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Creating an Instrument to Examine Athlete Alumni Philanthropy

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CREATING AN INSTRUMENT TO EXAMINE ATHLETE ALUMNI
PHILANTHROPY

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A Major Project

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Abstract

For many years, Bowling Green State University has had trouble getting athlete alumni to financially give back to their former program. While developing an instrument to survey the athlete alumni their reasons for giving or not giving, it was determined that no instrument was available to solicit responses. Each school has a unique culture and most surveys that have been used in previous research were very specific to that institution. This project developed a survey that can be easily adapted to any situation and culture so any university can use it as a template. When properly administered, this survey will lead to each university having a better understanding of their alumni and potentially a higher amount of donations.

Keywords: alumni, athlete alumni, donor, development, fundraising, non-donor, philanthropy, survey

Creating an Instrument to Examine Athlete Alumni Philanthropy

Charitable giving is essential to education, medical research, churches, hospitals, and hundreds of other causes because federal funding has decreased significantly. Higher education has greatly relied on charitable gifts throughout the past forty years. Bowling Green State University (BGSU) received 68% of its funding from the State of Ohio in 1969 (BGSU, 2012). That number decreased to 24% in 2012 (BGSU, 2012). Athletic departments within universities are in need of significant charitable dollars to provide funds for student-athlete scholarships, coaches salaries, coaches recruiting budgets, team travel, team equipment, and upgraded facilities. According to a Shapiro, Giannoulakis, Drayer, & Wang (2010) former student-athletes giving back to their former programs is holding steady at 5% of the student-athletes giving back. This number is hard to comprehend when individual giving equated to nearly 50% of the \$24.4 billion raised for colleges and universities in 2004 (Voluntary Support of Education). Even though student-athletes are given discounted (or free) schooling, school apparel, and an opportunity to play their sport amongst the best athletes in the nation, some do not feel compelled to give back monetary donations after graduation (O'Neil & Schenke, 2007).

For Division 1 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools, fundraising (24%) edged out ticket sales (23%) as the largest source of total revenue (Fulks, 2008). A large portion of the fundraising dollars at FBS schools includes seat premiums, which are added costs to ticket prices that go towards student-athlete scholarship

funds. According to Mahoney, Gladden & Funk (2003), obtaining priority seating for football and men's basketball games drive donations. While not all schools have seat premiums throughout their stadiums, most Division I schools have a least one premium seating section (suite/club level) that mandate a donation to purchase the ticket. Because of this, researchers have found student-athletes feel they have already donated talent, which produced funding for the school, and thus do not need to make donations post graduation (Martinez, Stinson, Kang, and Jubenville, 2010: O'Neil & Schenke, 2007; Shapiro et al., 2010).

Many studies related to athlete alumni engagement and philanthropy have been conducted at schools with major athletic programs (Mahoney et al., 2003; Martinez et al., 2010; Shapiro et al., 2010; Tsiotou, 2006; Gaski & Etzel, 1984, Meer & Rosen, 2007) but the research cannot be easily transferred to different schools as they all have a unique culture which effects fundraising. Shapiro et al. (2010) alludes to this when stating, "Our current examination focused specifically on former athlete at the Division I level. These findings may not necessarily apply to athletic alumni who competed at other levels." An example includes the studies that focus on premium tickets as a method of fundraising (Mahoney et al., 2003) because many smaller schools at the Division II and III level do not have the opportunity to sell premium seating or the donor base that demands it. The purpose of this study is to develop a survey that can be easily modified so it will be useful for universities throughout the country, no matter their athletic division or institution size. This will lead to better decision making for individual development offices and potentially an increase in donations.

In the past few decades, coaches and athletic administrators have started moving from school to school at a faster pace. O'Neil & Schenke (2007) suggested this change negatively influences donations from former athletes because the athletes lack identity with their former athletic department. Although the program is still in existence, the coaches, administrators, and players change more rapidly, which leaves a negative impact on donors trying to reconnect with the university or program. To negate this, coaches and administrators need to communicate with former athletes about the changes in student-athletes and personnel. If this is done properly upon arrival, donors will be more interested in then hearing about upcoming events and ways to monetarily support the team. Former athletes also need to communicate about their job and family changes, new contact information, and ways they are interested in helping the program succeed. Since coaches are not at a university for multiple decades like they were years ago, both sides needs to collaborate to help with smooth transitions.

