W
- Volleyball
Appendix B
Student-Athlete Survey

1. Please check the sport(s) in which you participate:
   ___ Baseball  ___ Rugby  ___ Indoor Track-M
   ___ Basketball-M  ___ Soccer-M  ___ Indoor Track-W
   ___ Basketball-W  ___ Soccer-W  ___ Outdoor Track-M
   ___ Cross Country-M  ___ Softball  ___ Outdoor Track-W
   ___ Cross Country-W  ___ Swimming-M  ___ Volleyball
   ___ Football  ___ Swimming-W  ___ Golf-M
   ___ Tennis-M  ___ Golf-W  ___ Tennis-W

2. What is your current academic classification (i.e., year in school)?
   ___ Freshmen
   ___ Sophomore
   ___ Junior
   ___ Senior
   ___ Graduate Student

3. Did you transfer to Eastern Illinois University from another school?
   ___ Yes
   ___ No

4. What was your initial recruitment status upon entering your designated sport?
   ___ Walk-On
   ___ Recruited out of high school
   ___ Recruited out of a junior college
   ___ Recruited out of another four year institution

5. How many years have you participated in EIU athletics?
   ___ 1 year
   ___ 2 years
   ___ 3 years
   ___ 4 years
   ___ More than 4 years (including years as a Red Shirt)
6. For how many years have you been on an athletic scholarship from Eastern Illinois University (check all that apply)?
   ___ 1 year
   ___ 2 years
   ___ 3 years
   ___ 4 years
   ___ More than 4 years (including years as a Red Shirt)
   ___ I have never been on an athletic-scholarship
   ___ I have or currently am receiving a scholarship from an entity outside of athletics

7. In general, how would you describe your overall experience at Eastern Illinois University?

   5 = Exceptionally good
   4 = Quite good
   3 = Neither good nor bad
   2 = Quite bad
   1 = Exceptionally bad

8. How would you describe your overall experience as an athlete at Eastern Illinois University?

   5 = Exceptionally good
   4 = Quite good
   3 = Neither good nor bad
   2 = Quite bad
   1 = Exceptionally bad

9. In general, how would you rate EIU athletics in preparing you for life after of college?

   5 = Exceptionally good
   4 = Quite good
   3 = Neither good nor bad
   2 = Quite bad
   1 = Exceptionally bad

10. Using the following scale (1= most important, 2=important, 3=least important), rank order the following and its importance to your overall focus at EIU.
    ___ Academics
    ___ Athletics
    ___ Social Life
11. Using the following scale (1= most committed, 2=somewhat committed, 3=least committed), rank order the commitment of the athletic department at Eastern Illinois University to each area.
   ____ Academics
   ____ Athletics
   ____ Social Life

12. If you were to experience college again, would you still participate in athletics?
   ____ Definitely Yes
   ____ Maybe
   ____ Definitely Not

13. How likely is it that as an EIU student-athlete you will contribute to or donate financial support to EIU in the future?
   ____ Definitely Yes
   ____ Maybe
   ____ Definitely Not (If Definitely Not, go to question 18)

14. Within how many years after you leave EIU do you think you will begin contributing monetary gifts to the athletic department?
   ____ 1-3 years
   ____ 4-6 years
   ____ 6-10 years
   ____ More than 10 years

15. If you plan to contribute financial support in the future, to what component of the university will you contribute money (check all that apply)?
   ____ LAIR Fund (EIU general athletic scholarship fund)
   ____ EIU Athletic Building Fund
   ____ Sport specific donation
   ____ Departments other than Athletics
   ____ Other (e.g., Time, Participation in Alumni Events, etc.)

16. If you provide support to EIU Athletics in the future, in what monetary range do you feel you will most likely donate?
   ____ $1-$50
   ____ $51-$100
   ____ $101-$250
   ____ $251-$500
   ____ $501-$1000
   ____ $1001-$2500
   ____ $2501-$5000
   ____ $5001-$10,000
   ____ More than $10,000
   ____ $501-$1000
17. In the future, how often do you feel you will donate monetary gifts to EIU:

- ___ 1 time
- ___ 2 times
- ___ 3 times
- ___ 4 times
- ___ 5 times
- ___ Annually over a lifetime

18. (Skip if you feel you will donate) Why would you not donate to EIU athletics in the future?

- ___ I will not have the monetary stability to donate
- ___ I do not have a strong enough connection with EIU athletics
- ___ I did not enjoy my time as an EIU student-athlete and feel no obligation to give financial support
- ___ I would rather donate to another department at EIU
- ___ I would rather donate to an organization or school other than EIU

Other:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Appendix C

Interview Questions

Tell me about your academic experiences as an EIU student-athlete?

Tell me about your athletic experience as an EIU student-athlete?

Tell me about your social life as an EIU student-athlete?

How do you think your experiences as an EIU student-athlete will affect your connection with athletics after you graduate?

What do you think your monetary giving behavior will be toward EIU athletics after you graduate?
Appendix D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The purpose of the study is to examine the potential giving behaviors of current student-athletes. Along with acquiring this data, the principle investigator will also compare the relationship between the proposed giving behaviors of current student-athletes from designated sports (i.e., football, volleyball, men’s basketball, and women’s basketball) with the giving behaviors of student-athlete alumni from these same designated sports (i.e., football, volleyball, men’s basketball, and women’s basketball).

Interview data will be audio recorded, unless advised otherwise by the interviewee. In this situation the principle investigator will record data through the use of hand written field notes. The information gathered from the study will contribute to the athletic department’s efforts to develop future donor solicitation campaigns while simultaneously increasing the giving behavior of future student-athlete alumni. The fiscal support raised in the future will, in turn, provide the necessary resources to guide EIU student-athletes to be loyal and dedicated contributors.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of storage and deletion. Audio recording and raw data will be stored on an external hard drive that will be contained in locked storage. The names/emails of respondents will be destroyed immediately after completion of data analysis.

Results of the findings will be released to the Eastern Illinois University Athletic Department for future use of fundraising campaign strategies. The shared results will not include personal identification of participants but will include data associated by each athletic team.

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

 Printed Name of Participant

 ____________________________

 Signature of Participant Date

 ____________________________

 Primary Investigator’s Signature Date