

The Perceived Relationship between Men's Intercollegiate Athletics and General Alumni Giving at Boston College from 1996-2005

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BOSTON COLLEGE
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Higher Education Administration

THE PERCEIVED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN'S
INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS AND GENERAL ALUMNI GIVING
AT BOSTON COLLEGE FROM 1996–2005

Dissertation
by

HALLIE G. SAMMARTINO

submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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AT BOSTON COLLEGE FROM 1996–2005

by Hallie G. Sammartino

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Abstract

This qualitative case study examines the importance of men's intercollegiate athletics for alumni giving at Boston College for a 10-year period, based on the perceptions of 21 Boston College administrators and alumni. This study explores how athletics at Boston College engages alumni in ways that may eventually lead to their financial support of the institution. The findings reveal that study participants perceive football and men's basketball as a major source of engagement for the University's alumni that outrank other alumni activities in terms of reconnecting graduates with the institution. Further, participants support the existence of a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College, although at varying levels of impact. The findings from this study suggest that engagement with athletic activities and events may serve as the conduit to general alumni giving that supports a host of programs and initiatives that aid the institution in its position as a national research university. Major findings focus on five areas regarding the relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College: the importance of general alumni giving, why alumni give, the importance of men's intercollegiate athletics, what engages alumni, and the influence of men's intercollegiate athletics on general alumni giving.

DEDICATION

To my husband Dan for all his encouragement, support, and love through all of our life together.

To my parents Elsie and Alexander for their gifts of a love of knowledge and a great education from early on.

To my sister Betsy and my nephew Kevin for their love and the fun they add to life.

To my “kids,” Baci and Dolce and Cody on high, for the happiness they bring.

To my grandparents Adolfo and Pauline and my aunt Gloria and uncle Al, who always told me I could achieve anything I wanted to as long as I put my mind to it.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

At a time when governmental support—both in the form of student aid and institutional grants—is clearly diminishing, while operating expenditures and tuition are increasing exponentially, never has there been a greater case for external funds in the support of America’s private colleges and universities. While higher education can rely on some influx of funds from a number of sources, including corporations, foundations, and non-alumni individual giving, the most recent research on voluntary giving by the Council to Aid for Education (CAE) indicates that general alumni giving in the U.S. accounts for 27.5 percent, or \$8.7 billion of all exterior support to 1,052 universities and colleges, only slightly surpassed by foundations, which contribute 28.8 percent, or \$9.10 billion, to total giving (CAE, 2009, p. 5). Alumni giving is, therefore, essential to the maintenance and health of private and public higher education and their future. More broadly, academia contributes to the greater good of society, from educating its citizens to enhancing many of its social and cultural facets, making higher education’s impact—and the need for voluntary support—that much more important in the world today.

Boston College, like many of its peers, is also highly reliant on external funding, and specifically, general alumni giving. This fact is underscored by the University’s current capital campaign, with its goal of raising \$1.5 billion focused heavily on the general giving of its more than 150,000 alumni. At the same time, alumni have much to be proud of—BC has consistently ranked in *U.S. News and World Report’s* top 30 research universities for almost a decade. Despite an indisputable school spirit that is evident in speaking to students and alumni, BC fundraisers and administrators are at a loss to explain why alumni giving rates are substantially lower than peer institutions,

most notably unofficial rival Notre Dame that's more than doubled BC's 22 percent alumni giving rate in 2008. Concurrently, Boston College alumni flock to football and men's basketball games, and administrators and fundraisers acquiesce to the fact that alumni have been and continue to be enamored with these sports—starting with the Holy Cross rivalry in the early part of the twentieth century, through the first major bowl game win since the 1940s with the 1984 Cotton Bowl, up until the 2009 season, when football in particular has held back-to-back winning seasons for a decade. Based on the assumption that men's intercollegiate athletics play a major role in the attention of many BC alumni, the researcher set out to examine the perceived existence of a relationship between alumni engagement and men's intercollegiate athletics and how it may influence general alumni giving at Boston College, and, in turn, better serve the financial needs of the institution as a leveraging point for donations.

Purpose of Study

Based on a proven need for alumni support at Boston College and the existence of a strong alumni fan base accounting for more than 40 percent of season ticket sales for Boston College football and men's basketball, the question often arises as to whether there is a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at BC. This study therefore looked to examine the perceptions, attitudes, and opinions of Boston College senior administrators and alumni on the role men's intercollegiate athletics may have played in general alumni giving from 1996–2005. The purpose set forth by the study was to gauge any perceived relationship between Boston College's athletic program and its alumni body's propensity to give to the general fund or other nonathletic programming in the hope of presenting data that can aid the University in its

fundraising practices. The study was designed not only to better inform the body of research on general alumni giving and the role of intercollegiate athletics but also to offer development practitioners data that can aid them in their fundraising strategy and tactics.

It was centered on four prevailing themes that emerged from the literature review:

1. Importance of General Alumni Giving in Higher Education
2. Importance of Intercollegiate Athletics to Alumni
3. How Alumni Engagement Impacts General Alumni Giving
4. Perceptions on the Role Athletics Plays in General Alumni Giving

Findings around these topics may ultimately help Boston College development professionals—and peers in higher education fundraising—to better address how they approach alumni for funds.

Therefore, the purpose of the study *was to examine if there was a perceived relationship by study participants between intercollegiate football and men's basketball and general alumni giving at Boston College from 1996–2005*. To meet the goals of this study, a qualitative case study was employed to collect and analyze data from both interviews and document analysis. This study was structured as an “intrinsic case study” (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 1998) to answer the research questions and to gain a better grasp on the unique phenomenon that is the focus of the case. The intrinsic case study allows the researcher “to define the uniqueness of this phenomenon that distinguishes it from all others” (Harling, 2002, p. 1). Sources of information included individual and focus group interviews and document review. Mixed purposeful sampling was applied within the study, with criterion sampling employed for 14 individual interviews with Boston College administrators, fundraisers, athletic professionals, and major alumni donors and

trustees. Homogenous sampling was applied to two focus group interviews, one with four Boston College alumni who give to the Boston College general fund or other nonathletic programming and a second group comprised of three Boston College alumni who give directly to athletics. Document review of both fundraising reports and athletic records on performance and attendance served as a third data source. A holistic analysis was employed in reviewing the data, through which the researcher looked to identify “specific themes, aggregating information into large clusters of ideas and providing details that support the themes” (Creswell, 1998, p. 249). Once the prevailing themes were identified, all data was triangulated to identify implications from the study, which follow in Chapter Eight.

Research Questions

From the stated purpose, the researcher developed the following questions to guide data collection and analysis. While these questions framed the study, further questions emerged from data collection and analysis that are addressed in the analysis and implications chapters.

The central question of the research is: What are the beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions of senior University administrators, fundraisers, and alumni donors on the perceived effect of men’s intercollegiate football and basketball on general alumni giving at Boston College from 1996–2005?

To broaden the scope of responses to the central research question, a subset of questions was created:

1. What are the key factors that participants identify as influencing general alumni giving?

2. How does a donor participant's perception of the influence of athletics on general alumni giving at Boston College compare to those of fundraisers and administrators at the University?
3. What types of athletic and/or alumni events do participants cite as ones that engage BC alumni?
4. What role do participants perceive fundraising policies and practices have in general alumni giving?

Guiding Assumptions

One of the key guiding assumptions for this study was the belief that voluntary financial support is essential to the livelihood of America's colleges and universities today. National fundraising records confirm the need for this external funding, particularly from those who have been fortunate to obtain a college degree and have the greatest personal interest in seeing an institution thrive. At Boston College, the need to supplement income from tuition, fees, and endowment is no different and the University continually seeks to supplement operating costs through the generosity of graduates, parents, friends, and corporations and foundations. From FY96 to FY05, annual support in dollars nearly tripled, from \$24 million in cash donations in 1996 to just over \$70 million in 2005, with alumni giving accounting for more than 50 percent of the annual total since FY99. In the same period, more than \$66 million was designated for financial aid from University grants and scholarships (Boston College, 2008). Since that time, Boston College has only continued to increase its commitment to students who have the qualifications to attend the University but not the means. In 2008–2009, more than 70 percent of Boston College undergraduates received some form of University-supported

financial aid, totaling just over \$85 million (Boston College, 2009). This alumni financial support also allows the University to retain its need-blind admission and 100 percent need-met policies, which in 2008 were maintained at only 23 other colleges and universities nationally (R. Lay, personal communication, February 2, 2009).

In interviews for this study with BC administrators and fundraisers, the need for alumni support was echoed many times. Virtually all the participants felt that their work in alumni giving either directly or indirectly was critical to the University's continued viability and success. The case for the recently launched \$1.5 billion capital campaign *Light the World* underscores this fact, as the fund drive will serve as the mechanism for enhancements to academic programming and major capital plant additions and improvements, while supplementing growth in financial aid, faculty, research, and the general operating budget.

Another important guiding assumption was the role men's intercollegiate athletics plays for Boston College alumni. Attendance appeared to offer a tangible indicator of how athletics engages the University's graduates. In 2005, 236,572 fans attended 6 home football games, at a total of 39,429 attendees per game (NCAA, 2005). In the same season, men's basketball drew an average of 6,440 to 17 games, for a total of 109,495 (NCAA, 2005). Although alumni account for 40 percent of season ticket holders at Boston College—the tickets normally being sold in pairs, with multiple tickets assigned to one ticket holder a commonality—there is insufficient data to determine the alumni status of those who attend with either attend with a season ticket holder or simply purchase individual game tickets (J. Di Loreto, personal communication, August 15, 2008).

In asking administrators and fundraisers to comment on their perceptions of how BC intercollegiate athletics engages alumni, they all indicated that it was a major source of reconnection for graduates to each other and to the University. With nearly 63,000 living alumni in Massachusetts (Boston College, 2008), one could conclude that BC alumni comprise a strong part of the fan base that comes to campus to support football and men's basketball each year. However, there are another 89,000 alumni living in the other 49 states and abroad, and while some, such as those in New England and New York, may in fact partake in the fan experience, it is likely the remainder are reconnecting with sports indirectly, through cable and satellite television—a number dedicated solely to intercollegiate athletics—and print and online college sports media, which have proliferated substantially over the past decade. The expansion of football and men's basketball to national media has brought alumni across the country and the world more opportunities to engage with Boston College through men's intercollegiate athletics, which is central to the research question.

The final guiding assumption focused on the fact that at Boston College, while some alumni give financially to their alma mater, these donations can be an even greater source of funding if we identify ways to motivate the more than 70 percent of alumni who do not give at all. In FY08 at Boston College, more than 30,000 alumni gave a cash gift to the University, accounting for half of all donations to BC, which totaled \$101.5 million that year. Yet, during the same period, less than a quarter of all BC alumni gave annually to their alma mater, despite senior class and alumni surveys over the years that indicate more than 90 percent of alumni are extremely satisfied with their college experience. There is visibly a subset of BC alumni who are happy with their educational

experience that do not support the University financially. Any information on what engages alumni may aid in finding motivators that will encourage alumni nondonors to give.

These guiding assumptions have been outlined in this section with the intention of providing some transparency to the research. Interviews for this study were based on the assumptions that giving to higher education and Boston College is critical; that men's intercollegiate athletics clearly is an aspect of the University that engages a very significant proportion of the alumni body; and that exploring more deeply alumni motivations for giving can aid BC and other institutions in finding ways to turn engagement into action. The literature review that follows offers support for these assumptions by the researchers cited. The following interviews with Boston College administrators, fundraisers, alumni donors, and major donors/trustees demonstrate that others in the University community most closely associated with alumni giving share these assumptions. Furthermore, while these assumptions are rich in applicability, they are low in specificity. They leave open many questions that are partially answered through the central research question and supporting questions in an effort to gauge the perception of a relationship between football and men's basketball and general alumni giving at Boston College.

Importance of Study

The statistics on alumni giving in higher education outlined in the guiding assumptions, which are expanded upon in the literature review, confirm that higher education is not only benefiting from but in many cases, in part, operating on the

generosity of its donors, with nearly one third of annual donations generated by alumni giving.

The expanding role of the capital campaign also serves as reinforcement for the important role of alumni giving. Originally created as a vehicle to fund buildings and other tangible and expensive additions to campus, the capital campaign has essentially become a cyclical effort that targets alumni giving in an effort to bridge the gap that has grown in higher education between tuition and fees and operating expenses. The capital campaign no longer serves as a tool to fund nonoperating expenses, as it seeks to infuse a major influx of funds for academic programming, faculty, research, and other aspects of daily campus life.

Beyond the financial support it provides to colleges and universities, alumni giving has taken on a new dimension in recent years, when college rankings—particularly those produced by *U.S. News & World Report*—have become increasingly integral in attracting undergraduate applications and influencing yield, which is the percent of admitted students who choose to enroll. Many do not realize that five percent of *U.S. News*'s university and college rankings is determined by alumni giving percentages—known as the participation rate, i.e., the percent of all living alumni who make a donation, as it is formally referred to by the fundraising profession. While not as significant a weighted factor to the overall *U.S. News* rankings as peer assessment (25 percent), retention (20 percent), faculty resources (20 percent), or student selectivity (15 percent), alumni giving is weighted equally with graduation rate and only 5 percent below financial resources in the final compilation of factors (Van Der Werf, 2007, p. A13).

The methodology of this study also is important to the body of research on men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving, as it is wholly approached from a qualitative basis. In examining the literature reviewed for this study—with the exception of a handful of qualitative studies cited, such as one on engagement by Kuh and Whitt (1995) and another on major donor motivations by Hunter (1975)—the bulk of past research on this topic has employed quantitative methodology. Most of these quantitative studies, which have been done in the past 50 years as fundraising has become a bona fide profession (Brittingham and Pezzullo, 1990; Coughlin and Erekson, 1985a), have focused on collection of data sets from surveys and other measurement models to which quantitative analysis is applied to develop hypotheses based on data correlations. This study offers a narrative from participants on how they perceive the men's intercollegiate athletics program and the engagement it creates between alumni and their alma mater—and how it may influence the propensity for alumni to give. The present study, which is based predominantly on personal interviews, suggests that more attention should be paid to participants' individual perceptions and attitudes toward men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving, and more broadly, a qualitative approach to the inquiry.

Further, Miles and Huberman (1994) asserted, “that qualitative data can help the quantitative side of a study by . . . validating, interpreting, clarifying, and illustrating quantitative findings, as well as strengthening and revising theory” (p. 41). Therefore, studies that involve methods from a qualitative paradigm may enhance quantitative findings on men's intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving, and, in turn, yield results that could serve as a catalyst for developing more innovative and introspective inquiry tools. Consequently, this study may not only provide Boston College fundraisers with

qualitative analysis that can be reviewed against quantitative findings on alumni giving but also aid the wider body of quantitative research on the topic—and potentially encourage further qualitative investigation on men’s intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving.

Alumni giving at Boston College plays an ever-increasing role in the financial health of the University, from capital expenditures to financial aid, as it does for the many thousands of colleges and universities across the United States and beyond. If study participants’ attitudes indicate that alumni are indeed more likely to give because of Boston College’s football and men’s basketball programs, these perceptions may aid development officers at the University and at other academic institutions, who may leverage these implications by crafting fundraising pitches around the collection of responses. Further findings could also impact how those who are fans of their alma mater’s teams but nondonors are approached for gifts based on their connection to athletics. The increasing importance of alumni giving to American higher education offers a broader rationale for a review of why alumni give—and ultimately whether a perceived relationship exists between men’s intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College. This study may not only inform the University about the perceived relationship between football and men’s basketball and general alumni giving but also may contribute to broader research in the field, which can aid the practice of fundraising in higher education.

Background to the Problem

Leslie and Ramey (1988) underscored the importance of alumni giving in higher education when they made the following statement:

Unlike appropriations and allocations from government and income from many other sources, voluntary support for colleges and universities takes on relatively unrestricted forms . . . much voluntary support may be expended without constraint. The result is that endowment and related funds often are the major sources of institutional discretionary funds by which innovations may be introduced, risks may be taken, and investments in the future may be made. (p. 115)

The impact of voluntary giving to academia today is unparalleled and vital to the livelihood of America's colleges and universities, which in the 2008–2009 school year enrolled more than 18 million students in higher education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). In Council for Aid to Education reports from 2005–2008, more than 50 percent of the funds raised through alumni donations were spent on annual operations at colleges and universities, with the remainder allocated to endowment, property and buildings, and loan funds. This data underscores how higher education is not only benefiting but—in many cases—also operating on the generosity of its donors.

At the same time, the phenomenon of competitive sports in America continues to serve as a major source of entertainment and engagement for many, from the college level where it began, to the ever-present professional sports that permeate our country today. When reviewing the role of men's intercollegiate sports in the latter half of the twentieth century, Koch (1983) asserted that college athletics has been on the rise in the United States since the 1970s, buoyed in part by the proliferation of televised games and championships. In 1982, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reported that 35.8 million fans attended intercollegiate football games, up 18 percent since 1971

(p. 360). Koch added that television and radio coverage of sports and networks such as ESPN—which now have several cable/satellite stations dedicated solely to college sports—have spurred on increased engagement of the public with intercollegiate athletics and “stimulated fan recognition and interest, rivalries, and attendance at games” (p. 363).

In the past three decades, college sports have garnered increased visibility due not only to heightened interest in intercollegiate athletics but also to major growth in the sports media industry. As our world becomes increasingly connected to college sports through venues like sports television, satellite radio, and digital media, one can assume that the role of college sports will only expand as the games are delivered to fans beyond the playing field. The question then becomes how alumni engagement with their alma mater’s teams may impact colleges and universities financially, particularly in the area of alumni donations. Therefore, the increasing importance of general alumni giving and strong popularity of college football and men’s basketball is central to a review of why alumni give—and if there is a perceived relationship between men’s intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving in higher education today, which is the purpose of this case study.

As an institution with a long history of strong intercollegiate football and men’s basketball programs, athletics serves as a vehicle for alumni engagement at Boston College. This level of performance has become a significant source of pride and school spirit—not to mention personal reconnection with classmates and the institution—for many BC alumni. In preliminary research for this study, two Boston College senior administrators conceded in a conversation with the researcher that in terms of outreach to alumni, there is no greater avenue of engagement to such a critical mass of graduates than

athletics, which often creates interaction among the institution, alumni, and their classmates (M. DeLong and W. Neenan, personal communication, April 12, 2006).

Through the lens of Boston College, this research study has sought to expand upon the pertinent literature that has examined the relationship between general alumni giving and men's intercollegiate athletics, specifically football and men's basketball. The literature provided guidance as to areas that warranted further review, including the importance of alumni contributions; general indicators and motivators for alumni donors; the impact of championship play on alumni giving; and specific literature that concurred with or rejected the possibility of a relationship between successful intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving. Research in these areas also informed participant inquiry and served as the foundation for the research questions.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, nine key terms are defined that are either specific to the nature of the study or provide transparency for the research collection and analysis, findings, and future implications.

Engagement—The level of involvement, belonging, attachment, and/or commitment an alumnus or student derives from participation in University events that encourages further interactions, which draws him or her closer into feeling a part of the institution that may ultimately encourage acts on behalf of the institution

Alumni Giving—All donations from graduates of the institution to any aspect of the institution, including athletic programming

General Alumni Giving—Donations from graduates of the institution to the general fund or other nonathletic programming, which is focal to the research question

Alumni Giving Rate or Alumni Participation Rate—The total number of living alumni who give in a fiscal year as a percent of all living alumni, which can be applied as a measure of giving to all living alumni or a subset of this body, such as graduates of a specific class year

Annual Giving—The summation of cash gifts received in a fiscal year

Restricted Giving—Gifts that are designated by a donor for a specific program and cannot be applied to other programming

Gifts to Athletic Programming—Gifts that are designated for use only in the intercollegiate athletics budget

Gifts to Nonathletic Programming—Gifts that are designated for all other uses than intercollegiate athletics

Unrestricted Giving—Gifts that are designated by a donor for general use at the university, determined by the administration

Overview of the Chapters

This study consists of eight chapters, with the first three chapters laying the base for this investigation. Chapter One introduces the context for the study—the importance of alumni giving in American higher education and the perception of a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving—and outlines the purpose, research questions, and importance of the study. Chapter Two, the literature review, presents an overview of the research conducted in the past on the indicators of and motivations for alumni giving, the role of championship play in alumni giving, and studies that either concur or refute a perceived relationship between successful intercollegiate athletic programs and alumni giving, based on a triangulation of the data

collected on the indicators. The chapter identifies areas where additional inquiry is warranted. Chapter Three details the methodology for this qualitative study, which centers on individual and focus group interviews to elicit attitudes, opinions, and perceptions from participants on the perceived relationship between football and men's basketball at BC and general alumni giving, and triangulation of the information through document review of a number of data sources on fundraising and athletics at the University. Chapter Four provides context on the study's setting, Boston College, and introduces the participants from individual interviews and focus groups to help frame and inform the study's findings.

Chapter Five presents findings on the importance of general alumni giving to Boston College, including finances and student aid; mission and institutional profile; alumni participation rates and national rankings; and the need for major gifts from alumni. The latter half of the chapter shares participants' perspectives on why alumni give, and introduces findings on indicators of and motivators for alumni giving, including wealth and emotional attachment; support for the work of the institution; engagement with the institution; perceived donor benefits; and the impact of gender on alumni giving. Chapter Six lays the base on the importance of Boston College athletics to the University generally; as an avenue to national visibility; as a reflection of the academic integrity of the program; to the student body; and to alumni both as students and later as graduates. Chapter Seven presents findings on perceived paths of engagement for Boston College alumni, including men's intercollegiate athletics as well as a range of nonathletic activities and programming, and how participants believe these varied activities may rank in connecting the more than 150,000 alumni back to BC. Section two then answers the

central research question in two parts: 1) What is the perceived impact of men's intercollegiate athletics on general alumni giving? and 2) Do respondents in fact perceive a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College?

The final chapter, Chapter Eight, summarizes the inquiry, discusses how the findings answer the research question in Chapter One, and offers implications for further research that may inform and assist fundraisers at Boston College—and across higher education—in leveraging alumni engagement in men's intercollegiate athletics to achieve greater giving for their institutions from graduates.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

One need only turn on a television to see the major role of intercollegiate sports in America today. Koch (1983) contended that the phenomenon of college athletics has been on the rise in the United States since the 1970s, due in large part to the widespread emergence of televised sports in American homes around that time. In 1982, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reported that 35.8 million fans attended intercollegiate football games, up 18 percent since 1971 (p. 360). Koch cited the burgeoning television and radio coverage of sports, and networks like ESPN that “flog our senses on a twenty-four hour a day basis with broadcasts of intercollegiate athletic contests” (p. 360). Koch also noted that at many institutions, college coaches’ salaries are double that of the presidents for whom they work.

Koch highlighted the impact the NCAA has had on the intercollegiate sports explosion by its maximizing visibility through lucrative television contracts, while working to protect ticket revenues by blacking out games where attendance might be hurt. In turn, it split the television income equally among all teams to ensure balanced revenue streams. Koch also commented that many observers of this growth phenomenon believe that televised basketball games have “stimulated fan recognition and interest, rivalries, and attendance at games” (p. 363).

Most of the research that is applicable to this author’s query on the existence of a perceived relationship between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving has been done in the past three decades, when college sports have gained increased visibility due to not only a growth in the sports media industry but also heightened interest in intercollegiate

athletics. As our world becomes increasingly connected to sports through venues like sports television, satellite radio, and digital media, one can assume that the role of college sports will only expand as the games are delivered to fans beyond the playing field and inquire as to how that may impact colleges and universities financially, particularly in the area of alumni support.

The fervor of intercollegiate play has caused much debate about whether its popularity has, in fact, an impact on alumni giving at the many colleges and universities that maintain big-time sports programs. This literature review examines research on this topic in an effort to identify the prevailing findings on the existence of a perceived relationship between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving.

This review of literature consists of four sections. Section one reviews research and literature regarding the importance of alumni giving for the general funding of college programs, activities, and mission. Section two examines a wide range of work that seeks to identify three potential indicators of a perceived relationship between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving, which are: 1) general characteristics associated with alumni donors; 2) motivations for alumni giving; and 3) the connection between championship/tournament play and alumni giving. Section three is contextualized by studies that either concur or refute correlations between successful athletic programs and alumni giving. Section four, the final section, is a summary that frames the need for future study on the existence of a relationship between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving.

The Importance of Alumni Giving in Higher Education Today

In an era of dwindling federal and state support of education—and skyrocketing tuitions and operating costs—never has the need for outside funds been more important to the fiscal health of America’s colleges and universities. While there are a number of sources of external funding for higher education—including corporations and foundations—the most recent statistics show alumni and individual giving account for more than 50 percent of outside support (Council for Aid to Education, 2007). Clearly, alumni giving is seen as important to the fiscal health of higher education and its future. The increasing importance of alumni giving offers a basis for a review of why alumni give—and ultimately whether a relationship is perceived between intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving. A more in-depth understanding of how alumni giving impacts higher education financially will clarify the need for future review of potential donor motivations, including the impact of football and men’s basketball.

Leslie and Ramey (1988) underscored the importance of alumni giving in higher education when they stated:

Unlike appropriations and allocations from government and income from many other sources, voluntary support for colleges and universities takes on relatively unrestricted forms . . . much voluntary support may be expended without constraint. The result is that endowment and related funds often are the major sources of institutional discretionary funds by which innovations may be introduced, risks may be taken, and investments in the future may be made. (p. 115)

Many professional fundraisers have quantified the importance of voluntary support

as their profession has become more established and data-driven. In an interview in 2001, Jerold Panas, a principal with the fundraising firm of Panas, Linzy & Partners of Chicago, confirmed this trend and further defined the fact that wealthy individuals were predominantly responsible for major support in higher education. Panas concluded, “We used to say that 80 percent of the money we raise came from 20 percent of the people. Now we say that 95 percent of the money comes from 2 percent of the people” (Brenowitz, 2001, p. 39).

In 2006, charitable contributions to United States’ higher education reached \$28 billion, with 30 percent of this total, \$8.4 billion, attributed to alumni giving (Council for Aid to Education, 2007, p. 2). Despite a decrease in the number of alumni who gave—commonly referred to as the alumni participation rate—in that same year, the overall dollar amount from alumni donations increased by 18.3 percent due to an increase in gift size (p. 1). Of the total \$8.4 billion, more than 50 percent was spent on annual operations at 1,014 institutions that responded to the Council for Aid to Education study, while the remainder was allocated to endowment, property and buildings, and loan funds (p. 1). These numbers indicate that higher education is not only benefiting but—in many cases—also operating on the generosity of its donors, with nearly one third of the funds from alumni gifts.

The expanding role of the capital campaign also serves as reinforcement for the important role of alumni giving. Originally created as a vehicle to fund buildings and other tangible and expensive additions to campus, the capital campaign has essentially become a cyclical effort that targets alumni giving in an effort to bridge the gap that has grown in higher education between tuition and fees and operating expenses. The capital campaign no longer serves as a tool to fund nonoperating expenses, as it seeks to infuse a major influx of

funds for academic programming, faculty, research, and other aspects of daily campus life. The bar on capital campaigns has never been higher—most Ivy League schools are waging campaigns in the billions every 5 to 10 years, with the top 50 research universities not far behind. Since the early 1990s, there have been 60 billion-dollar-plus campaigns, with Stanford hitting the all-time high with a goal of \$4.3 billion for its campaign slated to conclude in 2011 (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2007).

Alumni giving has also taken on a new dimension in recent years, when college rankings—particularly those produced by *U.S. News & World Report*—have become even more critical to an institution in terms of undergraduate applications and yield (those admitted who chose to enroll), as well as student selectivity. Five percent of *U.S. News's* university and college rankings is determined by alumni giving or participation rate, i.e., the percent of all living alumni who make a donation, as it is formally referred to by the fundraising profession. While not as significant a weighted factor to the overall *US News's* rankings as peer assessment (25 percent), retention (20 percent), faculty resources (20 percent), or student selectivity (15 percent), alumni giving is weighted equally with graduation rate and only 5 percent below financial resources (Van Der Werf, 2007, p. A13).

Before *U.S. News* moved from a pure peer ranking system to one that scored schools on a wider range of statistical indicators in 1989, many of the country's public universities consistently ranked in the top 25. In 2007, only three ranked in the top 25 research universities in the *U.S. News* rankings (p. A13). In 2006, the differential between alumni giving rates at public institutions versus privates underscored the fact that privates are more productive at fundraising, with private research universities averaging 17.5

percent alumni participation and public research institutions averaging 11 percent participation (p. A13). Brenowitz (2001) stated that this differential is in much part due to the fact that privates have had to rely on voluntary contributions for their budgetary needs for a longer time than publics, which have faced substantial budget cuts in the last several decades that significantly affected budgets once wholly or substantially funded by state and federal government.

Further, reports have surfaced in recent years that some schools are finding ways to manipulate their alumni giving rate in order to aid their institutions in the rankings, among other benefits. In 2007, Golden outlined a number of institutions that had manipulated their giving rates with positive outcomes. Albion College was one of the most highly publicized cases, as in 2004 it solicited senior class pledges and—unbeknownst to graduates—booked them over a six-year period to increase reported alumni participation rates (Golden, 2007, ¶ 2). The recalculations worked—Albion moved from a 36 percent alumni participation rate in 1998 to 47 percent in 2006, placing it 14th among liberal arts colleges for the year in the *U.S. News* rankings. The alumni giving rate also aided the institution in obtaining a Kresge Foundation grant for \$4.7 million in 2003 (¶ 3). Since Albion's accounting practices were exposed, the school has stated that it will no longer count gifts over multiple years and also stopped including senior class donors in the participation rate (Albion College, 2006). Other colleges—including Haverford, Wesleyan, and Trinity—were found to count donors in similar ways, which has led *U.S. News* and Kresge representatives to clamp down on standards for reporting alumni giving rates (Golden, 2007, ¶ 14). Golden concluded that alumni giving statistics have gone beyond serving as an internal measure of success for

organizational fundraising and have become an important factor in the stature of a college, which may impact enrollment and student selectivity.

The impact of voluntary contributions from alumni on the fiscal bottom line of America's colleges and universities cannot be underscored, as they have come to serve as a significant source of operational and student support. This fact, coupled with the increasingly important role alumni giving rates play in college and university rankings, supports the need for further research on the perceived relationship between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving. The next section of this literature review examines potential indicators of alumni giving, both generally and in conjunction with intercollegiate athletic play.

Potential Predictors of Alumni Giving

Drawing from the preceding literature analysis that alumni giving is essential to the financial strength of the United States' institutions of higher education, this author's next level of examination in gauging the perception of a relationship between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving was to review research on why alumni give to their alma maters. Three major indicators emerged in this literature review that can help shed light on why graduates may choose to support their alma maters based on action on the athletic playing field: 1) general characteristics associated with alumni donors; 2) motivations for alumni giving; and 3) the connection between championship/tournament play and alumni giving. This section reports on a large body of work that has emerged in the past three decades about each of these indicators as researchers attempt to gain a better understanding of the underlying causes of alumni giving in an effort to offer professional fundraisers data that may aid them in creating more targeted appeals for funds.