Shapiro et al. (2010) suggests student-athletes are not informed about the donation process and the importance of donations on their team while in school, which hurts the chances of them contributing after graduation. If educated about the giving process and how the donations are helping the current student-athletes, the coaching transitions might have less of an impact since the athlete alumni understand the need for support to the institution rather than to support a particular coach.

O'Neil & Schenke (2007) examined factors that impact student-athlete giving at one private school in the Southwest United States. They conducted an initial

survey of 35 former athletes from 20 different teams. After receiving feedback from these individuals, the revised questionnaire was sent and 464 surveys were returned. Former athlete attitudes about their school, time spent at their school, and attitudes after they graduated were used to frame the questions and athlete alumni could answer on a five point Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The researchers found that athlete alumni at this school had a positive athletic experience and still feel connected to their school. They concluded donations are low because most athletes feel they contributed to the school through their athletic performances.

Shapiro et al. (2010) analyzed four barriers that could prevent athlete alumni to give back, including importance, connection, knowledge, and experience. A total of 750 former athlete non-donors at a Division 1 public school on the west coast received the online survey and one fourth were returned. This survey included 34 Likert Scale questions pertaining to importance, connection, communication, experience, and satisfaction about their alma mater. This study found all four factors were important and that little research has been performed on donor constraints (time, money, information, etc). By better understanding the population at this school and why non-donors choose to not give financially, staff members can better understand and identify ways to turn them into donors in the future.

A meta-analysis was used by Martinez et al (2010) analyzing studies dating from 1976 to 2008 that investigated the relationship between philanthropic giving and intercollegiate athletic success. A total of 14 studies were used that had quantitative information on school type, giving targets, giving base, NCAA

classification, and sports of interest. A test of homogeneity concluded athletic success in all studies had a significant positive impact on giving. A moderator analysis was also used and found the institution type did not have an impact on success and philanthropic giving.

Conversely, Gaski & Etzel (1984) researched 99 public Division 1 schools and compared their football and basketball records with overall donations. The schools were grouped with similar institutions and nine years of data was used to find a correlation between winning and giving. The findings were shocking to many as there was not a strong correlation between the two groups. Roughly 8% of schools found a significant increase in giving while 2% of the schools saw a decrease in giving when football and basketball has winning records. A limitation to the study does not measure private institutions that rely heavily on private money nor does it measure alumni engagement, which often turns into philanthropic gifts. The author addresses this in the discussion by explaining winning over many years can enhance the school's public image that can lead to more engagement and money in the future. Rhoads & Gerking (2000) conducted a similar survey and found academic success and tradition had a bigger impact on alumni giving than athletic team performance. However, bowl game wins did have a positive impact on giving that can be attributed to the national attention and recognition they receive. Conversely, NCAA violations and probations can negatively affect giving because of the national attention it receives.

The studies conducted by O'Neil & Schenke, 2007, Mahoney et al., 2003, Fulks, 2008, Martinez et al., 2010, Shapiro et al., 2010, Tsiotou, 2006, Gaski & Etzel,

1984, and Meer & Rosen, 2007, all studied Division I-A programs, while the research conducted by Stinson & Howard, 2008, focused on Division I-AA and I-AAA institutions to find a connection between their programs and fundraising. The study was created for schools at this level because the majority of these institutions have a different operational model than the traditional Division I-A model. This study found that athletic performance positively impacts annual gifts to athletics and academics. Most schools at the Division I-AA level actually saw higher increases to academic gifts than athletics gifts when athletic teams were winning.

Athletic donors at three, Division 1 schools were analyzed in the study conducted by Mahoney et al. (2003). These institutions were all in urban towns, with the primary sport being either basketball or football. Donor behavior, motivation for giving, and demographics were the sections making up this survey and nearly 2,000 responses were received. An overwhelming majority of donors at these three schools were white males, aged between 50-60 years old, alumni of the school, living within 10 miles, and making over \$70,000. The typical age of the donors in this study is consistent with research by Steinberg & Wilhelm (2003) as they tracked giving over generations. The prewar generation is nearly two thirds more generous than later generations so this survey's age demographics fit with national trends.

Tsiotsou (2006) examined the differences in male and female athletic donors and found that 96% of individual gifts to intercollegiate athletics come from men. Even though there are less females giving, those who do give tend to give a higher percentage of their income than males. Almost 400 surveys were completed and

scored on a five-point scale that answered questions on attendance, experience, and involvement. Tsotsou found women donate 3.5 times less and attend games less frequently than men but their donations are more philanthropic because receiving benefits and recognition from gifts are less important to women (2006).