Indicators of Alumni Giving

Although fundraising has been in place since the days of the Colonial colleges, when wealthy settlers in the New World set out to establish and help fund institutions of higher learning for their offspring and descendants, fundraising only began to take on a professional form in the past century, and in higher education, came to be seen as a bona fide profession in the past 50 years (Brittingham and Pezzullo, 1990; Coughlin and Erekson, 1985a). As the need for voluntary support increased, so did the need for data to identify potential donors. Fundraisers reviewed what was most readily available to them—lists of past donors in recent years—to create profiles of potential donors by identifying and cataloging similar characteristics of those who had a propensity to give to their alma maters.

In their report on fundraising in higher education, Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990) reviewed a number of studies about the characteristics of donors to all nonprofits, as well as to higher education. They cited the work of Jencks (1987), who stated that giving generally increases with age, and that people who are married or widowed are more philanthropic than those who are single. Brittingham and Pezzullo summarized the body of work they reviewed on general characteristics by stating:

Research on private giving suggests that motivations for and patterns of giving differ significantly by the circumstances of the donor and the target of the gifts; the circumstances and motivations for giving to religion, education, charity, and the arts differ in significant ways. Overall studies of private giving reveal a U-shaped curve, with the largest giving, as a percent of income, among the least and the most affluent. (p. 36)

Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990) then focused on studies that reviewed the characteristics of alumni who gave. They referenced an article by Balz in 1987 that indicated wealthy respondents give more generously to colleges and universities, whereas less affluent respondents favored gifts to religious entities. The authors finalized their review on characteristics of alumni donors by reviewing a national survey on college graduates in 1983 by Lindemann, which found that approximately 25 percent donated to their undergraduate program at some time. Brittingham and Pezzullo's synopsis of the data indicated:

Donations were higher among those who earned a baccalaureate (40 percent) than among those who did not (13.5 percent); most likely from those who attended a religious college (48 percent), followed by an independent college (33 percent) and a public institution (22 percent); slightly more likely from women (28 percent) than men (24 percent); and increasingly likely as a level of income. . . . Loyalty to one's alma mater was an important factor in giving, cited more often by those who attended independent schools (76 percent) than public institutions (57 percent). (p. 39)

The authors also noted that more than one degree from an institution is a consistent characteristic among alumni donors.

In reviewing numerous alumni surveys on giving, Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990) concluded, "perhaps the best indicators of alumni giving are an emotional attachment to the school, participation in alumni events, and participation in and donation to other voluntary and religious groups" (p. 40).

A similar study by Beeler in 1982 reviewing alumni giving at private universities echoed the assertion that “emotional attachment” (Hueston, 1992) was the strongest predictor of alumni philanthropy. Beeler also found that student participation at campus events, strong academic performance, and extracurricular activities also served as predictors for giving. Similarly, Shulman and Bowen (2001) found giving patterns that indicated former students who participated actively in extracurricular activities were more likely to be alumni donors than their classmates who were not as engaged in student life, which correlated with findings by a number of other researchers cited by Harrison in 1995. Shulman and Bowen’s study also found that alumni giving correlated positively with academic achievement, with the top third of a class being the most generous and conversely, the bottom third being the least likely to give back to their alma mater.

In their literature review, Baade and Sundberg (1996a) stated that most theorists had found that alumni giving is “determined by three sets of variables: college or university characteristics, student characteristics (especially family wealth), and institutional efforts to solicit funds” (p. 75). When defining college or university characteristics, the authors not only evaluated academic endeavors but also extracurricular activities and student life experiences. In looking at student characteristics, they found that a student from a more affluent background is more likely to give as an alumnus, although they noted that since alumni give based on personal experience, the wealth factor may have more of a direct impact on the size of the gift, rather than the impetus to give. Baade and Sundberg also underscored the principle that the amount of resources placed into fundraising efforts can enhance giving from those

alumni who may not exhibit strong characteristics for giving through increased communication and engagement.

Baade and Sundberg's (1996a) sample included the alumni giving records of more than 125 public and private research universities and more than 250 liberal arts colleges in 1989 and 1990. Their dependent variable was the log of alumni giving per alumnus. While their research offered a number of insights into variables such as gift size and time out of school before first gift, for the purposes of this study, the most critical outcome was that the broad student experience—from academics to club activities to campus life functions, such as sporting events—could reflect relevant donor characteristics if the alumnus felt that the activity enhanced his or her college life.

In looking at characteristics of donors from a student development theory perspective, several studies were reviewed that offered a framework for the basis of this focus. In research examining selectivity and good practices in undergraduate education in this study, two of the guiding questions designed to gauge students' perceived benefits from out-of-classroom activities asked them to define what "the most significant experience" and "the major highlights" were at their respective institutions (p. 127). Kuh and Whitt widened the concept of engagement in a report that examined culture in higher education, which they defined as "beliefs, guiding premises and assumptions, norms, rituals, and customs and practices that influence the actions of individuals and groups and the meanings people give to events in a particular setting" (1988, p. iii). They further asserted that culture "holds organizations together and serves four general purposes: 1) it conveys a sense of identity; 2) it facilitates commitment to an entity, such as the college or peer group . . . and 4) it is a sense making device that guides and shapes behavior" (p.

10). These theoretical frameworks provide support for the supposition that students who enjoy intercollegiate sports as fans may continue their involvement with intercollegiate athletics and serve as alumni donors when engagement remains high after graduation and the sense of spirit continues to reconnect them to their alma maters.

After reviewing the literature, several patterns of donor indicators specific to alumni giving emerged consistently. Alumni giving correlates with wealth, particularly in the size of a gift. Alumni who graduate also are more likely to give than those who do not, and multiple degrees can positively impact giving to an institution. Alumni of religious and private institutions are more likely to give than those who attended public universities and colleges. Alumni who are actively engaged with their alma mater in their daily life are also more likely to give, as their emotional attachment has continued into their adult lives. Engagement as students also appears to be a significant characteristic among alumni donors, particularly those who were involved in extracurricular activities and/or were high academic achievers. Overall, characteristics of emotional attachment—whether as students and/or active alumni—appear to be the most significant indicators of alumni giving, and may help inform future research on the perceived relationship between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving.

Motivations for Alumni Giving

Understanding motivations and behaviors of donors serves as a complement to findings on donor indicators, as both are essential to getting a better grasp on a perceived relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving. Studies have examined general motivations for alumni giving as well as motivations for giving directly to athletics. For the purpose of the proposed study, it is important to review

findings on both types of studies, with the caveat that the central research question focuses on the perceived relationship between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving to the general fund and other nonathletic programming, for which the literature review found little precedent in previous inquiry.

While Brittingham and Pezzullo stated in their 1990 study on fundraising in higher education that research on alumni giving was predominantly an outcome of dissertations focused on a unique college or university, they offered some insights into general motivations for philanthropy to all nonprofits. The authors cited a 1975 study by Hunter which interviewed 30 donors who had given \$1 million or more to a wide range of nonprofits and inquired as to what their motivations were for giving. They responded, “worthiness of cause, personal interest or association with a cause, knowledge that the organization was managed well, a sense of real social need, a sense of community obligation, and tax benefits” (p. 54). Brittingham and Pezzullo also stated that a number of economists had studied individual giving to all nonprofits from two opposing standpoints, one economical and the other charitable. However, their research indicated that the majority of previous studies had concluded that a charity theory, particularly in the case of higher education, was most applicable to individual giving, as it is based on perceived utility of the gift by the donor. The utility could be “based upon altruism or an indirect benefit (maintaining or enhancing the prestige of one’s alma mater) or more direct (the prestige associated with giving)” (p. 34). Similarly, Leslie and Ramey’s findings in their 1988 study indicated that institutional prestige was a key factor in motivating alumni to give. Coughlin and Cletus (1986) also found that alumni giving was

motivated by “some indirect utility” and further stated that “personal attachment” (p. 183) to an institution influenced alumni giving.

Several studies have examined motivations for giving to athletics from a social cognitive theory, including Verner, Hecht, and Fansler (1998). They performed a quantitative study to gauge the motivations of a random sampling of athletic donors from 10 NCAA Division programs using a survey instrument that measured the importance of a wide range of factors on the subject’s likelihood to give. While the authors identified 11 factors as significant motivations for alumni giving directly to athletics, their overall conclusion was that there was “a strong, central, single motivation underlying all of the more particular motivations examined” (p. 132). The factors they identified were: 1) participating in secondary events (such as special donor events on campus and at championship venues); 2) public recognition; 3) giving of time and energy; 4) inside information; 5) priority treatment; 6) philanthropy; 7) collaboration; 8) create (explained as the ability to create enhancements, such as physical plant, and scholarships that aid athletics); 9) change (contribute to existing programs that enhance athletics); 10) curiosity (opportunity to participate in athletic management); and 11) power (influence decision making around athletics). Verner, Hecht, and Fansler stated that future studies should seek to identify the “strong single motivating factor as a necessary precursor to the other scales, so that the variance attributed to these 11 factors can be examined more finely” (p. 132).

Staurowsky, Parkhouse, and Sachs (1996) also performed a similar study in which they identified six factors that motivated alumni giving to athletics. Each factor had several qualifiers that aided in deeper definition of the motivations. They were: 1) social:

enjoyment of watching sports, ability to return to their alma maters, ticket availability, athletic events as family get-togethers, renewal of friendships, and access to players and coaches; 2) power: contribute opinions on program quality, peer contributions, influence on athletics personnel and school decision making; 3) success1: loyalty to school and support of athletic program that enhances school's prestige; 4) success2: aiding in bringing prestige through athletic success and personal participation in athletics; 5) philanthropic: fund scholarships and educate student-athletes in need; and 6) benefits: tickets for business partners, tax deduction, and special gifts. Similar to Verner, Hecht, and Fansler's study conclusion, Staurowsky, Parkhouse, and Sachs stated that further research should attempt "to elucidate the underlying factor structure at the center of athletic donor motivation" (p. 275).

Coughlin and Erikson (1985a) chose to look at alumni motivations for giving both generally to their alma maters, as well as toward athletic support. The authors cited a study that examined giving to health charities in which Long attempted to measure the importance of social pressures upon donor behavior in such forms of fundraising activities as volunteer peer-to-peer fundraising and publication of the names of those who give. Long (1976) found that social pressure, when combined with income and wealth status concerns, was a significant determinant of giving. Coughlin and Erikson also noted a similar study by Keating, Pitts, and Appel (1981) based on United Way contributions that found social pressure was a significant determinant of individual giving.

In the same study, Coughlin and Erikson (1985a) found that those who give to athletics appear to be pursuing end utility—some direct connection to or benefit from the gift versus the simple act of giving for the good of the cause. The connection or benefit

can be as basic as feeling empowered because they have control of where their funds will be applied within the university structure, but Coughlin and Erikson also offer another rationale for this end utility—preferential treatment as a donor. It has become commonplace for athletic donors to receive special treatment—from parking to seating to special premier events.

Conversely, the impact of NCAA sanctions on giving appears to inhibit alumni donors. When the NCAA sanctioned Mississippi State University (MSU) because a booster member gave discounts to a player, MSU donations to both athletic and nonathletic efforts suffered. Fear of sanctions may inhibit alumni giving in general, and Grimes and Cressanthis (1994) indicated that institutions would be wise to make it clear to alumni that they take the NCAA rules seriously and work hard to enforce them.

In summarizing the literature, it appears that many alumni are motivated by the direct utility of their gifts, whether it is altruistic or an emotional attachment that connects them with something they value, including social connections, institutional prestige, recognition, and a sense that they have a more internal perspective into the institution, and in some cases, its athletics program. For those alumni who give specifically to athletics, while end utility still remains important, the motivation is derived more closely through the power perceived from their ability to make a direct impact on the sports programs, and maybe more importantly, from their preferential treatment as boosters, ranging from special seating and parking to inclusion in internal events. While this research can help to shape the proposed study, further data collection around alumni motivations for giving may aid in determining a perceived relationship between athletics and general alumni giving.

Impact of Championships and Tournaments on Alumni Giving

In an article based on research that examined successful football and men's basketball programs of two data sets consisting of both public and private institutions from 1973–1990, Baade and Sundberg (1996b) concluded that in both private and public universities, winning teams were not a significant determinant of alumni giving. However, bowl and championship appearances were significant factors in alumni giving for both privates and publics. Basketball conference play was a particularly notable factor for increased alumni giving in the public sample. For football, a college team that made a bowl appearance appeared to provide stronger impetus for alumni giving than just a win/loss record, even if the overall season's win/loss record was a losing one. Baade and Sundberg noted that bowl appearances also brought more visibility to a university through enhanced publicity. The same holds true of basketball conferences, although the authors indicated that one reason these tournaments may impact alumni giving at public universities more than private institutions is that more than two thirds of the public universities in the sample appeared at least once in the NCAA tournament, while just over half of the privates won a bid to play. For the public institutions in the sample, the average number of appearances was approximately 5.1 versus 3.75 for the private colleges (p. 801). The authors concluded that the differential in giving in publics versus privates for basketball conference play may be a result of simply fewer appearances, and hence less visibility.

Coughlin and Erektion (1985b) stated that success for donors could be defined in a number of ways, including development of student-athlete/scholars, improved facilities and programs, and recruitment of the best coaches and trainers to their alma maters.

However, they argued that from their statistical analysis, which focused on major college sports programs predominantly in the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC), winning conference/national championships is one of the most important measures that defined success for donors. One example they use to illustrate their assertion is the increase Clemson University saw in its giving to athletics in the 1981–1982 season. Based on an anticipated successful football season, the school set a goal of \$3.5 million for its total fundraising effort—which was increased to \$4 million after Clemson concluded a championship season (p. 196). In the same year, the NCAA reported that play in a bowl game increased contributions to athletics almost 25 percent over target funding goals.

Daughtrey and Stotlar (2000) looked at gifts to the university versus gifts to athletics through two factors: voluntary support and number of donors. The data set included all NCAA Division I-AA, II, or III teams with a national championship between 1987 and 1997. Their significant finding was that for the three baseline years preceding the study, the mean of all donations given to the schools was \$3,912,509, whereas the mean for the total in the championship year was \$4,596,542, up 10.19 percent over the previous year. The total for the year following the championship was \$4,902,309, up 21.89 percent over the year prior to the championship (p. 188). Further, the research indicated that in that same year, the number of donors to athletics increased nearly 35 percent for Division I-AA schools, 51 percent for Division II schools, and almost 51 percent for Division III institutions the year of the championship (p. 189). Finally, Division I-AA schools appeared to benefit from championship appearances in general giving to the universities and realized an increase in both number of donors and size of donations, while Division III saw an increase in general donations overall. However,

Division II actually saw a decrease in overall donations to university giving despite the increase in athletic donors.

In the same report, Daughtrey and Stotlar (2000) quoted Sperber (1990) and Dodd (1997) as suggesting the reason there was a decrease in Division II fundraising was because alumni had been concerned that their alma maters were becoming “jock factories” (p. 185). They further asserted that this impacted not only giving to athletics but also to the university as a whole, and that fundraisers would be wise to take note as to how alumni respond to championships and how they can capitalize on the wins.

Rhoads and Gerking (2000) collected data from 87 NCAA Division I football and men’s basketball teams for a ten-year period from 1986 to 1996. Many of the institutions were in major conferences and had strong traditions of successful athletics, with long-term commitments from administrations to maintain well-subsidized programs. The authors studied whether voluntary educational contributions were enhanced by successful athletic programs and if there was a different impact from football versus basketball. The source of alumni giving for the comparative schools came from the Council for Aid to Education’s annual publication, *Voluntary Support of Education*. Its findings indicated that football wins and NCAA basketball tournament wins both had positive impacts on contributions made by alumni. Other findings indicated that a bowl game win increased alumni contributions per student by 7.3 percent, while a decrease of 13.6 percent is realized in alumni giving per student when their basketball team is penalized for an NCAA violation (p. 254). Rhoads and Gerking also stated that final sports competitions positively impact alumni giving, with bowl game appearances prior to 1985 increasing mean total support per student by 1.7 percent and NCAA basketball tournament

appearances during the same period increasing total alumni support 0.7 percent (p. 256). They concluded that administrators should take the correlation between successful athletics and alumni support seriously.

Padilla and Baumer (1994) also reinforced the impact that football bowl game wins and NCAA basketball championships mean to the bottom line for athletics funding. They stated that simply getting selected to play in the NCAA basketball playoffs nets a school anywhere from \$300,000 to \$500,000 from a combination of sources, one being alumni donations. Padilla and Baumer concluded that winning, particularly in the form of championship games, could have significant financial impact on college athletic programs. This visibility factor also appears to impact the correlation between a football bowl appearance and increased alumni giving, particularly because of the hoopla that goes on from the time bowl picks are announced in early December until when teams actually play around New Year's Day. This is especially true in a time when all bowl games are televised and heavily promoted for an entire month.

While Bok (2003) also stated that there were no empirical studies to demonstrate a correlation between success in athletics and alumni giving, he conceded that many college presidents still believe that success in football or basketball will encourage alumni to give to their institutions. Bok reasoned that if indeed this were the case, "To gain the needed visibility, teams would have to go to a prominent postseason bowl game or advance to the late rounds of the basketball playoffs" (p. 50).

Clearly, while there is data both to support and to refute the impact of championship play on alumni giving, most of it is based on specific examinations of particular schools' individual successes in championship play and correlating increases in

giving in the same year. To better determine if there is a perceived relationship between winning in football and men's basketball and alumni giving, further field research needs to be done with both fundraisers and donors to obtain more qualitative data on their perceptions of the impact.

Literature that Concurr or Rejects a Relationship Between Successful Intercollegiate Athletics and Alumni Giving

In looking at the concept of success in athletics, while much of the previous research examined for the literature review focused on winning, Coughlin and Erekson (1985b) raised the point that for donors, success could be defined in a number of ways, from development of student-athlete/scholars, improved facilities and programs, and recruitment of the best coaches and players, to even attendance. A number of authors have reviewed research on variables and factors that preclude or encourage alumni giving, from which they have attempted to draw overarching conclusions about the perceived relationship between successful intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving. In this section, the author reviewed these studies in more detail to determine 1) how success has been defined in previous inquiry, i.e., winning on the field versus satisfaction with the overall sports program, and 2) based on that definition, if there is a concluding opinion that concurs or rejects the question of whether a successful intercollegiate athletics program impacts alumni giving.

Baade and Sundberg (1996a) found that overall, "colleges and universities seem to be rewarded by their alumni for sports programs that are extremely successful" (p. 792). They cautioned that the money spent to raise the funds should not detract from the overall budget of the university, as increased budgets may not necessarily lead to

increased giving. Grimes and Chressanthis (1994) found winning in basketball a critical factor on the perceived positive impact that success in athletics might have on alumni giving. The authors contended that because of the longer basketball season, and hence more games, alumni were watching them on a week-to-week basis. Thus, the winning record was the key to whether alumni were spurred on to give. Conversely, the authors felt that in football, “who you beat” (p. 37) was a determining factor, because of the shorter season.

Coughlin and Erikson (1985b) stated that the relationship between alumni contributions and intercollegiate athletics continues to endure heavy “systemic empirical scrutiny” (p. 194) because of the increased demands on university budgets. They noted three studies, one by Sigelman and Carter (1979) which essentially stated that there was no relationship between athletic success and general alumni giving, another by Brooker and Klastorin (1981), who offered statistically significant relationships between athletic success and general alumni donations, and a third follow-up by Sigelman and Bookheimer (1983). In their study, Sigelman and Bookheimer stated that while they could not find a statistically significant relationship between athletic success and general alumni giving, they did in fact find a “significant simple correlation between athletic contributions and football success” (p. 195). Coughlin and Erikson noted that the design of Sigelman and Bookheimer’s study expanded the literature in the field because they looked at how successful athletics may impact gifts to athletics as well as general gifts to the institution, using both as dependent variables. In their own follow-up study, Coughlin and Erikson challenged particular variables of that work and then compared and contrasted their own empirical study based on the same data set from 56 institutions with

significant football programs from a survey executed by the *Omaha-World Herald*. Whereas both studies correlated a positive impact on giving with football success, Coughlin and Ereksen felt they had statistical evidence that other factors in successful intercollegiate sports fuel gifts to athletics. In looking at attendance and contributions, they found football attendance a prevailing variable over winning performance. Their correlations provided support for a strong linkage between donations to athletics and winning programs, and in addition to attendance, found bowl participation and basketball winning percentages “positively related to contributions and statistically significant” (p. 196).

In his book, Zimbalist (1999) contended that many proponents believe that successful athletic programs have an impact on giving and positive publicity. However, citing several sources of findings included in this study’s literature review that refute a correlation between successful athletics and giving to a general university fund—including Sigelman and Carter (1979) and Brooker and Klastorin (1981)—Zimbalist concurred no empirical evidence exists to support either of these two claims.

Grimes and Chressanthis (1994) researched the impact of Mississippi State University’s intercollegiate athletic program on its alumni giving from 1962 to 1991. They included a number of empirical studies in their review that both supported and denounced their assertion that alumni do in fact give because of their alma mater’s intercollegiate sports program. However, they also stated that in general, it is often hard to obtain and examine all the variables that may find a statistically sound and definitive answer to the question of a perceived relationship between successful athletics and alumni giving. A key commentary in their introduction addresses the importance of

determining if a successful intercollegiate sports program “attracts alumni contributions and endowments that otherwise may not be donated” (p. 28).

Grimes and Chressanthis’s (1994) study appeared to include more variables than most others, possibly because of the authors’ easy access to data. After looking at contributions as the dependent variable, and alumni base, enrollment, appropriations, income, winning, postseason appearances, television appearances, and NCAA sanctions as control variables, the authors concluded “that athletic success of a school’s overall sports program can positively influence the level of alumni giving to the academic side of the institution . . . intercollegiate athletics is found to generate a spillover benefit to the university in this case” (p. 38). They also found a strong correlation between televised games and higher levels of contributions, particularly when the teams were winning.

Sigelman and Carter (1979) began by taking a historical look at the correlation between successful athletic programs and alumni giving, noting that until the last three decades of the 20th century, many in academia were proponents of a positive correlation. They cite legendary leaders of higher education including Clark Kerr, a former chancellor and author of *The Uses of the University*, who, in 1967, underscored the importance of alumni giving by recognizing the fact that donations to private colleges and universities were “at levels never before experienced” (p. 187). Later in his book in a chapter that offers recommendations for the universities of the future, Kerr recognized the need for increased alumni cultivation in higher education moving forward. Sigelman and Carter further state that Kerr “characterized sports as a major factor in spurring alumni giving” (pp. 284–285). They also give four critical examples from the 1960s and 1970s that correlated significant successes in athletics followed by upswings in alumni giving. The

authors referenced several older studies that attempted to disclaim any connection between successful athletics and alumni giving. Although the authors found the studies somewhat faulted, their conclusion was that based on the prevailing literature of the time, “significant relationships between athletic success and alumni giving seemed so random and infrequent that they could be attributed to sheer chance rather than any academic systematic linkage” (p. 286).

Sigelman and Carter contended that most of their predecessors’ studies were outdated and stated that the hypotheses for their study was that the relationship between successful athletics and alumni giving has remained truly untested. In 1979, they identified 138 schools from Division I football programs in the 1975–1976 academic year. Utilizing annual giving surveys conducted by the Council for Financial Aid (CFAE), they looked at responses from surveys for 14 years between the early 1960s and the mid 1970s. The authors noted that survey responses vary from no response to limited response, and therefore based their analysis on a “less than total set of Division I CFAE respondents for any year” (p. 288). They examined two sets of variables, one for alumni giving—percent of change in total alumni giving, percent of change in the dollar value of the average gift, and percent of change in proportion of alumni who gave in 1975–1976—and one for athletic success, including winning percentage in basketball, winning percentage in football, and bowl appearances. After using regression analysis to examine the data, they found that of 99 beta coefficients, only 2 proved to be statistically significant and concluded that “the relationship between athletic performance and changes in alumni giving was random” (p. 291). Sigelman and Carter summarized their study by stating, “that according to a number of different statistical criteria, we have

found no support for the thesis that alumni giving is connected to athletic performance” (p. 291).

Turner, Merserve, and Bowen (2001) reviewed data from 15 selective colleges, divided roughly equally between NCAA Division IA, Division IAA, and Division III schools, and analyzed giving records for more than 15,000 alumni from 1988–1996. Because they were unable to obtain win-loss records for basketball, their final regression analysis only used win-loss records for football. Their findings found “no relationship of any kind between win-loss records in football and general giving at the Division IA universities that operate high-profile programs” (p. 821). They further found that improvements in Division IA win-loss records saw an average decline of more than \$200 per person in general alumni giving. However, in Division III, a 0.5 percent increase in the win-loss record correlated with an increase of 2.5 percent in general giving. Their rationale for this increase was that students at smaller liberal arts colleges have a stronger school spirit, and alumni are inclined to give accordingly when the team wins.

The most recent, highly publicized literature on the perceived relationship between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving was presented in a report initiated by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics in 2004. While the report also queried the relationship between successful athletic programs and undergraduate admissions, the sections focusing on alumni fundraising cited many of the same authors noted within this review, including Baade and Sundberg (1996); Brooker and Klastorin (1981); and Sigelman and Carter (1979). Author Frank offered little new research on the topic other than a study by Litan, Orzsag, and Orzsag (2003), in which they found “that both football winning percentage and lagged football winning percentage are negatively

linked with both total alumni giving and alumni donations to football programs. None of these estimates, however, is statistically significant at conventional levels” (Frank, 2004, p. 24). The scope of Frank’s report went beyond the perceived relationship between successful athletic programs and alumni giving and focused more directly on the costs of big-time athletics—including the start-up of new programs—and asserted that the significant expenses for programming were not offset by increases in alumni giving and undergraduate applications. In his analysis on alumni giving, Frank stated “Given that many alumni donations are earmarked specifically for college athletic programs, there is no doubt that many alumni feel strongly about these programs” (2004, p. 12). While this statement does not appear to discount a perceived relationship between successful intercollegiate athletic programs and alumni giving, the focus of Frank’s report was to reinforce the position that operating funds for athletic operations should not be based on any perceived relationships with alumni giving or undergraduate admission, and in this author’s opinion, not relevant to the specific question of the existence of a relationship between successful intercollegiate athletics and alumni voluntary support.

In summarizing the literature that attempts either to concur on or to reject a relationship between successful intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving, it appears that previous research findings are evenly weighted between the two camps. Similar to research in previous sections of this paper, much of the literature in section three presents quantitative case study analysis on correlations between giving and success defined in several ways, with championship play and giving exclusively to athletic development often identified as the defining factors that influence researchers to concur on or reject the existence of a positive relationship. On research examining general alumni giving and

winning, most findings indicate the lack of a relationship. However, in cases where the concept of success is broadened to include factors such as game attendance and television appearances, several authors, including Grimes and Chressanthis (1994), appear to expand the perception of a relationship between success in these areas and general alumni giving. These findings reinforced the researcher's contention that further exploration of the relationship between successful athletic programs—and how they are defined—and general alumni giving is warranted. Moreover, similar to findings in section two, there is a significant need for more qualitative field research, particularly with fundraisers and donors, who may offer a broader knowledge base and insights into the existence of a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving.

Chapter Summary

As presented earlier, this literature review examined a wide body of research in an effort to identify the prevailing findings on the existence of a perceived relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving. The indications of this literature review aided in the determination that further research on the topic was warranted.

Section one clearly demonstrated the critical impact of alumni giving on the financial health of higher education, as it has come to serve as a significant source of operational and student support. Alumni giving has also taken on a new dimension of importance with the role that alumni giving rates now play in college and university rankings. The literature in this area clearly reinforces the need for ongoing research on how alumni can be persuaded to give, as the importance of their donations continues to be a critical source of revenue for American colleges and universities.

The second section examined the potential indicators between intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving, and focused on literature that explored: 1) indicators of donors, 2) alumni motivation to give, and 3) the impact of championship play on alumni giving. The findings indicated that most prevalent indicators of donors are tied to engagement and emotional attachment to their alma maters, whereas motivation to give is based on the concept of the end utility of gifts, ranging from pure altruism to the envisioned power derived from perceived insider status within athletics. The literature also shed light on the role engagement plays in motivating alumni to give. In reviewing the role of championship play, bowl games and tournament play had the most notable correlation of impact on alumni giving. Collectively, these findings supported the need for further research on the perceived relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving in all three areas that may serve as predictors of alumni giving. Moreover, much of the data collected thus far in all three areas is quantitative in nature, yet donor characteristics, alumni motivations to give, and how championship play stimulate alumni giving are areas where firsthand perceptions and opinions may further inform the topic. This author therefore concluded that further research should be of a qualitative nature, with alumni and fundraisers who can help provide observations and knowledge about whether athletics impacts general alumni giving.

Section three included a review of literature that either attempts to concur on or to reject the existence of a relationship between successful intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving. Overall, the body of work reviewed appears to break down fairly evenly on either side of the argument, with the most quantifiable finding on the concurrence of a relationship based on correlations between championship play and

donor giving specifically to athletic funding initiatives. As in the other sections of this report, much of the literature in this section presents quantitative case study analysis on correlations between giving and success defined more narrowly as winning, with the exception of a handful of studies that look for a broader definition of how success is defined. These findings reinforced the researcher's assertion that broader exploration on the relationship between general alumni giving and successful men's intercollegiate athletic programs—with success defined more broadly to encompass the level of attention athletics gain as part of the alumni experience—is warranted, along with a significant need for more qualitative field research, particularly with fundraisers and donors who can share personal experiences and insights on the topic.

Conclusion

In reviewing the literature, there are a number of valuable observations that may inform the subsequent research on the perceived relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving. Clearly, the need for alumni financial support has been documented in the research cited in this report, and is a topic of much discussion in higher education news, the minds of college administrators, and in trustee boardrooms of America's colleges and universities today. Any research that can shed light on how to encourage alumni to give, give more, or give more frequently may help enhance the quality of higher education.

In examining the existence of a perceived relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving, what appear to be lacking are actual interviews with those who seek gifts from alumni: fundraisers and alumni donors. Using the research from this literature review, the author has built a qualitative study that draws

on the impressions of both those who solicit alumni and those who give in an attempt to gauge firsthand data of their perceptions on a relationship between Boston College football and men's basketball and general alumni giving. Through a series of interviews with fundraisers, senior administrators, major donors, and annual fund patrons, this qualitative study seeks to offer personal insights and motivations on a perceived relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology and processes applied in the research and analysis of data collected to gauge insights and attitudes on the perception of a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College from 1996–2005. These years were chosen because the mid 1990s was a period of expansion in the University Advancement Office, as evidenced by the record number of million-dollar gifts and a strong alumni giving rate of 40 percent in FY96 (Office of Public Affairs, 1998). In 2006, the Athletic Department at Boston College added a donor-based seating policy, which essentially requires a donation to maintain season tickets in preferred seating areas for football and men's basketball, hence the decision to use 2005 as the last year for the ten-year period, and 1996 as the starting year.

The following sections outline the design of the case study, data collection instruments, data analysis, and limitations of the study.

Design of the Study

This study was structured as an “intrinsic case study” (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 1998) to answer the research questions. Case studies are employed when the researcher seeks to develop a thorough understanding of a particular case in all its complexities. An intrinsic case study is used to gain a better grasp on the unique phenomenon that is the focus of the case, and allows the researcher “to define the uniqueness of this phenomenon that distinguishes it from all others” (Harling, 2002, p. 1). The “case study is an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell,

1998, p. 61). Time and place are what bind the system and the case is what is studied, which may take the form of “individuals, organizations, processes, programs, neighborhoods, institutions, and even events” (Yin, 1994, p. 12). Sources of information include individual and focus group interviews, observations, and document review, all of which were collected for this study. Creswell stated, “the context of the case involves situating the case within its setting, which may be a physical setting or the social, historical, and/or economic setting for the case” (p. 61).

The setting of this study is a single university, Boston College, that has long garnered success in men’s intercollegiate athletics—most prominently, football and men’s basketball—while underscoring the need for alumni support through donations. Because Boston College is an institution that is self-contained, having no formal relationship with other schools or colleges or the Catholic Church, it is chartered under the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as a bounded system. The study focused on the decade of 1996–2005 and used the fiscal year of June to May as the marker for a year’s period, which is a natural temporal bounding for both the athletics schedules and the fundraising year. The researcher has provided an extensive description of the study’s setting to provide readers a better understanding of the workings and complexities of the system in Chapter Four.

In this case study, the researcher applied mixed purposeful sampling. Criterion sampling was employed for 14 individual interviews with 7 Boston College fundraisers and alumni professionals, an athletic development administrator and fundraiser, 4 major alumni donors, one of whom also leads a foundation that has contributed significantly to BC and three of whom have served as University trustees, and 2 long-time senior

executive administrators. The proposed study had also included 2 national leaders in educational fundraising, but after repeated attempts, one never responded and the other declined to be interviewed because he felt that his knowledge was limited on the topic and his perspective would be vastly different based on his educational background both academically and professionally. At that point, the researcher was well into the individual interviews and agreed with the opinion that neither would offer a perspective that would aid in the implications of the study, which was strongly situated within the context of Boston College. Homogenous sampling was applied to 2 focus group interviews, one with 3 Boston College alumni who give directly to athletics and the other with 4 Boston College alumni who give to other areas of the University or the Boston College general fund. Document review of both fundraising reports and athletic records and attendance served as a third data source. Once all data was collected and coded, the researcher triangulated all data sources to determine the implications of the study.

Access and Entry

The researcher's access to Boston College as an employee and student significantly aided her in obtaining both individual and focus group interviews, as well as data and information both in public documents and private reports. The researcher's access as an insider may also affect her perceptions of the study and its findings. Concerns surrounding this insider perspective are addressed in the Limitations of the Study section of this chapter.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection included 14 individual interviews with Boston College administrators in the areas of executive management, athletic administration and

development, and university advancement; and Boston College major donors and Board of Trustees members. Data collection also included 2 focus groups, each comprising Boston College alumni donors—one group whose four members gave to athletics and a second whose three members gave to nonathletic initiatives and/or the general alumni fund—and a review of documents from University Advancement and Athletic Administration at Boston College. These sources helped to identify both the individual and shared observations and perceptions from participants on the perceived relationship between men’s intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at BC, and offered facts and figures on football, men’s basketball, and alumni giving, which provided the researcher with further insights into the case study inquiry.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews were employed to gain more personal perspectives and observations on the perceived relationship between football and men’s basketball and general alumni giving at Boston College. These interviews allowed the participants to speak freely and without concern about sharing their personal experiences and opinions on the topic in the presence of colleagues. Seidman (1991) stated that the purpose of interviewing is to understand “the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 3) and that “interviewing provides access to the context of people’s behaviors and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior” (p. 4). The interviews “call for special kinds of preparation and structure, including the use of an open-ended questionnaire, so that the investigator is able to maximize the value of the time spent with the respondent” (McCracken, 1988, p. 9).

The interviews with administrators and alumni donors provided the researcher with individualized data that was used to answer questions about indicators of giving, motivations to give, the impact of championship play on alumni giving, success in athletics and alumni giving, and more broadly, the perceived relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College. The individual interviews were conducted in the fall of 2008.

Focus Group Interviews

Vaughn, Schumm, and Sinagub (1996) indicated that focus group interviews are the “closest relative to the individual interview” (p. 14), yet can offer advantages over individual interviews, including “new dimensions to data collection because of their emphasis on dynamic group interaction” (p. 13). The authors also stated that focus groups can “yield a great deal of specific information on a selected topic in a relatively short period of time” (p. 13). Krueger (1994) indicated that the focus group interview is highly effective in data collection because it offers “an environment in which disclosures are encouraged and nurtured” (p. 15). He asserted that the focus group interview is an offshoot of the natural tendency for humans to develop perceptions and attitudes through interactions with others.

The researcher, in conjunction with administrators from the Boston College Fund, purposefully identified two sets of alumni donors, the first with three members giving directly to athletics, and the second group of four giving to nonathletic programming and/or the general alumni fund. Michaela Masi, director of annual giving at Boston College, advised and assisted the researcher in the refinement of the focus group interview protocol and questions, and the interviews were conducted in a “permissive,

non-threatening environment . . . comfortable and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions” (Krueger, 1994, p. 6). These interviews were held in the early winter of 2009.

Document Review

Institutional documents provided statistics on pertinent aspects of athletics and fundraising at Boston College over the period of 1996–2005, which were used to triangulate all data to determine implications of the study. Creswell (2003) stated that this kind of data offers “written evidence” (p. 187) that can aid in informing the research question. These documents included *The Boston College Chronicle*, *Boston College Magazine*, the *Boston College Annual Report*, the *Boston College Fact Book*, and the *Boston College Athletic Association Annual Report*. Additionally, data was collected on annual giving figures, football and men’s basketball win/loss records, and championship appearances from 1996 to 2005 through internal data reports produced for the researcher’s study. These documents allowed the researcher to examine facts and figures on athletic success and general alumni giving against the perceptions and attitudes of participants to better inform the research question of the existence of a perceived relationship between football and men’s basketball and general alumni giving during the 10-year period.

Data Analysis

The data for this study was collected from multiple sources, including audiotapes, transcripts, and documents, and due to the volume, was stored in a computer database that was compatible with a qualitative research program for data management and analysis, HyperRESEARCH (Hesse-Biber, Kinder, & Dupuis, 1990).

Holistic analysis was employed in reviewing the data, through which the researcher looked to identify “specific themes, aggregating information into large clusters of ideas and providing details that support the themes” (Creswell, 1998, p. 249). The interviews were transcribed and categorized, and then the researcher examined passages from participants that appeared to inform the topic, grouped them into categories, and then reviewed “the categories for thematic connections within and among them” (Seidman, 1991, p. 91). The researcher then looked for themes that informed findings and, following Creswell’s direction, recorded “a list of major ideas” (2003, p. 203). Based on the outcome of the development of codes and themes, the researcher determined that the study warranted a deductive analysis, as she believed it would offer the most optimal framework for determining its implications. Pope, Ziebland, and Mays (2000) wrote that, “Qualitative research uses analytical categories to describe and explain social phenomenon. These categories may be derived inductively—that is, obtained gradually from the data—or used deductively, either at the beginning or part way through the analysis.” (p. 2). Because the researcher began to identify categories earlier on in the data collection stage, deductive analysis was most applicable for the study.

Causal networks were used to analyze the data because it is “a late, inferential—and powerful step, building from pattern coding . . . conceptual clustering, and predictor outcome analysis,” according to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 228). The authors also stated that often questions arise around 1) if one can gain “meaningful inferences from loading case-level causal analyses into a cross-case procedure—and can it be managed?” and 2), “Can you really juggle a dozen such networks, each containing up to 30–35

variables that are out together in case-specific ways? The answer to both questions is yes” (p. 228).

Pattern coding was employed, as it identifies explanatory or inferential codes that pinpoint “an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. They pull together a wide range of material ‘into more meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis’” (Miles and Huberman, p. 69). As a form of first-level coding, pattern codes allowed the researcher to summarize segments into smaller data sets and moved her into an analytical stage during data collection, so further research can be informed from the analysis. In an effort to aid with this step, the researcher wrote a memo to herself after each interview and articulated her immediate perspectives on the interview so she could begin to develop themes as well as potentially revise some codes. Once the prevailing themes were identified, all data was triangulated to identify implications from the study, which follow in Chapter Eight.

Limitations of the Study

The internal validity of the case was established by triangulation of the data through multiple sources—individual and focus group interviews and document review—that were easily verified (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995). Additionally, the researcher regularly conducted member checks throughout the analysis process to “ensure the truth value of the data” (Creswell, 2003, p. 204). Two forms of member checks were employed. First, during the interviews, the researcher attempted to verbally confirm participants’ commentary within the context of the interview, to assure that the comments being recorded were clarified. Then, once the data had been coded, the researcher submitted a copy of the final set of comments that were under consideration for inclusion in the final study to each participant for review.

The only perceived threats to the sampling and internal validity of this case study that could impair the researcher's ability to draw the correct data from the experience were 1) the application of inadequate procedures, such as "changing the instrument during the experiment" (Creswell, 2003, p. 171) and 2) a participant's reneging on his or her agreement to be interviewed. With these threats in mind, the researcher worked hard to ensure that the instruments were fully developed, that all information about the study was disclosed to participants prior to interviewing, and that every effort was made to accommodate their busy schedules.

The researcher also continually reviewed researcher bias, particularly because the setting for the case is both her employer and her institution of doctoral study, making her an "insider." Creswell (2003) stated "the role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study" (p. 200). In an examination of typology of researchers, Banks (1998) identified the "indigenous-insider" as one who "endorses the unique values, perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her primordial community and culture and is perceived by people within the community as a legitimate member of the community who can speak with authority about it" (p. 8). As an administrator at Boston College, the researcher appeared to fit this description. Further, her roles as a former development communications director at Harvard University and annual fund director at a public college make personal beliefs on alumni giving a bias that must be continually recognized. However, Creswell asserts that the researcher's contribution to the "research setting can be useful and positive rather than detrimental" (p. 200). Finally, Hiles (2001), in his review of Moustakas' study of heuristic research in which the self of the researcher

is always present, concluded that the tacit knowledge the researcher carries can be valuable, and that ultimately, researcher bias can be identified through “the validation of the work by sharing it with others” (p. 11). Knowing fully well potential biases, the researcher made every effort to include a review by colleagues, professors, and classmates throughout the study and is confident that she brought an objective perspective to the research inquiry.

LeCompte and Goetz (1984) labeled threats to external validity “as effects that obstruct or reduce a study’s comparability or translatability” (p. 51), whereas Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that to determine the “trustworthiness” of an inquiry, the terms “credibility,” “transferability,” “dependability,” and “confirmability” (p. 300) should be applied to verify the validity of the study. Creswell (1998) indicated that in order to establish the generalizability or external validity of the study, best practices include “triangulating among different data sources . . . writing with thick and detailed descriptions, and taking the entire written narrative back to participants in member checking” (p. 201). The researcher believed that these procedures were rigorously applied to the research, and that the validity and generalizability of the case study was established in the examination of the perceived relationship between men’s intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College from 1996–2005.

This chapter presented an overview of the methodology for the research study and outlined the tools that were utilized for data collection and coding, which led to the development of a set of prevailing themes. Findings from the data collection are presented in Chapters Four through Seven and are organized around these themes.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

This chapter provides context on the study's setting, Boston College, and introduces the participants from individual interviews and focus groups to help frame and inform the study's findings on the perception of a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College. The first section of this chapter provides a general overview of the University that offers the reader insights into the workings of the University. Its goal is to present data about the scope and scale of the institution, its constituents, and some key facts and figures about finances, rankings, alumni giving, and athletics during the period of the study. The second section provides data on how the University's advancement efforts and operations are organized and provides a brief overview of its history, starting with the years of the first formal capital campaign through the study's timeframe, concluding with the start of the *Light the World* campaign. The first two sections should aid the reader in gaining a better perspective into Boston College and, as they move into the findings chapters, prepare them for a clearer understanding of the roles that fundraising and men's intercollegiate athletics play in the fabric of the University.

The third and final section provides a comprehensive introduction to the study's participants and their affiliation with the University as alumni, staff, donors, and/or trustees. The participants are organized into three major categories: Boston College administrators in the areas of executive management, athletic administration and development, and university advancement; Boston College major donors and Board of Trustees members; and Boston College alumni who give to athletics and those who give

to nonathletic programming. Information around participant relationships with the University, along with educational backgrounds and career information, is provided for the reader to not only add depth around participant responses to the research questions but also to offer a viewpoint from which we can gauge the responses.

The objective of Chapter Four is to provide the reader with significant information on the University as a whole, its fundraising efforts and operation, and the study participants to help clarify observations and opinions that emerge in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven in response to the research questions. The chapter is also intended as a backdrop to the researcher's conclusions around findings in Chapter Eight that may present areas of inquiry for further research.

Context

University Overview

Located in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, Boston College is one of the oldest Jesuit, Catholic universities in the United States. In 2010, *U.S. News and World Report* ranked Boston College 31st among national universities. The University confers more than 4,000 degrees annually in more than 50 fields of study through 8 schools and colleges. Faculty—which in 2009 totaled 679 full-time and 261 part-time members—are committed to both teaching and research and have set new marks for research grant awards over the last decade, capped off with a record-setting \$58 million at last annual count (Boston College Office of Marketing Communications, 2009).

The University's enrollment in the 2008–2009 academic year stood at a total of 14,623, with 9,060 full-time undergraduates, 720 full- and part-time continuing education undergraduates, and 4,843 full- and part-time graduate and professional students (Boston

College Office of Marketing Communications, 2009). The undergraduate student body comprised 52 percent women and 48 percent men, with African-American, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American (AHANA) students accounting for 24 percent of enrolled students. All 50 states were represented in this population, along with 66 countries and territories. The eight colleges and graduate and professional schools at Boston College include:

- The College of Arts and Sciences
- The Carroll School of Management
- The Connell School of Nursing
- The Lynch School of Education
- The Graduate School of Social Work
- The Law School
- The Woods College of Advancing Studies
- The School of Theology and Ministry, which was established through Boston College's reaffiliation with the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in 2008 (Boston College Office of Marketing Communications, 2008).

The University has made a major commitment to academic excellence. As evidenced in its most recent Master Plan and Capital Campaign goals, it seeks to add approximately 100 faculty positions, expand faculty and graduate research, increase student financial aid, and widen opportunities in key undergraduate programs, such as foreign study, internships, community service, and personal formation (Boston College University Advancement, 2007, p. 5). BC experienced tremendous growth in recent years, including a 75 percent increase in undergraduate applications over the past decade.

In 2008, a remarkable increase in revenue from voluntary giving helped to move the University's endowment to approximately \$1.75 billion, among the 50 largest in the nation (Boston College Office of Marketing Communications, 2008). While this endowment suffered in 2009—down to \$1.49 billion—due to the financial woes in the U.S. and abroad, BC remains committed to its plans for the future.

Over the study period from 1996–2005, Boston College experienced growth in annual giving dollars, with a steady increase each year, from nearly \$24.6 million in cash donations in 1996 to just over \$70 million in 2005. As the University attempts to keep tuition down and scholarship funds high to aid its student population—while weathering the costs of operating a major university—these funds are essential to the bottom line. In 2008–2009, more than 70 percent of Boston College undergraduates received some form of financial aid, totaling just more than \$85 million (Boston College, 2009).

During the same 10-year period, Boston College experienced a surge in performance on the football field and the basketball court, culminating in eight straight bowl game wins for football and two Big East Conference titles, a tie for the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) Atlantic Division season title, and several appearances in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) men's basketball tournament. Within the same timeframe, BC also ranked in the top 20 schools of the NCAA Graduation Rates Report, culminating in the 2004–2005 season with 86 percent of scholarship student-athletes who entered as freshmen in 1997 completing and receiving degrees. This milestone helped move the University to one of the top five academic success records among the nation's 117 Division 1-A football-playing schools that season, which all together averaged a graduation rate of 64 percent (Boston College, 2004). This trend has

continued, as in 2007, an NCAA survey published in *USA Today* reported that Boston College was the only university in the nation with football and men's and women's basketball programs to be ranked in the top ten both academically and athletically (Boston College Office of Marketing Communications, 2007). In 2009, 21 of BC's varsity sports teams received a perfect score in graduation rates, making the University the college with the most teams with this rate out of all the Division I institutions in the country (Boston College Athletic Association, 2010).

University Advancement Efforts and Operations

While fundraising has been a fundamental means of income for private colleges and universities since the inception of American higher education, at Boston College organized efforts to raise funds predominantly from alumni did not take hold until the late 1980s with the launch of the *Campaign for Boston College*. This first-ever comprehensive capital fund drive set an unprecedented goal of \$125 million, which was surpassed at its close in 1992 with a grand total of \$136 million. Seven years later in 1999, BC launched its second campaign with a goal of \$400 million, which concluded in 2003 and exceeded its goal by \$41 million. During these campaigns, while staffing was increased in areas where resources were lacking to address specific needs such as more major gift officers to make personal visits, Advancement operations remained basically unchanged in terms of funding and personnel.

In an effort to not only maintain the increasing level of donor support throughout the period of this study but also simultaneously prepare to embark on another substantive capital campaign, the University Advancement Office was reorganized and enlarged beginning in 2002. In 2010, the University Advancement Office has nearly doubled in

size to meet the challenge of obtaining at least “\$1.5 billion, triple the \$441 million raised . . . five and a half years ago,” during the last capital campaign (Birnbaum, 2008, p. 18). In 2002, the total number of Advancement professionals was approximately 100 (Ricard, 2008, p. 3). By 2004, near the conclusion of the parameters of this study, the department numbered 124, and in early 2008, 158, with 20 open positions, where it has remained through 2010. Of that number, only 5 are focused on athletic fundraising, with the remainder supporting gifts to nonathletic capital projects and unrestricted giving, which at BC—as at most other colleges—is encouraged because it allows “the University to put funds to use wherever the need is greatest. This includes support for the core priorities of the University, such as student financial aid, faculty support, expanding knowledge and serving society” (University Advancement, Boston College, 2010).

Gifts to athletics are funneled through the William J. Flynn Fund, which was established in 1998 in honor of former student-athlete and athletic director Bill Flynn, Class of 1939. The Flynn Fund provides a vehicle through which individuals can support Boston College’s 31 varsity sports programs, with the bulk of the gifts funding student-athlete scholarships. However, according to Brenda Ricard, associate vice president of Advancement operations and planning, the University Advancement team generally funnels donations to the Flynn Fund at the request of the donor, as unrestricted giving and capital giving are the focus of their efforts (personal communication, March 7, 2010). Ricard confirmed that gifts to athletics are not a major emphasis for the bulk of the Advancement staff and that most gifts received by the Flynn Fund are related to a move to significant donor-based benefits, such as access to events with coaches and players and game travel. Donor-based benefits include game-day parking for football, for which fees

significantly increased in 2005 when BC moved to the Atlantic Coast Conference, and culminated in 2006 with donor-based preferential seating for basketball and football. Ricard also asserted that most who donate to the Flynn Fund do so in return for booster benefits around athletic events, and her position is further underscored by the funding priorities set forth for the University's most recent capital campaign. Within the *Light the World* \$1.5 billion campaign goal, both intercollegiate and intramural athletics are targeted for a \$100 million influx of funds. However, academic excellence is set at \$575 million, undergraduate financial aid at \$300 million, Jesuit Catholic heritage and student formation at \$125 million, annual giving at \$175 million, and new campus buildings at \$225 million.

Based on the information presented in this section, the researcher purposefully selected the timeframe of this study to coincide with the period prior to donor-based seating, which would give donors to the Flynn Fund special game-seating preferences and other significant booster benefits. By choosing this time period, any influence by this special treatment is removed, and in turn, provides a more appropriate focus on the central research question around the relationship between athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College.

Participants

This section seeks to clarify participants and their roles or relationships with Boston College. There are two types of participants as labeled in the methodology: those who participated in individual interviews, and those who participated in focus group interviews. Each participant is initially identified by first and last name; however, throughout the findings only a last name will be used, with the exception of two un-

related individual participants who share the same last name, and will be referred to by first initial and last name. Additionally, participants in the focus group studies will be affiliated with one of two groups, Alumni Donors to Athletic Programming, marked by the acronym AD for Athletic Donors, and Alumni Donors to Nonathletic Programming, noted as NAD for Nonathletic Donors.

The participants for this study came from three categories: Boston College administrators in the areas of executive management, athletic administration and development, and university advancement; Boston College major donors and Board of Trustees members; and Boston College alumni who give to athletics and those who give to nonathletic programming. The following tables are included to help categorize participants and their primary and/or secondary affiliation for inclusion in the study (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2).

Individual Participants: Executive Management

Participants from the executive management area included a former high-ranking officer who continues to work for the University. This participant asked to be identified by a pseudonym and will be referred to as Jonathan Caron, S.J. Caron has spent much of his career as an academic administrator at BC, but has also served as a trustee, consultant, and advisor to a range of academic institutions and to the Boston business and nonprofit communities, and, more broadly, throughout the Jesuit order and the U.S. Catholic Church. William Neenan, S.J., former vice president of academic affairs, continues to work as a vice president and special assistant to the president. He is well known for his strong connection with both students and alumni for a number of activities, from *The Dean's List*, his annual fall reading recommendations of exactly 27 titles, to his

popularity as the celebrant for hundreds of alumni couples' weddings. In 2009, Neenan lent his name to a fundraising drive, "The Neenan Challenge," which started out in the fall of 2008 as a call to gain 5,000 new donors to the BC Fund and ended in June 2009 with a total of 25,000 new donors. In 2010, Neenan lent his name to a similar challenge that helped the BC Fund raise the most cash ever in a fiscal year. Both participants have been at BC for many decades and have not only provided executive leadership to the University but also have spent and continue to spend a great portion of their time on one-to-one alumni fundraising.

Table 4.1

Individual Study Participants by Categories

Category	Name	BC Affiliations
University Executive Management	Jonathan Caron, S.J.*	High-Ranking Officer
University Executive Management	William J. Neenan, S.J.	Vice President
Athletic Administration	James Paquette	Associate Athletic Director
University Advancement Senior Administration	Mary Lou DeLong	Vice President; Newton College**, Class of 1971
University Advancement Senior Administration	James Husson	Senior Vice President
University Advancement Senior Administration	Matthew Eynon	Associate Vice President Annual Fund
University Advancement Senior Administration	John Feudo	Associate Vice President Alumni Association; Boston College, Class of 1982
University Advancement Senior Fundraisers	Susan Thurmond	Executive Director, Affinity Programs Alumni Association
University Advancement Senior Fundraisers	Carolyn McLaughlin	Executive Director for Senior Vice President; Boston College, Class of 1987
University Advancement Senior Fundraisers	Peter McLaughlin	Special Assistant to the Senior Vice President; Boston College, Class of 1959

Major Donor/Board of Trustees	Maureen McKinney*	Newton College**, Class of 1971
Major Donor/Board of Trustees	Gregory Barber	Boston College, Class of 1969
Major Donor/Board of Trustees	Mikey Hoag	Boston College, Class of 1986
Major Donor	Edmund Duffy	Boston College, Class of 1963

Note. *Indicates participant has chosen a pseudonym. ** Newton College merged with Boston College in 1974.

Table 4.2

Focus Group Participants by Categories

Category	Name	BC Affiliations
Alumni Donors to Athletics	Michael Flaherty	Boston College, Class of 1984
Alumni Donors to Athletics	Nancie McSweeney*	Former athletic development employee; Boston College, Class of 1998
Alumni Donors to Athletics	Paul Clark*	BC Fundraising Operations; Boston College, Class of 1996
Alumni Donors to Nonathletic Programming	Paul Delaney	Boston College, Class of 1966
Alumni Donors to Nonathletic Programming	Richard Vespa*	Boston College, Class of 1962, Ph.D. 1990
Alumni Donors to Nonathletic Programming	Alexis Thomas*	BC Fundraising, Planned Giving; Boston College, Class of 1991
Alumni Donors to Nonathletic Programming	Kerry Roberston*	BC Support Staff, Lynch School of Education and School of Theology and Ministry; Boston College, Class of 2003, M.A. 2005

Note. *Indicates participant has chosen a pseudonym.

Individual Participants: Athletic Administration

James Paquette, the director of athletic development prior to joining another Jesuit institution as its athletic director in 2010, represented BC's athletic administration. He holds a bachelor's degree from Providence College and a master's from the University of

Massachusetts-Amherst. Paquette had spent most of his career at Boston College heading up fundraising for the Flynn Fund, an annual fund that provides scholarships to student-athletes. In 2006, the Fund raised “a record \$15 million, highlighted by 45 commitments of \$100,000 or more, the most six-figure gifts in the history of BC Athletics, representing an increase of more than 100 percent from just two years before” (Boston College, 2007a). The current athletic director was included in the proposed study but declined to be interviewed.

Individual Participants: University Advancement Administration

The four senior administrators from University Advancement included James Husson, the current senior vice president leading BC’s development efforts; his predecessor Mary Lou DeLong, former senior vice president of University Advancement and currently a vice president in the Office of the President and University Secretary; Matthew Eynon, associate vice president for annual giving; and John Feudo, associate vice president of the Boston College Alumni Association. Husson has had a lengthy career focused in educational fundraising, with experience predominantly in the Ivy Leagues, including Harvard and Brown universities. He has been at Boston College since 2002, first as vice president and then subsequently as senior vice president, and in October 2008, launched the University’s \$1.5 billion capital campaign, the most ambitious fund drive to date at BC. His predecessor DeLong currently serves as a vice president in the Office of the President, working predominantly on special projects with alumni, and was named University Secretary in 2008. She is a 1971 graduate of Newton College of the Sacred Heart, which merged with Boston College in 1974. A year after graduating, she returned to join Boston College’s Alumni Relations office, eventually

moved into fundraising, and then left BC to work in development at several other institutions, including Harvard Medical School. In 1989, she returned to BC to lead the University development team and stepped down from that role in 2004 at the conclusion of the *Ever to Excel* capital campaign, the highest grossing campaign effort to date.

Eynon, a career fundraiser, has been at Boston College for more than two years and has held similar positions at Suffolk and UMass-Lowell, most recently. His focus is on annual fund gifts, and most specifically, increasing alumni participation rates in annual giving, which he has achieved to date through a 5 percent increase in alumni participation from 23 percent in 2007 to 28 percent in 2009. Much of this increase is due to his leadership of the aforementioned Neenan Challenge. Feudo came to Boston College in 2006 and is a 1982 graduate of the University, and holds a master's degree from Lesley University. He came to BC after serving in similar positions at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and most recently, the University of Connecticut, both schools boasting large alumni bodies. Feudo's initial charge was to bring a more unified alliance between alumni relations and fundraising after decades of an alumni association that was separately chartered and run by alumni. During his tenure and in conjunction with Husson and Eynon's efforts, the Alumni Association was brought back into BC as a wholly functioning unit of University Advancement. In the same vein, the alumni affinity clubs—including the Real Estate Council, the Council for Women of Boston College, and the Boston College Technology Council—were all moved from under the guise of fundraising efforts to the Alumni Association office. The rationale of this move was to better represent the differences between alumni services that provide alumni with

resources and fundraising, which seeks resources from alumni to help better BC, as a way to build a relationship with alumni before soliciting donations.

Individual Participants: Senior Fundraisers

Three senior-level fundraisers were also included in the study. Susan Thurmond, executive director, Alumni Association, celebrated her 20th year at Boston College in 2010. Thurmond, a former major gift officer, currently manages affinity programs targeting alumnae, and executives in finance and technology. In her prior role as a capital gift fundraiser, she not only looked to raise gifts from the hundred thousand to million-dollar level, but also spearheaded major fundraising events, including the Pops on the Heights concert, which in 2008 and 2009 raised more than \$2 million for undergraduate scholarships each year. Carolyn McLaughlin, Class of 1987, is an executive director under Husson and essentially serves as his chief of staff. She has also spent much of her career at Boston College and has worked as both a frontline fundraiser and operations director. Ms. McLaughlin currently serves as the key liaison between major donors and the University for a wide range of special events and requests. Peter McLaughlin is a 1959 alumnus and a retired finance executive who currently serves as the special assistant to Senior Vice President Husson. He holds two advanced degrees from Bentley and Northeastern and is parent to four alumni. He began his career in alumni relations and served as acting executive director of the Alumni Association before Feudo. As part of an effort on the part of Boston College and the Boston Archdiocese to ensure Catholic elementary schools remain secure and accessible, Mr. McLaughlin now serves as the Chair of the Board for the St. Columbkille School.

Individual Participants: Major Donors/Board of Trustees

Four alumni, two women and two men, represented major donors and Board of Trustees membership in the individual interviews. Maureen McKinney, a pseudonym, who is a 1971 graduate of Newton College of the Sacred Heart and holds a master's degree from Babson, has played a leadership role in the Council for Women of Boston College, which seeks to engage alumnae more deeply in University life—and as donors. McKinney also made the largest single major gift to Boston College from a woman in 2006, and in 2008 became an officer on the Board of Trustees. She retired several years ago from a leading international financial services firm and holds board positions at a number of other nonprofit organizations. Gregory Barber, Class of 1969 and parent of two students who graduated in 1999 and 2004, is retired from a lengthy career as a CEO in the cable television industry. In addition to serving on the Board of Trustees, he also held a leadership role in the University's last capital campaign. Barber made a million-dollar-plus gift to Athletics several years ago, and is widely known as a generous philanthropist to many nonprofit organizations in New England. Mikey Hoag is a 1986 graduate, a Trustee, a parent of a student in the Class of 2012, and a member of the Council for Women at Boston College. After graduating, she worked in sports marketing and now currently owns and operates an interior design firm in Northern California. Hoag, a former equestrian at BC, has also been a major donor to the University in many areas, including her recent endowment in perpetuity of the starting point guard position on the men's basketball team. Edmund Duffy, a graduate of the Class of 1963, holds a law degree from Columbia University and is a partner in a securities firm in Manhattan. Over the years, he has been a major donor to the University, both personally and as a

trustee for the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation, which has directed more than \$5 million to the Sharp Scholars program at the Lynch School of Education.

Focus Group Participants: Donors to Athletic Programming

The first focus group of three alumni consisted of current donors to athletic programming (AD). The group included Michael Flaherty, a 1984 graduate, who attended BC in part on a sports scholarship and served as a manager for the football and men's basketball teams. He also holds an M.B.A. from Suffolk University and currently works as an administrator in health care. Nancie McSweeney, a 1998 graduate who also asked to remain anonymous, joined the Boston College athletic administration staff immediately following graduation. In 2009, McSweeney took a position in fundraising at a charter school in the Boston area, but continues to remain active at BC through her athletic interests. The final group member was Paul Clark, a 1996 graduate who also asked to be recorded under a pseudonym due to his status as business operations manager at Boston College.