Many of these studies have focused on specific criteria that can effect giving at a particular school or group of schools. There is a need for a complete survey that incorporates many points of emphasis and does so at a level that can be used by any institution. As state funding is declining throughout the country, universities have to rely more on private support. By having a survey template to send to alumni on a regular basis, this can help all schools (small and large budgets, public and private, small and large populations, Division I, II, III) all have a better understanding of their athlete alumni's giving motivators which will lead to more engaged and philanthropic athlete alumni. Due to the lack of a well-developed survey instrument that various schools can use, athletic departments do not fully understand their athlete alumni and are missing out on annual gifts. By not these additional funds, the student-athletes are being impacted by less scholarship money available, less travel money to play a top schedule, and less opportunity for mentors and tutors to help the student-athletes succeed in the classroom.

Method

Creation of Instrument

This survey (see appendix A) consists of twenty Likert Scale questions and eight questions on the participant's demographics. The five-point Likert Scale has

possible answers of strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, and strongly agree. The option not applicable is available in case the participant believes that is the best options for them. The questions on demographics are multiple choice and ask for the best answer. There is a possibility for a participant to have more than one multiple-choice answer, but they are asked to answer with the best choice for them. The participant consent form is on the front page of the emailed survey or attached to the survey when using postal mail.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to starting the study, HSRB approval needs to be applied for and granted in order to contact individuals with a survey. Written permission from the leader of the University's Foundation will be needed to obtain contact information and donor giving records of athlete alumni. Permission from the Director of Intercollegiate Athletics will also be needed as Intercollegiate Athletic Departments have communication with athlete alumni that the study should not interfere with.

A report request should be made to access alumni records through the University Foundation with contact information and sport descriptions of all athlete alumni.

An initial pilot survey should be created and sent to a small number of athlete alumni (25 men and 25 women) of various sports, using donors and non-donors, males and females, and alumni from all decades available. Their feedback will be used to update the survey and make it user-friendlier for the participants. This is required due to the subtle differences of various universities. Ten athlete alumni (5 men and 5 women) in the pool of 50 should be questioned in person for in-depth feedback. The survey should be tweaked to become more personal for

those universities athlete alumni. Once the pilot study and personal interviews have been conducted, it can be modified to fit the specific universities' culture. The initial survey will be emailed to all alumni with current email addresses and postal mailed to everyone else. Athletes from sports that have been dropped by that athletic department should also be included. This will help the data be complete but since the sport played is a question on the survey, that group can be separated if results for current varsity sport teams are requested. Many athlete alumni from teams that were dropped are disappointed and feel abandoned by the athletic department. If they receive the survey and know their opinion matters, it could help with their connection. Athlete alumni that did not graduate will be included if the university has current information for them. Each University's Foundation is able to research and track ex-students, many of whom leave early to play professionally.

After two weeks, a reminder email will be sent to all emailed surveys. The emailed survey will have a consent form in the email body while the mailed form will have a consent form included. A stamped envelope will be included in the postal mailing to increase the return rate. To follow the method that O'Neil & Schenke (2007) used on their successful survey, drawings for tickets and exclusive event invitations were offered for people responding within the first month. This can help increase the initial response rate and also start the development process by cultivating them for a gift while they are on campus for a game. While increasing response rates, this may cause response bias and each university should decide if this is an option they wish to pursue.

Data Analysis

This study focused on specific questions that could better describe an athlete alumni's history with the athletic department and their intent of philanthropy at their alma mater. The most common analysis procedures for Likert Scale data are mean, standard deviation, Pearson's r test, ANOVA, t-tests, and regression depending upon research questions (Boone & Boone, 2012). One year's data will be needed to serve as a base for comparisons however having multiple years' data will be more accurate and complete.

The surveys that currently exist are all specific to the individual study so they cannot be easily adopted at other institutions (Mahoney et al, 2003; Ko et al, 2013; Shapiro et al, 2010; Meer & Rosen, 2007; Tsiotsou, 2006; O'Neil & Schenke, 2007). Although these survey focus on different types of universities, they are specific to their intended population.

While creating a survey for research, there needs to be focus on the validity and reliability while gathering information to ensure accurate conclusions. Validity focuses on the study's success to measure what was intended to be measured and reliability focuses on the accuracy of the measuring procedure (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Holquist). Creswell (2003) recommends that questions are carefully worded and put in a specific order so results are not skewed because of the survey.