Focus Group Participants: Donors to Nonathletic Programming

The second group of four alumni comprised current donors to nonathletic (NAD) programming and included Paul Delaney, a 1966 graduate of BC and a parent of two alumni from the Classes of 1995 and 1999. During his career, Delaney also attended four Executive Business Programs at Harvard Business School, London Business School, Babson College, and the Kennedy School of Government. He worked in the software field until his retirement in 2008, and has been very active in the Alumni Association, especially as the co-chair of the effort to erect a Veterans Memorial on campus, which was achieved in 2009. Richard Vespa, a pseudonym, graduated from Boston College in

1962 and also holds a Ph.D. from the University. He has spent his entire career in academia in the student services field. Alexis Thomas, who asked to be recorded under a pseudonym, is a 1991 graduate who works at Boston College in planned giving and has been in the fundraising field at several universities in the area. Kerry Roberston, a 2003 graduate who also requested a pseudonym, currently works with the Lynch School of Education and the School of Theology and Ministry in a managerial, nonacademic role. She received her master's degree in higher education administration in 2005 and is very active as a young alumna.

Conclusion

The information on context and participants is presented in this chapter as a frame of reference for the reader to become better acquainted with Boston College as the setting for the study, which is integral to the central research question. The first section of the chapter shared insights into the organization, its operations, its makeup in terms of its key constituents, and its competitive positioning in higher education today. The latter part of the chapter then offered biographical data on the study's participants and their relationships with the University. This data is offered to shed clarity on how their beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions are formed around the research question, based on their status as alumni and/or staff at BC and the value that relationship may hold to them personally. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven will present the findings drawn from participant interviews in the hope of answering the research question and identifying future areas of inquiry that can inform that question.

CHAPTER FIVE: NEED FOR GENERAL ALUMNI GIVING

Introduction

As noted in Chapter one, Boston College relies heavily on external funding, specifically general alumni giving. The major purpose of this chapter is to present findings that address key questions on the perceived need for general alumni giving at Boston College, which may inform the central question, *Is there a perceived relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College from 1996–2005?* The central guiding assumption for this chapter is the undeniable fact that higher education in the United States is highly dependent on external funding to thrive.

One need only look at fundraising statistics to support this assertion—in 2006, alumni giving to American colleges and universities accounted for 30 percent of all voluntary donations, totaling \$8.4 billion (Council for Aid to Education, 2007, pp. 1-2). The same year, of the \$8.4 billion raised in the United States from alumni giving, more than 50 percent was spent on annual operations at 1,014 institutions, with the remainder directed toward endowment, property and buildings, and loan funds (Council for Aid to Education, 2007, p. 1). Boston College has also benefited from the generosity of its alumni during the timeframe of this study—from FY96 to FY05, annual support in dollars nearly tripled, from \$24 million in cash donations in 1996 to just over \$70 million in 2005, with alumni giving accounting for more than 50 percent of the annual total since FY99. The funds have not only been used to defer operational expenses but also are targeted for critical funds for both academic and athletic scholarships. In 2006–2007, nearly 70 percent of BC's students received some form of financial aid, with almost half

coming from unrestricted gifts to the Boston College Fund, and a very small percent from endowed funds (Office of Institutional Research, Boston College, 2007). In accordance with its commitment to need-blind financial aid, these funds allowed many deserving students who could not afford the tuition the opportunity to attend Boston College.

This chapter consists of three major sections. Section one presents participant interviews on perceptions of the need for general alumni giving in higher education, and more specifically, at Boston College, and offers insights on how alumni giving contributes to the University's fiscal picture and financial aid; its profile as a leader in education and in the rankings; and maintenance and growth of the institution into the future. Section two examines why alumni give and presents findings around indicators of giving, including wealth, emotional attachment, and a tradition of giving, and motivators for giving, such as engagement with and giving back to an institution. This chapter then concludes with a summary in which major findings are revisited.

The goal of the analysis in this chapter is to bring transparency to the reader on participants' responses to questions associated with the areas of inquiry. The data analyzed represents the perspectives and beliefs of those who both raised funds for and donated funds to Boston College during the period in which the central question is posed, thus offering the opinions of those who are highly significant to the experience of general alumni giving.

Importance of General Alumni Giving at Boston College

As a group, all participants resoundingly stated that Boston College simply could not survive without the funds that come from the graduates of the University. The majority cited fiscal operations and student aid as key benefits of alumni donations for

the University, but several other themes on the need for alumni giving and its positive impact emerged through data analysis: support of the mission and advancement of the University's leadership status; the impact alumni giving has on national rankings; and the need for increased giving moving forward both in numbers of alumni who give and major donations, so that Boston College may maintain and enhance the standard of excellence it seeks to attain, which is a guided assumption for this study. The themes and sub-themes are outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Emergent Themes on the Importance of General Alumni Giving

Theme	Sub-themes
Importance of General Alumni Giving to University Finances and Student Aid	
Importance of General Alumni Giving as a Reinforcement of the University's Mission and Profile as a Leader in Education	-University Mission -Institutional Profile as a Leader
Importance of General Alumni Giving and National Rankings	
Importance of General Alumni Giving for the University's Future	-Enhanced Alumni Participation Rate -Need for Major Gifts

Importance of General Alumni Giving to University Finances and Student Aid

All study participants underscored the need for general alumni giving in higher education, and more specifically to Boston College, citing three major funding areas—operations, endowment, and financial aid. None felt that any one of these fiscal needs was mutually exclusive of the other, in light of how the three are interdependent and funds are essentially funneled between them, based on the way alumni gifts are allocated. General fund gifts, or unrestricted gifts, may be employed as the University sees fit, including financial aid and operating costs, with a portion designated for endowment.

Endowment then provides a percentage of its earnings back to operating expenses and financial aid. At the same time, donors may restrict their gift to the school they attended at Boston College, scholarships, and specific programming, including academic, athletic, the arts, and student formation, to name a few. With that in mind, all concluded that higher education could not survive or grow without the generosity of its graduates.

John Feudo, associate vice president for the Boston College Alumni Association, summarized this belief:

The impact of philanthropy on all higher education is much greater than some people understand. No institution can support its students and provide the best education without private support. It's just impossible. Every school would be charging \$200,000 a year in tuition if they had to be self-sufficient and that is just not realistic. So in order for any school—public or private—to survive, they need private philanthropy.

Longtime fundraisers Mary Lou DeLong, James Husson, Carolyn McLaughlin, and University senior administrators Jonathan Caron, S.J., and William Neenan, S.J., all echoed this sentiment. Leslie and Ramey (1988) clearly supported this assertion when they stated “voluntary support may be expended without constraint. The result is that endowment and related funds often are the major sources of institutional discretionary funds by which innovations may be introduced, risks may be taken, and investments in the future may be made” (p. 115).

Some participants who work at Boston College in University Advancement offered specific examples of the critical need for alumni support, particularly in the area of student benefits.

Thurmond: In general, I would say the cost of a college education is skyrocketing and it's going to become an elitist situation pretty soon, so I think it is really important that alumni support their institutions of higher education.

C. McLaughlin: Most students have benefited in some way from other people's philanthropy, even if they're not on scholarships—they have a beautiful campus and a great faculty.

Husson: Without alumni support, schools are going to become increasingly dependent on tuition, and it is going to put more pressure on families to pay the full cost of an education.

These perspectives address the significant importance of general alumni giving for student financial aid, which has always been critical, particularly at institutions such as Boston College that are committed to a needs-blind admission policy and a full-need financial aid policy. However, in the economy of 2010, this funding becomes even more crucial for the dream of a college education.

Research presented by Marr, Mullin, and Siegfried (2004) reported similar results, asserting that while voluntary contributions from alumni help bolster an institution's fiscal condition, these funds are paramount to student aid, as they “strengthen the academic quality of the student body, insure a diverse student population, provide opportunities for intergenerational mobility in income and wealth” (p. 141). Participants' reflections on the importance of general alumni giving on student aid bare this declaration out. Greg Barber, in his multiple roles as a trustee associate, alumnus, and benefactor, explicitly stated:

It's essential to provide the level and quality of the educational services that universities provide and at the same time, offer the opportunity to people who simply cannot afford the high cost of higher education. Only through the support of university endowments can we solve tuition problems and give people a chance to get the college degree that they are capable of attaining, but may not be able to afford.

Further analysis of data revealed that other participants shared Barber's belief. Edmund Duffy, an alumnus and major donor both individually and as a member of the Sharp Foundation Board, stated, "It's pretty obvious that you couldn't have the robust higher education that we have today without alumni giving. When I went to Boston College, I was given a full-tuition scholarship. And I always thought that was a very wonderful thing." Maureen McKinney, a Boston College trustee and major donor, also stressed the need for general alumni giving, when she concluded, "the reality is that alumni giving is critical to the livelihood of a school—tuition and endowment simply cannot maintain the status of the educational standard here." Statistics from FY04–05 support these participants' beliefs. In that year, undergraduate enrollment totaled 9,059, while Boston College-funded student aid totaled \$91.1 million—equating to an average cost to the University of more than \$10,000 per student (Boston College, 2008). Barber, Duffy, and McKinney are keenly aware of the need for funds, which is evidenced in their personal generosity toward Boston College.

Alumni from both focus groups also felt strongly that even their smaller gifts to the University were important, and more broadly, to the future of higher education.

Vespa (NAD): Alumni gifts are very important to the health of a school—
education today cannot sustain itself on tuition alone.

Thomas (NAD): And it is critical to financial aid, as the cost of a college
education is skyrocketing and so many of BC's students rely on
some amount of aid.

Other participants in the NAD group agreed, as did those in the AD group, which
was summed up by McSweeney (AD):

The need for alumni giving—especially today—the need is at its highest, especially
given what has been going on in the economy. Now more than ever, there is that
need because the endowments have taken a hit and many schools are in crisis mode.

*Importance of General Alumni Giving as a Reinforcement of the University's Mission
and Profile as a Leader in Education*

Participants from both individual interviews and focus groups commented on how
alumni giving to Boston College may signify graduates' belief in the mission of the
institution and their perception of it as a leader in academia as a premier national research
university.

University Mission

A number of participants felt strongly that alumni give to the University because of
its mission and how that permeates throughout the work of the institution. The
University's mission statement begins:

Strengthened by . . . dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits
itself to the highest standards of teaching and research . . . and to the pursuit of a
just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and

the achievements of its graduates. It seeks to both advance its place among the nation's finest universities and . . . draws its inspiration from its academic and societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition . . . it is rooted in a worldview that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly. (Boston College, 2008)

Both fundraisers and alumni cited giving as evidence that alumni believed in this mission of Boston College, and commented on how giving has impacted and will impact the institution into the future. However, while administrators and fundraisers identified the impact of alumni giving on mission that more specifically correlated with the tenets of the University's official statement, alumni participants expressed mission more personally through their own perceptions and experiences, which often translated to good works within the BC community and in their personal and professional lives. Feudo, who is both an alumnus and administrator, expanded upon this alumni perspective on mission in explaining "alumni see our alma maters as these organizations that are turning out good students, good citizens into the world, and we want to be able to support them." A number of administrators saw alumni giving as an endorsement of BC's mission as a Jesuit, Catholic institution, including longtime administrators Neenan and DeLong.

Neenan: I mentioned the Jesuit, Catholic thing . . . I think for BC, a lot of people want to keep the Jesuit, Catholic thing alive, so I think that's important.

DeLong: The number one reason they give is that they believe in the mission of the institution.

Caron reinforced this point, although more broadly, when he stated that, in his opinion, “alumni, therefore, are and should be one of the principal supporters of the mission of education.” Duffy also underscored this point: “The more money you give to educational institutions, the better they are going to achieve their missions. So if you believe in their mission, you are going to support them to the extent that you can.” For the participants quoted in this section, it is clear that in their various roles as stewards of the University, they feel strongly that alumni belief in the mission of BC—and how that plays out in the work of the institution—highlights the need for alumni giving to perpetuate that work.

Members of both focus groups also saw alumni giving as a way of supporting the mission and expressed that from a more personal perspective reflective of contributing to the greater good of the work of Boston College.

Vespa (NAD): Giving shows pride for the institution—it serves as an endorsement of your belief in the institution.

Roberston (NAD): At BC, it also underscores our motto, “Men and women for others,” as we give back so future generations of alumni can benefit.

McSweeney (AD): I’m in a position now to help others to get the same opportunities that I got at BC, and I believe in what BC provides for people.

Institutional Profile as a Leader in Education

In a similar stance, a number of participants addressed the belief that Boston College is at a crossroads, with its *U.S. News and World Report* ranking at the highest ever, and with a very ambitious Master Academic and Capital Plan that can only be funded if the *Light the World* campaign successfully raises \$1.5 billion. Neenan

commented, “I think Boston College is a very worthy enterprise. We’re at a historical landmark right now in our history, and I think in order to do all the good things we want to do, we need a lot of money.” McKinney also stressed the need for alumni giving to advance Boston College as a leader, and how alumni in turn may benefit from the status of the University:

I believe that the majority of our alums want BC to continue to thrive—it makes their cachet just as strong as BC’s in terms of career and even who they are. Where you went to school seems to be a huge part of who you are—so someone that clearly values their education at BC could be more inclined to give.

Neenan and McKinney felt strongly that the perception of Boston College as a leader was an important motivation for alumni giving, as it offered a different, yet critical benefit to BC in that it supports the work and prestige of the institution. Holmes (2009) brought credence to this perception in research that examined the relationship between alumni giving and *U.S. News and World Report* rankings at Middlebury College—when the College dropped one place in the rankings, alumni consistently increased their giving by two percent. Holmes concluded, “when it comes to academic prestige, alumni are more concerned with preserving the reputation of their brand-name diploma” (p. 27).

Michael Flaherty, from the Athletic Donors focus group, echoed the idea of giving to help reinforce the high standards that have allowed BC to become a leader in the classroom and on the field, while competing at the highest academic level. “I am more inclined to help them with that endeavor than I would be if they decided not to compete at that level,” stated Flaherty.

To maintain its status as an institution of great academic prestige that is both socially just and contributing to the greater good through its Jesuit, Catholic traditions, Boston College must garner alumni financial support to maintain and enhance its programs. At the same time, alumni may also gain from their affiliation with the institution through professional, personal, and social aspects of their lives. As an institutional leader in higher education, alumni and the institution can enjoy a symbiotic relationship that allows alumni and the organization benefits from the prominence of the University.

Importance of General Alumni Giving and National Rankings

While not an area that was elaborated on significantly by many participants, a number suggested that college rankings may be a tangential benefit derived from alumni giving. Their perceived importance of *U.S. News* rankings highlight the fact that five percent of the scoring for this measure of college achievement is based on an institution's alumni participation rate, or the number of living alumni who give versus the total number of living alumni (Van Der Werf, 2007, p. A13). Thurmond elaborated on the importance of giving rates to rankings: "Your participation enhances the numbers, so that we can go to the Carnegie Foundation and say 'guess what? Our participation went up seven percent this year; does that qualify us for this million-dollar grant?'" Matthew Eynon, associate vice president of the BC Fund, echoed this assertion, and added another dimension to the importance of alumni giving beyond the obvious support for operations and student aid: "Increased rankings in various national publications, such as *U.S. News* . . . also allows us to compete for higher bond ratings, which is critical as we move into a capital expansion mode."

In their work, Bowman and Bastedo (2009) highlighted the obvious benefit from the rankings—student recruitment. In citing data from a 2007 Higher Education Research Institute report, they stated, “But over the past decade, the influence of college rankings has intensified. Since 1995, the proportion of students who describe the ratings as being very important in their college choice process has increased by more than 50%” (p. 416).

Neenan put forth a different yet valuable perspective on the importance of alumni giving to student recruitment, and how alumni giving can reflect positively on an institution’s status among its peers. He commented that beyond the fiscal benefits, alumni giving may “send a signal to parents and others that alumni have valued their education.” The assertion that financial support could represent a vote of confidence for an institution broadens the impact that alumni giving may have. When an institution is highly ranked—as BC is—the benefits may be plentiful. Students—and eventually alumni—can gain entry into professional roles that they otherwise may not have achieved. Highly ranked potential students are more apt to learn about the institution because of the prominence rankings bring, and, in turn, potentially increase the caliber of applicants. Rankings may also have financial implications—five percent of the total ranking is derived from alumni giving rates, meaning the number of living alumni who give as a percentage of all living alumni. This aspect of the rankings can impact two areas: bond ratings, which determine how much a school can borrow; and student aid and research grants/loans that examine alumni giving as a factor of alumni support and loyalty. Therefore, while many merely judge rankings as a potential indicator of an institution’s academic strength, this measurement actually may have a wider application to the performance of an institution.

Importance of General Alumni Giving for the University's Future

Enhanced Alumni Participation Rate

While Boston College has done a formidable job in fundraising over the years, the need for alumni giving will only increase, due to operating needs, economic fluctuations, and the desire for the University to continue to become a dominant force in American higher education today. No fundraiser or administrator will deny that improved alumni giving is critical across the board to the University's livelihood—the statistics cited previously from the Council on Aid to Education stated the general case for the increasing need for external funds for America's colleges and universities. However, one challenge that is well known to BC administration and fundraisers is the fact that our alumni simply don't give at the rate of some of our peer institutions, such as Notre Dame—which boasts 44 percent—nor those we aspire to emulate, including the Ivy League schools, where participation rates range from 61 percent at Princeton to 34 percent at Cornell (*U.S. News and World Report*, 2009).

In the past five years, Boston College's alumni participation rate has hovered in the low 20th percentile and has been a source of concern for fundraisers. In gauging the impact of BC's alumni giving rate today, Thurmond stated, "I don't think we see the strong impact we need because only 24 percent are giving. I think we would see a huge impact if we got to 50 and 70 percent—but anything we can do to get more alumni to give will help us meet the need for external funding."

Most of the alumni interviewed did not have a strong grasp of how participation rates may have larger implications. However, Alexis Thomas, a member of the Nonathletic Donors focus group, commented on how low numbers of donations from

graduates can hinder outside funding to academics, stating, “The number of alumni who give can significantly impact grants and loans that help fund special programs.”

Need for Major Gifts

The importance of the alumni participation rate becomes underscored when one considers who is giving the largest donations. Panas, a principal with the fundraising firm of Panas, Linzy & Partners of Chicago, concluded, “We used to say that 80 percent of the money we raise came from 20 percent of the people. Now we say that 95 percent of the money comes from 2 percent of the people” (Brenowitz, 2001, p. 39). Clearly, anything that can be done to increase the general pool may not only eventually lead to more giving but also to larger gifts. Eynon further explained the ramifications for increasing the participation rate: “A larger community of donors today will mean a larger community of long-term donors in the future.” He asserted that a low alumni participation rate critically minimizes the pool of alumni that can be cultivated for larger gifts. DeLong agreed: “When you look at the people who make million-dollar gifts, the vast majority of them have been very regular annual donors. First out, they gave \$10, then \$25, then \$50. Twenty years later, they are giving \$1 million.” Worth (1993) supported this statement in his guide on educational fundraising:

. . . the annual fund is a principal means of involving new donors, identifying those who have a particular interest in the institution, and developing their habit of giving. Over time, the annual giving program can be an incubator for major donors, whose cumulative impact on the institution can be substantial. (p. 67)

Summing up the conversation on the need for increased giving, Neenan stated, “We’ve entered into a major capital campaign. So the support from alumni is absolutely essential along with parents as well as friends . . . we need a lot of money.”

Why Alumni Give

In querying participants on their beliefs and perceptions on general characteristics and indicators of donors or potential donors, their responses were very close to research findings in the literature review but with an additional commentary that the researcher believes is unique to Boston College. Analysis of the data identified three themes surrounding characteristics and indicators: wealth, emotional attachment to the institution, and tradition of giving. Similarly, analysis of the findings on what participants perceive as general motivations for giving was heavily related to that in the literature review, with the following trends emerging: support for the work of the institution; engagement with the institution; giving back to the institution; personal benefits; and fundraising practices and policies. (See Table 5.2) The section concludes with perceptions by participants on motivations to give by gender, which was prompted by the central research question and the general assumption that there could be a significant difference on how athletics impacts giving from men and women.

Table 5.2

Emergent Themes on Why Alumni Give

Theme	Sub-themes
Indicators of Alumni Giving	-Wealth -Emotional Attachment -Tradition of Giving
Motivators for Alumni Giving	-Support for the Work of the Institution -Engagement with the Institution -Giving Back to the Institution -Benefits for Donors

Indicators of Alumni Giving

In analysis of the data, three themes emerged around general indicators of alumni giving: wealth, tradition of giving, and advocate for the institution. Brittingham reinforces these findings and Pezzullo's (1990) research on the topic, which found that "Donations were . . . most likely from those who attended a religious college . . . (and) increasingly likely as a level of income" (p. 39). The researchers also cited that "loyalty to one's alma mater was an important factor in giving, cited more often by those who attended independent schools" (p. 39).

Wealth

Most of the participants appeared to see wealth as a given in determining which alumni may be more inclined to give, including Thurmond, who stated, "Obviously, capability is a big deal. The more wealth, the more we benefit." DeLong and Duffy commented more specifically on how wealth is a clear indicator of giving.

DeLong: Alumni feel that they have been blessed, that they have a lot of money.

They need to do something constructive with it.

Duffy: My father gave me some advice when I graduated from college . . . he said

something like this: "We gave you a good education and a good mind.

Always use it to help others." I was very fortunate. I was successful in my

legal career and I made more money than I ever expected to make. I give

because I can.

These comments supported Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990), whose research found that wealth was an indicator of giving, and cited a number of studies on private giving that revealed a U-shaped curve, with the largest giving as a percent of income, among the

least and the most affluent (p. 36). Belfield and Beney (2000) also found that income is “strongly evident for those who do give” (p.75), while Scharffs (2010) cited higher income levels positively correlate with monetary giving (p. 63). Income is therefore perceived as an indicator by a number of study participants, and further, an indicator that could inform expectations for fundraisers on the giving potential of alumni.

Duffy’s statement, “I give because I can,” underscores the fact that without some form of disposable income, very few have the ability to make large donations. Yet, many institutions are now promoting the fact that many small gifts can be equally important to fundraising efforts. At the time of this writing in fall 2009, when we see wealth declining due to turbulent economic times, wealth may become less of a factor and smaller gifts may begin to take on a new role in the funding of higher education.

Emotional Attachment

In his 1982 quantitative study reviewing alumni giving at private universities, Beeler found that “emotional attachment to the university was the strongest predictor of donor status among the 14 variables tested” (p. 99), citing extracurricular experiences as a student as one of the foundations for this attachment. Many of the participants in this study translated this concept into concrete examples of how this attachment to and interest in Boston College can serve as an indicator of one’s propensity to give.

As a donor, Barber summed up his own philanthropy in stating, “The things that I have done the most for are things that I’ve had a personal connection with.” He further elaborated in adding that his gifts to BC can be traced back to the aspects of the University that engaged him as a student. McKinney offered similar perspectives: “Pride and connection to an entity that means something certainly is evident in those who give

to Boston College . . . clearly those who value their education at BC are more inclined to give.”

As fundraisers, Peter McLaughlin and Paquette also feel strongly that emotional attachment is a key indicator of giving.

P. McLaughlin: Engagement is so key to what we’re doing. They are stakeholders. . . . Their experiences as students create binding ties that they carry throughout their lives and place Boston College as the place where much of who they are began.

Paquette: I’m going to spend an incredible amount of time trying to build a relationship with a prospect, so I look for people with high net worth and liquidity, who are philanthropic—and who are interested in BC.

Thurmond and Neenan simplified their responses on indicators of giving that relate to emotional attachment. Thurmond commented, “One thing I learned early in my career when I first started in the BC Fund was people love Boston College. And that’s what gets you in the door.” Neenan was more succinct in his description on how alumni who are likely to give feel about BC. “Affection,” he stated. Both comments mark the fact that many at BC feel that the connection among alumni and the institution has deep emotional ties, which have significant implications for giving.

The collective comments of the participants reinforced Hueston’s (1992) work on predicting alumni giving, where he concluded that emotional attachment is the greatest indicator of propensity to donate. Weerts and Ronca (2007) expanded on the concept of emotional attachment in their findings on supportive alumni they studied. They wrote, “SUPPORTER alums were more likely to have initiated a lifelong relationship with the

university. . . . In other words, alumni who give and volunteer have formed deeper connections to their alma mater and this may impact their understanding about institutional needs and their role in meeting these needs” (p. 32).

Tradition of Giving

Lloyd (2002) stated that a tradition of giving emerges from several influences, including religion, family background, and inherited wealth. It is therefore understandable that for an institution rooted in the Catholic Church, where many parishioners felt a commitment to some amount of a weekly contribution, a number of participants cited this trait as an indicator of alumni giving, from both personal and professional perspectives. Noting research on giving histories and her experience as a senior fundraiser, DeLong elaborated: “The idea of creating the habit of giving, and giving once a year, translates to ‘I’m going to give to BC, no matter what the amount.’ To me, that can be a predictor of people who, if they have the resources, may become big donors.”

Other participants noted that philanthropy to any nonprofit is often indicative of a willingness to support others. Paquette explained:

If I go and meet with someone, and they are not giving to BC, but they are on the board of a hospital, or they are involved with Dana Farber, or they are involved with the zoo, that is music to my ears, because at least I know they get it, and they are giving money away.

He added that he often sees a number of people who support BC who also donate to Catholic Charities and other religiously affiliated organizations. McKinney echoed this belief: “Clearly, if someone gives to one charity or organization, there is a strong chance

they will give to another.” More specifically, several participants tied the tradition of giving to the experience of giving to the Church, which in Catholic families in the twentieth century was regarded as a habitual obligation.

Neenan: Some have a habit of philanthropy. It’s like going to Mass on Sunday.

You give money because that’s what you do.

McKinney: I always felt it was important to give. I remember my mother always making sure there was something for the collection plate.

Bruggink and Siddiqui (1995) used this sense of responsibility as the basis of their research on the econometric model of alumni giving. They stated, “An alumnus’ altruism to his or her college may be driven by a social sense of obligation to provide collective goods and services to society, sharpened by feelings of allegiance and empathy to his/her school” (p. 53). This statement not only emphasizes the obligation that creates a tradition of giving but also ties this attribute back into the concept of emotional attachment as an underlying source for the obligation to give.

Motivators for Alumni Giving

In their 1990 study on fundraising in higher education, Brittingham and Pezzullo presented their research on motivators for giving to nonprofits. The authors cited a 1975 study by Hunter, which interviewed 30 donors who had given \$1 million or more to a wide range of nonprofits and inquired about their motivations for giving. They responded, “worthiness of cause, personal interest or association with a cause, knowledge that the organization was managed well, a sense of real social need, a sense of community obligation, and tax benefits” (p. 54). They offered that giving to nonprofits offered two opposing standpoints for motivation, one economical, and the other

charitable. However, their research indicated that the majority of previous studies had concluded that charity theory was most applicable to individual giving in higher education, because of its foundation in the perceived utility of the gift by the donor. The utility could be “based upon altruism or an indirect benefit (maintaining or enhancing the prestige of one’s alma mater) or more direct (the prestige associated with giving)” (p. 34).

Support for the Work of the Institution

Nearly all the participants in this study contended that Boston College alumni financially support the University because they believe the contributions they make impact not only the campus but also the community—and even globally. They believe these contributions are required to continue and expand the scope of the University’s work. In addressing how alumni donations allow the University to do good work now and into the future, participants offered a set of very similar perspectives.

McKinney: In the case of BC, to ensure that it stays the place it has been and continues to become an even better place that impacts the greater good. I believe that the majority of our alums want BC to continue to thrive.

P. McLaughlin: I’m a believer in what we’re doing. I think we have noble causes. That’s the important starting point to a perspective donor. Do they believe in what you’re doing? In the case of BC, do they believe in our mission? Do they believe in the ability of our leadership to execute the mission? If they do, and feel endeared to the institution, those ingredients translate into financial support. I believe in that equation.

Another subset of participants commented on how a BC education can serve as the foundation for an alumnus to go out and do good, therefore expanding upon the scope

of BC's influence, which is an attractive reason for some alumni to support the institution.

DeLong: They give because they believe that this is a place that provides a good education. It turns out people who are going to be well educated and good citizens of the world.

Feudo: Our alma maters. These are organizations that are turning out good students, good citizens into the world, and we want to be able to support them.

Participants from both focus groups provided limited information about why alumni give; however, they almost unanimously cited support for the work of Boston College as their personal rationale for giving.

Thomas (NAD): I believe in the good BC does and want it to continue.

Roberston (NAD): I want to know that BC can continue to operate as a leading institution.

It is clear from these responses that both alumni and BC fundraisers connect the work of the institution with good, and in turn, find ways to support that good, most notably as donors.

Engagement with the Institution

Coughlin and Cletus (1986) found that alumni giving was motivated by "some indirect utility" and further stated that "personal attachment" (p. 183) to an institution influenced alumni giving. A number of participants discussed how engagement with Boston College is a critical avenue of motivation for alumni giving.

Barber, a former businessman, addressed engagement from a transactional standpoint: “The whole thing to me with fundraising is, at whatever level, try to engage those people that are giving you money and keep them engaged. Once you get them, your job is to keep them engaged, and at that, you can always do a better job planning ways.”

Some fundraisers and a donor approached the engagement piece within the emotional attachment context.

Feudo: I think different things motivate people. One is a sense of belonging. There is a culture at BC that makes you want to support the institution.

Hoag: Why do we do give? I think the love of BC, and the need that they have.

Father Caron tied the concept of engagement to the philosophies of the Jesuit order, underscoring the connection between knowledge, love, and action:

St. Ignatius’ spiritual exercises stated: “Knowledge leads to love; love leads to action.” And you see the point—we regret that we have so few trustee slots, because the more involved trustees are, they really understand the strengths and weaknesses and the needs of the school, and the more they know, the more they love about it. And we are looking for opportunities to get people to become more engaged with it. Its engagement and identification with it, and interest in it—that’s what leads to giving.

In response to Father Caron’s suggestion that the Ignation traditions reflect the idea of engagement leading to action, Peter McLaughlin commented:

I think that is a good analogy and a good tie-in. It gets back to involvement and meaningful engagement. Participation follows engagement. That is the advancement cycle. You identify people, you communicate with people, you

engage people, and then they support the institution, time, and treasure.

Engagement is so key to what we're doing. It's communication, it's engagement, and then you fit love in there, maybe you fit it in after engagement, and then the support follows.

McLaughlin added that at Boston College, engagement is essential because while studies confirm that alumni are engaged, the institution's low participation rate is evidence that many graduates are not acting on their personal attachment to the University:

The consulting study that we did in Advancement several years ago to pinpoint what motivates our alumni to give, again, pinpointed to engagement. The overwhelming majority of graduates have positive feelings about BC—90 percent. And the consultants compared this with 40 other universities. We're off the chart with how our graduates feel about us. But yet, it's not translated into financial support. But that's a huge plus, because now you say here's an opportunity. They feel good about us. So how do we move past engagement to giving?

Clotfelter's (2003) findings on a study about alumni giving to elite universities supports McLaughlin's conjecture in arguing, "the donations that alumni made to their alma maters were highly correlated to their expressed satisfaction with their own college experiences" (p. 119).

Giving Back to the Institution

Lloyd (2002) offered five categories of motivators for giving, including "duty and responsibility," which is defined in part as "the desire to 'put something back'" (p. 3).

Several participants commented on this concept in terms of their experiences with alumni as fundraisers and administrators.

DeLong: I think they feel a responsibility to give back because so many of the people who went here were on scholarships in one way or another. So it's like okay, it's my turn to let some other kid get some money.

Feudo: They give because they received. They want to give back because they received a quality education and they want to make sure that that education continues to be high quality for generations to come.

Neenan: Well, I would say gratitude for what the University did for me, either in terms of giving me financial aid, and allowing me to go to college, or giving me a good education that allows me to make a good living.

Gratitude is a big one.

Giving back was another area which alumni from both focus groups expressed as one of the driving reasons for their overall giving.

Vespa (NAD): I believe if you benefited from Boston College—in many and any way—a gift reflects those feelings.

Clark (AD): I received financial aid, and without it, I couldn't have come to Boston College.

McSweeney (AD): I give because I was fortunate to be given a free education and given a great opportunity to come to BC. So, I give without expecting anything in return. I give because I feel obligated to give back.

This section, coupled with the section that addresses tradition of giving as an indicator of alumni giving, highlights the fact that Boston College alumni who give do so

because they feel they should, most likely as a part of their personal belief system, often stemming from family history.

Benefits for Donors

Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990) indicated that the majority of research concluded that charity theory, particularly in the case of higher education, was most applicable to individual giving, as the donor bases it on perceived utility of the gift. The utility could be “based upon altruism or an indirect benefit (maintaining or enhancing the prestige of one’s alma mater) or more direct (the prestige associated with giving)” (p. 34). Boston College fundraisers and alumni interviewed for this study appeared to agree, both in terms of altruistic benefits and personal benefits.

DeLong: It’s pretty amazing when you consider that people, you ask them to give money and they do. They get nothing back for it, except that hopefully they feel good about their alma mater, and they are glad that this is going to help their alma mater thrive. There are people who are giving \$10 million to Boston College. What do they get for that? They get a little bit of recognition, a little bit of honor and glory, but for the most part, I think what they really get is feeling good about helping. I think they want this place to continue to exist, to be better, and to be a part of the fabric through giving.

Duffy, who has been both a personal donor and a board director on the Sharp Foundation that has given major grants to BC’s Lynch School of Education, simply offered, “Obviously I get a certain amount of satisfaction out of helping others.” Eynon, a BC fundraiser, commented on his personal motivations for giving:

I derive a tremendous amount of joy and pleasure from being able to support organizations that I care about, whether it's gifts to local organizations, or volunteering in our kids' schools, helping out in the small ways that we do in the organizations we support, it feels great. I think I understand the impact of our philanthropy maybe more because I'm a practitioner, but I also feel really fortunate to be able to do that.

Other participants indicated that for some alumni, more personal motivations were the impetus for giving, including benefits derived from affiliation with Boston College as an alumnus and/or donor.

McKinney: I believe that the majority of our alums want BC to continue to thrive—it makes their cachet just as strong as BC's in terms of career and even who they are. Where you went to school seems to be a huge part of who you are—so someone that clearly values their education at BC could be more inclined to give.

Feudo: At the same time, there is the selfishness that the better your institution becomes, the greater the value of the degree that you earned.

These participants offer several perspectives on how alumni perceive benefits. For some, the altruistic joy they gain from giving is more than enough reward; for others, the pride they take in the value of their degree and the desire to maintain the strength of that degree are a perceived bonus. And, for one cohort, a combination of benefits, special treatment, and a high level of recognition are the bonus they derive from their giving.

Impact of Gender on Alumni Giving

In a recent study on how married, heterosexual couples make decisions around giving, Rooney, Brown, and Mesch (2007) concluded, “after controlling for other factors, men are not likely to have a significant effect in the decision to give to education at all nor the dollar amounts given” (p. 240). While participants in this study did not discuss couples’ giving, most elaborated on the differences they have perceived in giving by gender at Boston College.

When asked about the impact of gender on giving—and more specifically, women’s giving—a number of participants addressed the question more broadly.

Caron: I think most of them are giving to improve the quality of education at

Boston College, and however the administration uses the money. I think that’s true of both the men and the women.

Neenan: I’d divide the alumni into three categories: the ones (men) that are strong supporters of athletics, and they give primarily to the athletic effort. Then there are those who are followers of athletics and they may be . . . major donors, but they will want to endow a chair in the department or give money to the Jesuit Institute. Then there is a third category of donors. It’s a gender breakout again. I think women may be vaguely aware of the sports program, but they want to give money to the McMullen Museum or the Council for Women. They want to know where the money is going.

Feudo: Women are smart, and in many cases, women look at the big picture and understand it better than men do, because typically the men are the ones caught under the emotion of athletics. I do think that women are very

thoughtful about the way in which they support any cause or organization. They will do the research. They will give to where the money is most needed. Women tend to give with the head, and men give with the heart and the emotion.

Analysis of responses suggests that the consensus is that women are far more pragmatic than men in their giving, due to impact of their donation. Men appear to seek out emotional ways to funnel their giving and the recognition that comes with their gift. The majority of the participants, however, responded directly to why women give and what motivates them to do so, based on research in the field and personal perspectives.

DeLong: But overall, all philanthropic research indicates that women tend to give to the end cause—they do research and see where their dollars can have the most impact in terms of their interests and pursue that cause. The women want to know a lot about what project they are giving to; the men less so.

Eynon: I think women overall are motivated to give to BC because they find things that they care about and believe in. I think of the research that I've read about what motivates women, they are probably more motivated about understanding the impact of their philanthropy. They want to know what good their gift does, whether it's a gift to athletics or the BC Fund or something else.

Several women fundraisers also discussed motivations for women to give to athletics.

Thurmond: As far as women are concerned, if they happen to be an athletic supporter, then they will probably enjoy success on the field. Again, I think women want to be part of a cause.

DeLong: But the women who will give to athletics in general were student-athletes. They are very dedicated to it, but they played varsity athletics at Boston College. Whereas there are lots of guys who didn't play varsity sports, but still give to athletics.

C. McLaughlin: Definitely for women athletes or for parents, for women who have athletic kids, that might motivate them, but other than that, I think women tend to be involved or want to be involved in whatever cause it is that they are giving to.

Another avenue that inspires women's giving is the Council for Women of Boston College (CWBC), established in 2003. The Council was designed to engage alumnae more deeply in University life, and at the same time, nurture the spirit of giving, particularly with women who have been successful in their careers. While numbering less than 150, the CWBC has come to be seen as a strong motivator of giving from alumnae of means, and reflective of tomorrow's women graduates' capacity to give back.

DeLong: I see this all the time with the Council for Women—they want to be a part of it because they see that their gift will go to improving the role of women at BC and beyond.

Hoag: I think for me, the key was that whole women's group that was developed. It gave people a reason to be interested in the school again—and in giving back.

Participants appear to see much potential in the part alumnae can play in the financial future of Boston College, particularly at a time when female students have surpassed male students as more than half the student body. The information gathered in these interviews also accentuates the need for fundraisers to look at ways to motivate alumnae differently from their male counterparts.

Impact of Fundraising Practices on Alumni Giving

According to Pearson (1999), “giving is influenced . . . by the quality of alumni relations and communications . . . and the messages conveyed in solicitations—not to mention methods used and resources invested in fundraising” (p. 8). Participants—both fundraisers and major donors—appeared to agree that generally, Boston College is effective in its fundraising practices in terms of solicitations, outreach, and resource investment. But several indicated that there was definitely room for improvement, particularly in the number of donors who are giving. Four major donors shared their perspectives; two very impressed with practices and two who felt practices could be improved.

McKinney simply stated, “I think we do a very good job,” while Duffy elaborated, “They’ve been very effective with me. Part of that reason is that I happen to be a trustee of a private foundation established by one of my clients . . . if you are potentially a big contributor, they are very effective. Conversely, two trustee/donors felt fundraising practices could be more impactful. Barber stated, “I think we do a good job. And you can’t just talk the talk, you have to actually walk the walk. But I think we could do better.” Hoag was more critical: “But I don’t think they ask. However, I think people have to be tapped on the shoulder and say ‘Hey, can you go to the next level?’”

Weerts and Ronca (2007) supported this assertion in their study of supportive alumni. “Advancement officers must establish awareness of ‘supporters in their backyard’ who may already be involved, but have not been asked to get involved as volunteers or donors” (p. 32). While some fundraisers were assuring in their responses that BC staff is highly effective, others felt there were missed opportunities. Husson and DeLong, the current and former senior administrators who have overseen fundraising, believed that fundraising efforts were effective. Feudo offered tangible comments: “I think you only have to look at our numbers to know that we are effective, and the fact that in this economy we continue to raise record numbers of dollars, that’s pretty impressive.”

However, some fundraisers addressed the alumni participation rate, which is low compared to peer institutions. Carolyn McLaughlin and Thurmond both echoed the need for better alumni participation, while Eynon, who is charged with increasing participation as the head of the BC Fund, offered these thoughts:

While I think that they (practices) are effective, participation is an issue, but it is something that is being addressed. I would say that we have been effective at increasing the dollars given by alumni, so the overall dollar amounts have increased dramatically, but the number of alumni who are donors and who choose to make BC a philanthropic priority every year has not increased quite as much. It’s a place where we can see great change in this campaign.

Peter McLaughlin shared his belief that practices were continuing to improve:

For a long time, the Alumni Association existed in a silo. But the reality is that the Alumni Association and Development have to be working in a very collaborative fashion to get that rate up.

Caron, who has served in two administrations at Boston College, provided his perspective from a long-term affiliation with the University:

I can remember 35 years ago when the school was raising \$800,000. It has increasingly moved forward. We have been increasingly effective. Action follows understanding. I think alumni need to know the depth of the need at the institution and the importance of giving. Our alumni are phenomenally devoted to us—it's always been a mystery to me how you can put together this deeply felt loyalty to the school and a relatively low percentage of giving.

Monks' (2003) research supports Caron's query:

The single biggest determinant of the generosity of alumni donations is satisfaction with one's undergraduate experience. In an attempt to target alumni/ae who are more likely to make generous donations, institutions could identify those students. . . . This information could be used to focus development resources to those who are most likely to make donations to their undergraduate institute. (p. 129)

This point may be well taken; while Boston College has raised significant donations from major gifts in the past, if the need is to increase the number of alumni who give, then the institution may want to heed Monks' advice. The institution will need to target solicitations to those alumni who are indicative of those more likely to give, as detailed in this study through the literature review and participant interviews.

Chapter Summary

The findings in this chapter expressed the perceptions and beliefs participants shared on two foundations for this inquiry: the need for general alumni giving at Boston College and why alumni give to Boston College. Findings in the first section demonstrate the belief by participants that Boston College alumni have consistently contributed to the financial health of the University through student aid, operating funds, and contributions to the endowment that support the institution's goals as well as its founding mission. Alumni contributions are perceived as enhancing the profile of the institution and its national rankings, most notably for *U.S. News*, both of which participants feel are important for student recruitment. However, alumni participation is seen as comparatively low compared to peer institutions, which participants felt not only hurts the overall ranking but also can have a negative effect on the donor pool, and—as a number of fundraisers indicated—on major gifts, which are important sources of funding for large capital and academic initiatives.

At a time when Boston College has embarked on a \$1.5 billion capital campaign to fund ambitious goals for enhanced academic programming and physical plant, these findings may aid in future study as to how the University can position itself better to emphasize the need for alumni funding and the benefits the University derives from that funding.

The second section of this chapter focused on observations around indicators of alumni giving to the University. In reviewing indicators for giving, participants echoed research in the field that stated charitable giving generally correlates with wealth and the presence of disposable income. Findings further emerged that underscored participants'

beliefs that emotional attachment to an institution or a cause is more indicative of whether prospects will actually complete the action of making a donation. As a subset of emotional attachment, a number of participants tied giving back to a heritage that has a tradition of giving to institutions or organizations they feel strongly about nurturing. The third section of this chapter presented analysis on participants' views on what motivates alumni to give. Emerging findings focused on four areas: support for the work of the institution; engagement with the institution; giving back to the institution; and benefits to donors. A fourth area of inquiry, impact of gender on giving, offered some limited perspectives on the topic more broadly, rather than relating specifically to the research question, while a fifth on fundraising practices elicited very limited responses from a handful of respondents, with most feeling they had neutral perceptions on the practices and policies and their impact.

Findings from the data analysis underscored that participants unanimously felt that alumni give because they believe in the good work of Boston College, starting with the importance of educating students to making a difference in the global community. Some participants also pointed to the Jesuit, Catholic philosophy—and how it impacts the work of the University—as a strong inspiration for giving. Drawing upon the indicator of emotional attachment, participants also saw emotional attachment to Boston College as the source of engagement that motivates many alumni to give. Analysis also indicated that study participants saw giving back to the institution as a natural progression that grows out of both support for the institution's work and engagement with the institution as a graduate. A number of participants also saw more tangible reasons for giving back—first, gratitude for an excellent education and as a venue for personal growth, and second,

monetary support as a student beneficiary of financial aid. Benefits for donors were seen as another potential motivator and were broken down into two general categories: altruistic benefits, such as ensuring that students who follow alumni are afforded the same education; and tangible benefits, including special recognition and benefits as donors. Finally, the question of the impact of gender on giving was explored with participants. While respondents find it difficult to relate their perceptions to the research question, participants generally believe that both men and women give because of their support of the institution, although the perception prevails that women support Boston College in ways that allow them to support a cause, while men support BC from an emotional and competitive standpoint.

The final section of the chapter examined the role of fundraising practices on Boston College's success in alumni giving. Most participants felt that the University had significantly improved its policies and practices during the duration of the study period. A number of individual participants, however, underscored the ongoing efforts to increase the number of alumni donors as a strong beginning to addressing the University's low participation rate. This chapter's findings demonstrated that participants believe Boston College needs alumni support to prosper and remain a highly ranked research university, and offered demographic and behavioral grounds as to why alumni give. Further research into how alumni can be encouraged to give at Boston College and beyond will only aid fundraisers as the need for external funding increases into the future.

Chapter Six moves this study toward the question of a perceived relationship between general alumni giving and athletics through the investigation of participants' perspectives on the importance of men's intercollegiate athletics to Boston College and

its constituents. Participants were asked to share their views on the impact athletics may have on alumni, students, and the general public to better inform the study on the role of athletics for the University, and how it may impact general alumni giving.

CHAPTER SIX: IMPORTANCE OF ATHLETICS

Introduction

One of the guiding assumptions for this study is the important role that intercollegiate athletics plays for Boston College and its alumni. Attendance figures at football and men's basketball offer credence to this supposition—in 2005, 236,572 fans attended 6 home football games, at a total of 39,429 attendees per game; in the same season, men's basketball drew an average of 6,440 to 17 games, for a total of 109,495 (NCAA, 2005). With nearly 63,000 living alumni in Massachusetts (Boston College, 2008), one may presume that BC graduates are a major portion of those in attendance at these games. However, the 87,000 alumni beyond the school's home state may also be reconnecting as fans through ever-increasing electronic sports media outlets. BC's intercollegiate athletics program is an avenue both to and from the school for its various existing and potential constituencies.

In an effort to underscore the long-standing tradition athletics represents for the University, and more generally, how its role has expanded in present day, this chapter begins with a brief introduction into the history of men's intercollegiate athletics at Boston College, which is central to this study on the perception of a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving. The remainder of the chapter turns to the research findings that present emerging analysis from participant interviews on the importance of athletics for Boston College in three sections. The first examines perceptions on the importance of athletics to the University as a whole, in terms of both the general national visibility it garners and the integrity BC's intercollegiate sports programs appear to underscore. This section also examines how this visibility plays into

the University's reputation and its undergraduate admissions prospects. Sections two and three explore the importance of athletics to two key constituencies, students and alumni. Section two examines the student experience around men's intercollegiate athletics and how that plays into campus life and affiliations at BC. Section three looks similarly at the alumni experience with athletics and how that may transcend into alumni lives after graduation. Both sections two and three examine how the athletic experience impacts students and alumni emotionally in ways that create engagement with each other and the University that brings lasting ties back to BC long after graduation.

The chapter concludes with a summary that highlights major findings from participant interviews on the importance of athletics for the institution, its students, and its alumni, which may further inform the central research question and present areas where further inquiry may be warranted.

History of Men's Intercollegiate Athletics at Boston College

The following section serves as a primer into the history of men's intercollegiate athletics at Boston College. For more in-depth information about BC athletics, readers should refer to these sources: Thomas O'Connor's *Ascending the Heights* (2009), and Reid Oslin's *Tales from the Boston College Sideline* (2004) and *Boston College Football Vault* (2008).

Boston College traces its official roots for men's intercollegiate athletics to 1883, just 20 years following the college's establishment in 1863. In the fall of that year, the precursor to the Boston College Athletic Club Association was created in support of the first organized men's baseball and football teams (Donovan, Dunigan, and FitzGerald, 1990). President Jeremiah O'Connor, S.J., appointed a faculty moderator—a similar

position of which exists to this day—and the school catalog for that year reported that the new athletic association’s purpose was to “encourage the practice of manly sports, and to promote by these the *esprit de corps* of the College Students, who are its members” (Donovan, Dunigan, and FitzGerald, p. 86). What ensued from this now official organization was a series of men’s baseball and football games played with neighboring colleges and athletic clubs in the late 1800s into the early 1900s.

It is of interest to note that one of the students on the organizing committee, T. J. Hurley, Class of 1885, went on to establish some of BC’s long-standing traditions, including the composition of the two spirit songs that are mainstays at current sporting events: “For Boston”—the oldest intercollegiate fight song in the U.S.—and “Hail Alma Mater,” as well as Boston College’s official colors, maroon and gold (O’Connor, 2009). In an effort to address the lack of any visible support for BC at early competitive sporting events, Hurley led the committee that chose the official school colors to be worn by fans, “in part, because the papal colors were maroon, purple, and gold, and because no other Jesuit college happened to have those colors” (O’Connor, p. 9).

In the decade following the 1883 establishment of an athletic association, Donovan, Dunigan, and FitzGerald (1990) and O’Connor (2009) indicated that football games were played informally as the game began to take hold across America’s northeast college campuses. However, one issue that plagued the game from becoming more formally established at Boston College was the lack of a suitable football or baseball field. Both teams played on makeshift plots of land around the site of the college’s first campus on Harrison Avenue in the South End of Boston. Despite this obstacle, the annals of sports history at BC recognize the football team of 1899 as Boston College’s first

triumphant team (Burns Library Archive, Boston College). The football team of 1899 made history in their first eight games, when they held each competitor scoreless until Brown University defeated BC 18 to 0. However, they ended their season on a high with a 17 to 0 win over the College of the Holy Cross. At the end of their season, the first organized alumni event on record in honor of sports was held to culminate the team's successful season with a dinner at the Parker House in downtown Boston on January 9, 1900.

As the college began to grow, its leaders saw the need for a more spacious campus as well as one that could address the increasing popularity of men's sports programs with students and alumni. In 1915, the campus was moved from the South End to its current Chestnut Hill location, and that fall, athletics took on a formal role in campus life as the new Alumni Field was unveiled (on what is now known as the Campus Green, or unofficially, the Dust Bowl), complete with facilities for baseball, football, and track, and adorned with "maroon goal posts . . . on a field of green" (Donovan, Dunigan, and FitzGerald, 1990, p. 139). Football quickly became the sport of favor, in part due to the team of 1920, which was the first to finish its season undefeated and went on to win the Eastern Championship. The same year, the football team also shut out Holy Cross, which was a much coveted win against what was becoming BC's rival on the field. The Eagles' coach at that time was Frank W. Cavanaugh, who held the position from 1919 to 1926 and went on to some fame through his induction into the National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame posthumously in 1954. He was also the subject of a 1943 Hollywood film, *The Iron Major*, in part for his aggressive coaching style as well as his service as a major in the Army who was severely wounded by shrapnel (Burns

Library Archives, Boston College). He emerged as one of the first heroes of Boston College sports, but many since have followed in his footsteps.

In 1920, another milestone was marked in the history of BC athletics, following the sweep of the Eastern Intercollegiate championship by the men's track team. A local "sports cartoonist depicted the BC team as a stray cat licking the intercollegiate plate clean" (O'Connor, 2008, p. 21). This infuriated a local priest, Fr. Edward McLaughlin '14, who wrote to *The Heights* student newspaper about his preference for a proper mascot. "Why not the Eagle? . . . Its natural habitat is the high place. Surely the Heights is made to order for such a selection" (O'Connor, 2008, p. 21), pointing to the new nickname the campus had gained when it moved to Chestnut Hill. The administration and students agreed with McLaughlin's recommendation of the eagle as the college's mascot, as well as the name by which all intercollegiate sports teams would be known from then on.

While men's baseball was still noted as a popular sport in the 1920s in the annals of Boston College athletics, football continued to draw prominence, particularly in 1928, when the team again went undefeated and won its second Eastern Championship (Burns Library Archives, Boston College). At the same time, BC's football team was receiving national notice as a leading contender in New England and began to be sought out for games in other parts of the country, including bowl games. However, this ambition was placed on hold in light of the onset of the Great Depression. Despite the economy, local fans stayed steadfast through the economically troubled 1930s, and because of rising attendance, games were sometimes played first on the former Boston Braves baseball field and later in Fenway Park due to crowd capacities that could not be managed at

Alumni Field. Then once again, in 1940, BC football was poised for national recognition. Following a Cotton Bowl appearance by the 1939 squad, and an undefeated season, the 1940 Eagles culminated the season on New Year's Day, 1941, when they beat Tennessee in the Sugar Bowl 19 to 13, giving them claim to the National Championship that year (Burns Library Archives, Boston College).

After a rebuilding year in the 1941 season, the 1942 team envisioned another national title, but their hopes were dashed on November 28, 1942, when BC was defeated by Holy Cross 55 to 2 at Fenway Park. With little zest for celebrating, many students and alumni canceled their plans for postgame festivities to be held at the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Boston that night. For many of BC's players and fans, the football loss may have saved their lives—492 people perished that night in one of America's worst fires (O'Connor, 2008, p. 25). The rivalry between the two teams continued to be a highlight for both—although many would say toward the mid twentieth century it became more of a tradition—until BC decidedly played its last football game at Holy Cross in 1986 in favor of finding more worthy and exciting competitors.

From the early 1930s through the 1960s, men's football, baseball, and track continued to draw fans, along with men's ice hockey, which had debuted in the early 1920s, but did not enjoy nationwide recognition until the early 1930s, with the arrival of coach John "Snooks" Kelly, for whom the hockey rink is named in Conte Forum today. Kelly took BC to national prominence during his 32-year career, first in 1949 when the Eagles won the NCAA championship, and then in 1956 and 1965 when they reached but did not win the NCAA finals. Baseball continued to be popular until the 1960s, when it began to be outshadowed by football and basketball across America's campuses

(Donovan, Dunigan, and FitzGerald, 1990). Men's track remained popular through the 1950s and 1960s, but eventually did not draw the fan power that would classify it as a big-time sport in men's intercollegiate competition. Men's basketball—again most likely played as a pickup sport, did not see national intercollegiate play until the 1950s, but really began to take hold in the 1960s, with the arrival of former Boston Celtics basketball star Bob Cousy as coach in 1963 (Donovan, Dunigan, and FitzGerald, 1990). Under Cousy's six-year tenure, the Eagles broke into the national intercollegiate college scene and were consistently ranked as one of the top ten men's basketball teams in the country.

In the last few decades of the twentieth century, football, basketball, and hockey dominated men's intercollegiate athletics at Boston College. However, hockey was not factored into this study for a number of reasons, but most pertinent: 1) hockey is seen as a very regional sport, even to this day when National Hockey League franchises emerged in warmer parts of the country such as California and Florida, because of its origins as a winter sport before the time of man-made ice, and 2) because of the regional aspect of hockey, it gets very little national media exposure during the regular season. Conversely, with the dawn of broadcast and digital media dedicated to competitive sports, intercollegiate football and men's basketball have gained much visibility that has produced a wide range of fans. BC's football and basketball teams have been fortunate to have performed well enough in the 1980s through today to garner exposure that not only brings virtual fans to watch but also presents the opportunity for their alumni to sit in the stands and experience the highs and lows of competitive sports with students, classmates, and other alumni who share their passion.

In the 1980s, Boston College men's intercollegiate sports became a media sensation on November 23, 1984, when senior Doug Flutie's:

last-second 48-yard "Hail Mary" touchdown pass to Gerard Phelan gave the football Eagles a thrilling 47-45 victory over the University of Miami and secured its own enduring place in both Boston sports and college football lore.

The storybook win was more than a major sports accomplishment for Boston College: It came as the school was emerging as a major national university. The Eagles football team played nine games on network television that year and the increased visibility was cited as a valuable factor in the rise in admission applications and alumni support that followed. (Oslin, 2004, p. 1)

Research over the years has brought those who studied the so-called "Flutie Factor" to come to varying conclusions on whether it did in fact increase undergraduate applications—yet, it was reported in a *Boston College Magazine* article in 2003 that:

Applications to BC did surge 16 percent in 1984 (from 12,414 to 14,398), and then another 12 percent (to 16,163) in 1985. But these jumps were not anomalous for BC, which in the previous decade had embarked on a program to build national enrollment using market research, a network of alumni volunteers, strategically allocated financial aid, and improvements to residence halls and academic facilities, says John Maguire '61, Ph.D. '66. . . . "Doug Flutie cemented things, but the J. Donald Monan factor and the Frank Campanella factor are the real story," he said, referring to BC's former president and executive vice president. (McDonald, 2003)

Regardless of whether one believes in the Flutie Factor or not, the impact of the

championship game on the public prominence of BC football, and to a broader degree, the University, in general cannot be discounted, as the story lives on at BC and beyond, especially since Flutie, Class of 1985, continues to be an active figure on campus and works in national sports broadcasting as of 2010.

The last significant event for Boston College's football and men's basketball programs—and for the athletic program in general—was the move to the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) in 2005. William P. Leahy, S.J., cited a number of reasons why the ACC was a better alliance for BC than the Big East Conference it was leaving, and at the same time, underscored the University's view that intercollegiate sports are an integral aspect of Boston College's culture. The following are statements made by Fr. Leahy in *The Boston College Chronicle* (2003):

First, from an academic standpoint, I believe that the ACC is a great fit for Boston College. It has five universities—Duke, UNC-Chapel Hill, Wake Forest, Virginia, and Georgia Tech—that, like us, are ranked among the top 40 national universities, and it is a conference with a balanced mix of private and public institutions.

In addition, the ACC is in a part of the United States with attractive demographics, a great plus for our student recruiting efforts in future years. Finally and very important to me, the ACC is committed to a program of academic cooperation and collaboration that encourages faculty and student exchanges as well as sharing library resources, something not done in the Big East.

While many alumni, students, and fans of BC were also proud to join a league with other highly ranked academic institutions, many were also excited by a conference that would also bring better-ranked competition to the field and the court. These two aspects of Boston College's membership in the ACC may be the most important result of the ACC affiliation—the ability to attract better student-athletes to the University, which is considered an underpinning for maintaining and retaining a successful intercollegiate athletic program for BC's administration, as is evidenced in President Leahy's comments.

In 2009, Boston College maintained 31 varsity sports programs—the most in the ACC— that engaged 750 student-athletes, with more than 260 of these students the beneficiaries of athletic scholarships (Boston College Athletic Association, 2010). In the same year, 21 of these teams received a perfect score of 100 in their NCAA Graduation Success Rates, making BC the school with the most teams to achieve this score within all of the Division I intercollegiate athletic programs in the country (Boston College Athletic Association, 2010). Additionally, the Eagles football team was one of the top six teams in the country to receive a score of 90 or better, along with Duke, Notre Dame, Navy, Northwestern, and Vanderbilt. Athletic Director Gene DeFilippo credited the student-athletes' hard work, along with the coaches and staff of the Office of Learning Resources for Student Athletes, for this achievement (Boston College Athletic Association, 2010).

The history of Boston College's men's intercollegiate athletics, coupled with the current-day commitment of student-athlete performance on and off the field, paints a picture of a sports program that, while steeped in tradition, seeks to fully represent the University's motto of "Ever to Excel." In the next section, we will examine what past and

present BC men's intercollegiate athletics means to the University's constituents, including alumni, students, and the general public.

Importance of Men's Intercollegiate Athletics to Boston College

In querying Boston College administrators, fundraisers, and Alumni Association personnel on their perceptions of how BC men's intercollegiate athletics engages alumni, all replied that, in particular, football and men's basketball were a major source of reconnection for graduates and the University. Long-time senior administrator Caron summed up his views on the role of intercollegiate athletics in higher education, and specifically, at BC:

It's also important to the life of the school. Athletics are an interesting thing. People like them. They contribute a lot of excitement. I always have thought about how athletics has played in the life of this institution, in the life of the students, in the life of the alumni, in the life of the city, in the region, and I thought it was very important for us. I think athletics, rightly controlled, rightly managed, has a value for education.

Eynon and Peter McLaughlin also commented on the general benefits to Boston College's athletic programs and the important place they felt these programs had in the life of the University.

Eynon: I think whether you participate as an undergraduate or whether you just walk through campus as an alumnus—or even faculty or staff—and see it happening around you, I think it shapes your perception of the institution for a long time after that.

P. McLaughlin: I think without any question it has a positive impact on people's perception about the school. And when you couple that with the academic successes for our athletes, I think it's easy to conclude that athletics is a vital part of what we do. I think we have our priorities in order. We are here primarily as an academic institution. But athletics is an integral part of what we're doing. It's much more important at BC than it may be for some other schools.

While stating sports were important, DeLong moved away from the role of men's intercollegiate athletics as transcending to more of immediate gratification from the experience: "College sports are very much a part of a college experience at a place like BC. . . . It's a beautiful fall day, you're in the stadium, you're with your friends, you're cheering on the school that you've chosen to attend." Whether seen as a formational experience of significance or simply a day of enjoyment, participants were unanimous in their perception that football and men's basketball hold an important place in the recent history of the University.

In an effort to drill down and identify specific areas where athletics plays an important role for Boston College and its constituents, participants were queried on their perceptions about how and why intercollegiate football and men's basketball may be consequential for Boston College. The analysis produced several distinct areas that emphasize the importance of athletics to the University, to students, and finally, to the alumni experience.

Importance to the University

Through the analysis of the data emerged opinions on the importance of athletics to the University as an institution of higher education, with participants repeatedly citing two outcomes: national visibility for the University and the integrity of the program. The findings around integrity were so pronounced in individual interviews that it is not only evident that a high level of conduct is an imperative for BC's senior and athletic administrations but also for many, a point of pride as much as any athletic success.

National Visibility for the University

In addressing the increasingly important role of men's intercollegiate athletics in our society, Koch cited the burgeoning television and radio coverage of sports, and networks like ESPN that "flog our senses on a twenty-four-hour-a-day basis with broadcasts of intercollegiate athletic contests" (1983, p. 360). Years later, his comments are only enhanced by the fact that we now have multiple sports networks devoted to college sports, along with online multimedia sites that stream games and offer real-time scores around the clock, leading to a new level of visibility for college sports. As a Division I school, BC is fortunate to be showcased via this media frequently through the football and basketball seasons. Participants strongly felt that the visibility athletics offered Boston College was a very positive offshoot of intercollegiate play. Many—including Hoag, Eynon, Peter McLaughlin, and Thurmond—reinforced their beliefs on the impact a national athletic presence can have for the University, while several explained their perceptions on the scope of this visibility.