This survey has six main topics: demographics, communication, current connection, image of athletic department, philanthropic interests and future intent. The first eight questions are multiple choice and pertain to participant demographics. This section will better assist the athletic department in

understanding the current donor and non-donors background to find patterns. O'Neil and Schenke (2007) also separated their survey into subcategories and included information on demographics of the athlete alumni. Within the demographics section, determining the gender is necessary for a few reasons. First, the men's basketball team alumni and women's basketball team alumni need to be differentiated as having played on different teams. Also, Tsiotsou (2006) found that women and men have different patterns of giving to non-profit organizations.

Knowing the age is important so alumni can be categorized to see trends in giving based on age. Trends in giving show alumni gradually start giving philanthropically after graduation and the dollars raised and number of donors increase over time. Also, Steinberg and Wilhelm (2003) determined the prewar generation who are currently over 60 years old have a significantly higher average gift. After speaking with many adults, it could be assumed that they have the wealth since many are almost done or done with their careers and are living on their retirement savings that accrued during their years spent working. Many are done paying large bills like a mortgage and college tuition, so this group often times has a large amount of disposable income.

The next question is ethnicity to understand if there are certain racial groups that have common responses that the athletic staff needs to be aware of. If athletic departments can better understand trends within certain groups of people, action can be taken soon after graduation for a higher probability of giving.

Household income is important to understand because if a person makes less than \$30,000, they shouldn't be as heavily solicited as someone that makes over

\$250,000. While people with smaller income levels might have a higher affinity to the institution and make small annual gifts, the people who make higher incomes have the potential to make larger philanthropic gifts and need to be cultivated for a large gift. Although lifestyles are different and people with lesser incomes could actually have more disposable income, the most common larger donors have larger incomes. With my current work in fundraising major gifts (\$25,000+) at a university, the two general factors an individual needs to make a major gift is a high net worth and interest in the institution.

Location is vital to determine as it pertains to connection. Living in the schools' town allows for information to be easier accessible than someone that lives a few states away. This also helps better gauge if benefits to tickets at games could be of interest to them. Local alumni might be drawn to ticket benefits more so than an alumni living a few states away that wouldn't be able to travel to games as easily.

Another communication question is the frequency of phone calls, email, and/or mail. Since donors usually do not give to things they aren't well familiar and engaged with, the amount of communication could impact the survey answers. For the initial survey, the base can be established of the annual gift levels and the frequency of communication. When communication increases and athlete alumni take more of an ownership role in their former team, donations should increase because they will be more committed and invested in the welfare of the program.

The athlete alumni's college of graduation is important, as there could be trends from graduates of the Honors College or Business College. Although the main focus of athlete alumni is their athletic interest, their experience in their college

could show trends as well. In addition, alumni from the College of Business are more likely to obtain jobs that pay higher than alumni in the College of Education. There are always exceptions, however, in general, teachers usually have a lower base salary than accountants and financial professionals.

The final demographics question is the sport the athlete alumni played. This will allow for teams to be separated from each other and compared. It will also allow for the teams that were cut as varsity sports to be removed if necessary, since many could have negative responses.

Section two focuses on communication and current connection. These questions focus on current channels of communication and current feelings towards their former program. In the Shapiro et al. (2010) study, questions were separated by categories and asked athlete alumni about their experience, connection to the program now, connection to their teammates, and giving history. Many questions focus on the current issues that donors speak with development officers about.

The first two questions in this survey can explain how the athlete alumni feels about their current level of connection, “I stay in contact with my former coach(s)” and “I stay in contact with my former teammates.” If athlete alumni can agree to both of those questions, it is easier to work towards philanthropic giving since they have maintained an interest in and connection to the program.

A follow up to those questions is “I am more connected to my former coach(s)/teammates than to my alma mater.” When athlete alumni agree to this answer, the athletic departments needs to use their demographics and find an involved team member that can rally together and engaged the athlete alumni with

their alma mater. This question is used as much in strategy of communication as it is in understanding of connection.

The next two questions are meant to bring honest feelings about the respect the alma mater showed to them while in school by answering “My coach(s) treated me fairly” and “My alma mater financially benefitted from my athletic performance.” When participants agree to either of these questions, the athlete alumni are showing their frustrations with the model of money exchange between themselves and their alma mater. One common frustration with athletes is they believe they generated significant income for the school since people bought tickets and apparel, so they shouldn’t have to give (Shapiro et al, 2010).