Barber noted, "I think we realize that this is the way we get our identity out there in a big way, and you can't ask for better publicity than to be on ABC for three hours

every Saturday.” Duffy added, “Athletics is the thing that keeps the name out in the public view.” Paquette used a metaphor to encapsulate his viewpoint: “People talk about athletics being the front porch of the university, and a lot of times it is.”

Barber also recounted a story to illustrate his point:

I remember the comment that the president of Ohio State made. He said, “I can’t get 50,000 people to come to a chemistry department experiment.” I think that’s really how I feel about it. You can get 50,000 people to come to Alumni Stadium on a Saturday for a good football game. But you’re going to get people coming to follow whatever part of the University—or interact with the University—with things that interest them. But to get them together so that they have a chance to rekindle the old personal relationship, athletics provides that platform, and that I think is true any given Saturday. You can see it across the country.

Neenan offered his personal experience to highlight his perception on the visibility athletics affords BC:

When I am on an airplane flying here or there, and it turns out I’m from Boston College, invariably, someone will say, “Didn’t you win the national championship in hockey last year?” or “How do you think you’re going to do against Virginia Tech?” It’s the way the University gets its public face, which isn’t from our core curriculum or the library, but it’s our sports program that’s our public face.

Members of both focus groups also cited strong visibility for the University as a benefit of national intercollegiate play.

Flaherty (AD): It is all free publicity. You can’t put a value on that.

McSweeney (AD): We call them front window sports. That's what they are. What role does athletics play at BC? It is probably the most national advertising or marketing arm that we have, specifically football and men's basketball.

Other focus group members echoed that BC sports bring the University national prominence through mass media presentation of football and basketball. In general, participants across the study saw BC's athletics program as a major proponent of awareness for the institution with the general public through its delineation through multiple media channels.

Several participants delved further into how BC attains visibility and pointed to championship play.

Feudo: In 10 years, we probably won 7 bowl games. We had success in basketball and went to the NCAA tournament several times during those years. We won one hockey national championship during those years, so there are a lot of things that raise both the visibility of the athletics program as well as the institution there.

Eynon: When you are in a bowl game, there are lots of people who are watching that game who have no direct affiliation, and learn about the institution. You almost always get an ad on TV as part of the contract, and it's an opportunity to talk about our Jesuit, Catholic heritage, talk about the institution in ways that other people might not see it. So, I think there are a lot of really positive benefits.

C. McLaughlin: Visibility. It's national visibility. I think it's better visibility if you have a national championship and you're going to a bowl game.

These comments indicate that participants saw the opportunity to play in bowl games and championships as a way that BC's visibility increases beyond season play. But participants appeared to believe that while it is the game that brings the attention, that attention could broaden to bring interest to the University as a whole.

Emerging findings also demonstrated that some participants felt that visibility can in turn aid Boston College in the recruitment of potential students across the country, particularly at a time when a dramatic shift is occurring in college-age demographics. According to Robert Lay, dean of Boston College's Enrollment Management Office, population shifts in the Southeast, Southwest, and on the West Coast mean BC will need to draw from these regions to maintain enrollment numbers within the next decade (2008, personal communication). Study participants indicated that visibility from Boston College athletics may have an impact on applications. The following excerpts illustrate this perspective.

Hoag: When they have a good year, applications are up. So I think sports sell BC to prospective students, but it's just hard to put a number on it.

DeLong: The college is on national TV with a game and we've got our public service announcements, and the kid is sitting in front of the TV, thinking about what college he or she is going to apply to—that stuff counts. I also think that it's the first impression, for kids who haven't been here or heard of us.

McKinney: Well, certainly visibility. People can see BC play on TV now from coast to coast—probably even beyond. That has to account for something in terms of admissions.

Caron: That has been extremely important for our admissions picture, for the diversity of the composition of our student body, for the growth in the pool of applicants from whom we draw.

Alumni from both focus groups concurred:

Roberston (NAD): I think it also helps us with admissions. Kids who may have heard of us watch a home game, where they showcase the beautiful campus, throw out impressive facts about the school, and it can encourage a potential student to check us out.

Flaherty (AD): Look at the Atlantic Coast Conference—being able to introduce Boston College to a segment of the population that wouldn't have considered Boston College as an option for college but are now considering us.

Focus group participants—much like individual interviewees—conjectured that the Boston College men's intercollegiate athletic programs may help the University garner interest from a more geographically diverse prospect pool for undergraduate admission.

Some participants took the discussion in a slightly different direction, citing their perceptions that Boston College's high academic standards have been put in the public's eye because of visibility from men's intercollegiate sports, which may reinforce BC's place among national research universities to the broader public.

Husson: I think it gives us an opportunity to get our message out there. And I think it goes beyond just visibility. It's not just that athletics puts us in the public eye; it's how athletics puts us in the public eye.

P. McLaughlin: I think it is more visibility, more pride, but the reality is though sports is the vehicle to visibility, it actually helps us promote our emphasis on academics through our public service announcements and mention of our mission and student achievements during the commentary.

Vespa (NAD): I think the visibility is even more important because it allows us to get the word out about our academic programming and strengths. People see the team and become curious, because just having the name Boston reflects an area where academia is very strong.

It could be inferred through the findings that the visibility of athletics nationally raises the profile of the University and offers potential applicants insights into how they might fit into BC as students. While nearly all who are watching will not come to BC as Division I athletes, they may gain both an academic and student life perspective on what the undergraduate experience can be for them.

Visibility was also addressed with Boston College's alumni outside of New England, with many now having the opportunity to tune in through a broad range of new media beyond television. A number of participants felt that games broadcast on TV or streamed via the Web were a major opportunity to reconnect with alumni. Peter McLaughlin stated, "The reality is that more than 50 percent of alumni are outside New England. That's what it is statistically. They don't have the opportunity to patronize athletic events, unless they are on TV." Hoag offered similar thoughts, "It's hard to keep people involved and I think sports does that. You are gone from BC for a long time, but you see them on the TV. Everyone can get excited about a game now."

Overall, participants indicated that national visibility offers Boston College many benefits, from raising the academic profile across the country to student recruitment in important regions with population growth and diversity. But most important for this study is the opportunity it offers its graduates to reconnect through a vehicle that often evokes fond memories. It is a form of engagement that has only been part of the alumni experience for several decades, yet continues to grow as new technologies increase the avenues that offer intercollegiate football and men's basketball programming on a global level, increasing its importance as an alumni outreach tool.

Integrity of Boston College's Athletic Program

While not a point of inquiry for this study, the researcher found that nearly all individual participants shared their perspectives on the high integrity of the intercollegiate athletic program at the University. This point counters much of the research on standards for student-athletes, which Duderstadt summed up in stating, "In the majority of sports programs, athletes are students first and athletes second. . . . However, football and basketball . . . have developed cultures with low expectations for academic performance" (2000, p. 191). But based on BC's support of student-athletes, as evidenced in a superior graduation rate, integrity in athletics was repeatedly noted in responses to a wide range of questions. It appears to be a great source of pride for both those who are enthusiastic sports fans and for those who appreciate the role of sports at BC, but personally are not deeply engaged as spectators and followers of the teams. A number of participants commented on their belief that both a strong academic program and a strong athletic program can co-exist, if care is taken to strike a balance between the two.

P. McLaughlin: I think we have our priorities in order. We are here primarily as an academic institution. But athletics is an integral part of what we're doing.

And I think we do it in the right way. I can only view it as a positive.

Neehan: But we are known as having a very clean program and a program that emphasizes their education.

Duffy: There is no reason why, at least in my judgment, you can't have a successful athletic program and a top-notch academic program.

Paquette: It's a balance. And you don't have to sacrifice one for the other.

DeLong and Feudo explained further how they feel the University ensures that its varsity players succeed in academics. DeLong commented, "Our student-athletes who come here . . . we don't take kids who we think are going to flunk out. And the athletes do get a lot of support, academic support." Feudo supported this statement: "I think we are also committed to doing it the right way and to providing the best environment for our student-athletes."

Another theme that emerged in the findings around integrity was the perception that BC runs a very disciplined and regulated program. Much credit was given to the administration of Boston College and to its athletic director, Gene DeFilippo.

Barber: We're doing things the right way, we're living in the rules that were not only created for us in the NCAA and others, but created by ourselves too, to do it the right way and not bring in what are, in effect, paid players.

DeLong: It's pretty strictly regulated, which I think is a good thing, and I think that it's incumbent on the athletic office to run a really clean program.

And I think that our current athletic director does a very good job on that.

Duffy: I think the most important thing is that you have to run a disciplined program where you graduate the bulk of your athletes, 80 to 90 percent of them, and you keep up your academic standards for athletes. It's not strictly about winning. I think Boston College has struck a very good balance.

Discussions on the high standards of the program often cited the high graduation rate that Boston College maintains, which was perceived as an indicator of the ability to balance sports and academics for student-athletes. A number of participants, including Neenan, DeLong, Barber, Duffy, Carolyn McLaughlin, and Peter McLaughlin, stated that they were highly impressed with this rate, while others elaborated that they personally took much satisfaction in the fact that BC has ranked as one of the top six NCAA universities with a Division I football program consistently. As head of the Alumni Association, Feudo summed up his feelings about the graduation rate:

That's something that I personally—even as a huge sports fan—I brag about that even more than I brag about the wins and losses. I also think and I know from my travels that there are a lot of alumni who have a great deal of pride in the fact that Boston College has one of the highest graduation rates in the country.

Paquette stated he felt that BC had an obligation to make sure that its student-athletes complete their studies and leave with an education that can aid them in the future:

Not only are we winning, we're graduating student-athletes, and we're doing it the right way. There are no shortcuts. At some schools they win, but there are a lot of sacrifices going on. In some cases, I think they are exploiting kids. If the kid

comes to your institution and you don't supply them with support that they need to graduate with a meaningful degree, you are exploiting them.

Husson summarized how the weight that the University places on integrity for athletic programs benefits not only BC but also Division I varsity sports in general:

The fact that it puts us in the public eye because we have a program of integrity, because the graduation rate is so high, because Matt Ryan is such an outstanding young man who is doing what he's doing and graduated from Boston College underscores that Boston College is an institution that matters. And it is something that we should support because it is a model, frankly, for intercollegiate athletics.

These findings express a strong belief in the positive role that men's intercollegiate athletics can play in higher education if diligence is taken not only to meet NCAA standards but also to create stringent internal rules around athletes' performances both on and off the field—and especially in the classroom. It appears that the belief in the program's integrity is more than just pride in the high level of academic standards BC sets—it allows some to reject the negative perception that if an institution is strong academically, one must see sports as a detractor to that factor. In other words, the integrity of the program appears to remove the choice of whether to highlight academics versus athletics, and empowers some to feel positive about embracing both.

Importance to Students

In examining the importance of men's intercollegiate athletics to students, for the most part, participants saw sports as an important part of the college experience and student life, and the basis of a student's burgeoning school spirit. These findings were substantiated in a study by Pascarella, et al. that looked at the context of college impact

and offered the qualifier for the study that “interactions with other students constitute a major impact . . . on any one student (e.g., Astin, 1993; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 1998; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1999)” (2006, p. 252). However, the inquiry did not evoke major discussion beyond that. In part, it seems as though many just see student engagement with men’s intercollegiate athletics as a natural aspect of student life at a university with a major sports program. DeLong conveyed this sentiment: “I think at a school like Boston College, it’s very much a part of the college experience, particularly for the undergraduates.” She elaborated, “Parents’ Weekend comes around and we always make sure it’s on a football weekend and that there are enough extra tickets. The parents can buy tickets, and students tailgate with their roommates and their roommates’ parents, and it’s great.”

Senior administrator Caron added his perspective on men’s intercollegiate athletics for students:

They add a dimension to student life that’s very important, I think. It just adds a level of excitement, cohesion to the campus experience that other institutions don’t have. I’ve worked in institutions that don’t have a significant football program and a basketball program, and they do contribute a great deal. And it stands on its own feet for what it means to the kids, for what it means to the school, for what it means to the education of the kids who play.

Husson commented on the draw of sports for students: “I think that our students value the athletic program. I think many of them enjoy being part of an atmosphere of a school that has high-quality athletics in a variety of sports.”

Members of both focus groups shared this perception:

Vespa (NAD): Whether kids are sports fans or not, I think the experience is so compelling and exciting, it offers them a built-in camaraderie and gives them the beginnings of their school spirit, which then expand into other aspects of what they can get excited about. As a freshman, you have to remember, you're the new kid and having this Saturday social ritual that other new kids are trying to figure out allows them to break the ice more quickly than if there wasn't this kind of infrastructure.

Thomas (NAD): Sports like football and basketball help our students build relationships—it provides a social life and offers a cultural framework that they can easily assimilate into.

Clark (AD): Athletics creates that common bond. And I think it really helps create those initial relationships that tie students to each other early on and allow them to join together.

McSweeney (AD): I think it is a very positive influence in terms of creating camaraderie. Those seven Saturdays in the fall, when else are you going to get 7,000 of your 9,000 students all wearing the same thing in the same place, whether or not they are there to watch the game or not? I think it creates a sense of unity for students and gives them something to rally around.

Findings around this area of inquiry indicated that all participants shared the perception that athletics for students can serve as a point of connection to each other and offer a major intersection of connection across most of the diverse factions of the Boston

College student body. Further, the connection creates bonds among students and the institution.

Peter McLaughlin cited an example of how the student experience with intercollegiate sports plays out in terms of engagement that carries over after graduation:

The Notre Dame game, there was tremendous enthusiasm. (Students) stayed in the stands 15 minutes after the game. Those are experiences and a way of bonding that have to have lasting effects in terms of friendships that last. I recall, when I get together with my old cronies, we talk about the day that we played Syracuse in football.

In general, findings emerged that a men's intercollegiate athletic program plays a strong part in many students' nonacademic activities at BC. Participants validated the role of athletics for students and found it to be a significant aspect of engagement with the University. A number further asserted that this engagement in part served as the basis of the school spirit students carry in their four years at BC, and beyond as alumni:

Neenan: I think it's the principal driver of the school spirit.

Hoag: And I think BC has the best of all worlds, where it has great school spirit, great athletics, and it also teaches you to give back.

McKinney: Fun, spirit, the building of a camaraderie that could last a lifetime.

Paquette: I think it is a rallying point. It gives them a sense of community.

Roberston (NAD): I think football and basketball add a dimension of culture and camaraderie at a college that might not happen without them. I can't imagine BC without athletics—just like I can't imagine Notre Dame without them. It is a significant aspect of who we are and how students

build relationships that turn into long-term friendships after they graduate.

In the end, it is the beginning of their love for BC and being a part of it.

Eynon offered a descriptive narration on his experience and perceptions on how athletics creates student spirit:

Yes, I think it's a great tie. I think athletics is something that—for institutions that have high-profile successful athletic programs like BC—it, in a sense, creates school spirit. When you see thousands of kids in their Super Fan shirts at a home or away football game, whether you're an athlete or a supporter of athletics on campus, it instills pride in your school, and athletics does that everywhere. People want to be part of a winner. When you're winning on the athletic field, you feel a sense of pride about that success. I think big-time Division I college athletics, I think it adds a lot to the college experience.

Overall, participants appeared to embrace the positive outcomes of men's intercollegiate athletics for students, including the social connections they derive from them, the sense of pride, and in turn, the school spirit it inspires, along with the lasting ties it can create back to BC. Participants felt it was a natural aspect of what the University stands for and that it should be embraced for the point of connection it creates for many students.

Importance to Alumni

Reviewing the importance of Boston College athletics to alumni is a critical aspect of this study on the perception of a relationship between athletics and general alumni giving. Throughout the studies and writings cited in the literature review, including Shuman and Bowen (2001), Kerr (2001), and Frank (2004), whatever their

findings on the positive or negative impact of intercollegiate athletics on academia, they all agreed that it was a significant aspect of campus culture that permeated beyond the campus perimeter. The idea of this culture is reflected in the findings around the importance of athletics for alumni, from which two leading themes surfaced: how athletics instills pride in alumni and how it serves as a reconnection point for them to each other and the University.

A number of participants addressed the sense of pride alumni gain from athletics throughout the study. Eynon and DeLong offered deeper insights into where this pride is derived.

Eynon: One thing I would say about BC is I think our alumni are incredibly proud of the fact that our student-athletes succeed on the field and in the classroom. I think perceptions around athletics at Boston College might be different were our athletic program not successful in both arenas. They don't only care about football and basketball; they channel their love for BC through some of those portals.

DeLong: I think alumni—whether or not they are sports fans—like their team to win, people like to be proud of their institution, whether it's because we have a high graduation rate, we're highly ranked, or because our football team wins. It's a great opportunity to bring alumni back to campus. I think it's an opportunity for them to feel proud of Boston College.

Through the findings—while implied more than definitively stated—emerged the sense that alumni pride leads to deeper engagement with other graduates and the University, and creates a point of reference that alumni can feel good about. Generally

throughout the study, the importance of athletics for a vast majority of alumni was underscored, particularly on the topic of engagement and reconnection to friends and the institution. Peter McLaughlin supported this in stating, “As a generalization, athletics at Boston College is important as an integral part of what we do . . . a vital part of what we do for alumni. And I think that’s the perception, by and large, of alumni.” Several expanded on this perspective and how sports help to facilitate alumni connections.

Duffy: But there is nothing like sports to get alumni talking to each other about the school.

Eynon: The truth is it dominates a lot of the conversation from the standpoint of our work in advancement; it’s a way to enter the conversation through, so we use athletics as a means to get in the conversation. When we meet with donors, by and large they are aware of what bowl we might go to, or whether or not Matt Ryan was going to win the Heisman in 2007.

Feudo: I think athletics can be important in providing a forum for alumni to have discussion about the institution, so it’s a conversation starter. I think it’s a way of getting people engaged and certainly in big numbers that you can’t do otherwise. I think that athletics is a pride-building opportunity.

Thurmond: I think specifically at BC, it is part of our culture. There are important engagement opportunities for alumni to come together.

Alumni in both focus groups reaffirmed this perception that athletics serves as a vehicle for reconnection and engagement for alumni.

Thomas (NAD): I think it gives me a sense of spirit as an alum—and as an advancement professional. I think it offers our alumni a great way to get

together and reminisce. It's about engagement, bragging rights, reconnection, and a social circle with other alums.

Roberston (NAD): I definitely find athletics as a way to stay connected to my classmates. It provides a continuous bond with classmates and the school for years to come. And, now we see that this is not necessarily just on campus. Chapters have game watches and they can get 100 people at 9 a.m. on a Saturday morning somewhere to watch the game together. When there is a football game, days in advance, my classmates and I will be planning the details, getting out the gear, and calling each other to rally the troops. It reinforces to me what BC means to me, both in terms of what the games mean, but what BC means in the bigger picture.

Vespa (NAD): In the end, I think sports are an important part of who we are, both publicly and for students and alumni. They serve as a point of connection, reconnection, and engagement with the school and with others. They offer a way for alumni to relive fond memories.

Analysis of these findings in the section above indicates that participants believe sports is a shared experience that alumni relive throughout the course of their lives as BC graduates and one that is ingrained in the identity of Boston College. Men's intercollegiate athletics often serves as a natural point of engagement for alumni, as it reconnects them to both experiences and positive feelings of deep affection for their alma mater. It also serves as a point of entrance for those who are reaching out to alumni to engage them as volunteers and donors.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented participants' perceptions of Boston College athletics' contributions to the University's campus life; the prominence athletics brings to BC on a national level; and its importance to students and alumni. Most generally, participants indicated that sports was an important aspect of Boston College culture that transcends beyond the campus, and more broadly, can be seen as an experience that is embraced at many institutions of higher education.

More specifically, findings indicated that the consensus of participants was that the men's intercollegiate sports program brings visibility to the University it might not otherwise garner. This visibility is largely a result of BC sports teams' appearances on national and sports television outlets, which broadcast both regular season games and championships. Through this visibility, subjects found that the academic excellence of the institution is highlighted and underscored to alumni, current students, and even potential students, who might not have an opportunity to become aware of BC if it was not for the media exposure. Several participants tied this visibility to enrollment management and felt that it served as an avenue to increased applicants, especially in demographic areas where BC historically has not attracted candidates but needs to recruit within to maintain a diverse and high-quality student body.

A number of participants who either work at BC or have held significant volunteer roles at the University also cited the integrity of BC's athletic programs as reinforcement around the message that Boston College is committed to high standards—both on the field and in the classroom. They cited the significant support for student-athletes and high standards for conduct as indications of this integrity, which is reflected

in top graduation rates for student-athletes that receive significant media attention.

Participants felt this integrity also emphasized publicly that Boston College is committed to a strong balance of academics and athletics, and that it is not willing to sacrifice the former for the latter.

The importance of athletics to the student body was also noted across findings. It is perceived as a facet of student life that builds school spirit and pride, and one that is shared among the broader BC community, from students to parents to alumni, and even to faculty and staff. A number of participants cited the camaraderie it fosters within students, and recognized this as the basis of their connection with the institution and each other, first as students, and then as alumni. Many saw it as a focal point of campus life for many students that gave them a way to connect with others from the first day on campus, because it is an experience that can be shared regardless of a student's background or academic interests. Men's intercollegiate athletics at Boston College is seen as a significant point of engagement for many students—whether fans or not—that creates lasting ties to the institution.

Findings on the importance of BC athletics to alumni correlated closely with those for students, and centered on school pride, and as a place of connection and reconnection for graduates. Pride in athletics for alumni translated into a desire to be connected with the University, be it physically by game attendance or virtually through sports media. Fundraising professionals also cited BC athletics as a source of their introduction to many alumni, simply due to communality of the topic and the fact that it is a source of visibility that alumni enjoy. Alumni participants viewed athletics as a point of reconnection, again, at gatherings, or through simply conversing about having their team in the forefront.

Participants frequently referred to the camaraderie that athletics fostered as another example of its importance to alumni as a continuation of their relationship with their alma mater. Virtually all alumni participants stated that for them, athletics created a common bond and memories—not necessarily of game play but of the interaction around it—that tied them to each other and Boston College long after graduation. Many participants also concurred that the pride alumni take in men’s intercollegiate athletics is a source of engagement with other alumni, and, more broadly, the institution itself.

This chapter’s findings underscored participants’ perceptions that BC’s men’s intercollegiate athletics are an important part of the University’s culture, as well as a vehicle that brings Boston College national prominence as a top academic institution that also excels in sports. Further research appears to be warranted from a qualitative perspective at other institutions that support a similar academic and athletic infrastructure, which differentiates this study from most other studies on the topic that examine a relationship between general alumni giving and men’s intercollegiate athletics from a quantitative perspective.

Chapter Seven examines participants’ perceptions on the relationship between alumni engagement and general alumni giving at BC. The first section of the chapter reviews the ways alumni may become engaged with the University through both athletic and nonathletic activities and events, while the latter half examines the importance of this engagement for Boston College’s fundraising efforts.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT WITH MEN'S INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS AND GENERAL ALUMNI GIVING

Introduction

A guiding assumption for this study is the fact that while many Boston College alumni hold their education in high esteem, at the time of the study period, three quarters of Boston College graduates were not supporting the University financially in any way. In FY08, the total amount given by alumni hit \$101.5 million, but fundraisers and administrators continually grapple with what this number could reach if a greater number of graduates could be engaged to support their alma mater monetarily. In Chapter Six, study participants concurred that men's intercollegiate athletics is a source of pride in the BC community that carries a great weight of importance for students—and in their role as alumni following graduation. In Chapter Seven, findings are presented on what engages Boston College alumni with each other and the institution, following up on the importance of athletics but expanding upon the inquiry to identify other avenues of alumni engagement and how they rank against athletics.

In examining research in the literature review that defined donor characteristics, several studies on student development theories cited the concept of engagement as a framework “to document the outcomes produced by interactions between students and their institution's environments” (Kuh, 1995, p. 126). Earlier in his research, Kuh, along with Witt (1988), expanded on the concept of engagement in the culture of higher education and asserted that it “holds together organizations and serves four general purposes: 1) it conveys a sense of identity; 2) it facilitates commitment to an entity, such as the college or peer group . . . and 4) it is a sense making device that guides and shapes

behavior” (p. 10). In applying this assertion to the study, the researcher looked to examine in this chapter how athletics at Boston College creates something that alumni can identify with and commit to, which ultimately could elicit giving behaviors toward the institution.

In section one of this chapter, the researcher reviews what study participants cite as paths of engagement for Boston College alumni, including men’s intercollegiate athletics as well as a range of nonathletic activities and programming, and how they believe these varied activities may rank in connecting the more than 150,000 alumni back to BC. Section two then answers the central research question in two parts: 1) What is the perceived impact of men’s intercollegiate athletics on general alumni giving? and 2) Do respondents in fact perceive a relationship between men’s intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College?

The chapter concludes with a summary on the key findings that emerged around alumni engagement and general alumni giving, and also examines participants’ perceptions of the relationship between men’s intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College. The summary includes ways to apply these findings to future research that may not only aid the advancement team at BC but also help fundraisers at similar institutions in higher education strategize around these findings around alumni giving to maximize their development initiatives.

What Engages Alumni at Boston College

In analyzing study participants’ responses about what engages alumni at BC, the researcher offered two categories, men’s intercollegiate athletics, which is at the core of the research question, and nonathletic activities. Participants’ responses helped to flush

out groups under each category and offered insights into perceptions around the depth of engagement for each grouping. Analysis of the findings indicated that participants viewed engagement with athletics on two levels, a primary level that relates to personal interaction with sports at BC, and a secondary level that offers alumni 1) a social vehicle from which to interact with classmates and 2) a visibility factor for their alma mater from mass media that is perceived as enhanced prestige for the institution, which is discussed in the first part of the section. Participants' perspectives on nonathletic programming that engages alumni are then introduced through three groups: alumni events and outreach, alumni communications, and academic and cultural programming. The section concludes with respondents' beliefs and perceptions on rankings for both athletic and nonathletic programming that engage alumni.

Intercollegiate Football and Men's Basketball

In reviewing responses from participants around alumni engagement with Boston College intercollegiate athletics, emerging findings appeared to fit in two categories, a form of primary engagement that allowed for personal interactions around athletics and a secondary level of engagement that alumni perceived from the prominence of the athletics program among peers and within the national sports scene.

Primary Engagement: Personal Interaction

In Chapter Six, findings indicated that BC football and men's basketball serve as a major source of engagement for alumni, and as a source of reconnection for graduates and the University. A number of study participants spoke about the personal interaction that Boston College athletics fosters broadly for alumni as a point of interaction and conversation, including long-time donors Barber and Duffy.

Barber: When it was my 25th reunion, I was in charge of major gifts for the class toward the class gift. I contacted a lot of classmates, and almost across the board our conversations drifted into either football or basketball. It became pretty clear that that was a common connection with my classmates. I think it's true with a lot of people. It's the connection that keeps them tied to the University.

Duffy: But I have gone to Boston College football games mainly to stay close to my alma mater. All I can do is speak for myself and my colleagues, the guys I hang out with—we have an email group that is all they talk about. But there is nothing like sports to get alumni talking to each other about the school. I think it's a very major contributor toward a positive attitude toward Boston College. Athletics is one of those engagement tracks.

University Advancement staff members Feudo and Paquette echoed these comments and added their insights on how the relationship between alumni and BC athletics can be broadened to create a dialogue between alumni and the institution.

Feudo: I think athletics can be important in providing a forum for us in Advancement to have discussion about the institution, so it's a conversation starter. I think it's a way of getting people engaged and certainly in big numbers that you can't do otherwise.

Paquette: It gives them a connection back to BC and provides a unique opportunity for the University to engage and strengthen the relationships with people who normally aren't involved.

Members of both focus groups, those who give to athletics and those who give to nonathletic programming, also agreed that football and men's basketball at BC offer a personal level of engagement with the University that enhances their alumni status.

Thomas (NAD): It creates a positive alumni experience that engages them with BC and their friends.

Vespa (NAD): In the end, they are an important part of who we are, both publicly and for students and alumni. They serve as a point of connection, reconnection, and engagement with the school and with others.

Clark (AD): It creates that common bond. And I think that's what helps create those relationships between alumni and BC.

A number of participants also emphasized athletic engagement as a way to instill a sense of identity and pride around the institution within BC's graduates, including McKinney, a donor and trustee, and DeLong and Neenan, long-time fundraisers.

McKinney: It is part of the fabric of what makes BC so special. I can't envision the school without them, but they have a place, which is most likely one of pride, camaraderie, and engagement for alumni, whether they can or cannot make it to campus.

DeLong: I think it's a great opportunity to bring alumni back to reconnect. I think it's an opportunity for them to feel proud of Boston College.

Neenan: So it's a matter of identification with the University, and pride in it, a way to become connected and maintain it.

A number of respondents addressed the fact that football and men's basketball draw alumni back to campus, whether physically through game attendance or virtually

through TV and digital media, including career fundraisers Husson and Thurmond, Caron, a long-time administrator, and trustee and donor Hoag.

Husson: Athletics definitely is an important avenue for keeping alumni connected—they feel like they are an ongoing part of the community. Schools with robust athletic programs make you feel like you're a part of the community, because you come back to the game and you remember what it was like to be a student, and then you have your shared experiences of a lifetime enjoying the athletic contest.

Thurmond: Athletics are important engagement opportunities for people to come together. And it is part of our culture. It is a great way to come back, have fun, and feel a part of something.

Caron: Well, clearly they have an attraction for alumni. It's one of the reasons why alumni come back to the campus in many cases. It is absolutely an avenue of engagement. For many alumni, it's a binding element in bringing them in and giving them pride in the school.

Hoag: It's hard to keep people involved and I think sports does that. You are gone for a long time, but you see them on the TV. Everyone can get excited about a game. And you're like, "Oh gosh, I have to go and visit again." I'm not sure I'd go back for a lecture.

Staurowsky, Parkhouse, and Sachs' (1996) study on alumni motivations for giving reaffirmed the notion that athletics is a way for college alumni to join together. They identified six factors that encouraged alumni giving, with the first addressing the social nature of athletics, defined as: enjoyment of watching sports, ability to return to

their alma mater, athletic events as family get-togethers, and renewal of friendships. Their assertion appears to be woven throughout participants' responses on the perceived social benefits derived from personal interactions with Boston College athletics.

Focus group members echoed this sentiment, with McSweeney and Roberston summing up the discussion for the athletic donors and nonathletic donors groups, respectively, while Flaherty offered a sports fanatic Eagles fan perspective on the ups and downs of winning and losing.

McSweeney (AD): It provides a common topic and place; a great opportunity for alumni or parents or friends of the University to come back and be engaged and congregate.

Roberston (NAD): I definitely find athletics as a way to stay connected to my classmates. When there is a football game, days in advance, we will be planning the details, getting out the gear, and calling each other to rally the troops. And, when they are on TV, I will put on my sweatshirt and call my friends to talk about how they are playing. It reinforces to me what BC means to me, both in terms of what the games mean, but what BC means in the bigger picture.

Flaherty (AD): I think athletics at least for me and the circles that I run with kind of creates almost a shared love-hate relationship with the school based on whether they win or lose, and how we think as alums the coaches and players should be doing to assure the wins. But, either way, they keep you emotionally connected to the school. I definitely think athletics is a

significant factor of involvement with BC—and each other for a lot of alums.

A number of study participants, including administrator Feudo and focus group member Roberston, also mentioned that today alumni also can gather together around sports beyond the BC campus, as almost every football and men's basketball game can be found on satellite television whenever and wherever the teams play.

Feudo: I had a San Francisco Chapter leader here from the Bay Area and we were talking about some of the events that they sponsor. He mentioned a game watch and said even when they have a game watch for a noon start, which is 9 a.m. there, they will get 75 to 100 Boston College alums ready to watch a game. That is a pretty significant number for an alumni event anywhere in the country, let alone a place like Northern California.

Roberston (NAD): Sports offers a continuous bond with classmates and the school for years to come. And, now we see that this is not necessarily just on campus. Chapters have game watchers and they can get 100 people at 9 a.m. on a Saturday morning together somewhere to watch the game as a group.

Overall, study participants unanimously perceived Boston College football and men's basketball as an avenue of personal engagement for alumni with each other and their alma mater, whether within a group setting or, more generally, as a point of conversation, reconnection, and pride around athletics, and more broadly, the institution.

Secondary Engagement: Socializing and Media

Reviewing participant responses revealed that many felt that athletics created another level of engagement that, while not as powerful on a personal level as reconnection with the institution and classmates, offered alumni a secondary level of engagement through general social interactions around sports and visibility of their alma mater through the media.

Paquette offered his thoughts on the communal aspect of sports at BC, stating, “I think it’s a huge part of the social fabric here. Those memories keep on going and when alumni meet outside of BC, it is often the second topic of conversation after introductions.” Focus group member Thomas (NAD) offered a similar thought on the social benefit of sports for alumni engagement: “They give you bragging rights and create an organic social circle with other alums, whether at a chapter reception or on an alumni blog that might have nothing to do with athletics.” Barber downplayed the need to be a diehard fan to become engaged with athletics: “You don’t have to be a sports nut but it’s not a bad thing to have some social skills too and enjoy that stuff. It’s just kind of a cross section of who we are in this country—people sitting on a plane, in a restaurant, they talk sports. It brings people together.”

Several participants also cited the visibility of BC athletics in the media as a marker of national prominence that makes them proud of the institution and their relationship with it, including major donors Barber and Duffy, and focus group member Clark.

Barber: You can’t ask for better exposure than to be on ABC for three hours every Saturday. It covers a big part of the country. A lot of alumni see that

around the country and it brings them back to BC and their own experiences.

Duffy: You are able to see your teams on television, to read about them in the newspaper—it keeps the school on your mind all the time wherever you are and makes you proud that it is in the national media.

Clark: To draw a parallel or a contradiction, look at a program like Church in the 21st Century (a program created by BC to bring Catholics back to the Church following the sexual abuse crisis), which is so important that we do it, but it doesn't create collegiality between BC alumni down in, say, Tennessee. From the alumni perspective, sports are great to talk about and bring a constant sense of awareness because sports are in your face. On ESPN, in *USA Today*, and on the Internet. Today, it's in all those places, whereas the other great work we do here is only in our own publications. Or maybe in *The Boston Globe*, but not in the *LA* or *New York Times*.

Studies about alumni giving often suggest that reputation is a key factor that stimulates donations to university sports programs. In particular, Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990) and Leslie and Ramey (1988) cited prestige as a strong motivator for donations. If some alumni equate visibility in the national media with a type of prestige for the institution, it serves to reinforce why media exposure has been continually cited in this study as a benefit of Boston College's football and men's basketball as another factor that helps to strengthen engagement with alumni.

Feudo summed up the discussion in this section when he tied the visibility factor back to personal engagement in stating, "It goes back to a combination of the shared

pride that you feel with your classmates around winning teams, but also the visibility that you get in the media. It brings together two types of engagement that can only deepen the relationship sports fosters between alumni and the institution.”

Nonathletic Events and Programming

Although the participants indicated that athletic events and programs offer sources of engagement with the University, they also remarked that another vital way to engage with the University is through alumni events that are not related to athletic events. When asked to identify nonathletic programming that engages alumni at Boston College, participants’ responses were centered on three groups: alumni events and outreach, alumni communications, and academic and cultural programming. This section will focus on these three types of programming and how they may engage alumni and in turn impact alumni giving.

Alumni Association Events and Outreach

Outreach programs were perceived as prevalent in fostering alumni engagement that can encourage alumni giving, especially programming offered by the Council for Women at Boston College and the Wall Street Council. Eynon offered the most comprehensive response regarding perspectives on University-sponsored events that engage alumni. Furthermore, Eynon’s view was echoed across participants’ perceptions, including other members of the University Advancement staff:

As far as other alumni events, and it’s an important challenge for us to think about, class reunions—as far as I have seen in my tenure here—have taken hold in good ways, in successful ways. Increasingly, affinity programs have become an important portal for people to connect into BC, whether it’s the Council for

Women at Boston College, which has become a very strong affinity group for us, or the Wall Street Council, or the Tech Council, East Coast and West Coast.

Reunions, to a degree, are an affinity group. I think beyond athletics, we must offer a broad and deep menu of events of every different kind to engage alumni, in every different scope of size. Some events will be big, some will be small. Some will be athletics, some will be cultural activities, and some will be University programs around academic themes.

Husson: Reunions. Affinity group programming with the Wall Street Council, or the Tech Council, or the Council for Women. In terms of organized activities, chapter events—local chapters that will bring alumni to get together to hear a talk by a BC professor or faculty member.

Feudo: The biggest event that we have outside of an athletic event that would engage that many people is reunion weekend. And last year we got 5,000 people back, which was the single highest attendance figure that we've ever had.

Major donors Duffy and McKinney echoed these perceptions.

Duffy: Reunions are nice, but they only occur every five years, and they only last two days.

McKinney: Well, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention affinity groups, like the Council for Women. I think groups like that, the Tech Council, and others strongly engage alumni. But, obviously in smaller numbers.

Alumni Communications

Several participants identified University communications targeting alumni as another vehicle for engagement with them, including the alumni magazine, several alumni electronic newsletters, and occasional emails from University officials. DeLong noted how the Boston College alumni magazine keeps graduates bonded with the institution:

I think *Boston College Magazine* is probably for many people the main connection back. It's a good magazine, probably most of them go to the class notes first and read about their classmates, but I think many of them do read the rest of the magazine.

Thurmond also addressed the value of alumni communications, but cited those that are more informal and based on areas of interest as a student:

Sometimes, it's more than just attending an event. For example, one of my colleagues sent a blast email to a group of political science majors and 400 of them wrote back and said they wanted to be part of this shared-interest group. So now they have a quarterly newsletter, and these 400 people get that quarterly newsletter, which keeps them connected to what they identified with academically at BC.

In general, most respondents cited alumni communications as a core element in delineating information about the University on a regular basis.

Academic and Cultural Programming

As a counterpoint to athletic programming and alumni-focused programming, most other engagement activities cited by respondents fell under the category of academic and

cultural programming, with the McMullen Museum, Burns Library, and the Church in the 21st Century Center-sponsored events most prominent.

McKinney: The museum and the Burns probably bring a fair number of local alums to campus.

Caron: There are some who love to come to the museum exhibitions and the theater program.

Neenan: If you think of other events, we had a blockbuster show at McMullen that drew a steady number of local alumni. And speeches. We have the Church in the 21st Century, and a lot of public speeches. So there are these other events that appeal to alumni and to others who are friends of the University.

Duffy: I must say I'm impressed by the Church in the 21st Century (C21) initiative.

C. McLaughlin: There are not that many other things that bring critical masses back to BC. C21 can, depending on the panels.

Delaney: I am a sports fan, but there are other things that impact my feelings about BC. I am very committed to the Burns Library. But I am most passionate about the Veterans War Memorial, for which I co-chair the committee that has raised nearly \$500,000 to erect a tribute to our fallen brothers and sisters.

Focus group member Delaney identified a very small but focused niche of alumni engagement, the Veterans Memorial. This may be reflective of very targeted University initiatives around student experiences, such as in this case, military experience, that small

pockets of alumni may see as a significant point of engagement, which could warrant future inquiry.

Ranking of Events that Engage Alumni

Finally, participants were asked to rank all athletic and nonathletic activities. By and large, participants cited athletics as the activity that engages alumni at the greatest numbers, followed by reunions.

DeLong: I think in terms of numbers, I think football probably does. You've got 44,500 seats in that stadium. It's always full for home football games, so there are seven of those and you just multiply that. Obviously for some of them, it's the same people. But I think in terms of sheer numbers, it's probably athletics. Probably after that, it's reunions. We get several thousand people at reunions. And then it's probably the chapters or the clubs across the country. That would be my guess.

Feudo: You look at other events and even our most successful events get between 400 and 1,000 people. So imagine having an event where—let's go back to reunions, where we have 5,000 people and they are not all in one place at one time because they are all spread around campus. So even the fact that they are all there for the weekend because of reunion, and that is still only one ninth of the size of a big football game because we have almost 45,000 seats in the stadium. It is interesting how there have been people who have come up to me after big victories and congratulated me when I haven't thrown a single pass. When you look outside of athletics, the

opportunities are many, but the opportunities for engagement in those types of numbers are few.

McKinney: Well, the museum and the Burns probably bring a fair number of local alums to campus. And, I know the work the Alumni Association is doing with regional chapters has attracted some pretty good crowds. But if I had to rank, I think athletics is the obvious point of reconnection for the largest mass of alums.

Neenan: Sports are the thing. When you look at what activities engage alumni, sports win, hands down.

Focus group participants agreed with the general consensus that while alumni and University-sponsored social, cultural, and academic events connect alumni with Boston College, athletics has the broadest impact on engagement for alumni and their fellow classmates, as articulated by Vespa and Roberston.

Vespa (NAD): I think BC has many good things to brag about, but I do feel sports affect my attitude, as they're more universally common to a large number of the community and something that many know something about, versus the museum, or AHANA—all of which offer great programs, but are less mainstream and not as easy to rally a crowd around. These types of activities probably weigh in more in terms of how I feel BC is important in the community. But athletics has been the leading event during my long tenure here.

Roberston (NAD): It's not so much about events, but what happens on campus.

Service trips, the Jesuit, Catholic traditions, AHANA—I am very proud of

these aspects of BC. But, I can't say there are any events that draw me back more than athletics.

Analysis of the findings in this section indicate that study participants believe Boston College athletics offers alumni both a personal level of engagement as a source of connection to the University as well as a secondary source of engagement through social interactions and media visibility. While study participants refer to a number of University-sponsored activities as paths of engagement for alumni—most notably reunions—the overwhelming majority of participants cited men's intercollegiate athletics as the most significant avenue of reconnection for the broadest and greatest number of alumni.

Influence of Men's Intercollegiate Athletics on General Alumni Giving

In this section, two areas of inquiry central to the research question are presented: 1) participants' perceptions on the impact of men's intercollegiate athletics on general alumni giving at Boston College and 2) participants' beliefs in a relationship between BC football and men's basketball and general alumni giving. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were asked to offer their personal perspectives on each area of inquiry. What follows is a detailed and articulate commentary key to these areas of inquiry that directly informs the central research question and presents the final findings for this study.

Impact of Athletics on General Alumni Giving

Each participant was asked to respond to the following question: *What are your perceptions on the impact of Boston College athletics on general alumni giving from*

1996–2005? The following are the prevailing responses from the majority of participants that answered the question most directly.

Barber: Sports give people a reason to follow what's going on at their alma mater and then they can make their own decisions when they start thinking about how the college experience affected their lives, and whether they want to support the University with good money and gifts. But athletics gets you to that place, it will get you to the University, and it will keep you connected as a grad. Once you get to think that way, then you are much more inclined to support whatever it is financially.

Eynon: Athletics is a place people engage, it's a place people find a sense of pride. It's not the only place, but it's a ready-made platform for us to use. If we didn't have athletics as that platform, I think we'd have to find other options, and I think that's hard. I can tell you having worked at other institutions that do not have quite as high profile an athletic program as BC, having that platform is a great advantage.

Feudo: Engagement can take many forms because it's not just about "I love BC football so I'm going to give." It's "I love BC football so I'm going to talk to people about it," and all of a sudden from my discussions with my friends, I realize how much pride I feel in the University and then I may be led to give. People want to give to things that will make them feel like they are part of a team.

Duffy: I believe that they are more willing to shed the wealth because of their love for and interactions with athletics.

These participants' responses reflect Baade and Sundberg's (1996a) study on alumni donor characteristics that concluded alumni were most likely to give to their alma maters if they participated in a broad student experience, including attendance at sporting events they felt significantly enhanced their lives. Since the alumni experience with athletics begins on campus as students and carries over into their relationships with the institution as graduates, Baade and Sundberg's research adds validity to these participants' comments on the connection between engagement with athletics and giving.

Several participants responded to the question on the impact of athletics on giving around how it may affect the way alumni give or where their gift might be directed.

Paquette: What happens with athletics sometimes, is all of a sudden people get engaged with athletics, maybe they make a significant gift to athletics, and that ultimately is going to bring them closer to the institution, and potentially engage them to learn more about the institution. Then, ultimately they make a major gift somewhere else, because they got close—they might give \$5 million to the school of management. Athletics was what hooked them up and brought them in, and got them to find out about all these other great things that were going on, which got them to give to the institution in an academic capacity.

Neenan: There are those who are followers of athletics and they may be season ticket holders and be major donors, but they will endow a chair in an academic department or give money to the Jesuit Institute.

McKinney: I do believe that some alumni are encouraged to give because of Boston College athletics, but I don't think it is in the area of major gifts.

Which isn't necessarily a bad thing if we can get alumni to understand that participation is critical and then help them to see why they need to stretch their gift to ensure the health of their alma mater.

DeLong: Well, certainly athletics is important to our alumni and may be a factor for some when they are considering a gift, but I think statistically, it would be hard to say how that giving is directly influenced by athletics, for how many, and to what areas of the University. But yes, it does come into play in our giving.

Focus group respondents also perceived an influence from athletics on alumni giving and offered thoughts on how it can affect their behaviors toward the University. This group suggested that favorable experiences with athletics shaped how alumni felt about the University, which also impacted their choice to give gifts that would support Boston College's major initiatives.

Vespa (NAD): If alumni have good experiences with athletics that shape their feelings about us, it can play a role in the giving decision to the University's priorities.

Thomas (NAD): For some, I am sure sports is the only reason. But for others, it might have more to do with the good feelings they get from them and other aspects of BC, which get them to give. But the athletics definitely plays a role for many donors.

McSweeney (AD): I think for some people, athletics is a reason why a lot of people give, because they derive so much enjoyment from it and all that goes along with it as an alum. It's a significant factor, personally for me.

These responses suggest that alumni who take pleasure in Boston College men's intercollegiate athletics and derive satisfaction from their interactions may be more likely to give to the University. Coughlin and Cletus's (1986) research on alumni giving supported this notion. Their research proposed that alumni were motivated by "some indirect utility" through gifts to their alma maters and further stated that "personal attachment" (p. 183) to an institution influenced alumni giving.

Furthermore, these collective responses offer insights into participants' beliefs around athletics and giving at Boston College. Overwhelmingly, study participants saw men's intercollegiate athletics as a factor that impacts many graduates' decision to give, based on the supporting findings around engagement with athletics that emerged throughout the study.

Relationship between Athletics and General Alumni Giving

The final question posed to participants explored their beliefs in a relationship between Boston College men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving. The responses are as follows, framed by participants' relationship with BC to offer context on their perspectives, beginning with major donors and/or trustees McKinney, Barber, Hoag, and Duffy.

McKinney: Yes, there could indeed be a subset of alumni who are motivated and engaged by these sports. How much, I couldn't say. But you cannot deny that tomorrow there will be thousands of alumni here, enjoying each other's company and cheering on their alma mater. So, I guess, I cannot discount some type of relationship.

Barber: I think there is a huge connection. It's this whole idea that it is something that the alum can say they are doing from a personal standpoint, like "We're playing Maryland this weekend." It's this connection and this tie of mental ownership, which is really real ownership in my mind, and once you get to think that way, then they are much more inclined to support whatever it is financially. The things that I have done the most for are things that I've had a personal connection with.

Hoag: Absolutely—there is a relationship between BC's alumni giving and our alumni's love of sports.

Duffy: I don't see what else you can do to get the same impact. Yes, I believe there is a relationship between athletics and all alumni giving—it gives them great enjoyment and pride and people want to pay back for that.

Their perspectives were supported in a 1975 study by Hunter on motivations for giving, cited by Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990), which concluded that alumni were more likely to donate when they believed in the "worthiness of cause" and had a "personal interest or association" with the institution (p. 54). University officials and Advancement professionals weighed in similarly.

Neenan: I think there's definitely a positive relationship between our athletic program and why some alumni give. I'm not sure how you quantify it. But I bet if Father Leahy were to announce that we're dropping our football and men's basketball programs here, we would find out there would be a drop in giving.

P. McLaughlin: I think athletics helps fuel enthusiasm on the part of our donors. I think it's that simple. There is a universe out there that will support BC to a greater degree because of our athletic programs and the success of our athletic programs. And that means the whole idea of the integrity of our student-athletes, not necessarily winning.

Eynon: There is definitely an impact from athletics on alumni giving because of the importance of athletics at BC for a long time.

Husson: Yes, I do believe there is a relationship. It is a plus to have the athletic program we have and I think it contributes to alumni giving in a positive way. I think that anything that happens that causes people to feel good about their relationship with BC and be proud of their relationship with BC helps us raise funds.

Paquette: I think there is definitely a relationship. I just think athletics enhances the exposure and the brand. I think it makes people more aware of us and their connection to the institution's success, both on and off the field.

These comments by frontline fundraisers were supported by Staurowsky, Parkhouse, and Sachs (1996) in a study on giving motivations. They cited "Success1," which they defined as loyalty to a school and support of athletic programs that enhance the school's prestige, as one of six factors that encouraged alumni to donate to their alma maters. Study participants believe that Boston College athletics impacts general alumni giving because of what alumni gain from their experiences around football and men's basketball, which is an important aspect of the graduate experience.

Several other University officials confirmed the belief in a relationship, with the caveat that they could not define it or set parameters around it.

C. McLaughlin: While I feel there is a relationship between athletics and alumni giving, I'm not sure that they are so closely linked as that would suggest. But, that could be my own personal bias.

Caron: I think there is some relationship, but I don't have a clear, sharp understanding.

Finally, alumni from both focus groups concurred on their belief of a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College—although donors to nonathletic giving weighed in more heavily, even in the case of Delaney, who was the study participant least personally supportive of the supposition of a relationship.

Delaney (NAD): There probably is some relationship, but for me, there isn't. But I know I see many, many friends and classmates at sporting events, even following the team on the road, so I can't deny that their love for sports doesn't have something to do with their love for the school and in turn, their decision to give back monetarily.

Thomas (NAD): I'm not sure about a direct relationship, but I think the engagement athletics offers for alumni impacts their whole attitude about BC and weighs into the decision to give.

Roberston (NAD): For me, athletics and all that comes with it is one of several factors that make me love my school and want to give back. And I don't think that I am alone.

In conclusion, findings indicated that all participants believed there was some form of a relationship between Boston College athletics and general alumni giving, though some offered the qualification that they could not quantify it easily nor offer specifics around direct correlations between engagement with athletics and the decision to give. Many cited examples of the emotional attachment that sports create for alumni as their reasoning for their beliefs, which was supported across the literature as a motivator for alumni giving in studies conducted by Beeler (1982), Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990), and Hueston (1992). Study participants consistently perceived a strong level of interest and involvement with athletics at Boston College that helps cement the relationship between an alumnus and the institution, which nurtures and encourages the propensity to give back to the institution financially.

Chapter Summary

The analysis in this chapter focused on participants' perceptions around the role athletics plays in alumni engagement at Boston College, if that engagement has an impact on giving, and the belief that a relationship exists between BC athletics and alumni giving. The findings indicated that all study participants concurred that some form of a relationship does exist between football and men's basketball and general alumni giving, although with varying levels of specificity on the degree of connection.

More precisely, findings suggest that the majority of participants felt that the men's intercollegiate sports program at BC is a strong point of primary engagement for alumni and serves as a connection to the University and fellow alumni, as well as a source of pride. A number of participants also pointed out that athletics was a major draw for bringing alumni back to campus. They also identified a secondary level of

engagement through two avenues: 1) the social interactions sports create among alumni on and off campus and 2) the high level of visibility they garner for the institution through the media. As Alumni Association Vice President Feudo summed up, the primary level of personal engagement coupled with the visibility the media earns for Boston College “can only deepen the relationship that sports foster between alumni and the institution.”

In evaluating alumni engagement around nonathletic programming sponsored by the institution, the emerging findings fell into three groups: alumni events and outreach, alumni communications, and academic and cultural programming. Participants widely recognized reunion as a major form of organized engagement for alumni, with the drawback that it had finite impact because of its five-year cycle and short weekend duration. A number of University employees and major donors identified affinity clubs as another popular activity for alumni, along with regional chapter events that have grown in the past decade across the country. A handful of respondents identified University alumni publications as another source of engagement, indicating that readership for these is based on affiliations such as class year or academic interests. Under academic and cultural programming, a number of participants focused in on three specific vehicles that attract alumni interest: the McMullen Museum, the Burns Library, and Church in the 21st Century-sponsored programming.

In asking participants to rank events that engage alumni, even those participants who were not sports fans or felt that nonacademic activities were personally more of a draw for themselves indicated that they could not identify anything other than BC football and men’s basketball that engages alumni in so many numbers and in such depth.

Only reunions were cited as another major alumni engagement opportunity by all study participants, but still significantly less so than men's intercollegiate athletics.

The second half of the chapter presented participants' responses for two major areas of inquiry central to the research question: 1) findings on the perceived impact of athletics on general alumni giving and 2) the perception of a relationship between BC football and men's basketball and general alumni giving. Participants supported the idea that athletics has an impact on general alumni giving at Boston College and saw engagement with athletics as a possible precursor to when alumni begin to think about making a gift. Many underscored the idea that athletics offered alumni the opportunity to feel ownership and be a part of the team, which prompted them to support their association. Fundraisers identified athletics as a natural place to begin the conversation with alumni about giving, because of their engagement with athletics.

A number of respondents addressed the question about a perceived relationship between athletics and giving by offering insights as to what they thought the quantifiable impact might be, such as where alumni may direct their financial support within the institution and size of gifts, from small donations that aid in alumni participation rates to major gifts that could fund capital expenditures. Finally, in responding to the impact of athletics on alumni giving, members from the two alumni focus groups asserted that athletics is a positive experience for alumni that may shape behavior and, in turn, serve as the catalyst for encouraging alumni to give.

When posed with the central research question examining their perception of a relationship between Boston College football and men's basketball and alumni giving, study participants unanimously indicated they believed there was some level of a

relationship. A number of respondents cited engagement and personal attachment with athletics as the call to action for alumni to support their alma mater. Pride was also frequently cited as a factor that encouraged alumni to give back and as an extension of a way they could share in the success of the institution. Feelings of goodwill toward Boston College that emerged from interactions with football and men's basketball were also mentioned as elements of the relationship between athletics and alumni giving. Several participants qualified their responses by stating that while they did believe there was a relationship between intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving, they could not quantify it nor draw distinct conclusions as to the level of impact. It is of note that within the alumni focus groups, donors to nonathletic programming responded more deeply and affirmatively in the belief of a relationship between athletics and alumni giving at the University, which was of interest in light of the fact that they chose not to fund athletic programming.

This chapter's findings supported the central research question in demonstrating that participants not only believe that athletics is an avenue of engagement for alumni but also one that encourages alumni giving. What little literature was found on alumni giving that both supported and refuted a relationship was solely based in quantitative methodology. The qualitative nature of the study and the outcomes that reflect a belief by participants in the importance of athletics on alumni giving—that they further categorized as a relationship—lead the researcher to believe more qualitative investigation on the topic is warranted, particularly with those who are professional fundraisers. The findings in this chapter and subsequent future inquiry may aid Boston College and others in higher educational fundraising by offering opinions and perceptions that will assist them as they

approach alumni with personal attachment to athletics that may serve as an avenue to an institutional donation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings for this study on the perception of a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College were presented in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. The following sections are presented in this chapter: summary of the study, discussion of findings, conclusions and implications, recommendations for future research, and closing comments.

Summary of the Study

Despite the fact that there were a number of possible research approaches that addressed a range of questions about the importance of athletics for annual giving, the researcher chose to limit this study's scope and intention. Its purpose was to document the perceptions of 21 Boston College administrators and alumni around the central research question on the existence of a relationship between athletics and general alumni giving, which was the focus of this study. This study also examined how athletics at Boston College engages alumni in ways that may eventually lead them to financially support the institution. The findings suggest study participants perceive football and men's basketball as a significant source of engagement for the University's alumni that outranks other alumni activities in terms of reconnecting graduates with the institution. In the final findings chapter, participants agreed that there was a relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at BC, although at varying levels of impact, which will be addressed in this chapter.

This study began with three inter-related assumptions. First, and key to the research inquiry's contribution to the field of fundraising, was the belief that voluntary

financial support is essential to the livelihood of America's colleges and universities and, more specifically, Boston College. Document review of Boston College annual reports and publications indicate fundraising supports the University's financial health; it aids operating expenses and at the same time, alleviates the need for substantial drawdown on the endowment. Fundraising also allows BC to maintain a need-blind admissions policy and a 100-percent need-met financial aid policy that provides more than 70 percent of the undergraduate student body with some form of grants or scholarships. This assumption was further sustained throughout findings in Chapter Five that examined the importance of general alumni giving at the institution.

The second guiding assumption was the role men's intercollegiate athletics plays for Boston College alumni. Attendance numbers quantified the rationale for this assumption—in 2005, the last year of this study's timeframe, 236,572 fans attended 6 BC home football games, at a total of 39,429 attendees per game (NCAA, 2005), with alumni accounting for 40 percent of all season ticket sales for both sports (J. Di Loreto, personal communication, August 15, 2008). Findings in Chapter Six correlated with this assumption, as attendance at football and men's basketball was cited as a major source of reconnection for graduates to each other and to the University. Participants also believed that national media now brings sports into the homes of alumni around the country and even the globe, which allows graduates who cannot attend the opportunity to enjoy Boston College men's intercollegiate athletics wherever they live.

The final guiding assumption focused on the fact that at Boston College, while some alumni give financially to their alma mater, these donations can be an even greater source of support if fundraisers can identify ways to motivate the more than three

quarters of alumni who do not give at all. Fundraising records presented a financial case for this supposition. In FY08, more than 30,000 alumni made cash gifts to the University, accounting for half of all donations to BC that year, which totaled \$101.5 million. Yet, during the same period, less than a quarter of all BC alumni gave annually to their alma mater. Study participants, particularly those who work at the University as fundraisers and administrators, underscored this fact across the findings in Chapters Five and Seven, which examined the need for general alumni giving and the impact athletics may have on it at Boston College, respectively.

These guiding assumptions created a framework for the study. They also served as the foundation for the central research question and the supporting questions posed to study participants that informed the findings of the study.

Importance of the Study

The statistics on alumni giving in higher education presented in the literature review substantiate that higher education is not only benefiting from—but in many cases, in part operating on the generosity of its alumni, who account for nearly one third of donors annually to America’s colleges and universities. At the same time, the prevalence of named facilities and programs at these institutions emphasizes how alumni giving also serves to fund capital expenditures as well as major initiatives for academic programming, faculty, research, and other aspects of daily campus life.

The methodology of this study adds another perspective to the body of research on men’s intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving. Unlike most of the studies identified in the literature review, this study approached the research from a qualitative basis. Further, while focused on the context of Boston College, the findings indicate that

all participants felt that football and men's basketball has an impact on alumni engagement to some degree, and in turn, alumni giving. Participants across the board agreed—at varying levels of specificity—that a relationship exists between athletics and alumni giving. These findings may help fundraisers determine how nondonors actively engaged in men's intercollegiate athletics may be more successfully approached for gifts based on their connection to athletics.

Research Questions

This qualitative inquiry was guided by the central research question: What are the beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions of senior University administrators, fundraisers, and alumni donors on the perceived effect of intercollegiate football and men's basketball on general alumni giving at Boston College from 1996-2005? To broaden the scope of responses to the central research question, a subset of questions were created:

1. What are the key factors that participants identify as influencing general alumni giving?
2. How does a donor participant's perception of the influence of athletics on general alumni giving at Boston College compare to those of fundraisers' and administrators' at the University?
3. What types of athletic and/or alumni events do participants cite as ones that engage BC alumni?
4. What role do participants perceive fundraising policies and practices have on general alumni giving?

The research questions focused on eliciting personal responses from participants that would draw out findings that either supported or refuted the perception of a relationship between BC athletics and general alumni giving. The questions also led to findings about the importance of alumni giving at Boston College, the role of intercollegiate athletics in the life of the University's alumni, what engages alumni with the institution, and how that engagement can evolve into giving behaviors.

Discussion of Findings

What emerged from the study were insights about the perceptions of administrators, fundraisers, trustees, and alumni donors that shaped their overall impression of the significance of football and men's basketball and the impact on alumni giving at Boston College. The findings from this study suggest that engagement with athletic activities and events may serve as the conduit to general alumni giving that supports a host of programs and initiatives that graduates believe aid the institution in its position as a national research university. This section presents a discussion of findings related to five themes that became apparent from data analysis.

Importance of General Alumni Giving

Participants believed that the University has generally benefitted from the generosity of alumni, who have contributed to the financial health of the institution through donations to student aid, operating funds, capital expenditures, and contributions to the endowment. They also asserted that alumni giving reflects pride in the institution and enhances the profile of the institution and its national rankings. However, the number of alumni who give, which hovered below 25 percent during the study period, is seen as disappointingly low compared to peer institutions, which puzzled many participants

because of the loyalty and love they perceived most alumni express for their alma mater. The low participation rate is viewed as an area of great potential, based on the dollar amount raised from less than a quarter of all graduates, which in 2010 was more than \$100 million.

This participation rate for BC alumni may not seem disheartening in light of 1) a 2009 Council for Aid report that indicated the national average for participation rates for private research/doctoral institutions was 15.3 percent (2010), and 2) that Boston College is relatively young in its fundraising efforts, having evolved from a commuter school for less affluent Bostonians through the middle of the twentieth century, and launching its first capital campaign for \$125 million only in 1988. However, the University's academic trajectory over the past thirty years has propelled BC into the ranks of a pool of schools that have had long-standing traditions of philanthropy, which has encouraged Boston College fundraisers to increase expectations on how many alumni should be giving. Therefore, fundraisers seek to achieve participation rates (*U.S. News and World Report*, 2010) on par with schools that BC's notes as their top cross-applications competitors, as illustrated in Table 8.1 (Boston College Office Of Public Affairs, 2010).