The image athlete alumni have of the current state of the institution is examined in the next six questions. “The teams at my alma mater are successful, my alma mater is well respected nationally, my alma mater has a rich history in athletics, my alma mater helps elevate the image of the community, I watch my alma mater compete regardless of who they are playing, I would never switch my loyalty from my alma mater even if my close friends cheer for another team.” These questions allow individuals the opportunity to rate their alma mater against others.

Some athlete alumni will give to their alma mater because it is a status symbol or their teams have a rich history in winning. It appears that an alumnus of a large institution is more likely to display school memorabilia in their home and office than that of an alumnus of a smaller, lesser-known institution. This trend might allow for alumni of larger institutions to create alumni networks within the neighborhood and office easier than those of smaller institutions because of the

sheer number of alumni. These networks can increase school pride and engagement.

Determining the athlete alumni's interest in game tickets and game parking as well as recognition is important and will be addressed in the next six questions. Tsiutsou (2006) focused on what motivated the athlete alumni's giving. Some examples are tax deductions, priority seating, personal contacts, attendance of sporting events, parking benefits, etc. Although some people make purely philanthropic gifts to their alma mater, many make gifts so they can receive some sort of value in return. These questions, "I am asked annually to make financial contributions to my alma mater, my financial contributions are more meaningful when directed towards my former program, I make financial contributions to receive tickets and priority seating, I make financial contributions to receive parking benefits, I enjoy receiving recognition for my financial contributions, my financial giving is impacted by my former team's success," are the most important in determining donor intent.

Every participant should agree to the first question that they are asked annually for support. If they are not, the department needs to review their records and determine how people are being missed in their annual solicitations. If people respond to the questions about tickets and parking stating they are making financial contributions because of benefits, the development approach needs to be changed from a conversation about philanthropy to more of a conversation on the exchange of goods. Those participants could impress more clients at games in a luxury suite than they could with a lesser ticket in the stands. Since they make a gift to get

something in return, they might want to get something larger in return for a larger gift. Mahoney et al., 2003, surveyed three schools with major football and/or basketball programs and found that premium seating was the most motivating factor in philanthropic giving.

Recognition tends to be a question that is not answered honestly as people do not always admit they enjoy public recognition. If a sizeable group of people from a certain age demographic or team answer that they enjoy recognition, an event could be planned to recognize these alumni. That would not only help engage them more with the current coach and team, but also make the athlete alumni feel like they are still a part of the team while giving them the public recognition they were looking for.

The last section is philanthropic status to determine their present day thoughts on their alma mater and former team. The four questions in this section ask “if their alma mater has helped them success, if they believe giving back is the right thing to do, if they believe their contributions will have an impact, and if their alma mater actually needs the support.” These questions are important because if the first two are answered with ‘disagree,’ the athlete alumni who believe that are not very likely to ever give because they philosophically do not believe they should. If the second two answers are ‘disagree,’ those athlete alumni need to be better informed of the need for private giving and can be influenced to give if they receive the correct information.

If an alumnus does not feel their alma mater has helped them succeed or if they do not think giving back is the right thing to do, then they will probably never

make financial contributions. Many people do not think small gifts of \$50 or \$100 to their alma mater will make an impact since some donors give millions. The size of the gift is a factor to account for when talking about impact. In the US News and World Report ranking, 5% of the overall school ranking is alumni philanthropic participation. Even if the alum gives \$1, it helps the schools participation numbers (US News and World Report). This ranking can help attract better students and student-athletes, causing the perceived value and tradition of the university to increase.

By asking all athlete alumni if their gifts are more meaningful when directed towards a specific program than the general fund, the athletic departments could decide if they are using the most effective model for giving. Meaning, if most athlete alumni think their contributions are more meaningful when directed towards their former program but the athletic department doesn't allow giving to specific teams, they are not capitalizing on the market.

Finally, the overall opinions of the experience at their alma mater and experience as a student-athlete are gauged. While using the data, these two questions could be used to separate the initial responses, as there could be patterns if from the positive experiences and negative experiences.

Discussion

The primary objective was to create a survey that can be adapted to any school. The existing surveys are created for specific universities and cannot be easily modified to fit the needs of a different institution.