Table 8.1

Boston College Top Cross-Application Competitors

Competitor Rank	University	Alumni Participation Rate
1	Georgetown University	27%
2	Harvard University	37%
3	University of Pennsylvania	37%
4	Yale University	38%
5	Cornell University	31%
6	Boston University	8%
7	University of Notre Dame	44%
8	Villanova University	18%
9	Brown University	37%

It is clear in speaking to members of Boston College's Advancement team who participated in this study that they not only believe that alumni giving can be increased to attain the same participation rates as their peers, but also contend that the level of academic excellence realized by the University in the last decade should compel alumni to give in support of this achievement. With participants who were fundraisers at BC indicating that major giving comes over time, starting with small but steady annual gifts, they strongly asserted that an increase in the participation rate may not only enlarge the size of the donor pool but also eventually impact the number of large gifts, which are key for funding capital and large-scale academic initiatives.

Why Alumni Give

An analysis of the findings underscored that emotional attachment to an institution or a cause is most indicative in determining which prospective donors will make a gift. More specifically, participants' views concerning alumni motivations focused on four areas: support for the work of the institution, engagement with the institution, giving back to the institution, and benefits to donors. Participants across the interviews underscored their belief that alumni support Boston College because they believe in the work it does in educating students. More broadly, graduates believe in the contributions the institution makes to scholarship, as well as to the social and cultural aspects of our society. The Jesuit, Catholic tradition and how it impacts the work of the University—both on campus and in the global community—was also seen as a strong inspiration for giving. However, a major motivator for donations noted most consistently was the emotional attachment that emerged from personal interactions with the institution as students and as graduates.

Participants also felt that there was a subset of alumni who give back in gratitude for an excellent education, particularly if they were the beneficiaries of financial aid. Benefits for donors were also seen as a potential motivator, consisting of two general categories: altruistic benefits, such as funding an activity that an alumnus enjoyed as an undergraduate that can be supported so that future generations of students have the same opportunity to engage in that experience; and tangible benefits, such as those associated with donor status, including special recognition and perks. Yet, participants' comments focused on altruistic benefits as the vast source of motivation for alumni giving at BC, which reinforced the finding on support for the work of the University as a significant factor in the decision to give.

In exploring the impact of gender on alumni giving, findings showed that women who support Boston College do so in ways that allow them to support a cause for which they can see a tangible impact. However, men are motivated to give emotionally and in the spirit of competition that gives them a sense of staying abreast of their classmates in meeting the challenge to support their alma mater.

Importance of Men's Intercollegiate Athletics

Participants view Boston College athletics as a major contributor to campus life and national visibility for both students and alumni, and as a point of connection with each other and the institution. Generally, participants indicated that sports were an important aspect of the Boston College culture that brings students together and transcends campus into the life of alumni.

More specifically, participants agreed that the men's intercollegiate sports program at BC brings visibility to the University it might not otherwise garner. Through

this visibility, respondents felt that the academic excellence of the institution is highlighted and underscored to alumni, current students, and even potential students who might not have an opportunity to learn about BC if it were not for this media exposure. Several participants tied this visibility to enrollment management and felt that it served as an avenue to increased applications, especially in demographic areas where BC historically has not attracted candidates but needs to recruit within to maintain a diverse and high-quality student body.

Participants who either work at BC or volunteered at the University also cited the integrity of the athletic program as a representation of the institution's commitment to high standards in athletics, but, more importantly, to academic excellence. They believed that the high graduation rates for student-athletes emphasize to the public that Boston College is determined to maintain an athletic program rooted in a scholarly institution, and that the University is not willing to sacrifice achievement in the classroom for athletic performance on the field.

Findings also underscored the importance of athletics to the student body as a facet of campus life that is the basis of student school spirit and pride. The experience of football and men's basketball may also be shared with the broader Boston College community, from students to parents to alumni, and even among faculty and staff. The athletic program promotes camaraderie among students and is recognized by many as a foundation for their connection with the institution and each other, first as students, and then as alumni. Football and men's basketball are seen as a significant point of engagement for many BC students, whether sports fans or not, that foster lasting ties to the University.

The importance of men's intercollegiate athletics to alumni paralleled that of students, as it also seen as a point of pride and an avenue of connection to classmates and the institution. The enjoyment alumni derive from athletics encourages them to reengage with their alma mater, whether attending a game or following one through sports broadcast and digital media. Athletics at Boston College produces common bonds and recollections—not necessarily of what happens on the field but the interaction around it shared with fellow alumni, which ties graduates to each other and BC long after their college years. Participants also felt that the pride alumni take in men's intercollegiate athletics is a source of engagement with fellow alumni and the institution itself.

What Engages Alumni at Boston College

Study findings discussed in this section are grounded in how participants operationalized their perceptions and comments around engagement, which the researcher subsequently defined as: the level of involvement, belonging, attachment, and/or commitment an alumnus or student derives from participation in University events that encourages further interactions, which draws him or her closer into feeling a part of the institution that may ultimately encourage acts on behalf of the institution.

Study findings indicated that football and men's basketball serve as a primary point of engagement with the University for many alumni and are regarded as a major draw for bringing them back to campus. These sports also reconnect alumni on a secondary level of engagement through: 1) social interactions for alumni on and off campus, and 2) a high level of visibility that attracts significant media attention. Other avenues of alumni engagement cited by participants centered on nonathletic programming sponsored by the institution and were broken into three groups: alumni

events and outreach, alumni communications, and academic and cultural programming. Reunion was viewed as the greatest source of engagement out of the three groups, with the caveat that it had limited impact because of its five-year cycle and short weekend duration. Affinity clubs were also seen as a growing vehicle for encouraging alumni to get involved with BC, along with regional chapter events in major cities that have increased in number across the country over the past decade. However, a number of participants believed that these types of activities are still only engaging small pockets of alumni and that more has to be done to reach out and engage BC alumni in meaningful ways.

In ranking events that engage alumni, even participants who self-identified as not generally interested in sports were unable to name any alumni activity other than men's intercollegiate athletics that engages alumni in so many numbers and in such depth. Again, findings indicate that the University needs to work harder to find ways it can connect with the three quarters of alumni who simply do not give.

Influence of Men's Intercollegiate Athletics on General Alumni Giving

An analysis of findings indicate that athletics has not only influenced general alumni giving at Boston College and but has also served as an avenue of engagement that has led some alumni to donate to the University. Athletics gives alumni a sense of ownership in the institution, as well as membership in and connection with the teams they support. Fundraisers use athletics as a way to engage alumni in a dialogue about BC, which can lead to a conversation about the financial needs of the institution, and end in giving. For many participants, athletics is perceived as an experience that helps to shape

alumni behavior and may, in turn, serve as the mechanism for attracting alumni donations.

Study participants unanimously indicated that they believed there is a relationship between Boston College football and men's basketball and general alumni giving. Engagement with athletics may be the call to action for many alumni in persuading them to give financial support to their alma maters. Pride in the athletic program encourages graduates to give back, as do feelings of goodwill toward Boston College that surface from their experiences with football and men's basketball. Some participants qualified their belief in a relationship between athletics and giving in stating that they could not quantify it nor draw distinct conclusions as to the level of impact, but felt athletics did indeed engage alumni and serve as a motivation to giving.

Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study emerge from the perceptions of 21 participants, and provide the foundation for the following conclusions and implications. These conclusions and implications are grounded in the central finding that alumni giving at Boston College is an emotionally motivated behavior influenced by activities that foster alumni engagement, and that men's intercollegiate athletics are a major aspect of this engagement. Although participants discussed other activities that engage alumni, athletics seemed to be the common thread that united the various participants' perspectives. These perceptions offer senior administrators and fundraisers a broader understanding of the importance of alumni giving and how football and men's basketball can influence Boston College alumni to make donations.

Senior Administrators and Fundraisers

This study concluded that Boston College's financial picture has been supplemented significantly for at least the last several decades through donations from alumni who enjoy football and men's basketball and the connection it offers them to BC and fellow classmates. Their gifts over the years have helped to fund student assistance, operating budgets, capital initiatives, and growth of the endowment. Leslie and Ramey (1988) underscored the critical impact of alumni giving in higher education in stating that donations are "the major sources of institutional discretionary funds by which innovations may be introduced, risks may be taken, and investments in the future may be made" (p. 115). This conclusion stems from participants' beliefs that the men's intercollegiate athletic program is a central part of Boston College's culture today that surpasses the boundaries of campus and extends to alumni wherever they live.

Senior administrators charged with making financial decisions about fundraising and sports should first recognize the weight of men's intercollegiate athletics in engaging alumni and second, learn from the general findings of this study, which may better inform and develop policies and practices that will increase alumni giving to the University. Furthermore, this information may serve as a catalyst to identifying vehicles that may raise the alumni giving rate to match or exceed that of its peer institutions.

Another conclusion from this study that may aid fundraisers in refining their solicitation efforts is that emotional attachment is critical in engaging alumni in a cause or institution, and encouraging prospective donors to ultimately step up and give their financial support. Personal interactions as students and then graduates were noted as a significant motivator for alumni giving in the literature review, and universally,

participants believed that men's intercollegiate sporting events offer alumni many opportunities to come together and connect with each other and Boston College.

Brittingham and Pezzullo (1990) supported this assertion in stating, "perhaps the best indicators of alumni giving are an emotional attachment to the school, (and) participation in alumni events," (p. 40). Similarly, Shulman and Bowen (2001) found that giving patterns for former students who participated actively in extracurricular activities were more likely to become donors as alumni.

Therefore, the concept of a relationship between engagement and giving should encourage administrators at BC to search for new avenues of engagement for alumni who are not engaged through men's intercollegiate athletics, such as those currently focused on academic and cultural programming now supported by the Alumni Association. The emergence of affinity group programming in the past decade at Boston College has proven successful in engaging graduates, with the advent of the Council for Women of Boston College, the Wall Street Council, and the Technology Council. However, more vehicles for outreach around academic and culture interests may encourage other clusters of nondonors to become reengaged with Boston College.

A major conclusion that emerged from data analysis related to the central research question is that senior University administrators, fundraisers, and alumni donors support the concept of a relationship between Boston College men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving. Engagement with athletics is perceived as the call to action for many alumni in persuading them to give financial support to their alma mater. Pride in the athletic program—and, as stated by participants, the integrity of a program that retains high academic standards for student-athletes—encourages graduates to give back,

as do feelings of goodwill toward Boston College that surface from experiences with football and men's basketball. Coughlin and Erikson (1985b) concluded that a successful athletic program could be defined in a number of ways, from development of student athlete/scholars, improved facilities and programs, and recruitment of the best coaches and players. In their study that examined the correlation between successful athletic programs and alumni giving from a historical perspective, Sigelman and Carter (1979) cited legendary leader of higher education Clark Kerr, whose book, *The Uses of the University* (1967), recognized the need for increased alumni cultivation in higher education. Sigelman and Carter noted that Kerr "characterized sports as a major factor in spurring alumni giving" (pp. 284-285).

Additionally, with the theme of mission emerging as a constant thread throughout participants' comments, the University should consider what the data suggests in terms of how the mission ties into alumni engagement and the role of athletics. Participants universally cited the products of BC's mission, such as the good the University and its members impart on society in many different ways, as a source of institutional pride and positive feelings for BC alumni. Findings also emphasized that for many alumni, athletics is a major source of their interaction and involvement with their alma mater. One could speculate that if fundraisers and administrators could 1) leverage alumni engagement with athletics as a platform to underscore BC's contribution to making the world a better place and 2) begin a conversation on how alumni can personally contribute to the work of Boston College through financial support, this data could have significant impact on nondonor alumni engaged with athletics. Operationally, fundraisers could use a combination of pre- and post-game interactions and special events, such as the

opportunity to meet coaches and players or take a special tour of restricted facilities, as vehicles to speak one-on-one with alumni about how they can further the impact of Boston College's good works. Athletic communications, such as annual reports, newsletters, and announcements, could also be used to promote the idea that alumni can personally make a difference in the University's impact on those in the BC community and beyond.

Finally, at the time of this study's conclusion, when a turbulent economy has forced higher education to scrutinize where budgets can be cut and programming eliminated, the findings of this study may aid Boston College senior administrators as they examine the viability of maintaining Division I-A athletics at Boston College, at a time when other institutions are questioning their worth versus their weight in draw on resources. While it may in fact be the right decision for many colleges and universities to eliminate sports, at institutions like Boston College that are steeped in athletic traditions, the findings that alumni continue to hold sports as source of pride and reconnection that translates into impact on annual giving should signify their value to the institution—as well as influence policy decisions around the role of intercollegiate athletics as part of the fabric of the University.

Limitations of the Study

Because of the researcher's status as a 10-year Boston College employee who interacts frequently with senior management and fundraising professionals, researcher bias was the most concerning limitation of the study. Therefore, personal beliefs on alumni giving as a bias were constantly reviewed, and member checks were regularly

conducted throughout the analysis process, to “ensure the truth value of the data” (Creswell, 2003, p. 204).

At the same time, Creswell asserted that the researcher’s contribution to the “research setting can be useful and positive rather than detrimental” (p. 200). Knowing the potential biases, the researcher made every effort to include a continual review of the data collection process and findings by colleagues, professors, and classmates. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher was confident that she had brought an objective perspective to the study.

Creswell (1998) indicated that in order to establish the generalizability or external validity of the study, best practices include “triangulating among different data sources . . . writing with thick and detailed descriptions, and taking the entire written narrative back to participants in member checking” (p. 201). The researcher made every effort to assure that these procedures were rigorously applied to the research, and that the validity and generalizability of the case study was established within the research study’s inquiry.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this qualitative study presented an in-depth examination and analysis of the participants’ perceptions and attitudes toward men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving, the study could be redesigned to address specific concerns that may benefit Boston College through future research, and more broadly across higher education through an expanded methodology.

Research Specific to Boston College

A major area of future inquiry that emerged in this study was the lack of a clear understanding on the part of participants, particularly in administration and fundraising,

on why three quarters of alumni do not give to Boston College. While participants shared many insights on their perspectives on alumni motivations for giving, when the absence of giving on the part of the majority of BC alumni arose in interviews, study respondents had little commentary or simply stated they were puzzled by this phenomenon. Therefore, a study designed to examine this lack of giving could provide data that may suggest programmatic changes or new practices. The study could commence with a quantitative approach to the inquiry through the administration of a general survey to all alumni, designed to not only gauge their satisfaction with their alma mater but also determine their status as donors or non-donors. Once self-identified, the survey would take respondents to the appropriate subset of questions developed to specifically address why they do or do not donate to Boston College. Researchers could then analyze the findings of that inquiry to develop a more extensive qualitative study, comprising individual and group interviews with alumni nondonors that examine what prohibits them from giving. The research could provide insights as to what the barriers are that inhibit alumni giving at BC and provide fundraisers with data that could be integrated into fundraising strategies and practices designed to address these inhibitors and, subsequently, encourage nondonors to give.

Expanded Methodology

This study on participants' perceptions around intercollegiate athletics and its impact on alumni giving could be expanded in two ways. First, the study could be broadened to include individual and focus group interviews with participants from similar peer institutions, possibly those institutions that are noted in the study as Boston College's top cross-application schools. While the participants in this study were all

donors from the same university, by increasing the number of participants to include donors from other universities, the inquiry would not only advance the generalizability of the findings but also offer perspectives from a more diverse population of alumni donors.

Second, the findings of the present study could be used to develop a case study employing a mixed methodology, which includes participants from outside of Boston College, to explore perceptions around both men's and women's intercollegiate athletics and alumni giving. The data collected from this study could be used to develop a survey that reaches alumni donors across various types of universities, including large and small public and private institutions. The underlying purpose of the survey would be to gather information about participants' attitudes and beliefs toward men's and women's intercollegiate sports and general alumni giving. Survey results would then be used to select a purposeful sample of donors for individual interviews. This small sample of participants would be asked to write a short narrative about their donor experience with their alma mater and how their involvement with athletics may encourage them to give, and to what aspects of their alma mater in terms of specific programming. These elements would add powerful components to the research around where gifts are designated, especially within the narratives. Narratives as a research tool may "capture events and phenomena in such a way that we are able to bring them *up close* as oppose to *out there* distant and abstract" (Gudmundsdottir, 1997, p. 1). Furthermore, the narrative would provide another way to delve deeper into the perceptions of donors around the influence of athletics on general alumni giving.

Closing Comments

The central research question emerged from the researcher's observation of the popularity of men's intercollegiate athletics at Boston College upon her arrival in 2000, which exceeded her personal experiences, first as a student at a state university and later, as a professional in the field of higher education. During her student experience at a Division I-AA flagship state university, the role of athletics was one of a wide range of activities in which students participated. However, its prominence looking back did not dominate the student experience, which was probably most impacted by Greek life on campus. Certainly there were probably "Superfans," similar to those students at Boston College who proudly wore their golden t-shirts emblazoned with a slogan unique to their graduation year that expresses their die-hard support of their Eagles' teams. But, they did not register anywhere as loudly to the degree that this phenomenon does at BC.

Later, as a practitioner in higher education, the researcher's perceptions of the role of men's intercollegiate athletics were mostly based on her five-year experience at Harvard University, which—despite the origins of its athletics program stemming from the 19th century—appeared to engage a small faction of alumni, noted through poorly attended sporting events and limited socializing around them, as evidenced by the researcher.

Upon coming to Boston College, the researcher was quite surprised by the role athletics plays in campus life—and maybe more importantly, with alumni. Athletics is ever present in general meetings and conversations with alumni—it is assumed one will know who is starting, where teams are ranked, and what bowl game or tournament berth might be in the future. And it is assumed to be gender-blind—women are expected to

know as much as men about the sports picture on any given day, and often from a personal perspective.

At the same time, with career experience and a strong interest in the field of fundraising, the researcher was intrigued by the relationship between the strong emotional attachment alumni evidently hold with athletics and the impetus to give to Boston College. After vetting the proposed topic to a number of colleagues, fellow students, and faculty, the consensus was that the topic not only could have impact at BC but also at other institutions with similar athletics programs.

Thus, the study was proposed with the goal of contributing qualitative findings that might add to the body of research on the topic, which is highly quantitative and indicates that there is either no quantifiable relationship or generally inconclusive findings based on the data.

The findings of this study substantiate a relationship between athletics and alumni giving based on qualitative inquiry. While the researcher does not discount quantitative study findings, she feels strongly that this study underscores the need to draw opinions and perceptions on the impact of athletics on alumni giving from those who seek gifts on behalf of their institution and those who make gifts as alumni. She hopes that this study may encourage others interested in the topic to engage in research that draws from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective, to deepen understanding of how the influence of engagement with athletics may be leveraged to increase the generosity of alumni across a wide range of America's academic institutions.

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APPENDIX A

Protocol for Individual Interviews

The protocol will be employed for all individual interviews. It is divided into three sets of questions: Introductory, Probing, and Open-Ended. An additional subset of questions will subsequently be developed to address the affiliations and backgrounds of the five categories of individual participants.

Introductory Questions

What is your educational background?

As a college student, were you involved in sports as an athlete and/or a spectator? If so, how were you involved and how do you feel about those experiences today?

What is your profession? How long have you worked in this field? Why do you work in this field?

Do you attend sporting events now and if so, are they professional and/or college? Why do you attend?

What other engagement do you have with professional and/or college sports, such as televised games, sports news, and other activities related to sporting events?

Describe your attitude toward philanthropy and which type of nonprofit organizations you are inclined to support through donations.

How frequently do you give to any of the nonprofits you have supported in the past?

If you are philanthropic, what are your motivations for giving to the nonprofit organization(s) you support?

Probing Questions

What are your views on the need for alumni giving in higher education today?

What are your perceptions of the impact of alumni giving on higher education today?

Do you believe your views and perceptions around alumni giving are biased by your profession and/or volunteer roles, and why?

What are your views on the role of football and men's basketball in higher education today?

What are your perceptions of the impact of football and men's basketball in higher education today?

Do you believe your views and perceptions around the role of football and men's basketball are biased by your profession and/or volunteer roles, and why?

What does it mean to you when Boston College plays/wins a bowl game or basketball tournament?

How do you perceive football and men's basketball affect an alumnus' school spirit toward Boston College?

What does it mean to an alumnus when Boston College plays/wins a bowl game or basketball tournament?

How does athletics contribute to an alumnus' attitude toward their alma mater?

What types of athletic and/or alumni events contribute to an alumnus' attitude toward their alma mater? How would you rank these events in terms of their impact on alumni attitudes?

What other avenues do you perceive as ones that lead to alumni engagement? How would you rank these events in terms of their impact on alumni attitudes?

What are your perceptions of the effectiveness of fundraising policies and practices on alumni giving?

If you believe athletics does encourage alumni to give, what are your perceptions around where an alumnus' donation is directed, in terms of athletic programs or nonathletic programming and/or general alumni fund?

Do you think the size of a gift is influenced by success in athletics?

Open-Ended Questions

What are your perceptions on the importance of athletics for alumni?

What are your perceptions on the benefits of athletics at BC for the alumni? Students?

The University in general?

Why do you believe alumni give to their alma maters? What characteristics may serve as indicators that they may give? What motivates an alumnus to give?

What are your perceptions on the existence of any form of a relationship between athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College?

Follow-Up, Nonstructured Questioning

Participants will be asked to add any further beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, observations, and assumptions on their view on the existence of a relationship between success in athletics and general alumni giving.

APPENDIX B

Written Survey for Focus Group Participants Prior to Interview

What is your educational background?

As a college student, were you involved in sports as an athlete and/or a spectator? If so, how were you involved and how do you feel about those experiences today?

What is your profession? How long have you worked in this field? Why do you work in this field?

Do you attend sporting events now and if so, are they professional and/or college? Why do you attend?

What other engagement do you have with professional and/or college sports, such as televised games, sports news, and other activities related to these sporting events?

Describe your attitude toward philanthropy and which type of nonprofit organizations you are inclined to support through donations.

How frequently do you give to any nonprofit organizations you have supported in the past?

If you are philanthropic, what are your motivations for giving to the nonprofit organization(s) you support?

APPENDIX C

Focus Group Interview Protocol

This protocol will be used with both sets of alumni, one comprising alumni who give solely to athletics, and the second comprising alumni who give to nonathletic and/or the alumni general fund.

Introduction to the Session

One need only turn on a television to see the major role of intercollegiate sports in America today. Koch (1983) contended that the phenomenon of college athletics has been on the rise in the United States since the 1970s, due in large part to the widespread emergence of televised sports in American homes around that time. In 1982, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) reported that 35.8 million fans attended intercollegiate football games, up 18 percent since 1971 (p. 360). Koch cited the burgeoning television and radio coverage of sports, and networks like ESPN that “flog our senses on a twenty-four-hour-a-day basis with broadcasts of intercollegiate athletic contests” (p. 360).

During the same timeframe, dwindling federal and state support of education—and skyrocketing tuitions and operating costs—has severely intensified the need for outside funds to maintain the fiscal health of America’s colleges and universities. While there are a number of sources for external funding of higher education—including corporations and foundations—in 2006, charitable contributions to United States’ higher education reached \$28 billion, with 30 percent of this total—\$8.4 billion—attributed to alumni giving (Council for Aid to Education, 2007, p. 2). Of this amount, more than 50 percent was spent on annual operations at 1,014 institutions that responded to the Council for Aid

to Education study, while the remainder was allocated to endowment, property and buildings, and loan funds (p. 1).

The widespread fervor of intercollegiate play—predominantly in the sports of football and men’s basketball—has caused much debate about whether its popularity has an impact on general alumni giving at the many colleges and universities that maintain big-time sports programs. As our world becomes increasingly connected to sports through venues like sports television, satellite radio, and digital media, one can assume that the role of college sports in the U.S. will only expand as the games are delivered to fans beyond the playing field—and lead to the question as to how in particular football and men’s basketball may impact colleges and universities financially, particularly in the area of alumni support.

Probing Questions

After reading this passage, please respond to the following questions:

What are your views on the need for alumni giving in higher education today?

What are your perceptions of the impact of alumni giving in higher education today?

What are your views on the role of football and men’s basketball in higher education today?

How does athletics at Boston College affect your attitude and feelings toward your alma mater?

How does football and men’s basketball affect your school spirit toward Boston College?

What types of athletic and/or alumni events contribute to your attitudes and feelings toward your alma mater? How would you rank these events in terms of their impact on your attitude and feelings toward BC?

Why do you give to Boston College? What are your motivations and why?

What are your attitudes and feelings toward fundraising solicitations at Boston College?

What does it mean to you when Boston College plays/wins a bowl game or basketball tournament?

When BC is successful in athletics, how does that influence your decision to give to BC?

Do you think the size of your gift to BC is influenced by success in athletics?

If you believe athletics encourages you to give to BC, does it encourage you to give to athletics programs or general fund and/or specific nonathletic programming? Why?

Open-Ended Questions

What are your attitudes and feelings on the importance of athletics at BC?

Do you believe that athletics is a significant factor in your decision to give to Boston College?

What are your perceptions on the benefits of athletics at BC for the alumni? Students? The University in general?

What are your perceptions on any type of relationship between men's intercollegiate athletics and general alumni giving at Boston College?

Follow-Up, Nonstructured Questioning

Participants will be asked to add any further beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, observations, and assumptions on the impact of success in athletics at Boston College and their decision to give to BC.

APPENDIX D

October 30, 2008

Dear (Participant):

Currently, I am conducting research on the perceived effect of men's intercollegiate football and basketball on alumni giving at Boston College, and I would like to invite you to participate in a research project on your attitudes and beliefs on this topic as a Boston College (administrator, alumnus/na, trustee, and/or benefactor.) Briefly, alumni giving has become increasingly critical to the fiscal health of our nation's higher education sector, and evaluating motivations and indicators that may influence donations from graduates could prove invaluable to our America's colleges and universities. Boston College has been quite successful in these two sports between 1995 and 2005, and this study will seek to determine if the role of athletics has had any impact on alumni support of the University through donations.

The purpose of this study is to determine what the perceived effect of these sports is on alumni giving at Boston College during the aforementioned period, through interviews with Boston College administrators, trustees, and alumni. Building on the work of Coughlin and Ereksion (1985), who determined that alumni giving is based on some perceived "end utility" from a donation, and Daughtrey and Stotlar's (2000) research that found increases in alumni giving were the result of a sense of participation in a positive aspect of the institution, my research will address the following questions:

- 1) What are the key factors the participants identify as influencing alumni giving?
- 2) Do participants believe there is a perceived effect of athletics on alumni giving, particularly in football and men's basketball?
- 3) How does a donor participant's perception of the impact of athletics on alumni giving compare to an administrator or fundraisers?
- 4) What types of athletic and/or alumni events on campus may affect alumni giving?
- 5) What is the perceived effect of fundraising policies and practices on alumni giving to athletics?

Participation in this research is voluntary. The research will not require additional time from you during the course of the study nor will your participation have any effect on your affiliation with Boston College. The collection of interviews by you and other administrators, development officers, trustees, and alumni will be the major data source for this project. If you prefer to remain anonymous, a pseudonym will be assigned and used in any reports. As your participation in the research is voluntary, you may withdraw at any time.

The benefits of the research for you would be the opportunity to engage in a study that may contribute to a better understanding of alumni motivations for giving to Boston College, as well as better inform the topic for all institutions of higher education. Never has the need for fundraising been so critical to higher education—in 2006, charitable

contributions to higher education in the United States' reached \$28 billion, with 30 percent of this total attributed to alumni giving. More than 50 percent of these funds were spent on current operations at 1,014 institutions that responded to the Council for Aid to Education study, while the remainder was allocated to endowment, property and buildings, and loan funds. Any data that can add to the body of literature on the topic has significant ramifications for American colleges and universities.

I will wait to hear from you on your decision to participate in this research. Please be aware that I welcome your questions or inquiries anytime during the research. Do not hesitate to call me at my office (617-552-4821). If I am not available please leave a message and I will return your call promptly. I may also be reached by email (hallie.sammartino.1@bc.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, please call the Boston College Office for Human Research Participant Protection: 617-552-4778. Furthermore, when completed, a summary of the research results will be made available to you upon request. I look forward to your questions and/or concerns regarding the research briefly described above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hallie G. Sammartino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Hallie G. Sammartino
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration Program
Lynch School of Education
and
Managing Director, Office of Marketing and Communications, Boston College

APPENDIX E

Boston College Consent Form, Lynch School of Education
 Department of Higher Education Administration
 Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in the Research Study:
 The Perceived Relationship Between Men's Intercollegiate Athletics and
 General Alumni Giving at Boston College from 1996–2005
 Investigator: Hallie G. Sammartino
 Type of consent: Adult Consent Form
 Date Created: 5/15/2008

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study examining your beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and assumptions on the impact of men's football and basketball on general alumni giving at Boston College from 1996–2005.

- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study:

The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a perceived effect of men's football and basketball on general alumni giving at Boston College through interviews with Boston College administrators, fundraisers, trustees, and alumni.

Why have I been asked to take part in the study?

You have been asked to participate in this study because of your relationship with Boston College as a/an [administrator, development officer, trustee, and/or alumnus.]

Description of the Study Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, your participation will be limited to a 60-minute interview with the researcher and a possible follow-up communication. You will also be allowed to review your interview.

Risks/Discomforts of the Study:

The study asks you to disclose personal thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about alumni giving and athletics at Boston College. Participants may feel uncomfortable disclosing personal information. Therefore, the study may include unforeseen risks.

Participants may feel uncomfortable or experience discomfort from exposure of personal information. To minimize this risk, the researcher will have a preliminary discussion with you on whether you want to participate with your name or take on a pseudonym—this is your choice and your decision will be respected. If at anytime after your interview you determine you prefer a different option, your request will be applied to the study findings.

Benefits of the Study:

The purpose of the study is to find out what the perceived effect of these sports is on alumni giving to nonathletic programming. As a/an [administrator, fundraiser, and/or alumnus,] the only benefit I perceive for you is the opportunity to share your perceptions and attitudes around football and men's basketball and general alumni giving. In your role as a Boston College trustee, you may also derive benefits from learning more about BC alumni and how athletics may affect alumni giving. The benefit derived by Boston College from your interview is learning more

about how athletics may influence general alumni giving, which is critical to the financial well-being of the University and its governance.

Reimbursement:

The researcher will reimburse participants for any out-of-pocket costs resulting from their interview.

Costs: There is no cost to you to participate in this research study.

Confidentiality:

- The records of this study will be kept private. In any report I may publish, if the participant chooses to use a pseudonym, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records will be kept in a personal computer that only the investigator can access.
- All electronic information, including digital voice recordings of the interviews, will be coded and secured in an electronic, password-protected file stored on a personal computer. Once the researcher has concluded the study, all digital files will be destroyed.
- I will make every effort to keep your research records confidential but it cannot be assured. Records that identify you and the consent form signed by you may be looked at by a regulatory agency such as Federal Agencies overseeing human subject research or the Boston College Institutional Review Board.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:

- Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with the University.
- You are free to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason.
- There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not taking part or for stopping your participation.
- You will be provided with any significant new findings that develop during the course of the research that may make you decide that you want to stop participating.
- The investigator may withdraw the subject from the study when it is in the subject's best interest, when there are untoward side effects, or when there is failure to comply with the study requirements.

Contacts and Questions:

- The researcher conducting this study is Hallie Sammartino. For questions or more information concerning this research, you may contact me at 617-552-4821 or email me at hallie.sammartino.1@bc.edu.
- If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact: Director, Office for Human Research Participant Protection, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu.

Copy of Consent Form:

- You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:

- I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Study Participant (Print Name): _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____