The next step for this survey is to test it at different universities. The test should initially start at a similar institution to see its reliability and then slowly spread to public and private institutions of all sizes throughout the United States. By starting slow, the survey can be tweaked if necessary. Once the survey becomes available, athletic administrators can use this at their current institutions and take it with them to their next positions since there is a high turnover rate in college athletics (O'Neil & Schenke, 2006). However, knowing what the alumni say during one year has limited value. The real value comes in surveying every year and developing historical trends. After the first and second year of using the survey, modifications can be made within the athletic department based on the most common answers. These modifications could then be tested throughout the year and analyzed in the next year's survey. Most athletic departments do not have a form of communication that allows for annual feedback from athlete alumni. This model is very common with season ticket holders and current donors, but has not yet been adapted to all athlete alumni.

Discussions can be started within universities and athletic conferences to understand the changes that need to happen to have an increase in donations. Schools throughout a conference will have metrics that are similar to each other's so each university will know how their alumni feel compared to the alumni at peer institutions. For example, the current survey model within the Mid American Conference member schools is a self-reporting 45 questions survey. This survey often takes multiple days to complete and every university has different measuring metrics, so the answers could be reported in a way that benefits the school.

Bowling Green State University's athletic alumni might not feel their school has a respected image nationally while the University of Toledo's athletic alumni might not feel like they had good relationships with their coaches. Each school will be able to understand the challenges at their institution but also better understand the challenges that the schools in their conference face.

This survey referenced the survey from Shapiro et al., 2010, because they state, "this population of the donor market is not adequately cultivated." Similar to their findings, the understanding of athlete alumni is not developed enough after graduation, so many athlete alumni do not understand the giving process, how their gifts impact their former programs, and the specific needs of the program.

Distributing the survey results internally will also help the entire athletic department become more mindful of the alumni. When the coaching staff knows the opinions of their alumni, they can better plan alumni experiences on campus for the group. If athlete alumni respond to the survey saying they do not feel they are connected to their former teammates, reunions can be held for those age groups that feel the most disconnected.

In the study by O'Neil & Schenke (2007), athlete alumni from revenue producing sports (football, hockey, basketball) were the least likely to give back and the most to feel they have already contributed their time and talent. If the survey results come back similar to this finding, coaches of revenue sports can have training on how to tackle this issue so an extra emphasis can be put on the needs of the team and the benefits of becoming reengaged with that university.

A major limitation to this study was the results were self-reported like the O'Neil & Schenke (2007) study that stated, "Although the guaranteed anonymity encouraged participants to give honest evaluations, it is difficult to overcome the influence of social-desirability bias, especially as it relates to feelings about alma maters and former athletic experiences" (p.72). Another limitation to this study is it was not able to pinpoint the most effective person for the athlete alumni to be in communication with, whether it be the head coach, assistant coaches, student-athletes, athletics director, or other administrators. Further research would be needed to target the best person(s) to initiate the contact. By knowing this information, the most effective person could reach out to athlete alumni through email, phone, newsletter, etc. A preferred communication option could be added to the annual giving brochure that is sent to all athlete alumni asking them to give. Athlete alumni could be asked their preferred method (email, mail, phone) and preferred person (Athletic Director, Head Coach, Assistant Coach, Development Officer, etc) of contact (Shapiro et al., 2010) since some people prefer to the student-athletes while others want to hear the information from the Athletic Director who makes the decisions.

In conclusion, this paper has shown that there are many potential factors that can impact athlete alumni financially giving back to their alma mater. Student-athletes form a special bond with their teammates, coaches, and administrators while playing their sport and as people move to different roles, that communication and engagement sometimes ends. If universities are intentional about connecting with every athlete alumni and surveying their opinions regarding the connection to

the athletic department, universities should be able to better understand the needs and wants of the athlete alumni, which can raise more money and increase their donor base. By increasing donors and dollars raised, universities could provide more scholarships to their athletes, provide better facilities, and recruit better athletes and coaches.

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Appendix A

Athlete Alumni Survey

Dear Athlete Alumni,

We are in need of your assistance as we look to better the student athlete experience and engage our athlete alumni. Specifically, we are looking to determine what steps can be taken within the athletics department to increase participation and financial contributions from athlete alumni. Your insights are vital to the success of this study.

The following survey will take 10 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and should be done on your personal time. You are free to withdraw from this study at any point. Please be assured that the information in this questionnaire will not allow us to specifically identify you and, as such, your responses will be anonymous. The link to the survey is listed below.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact the Athletics Department. This study has been approved by the institutional review board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or wish to report concerns about the study, you may contact the Office of Research Services.

Thank you for your valuable time and assistance.

1. Gender

2. Age

3. Ethnicity

4. Household Income

5. Location to School

6. Frequency of Communication with Athletics Department (phone/email/mail)

7. College

8. Sport Played

