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African-American Alumni Perceptions and Motivations Toward Philanthropic Giving (A Case Study of an African-American Alumni Council at A Midwestern University)

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AFRICAN-AMERICAN ALUMNI PERCEPTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS
TOWARD PHILANTHROPIC GIVING
(A CASE STUDY OF AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ALUMNI COUNCIL AT A
MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY)

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a qualitative case study of African-American philanthropic motivations and fundraising strategies employed to increase African-American alumni giving at a predominantly white institution, Midwestern University. The lack of research and lack of understanding of African-American alumni motivations and perceptions of philanthropic giving is the problem for this case study. It is the goal of the researcher that the findings and recommendations of this research be considered in the development of the University's race specific fundraising strategies. The study included seven personal interviews of the Indiana State University African-American Alumni Board of Directors. Exhaustive field notes were analyzed thematically. Additionally, ex post facto regarding the AAAC Board of Directors was analyzed. Through triangulation, the researcher analyzed the data for commonalities. Commonalities found in the interviews, artifacts, and observations have been reported. This study expands our understanding in general and will assist leadership in expanding philanthropic activity and giving. Engaging and developing fundraising strategies for the untapped resource of the African-American alumni is important, yet the importance and feelings of inclusion to African-American alumni is the theme that emerged above others. The researcher found the African-American alumni are motivated to give to their alma mater based on the positive memories and relationships that were formed during their college experience. The expectation is that their financial support to the University will support the African-American students and staff of the University.

As this Midwestern University has made progress, in the creation of the African-American Alumni Council, the researcher found that, the call for authenticity, transparency, and relevancy is essential to the council's success.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The financial uncertainty for state higher education institutions typically caused by the decrease in state funding of higher education institutions, has resulted in the increase and reliance on alternative sources of revenue (such as philanthropy) in order to sustain the operations of their institutions (Spears, 2008). Alumnus charitable contributions are vital for all of higher education. According to the report of the Council for Aid to Education (2007), 10 percent of higher education operation funds are made up of the voluntary donations.

African-Americans have remained an untapped resource in regards to philanthropic giving, specifically in higher education (Gasman, 2006). Over the recent decades, African – Americans have increased their education and wealth (Shin, 2010), and, thus enabling them to become philanthropists at all levels. Research demonstrates, as a whole, African-Americans are more philanthropic than their White counterparts, giving more of their discretionary income to nonprofits (Drezner, 2008). However, at this Midwestern University the giving records of African-American alumni, as a whole, are less than that of their Caucasian counterparts.

To remain successful, higher education institutions must develop fundraising strategies that are specific to their alumni (Weber, 1991). There is a current debate regarding race-specific fundraising strategies. One argument is that fundraising strategies can be applied to all cultures and communities, while other researchers disagree and suggest that employing race-related

strategies and motivations are major components in the black community (Spears, 2008). Low participation from African-American alumni may be attributed to many reasons. “One can attribute the lack of alumni support to the fact that, as a general rule, African-Americans earn less and hold fewer assets than White alumni” (Gasman, 2006, p. 1). However, “with a buying power fast approaching \$1 trillion dollars and a “historical mistrust of organized philanthropy” (Gasman, 2010, p. 5) it is vital for higher education institutions and various nonprofit organizations to explore the motivations behind African-American giving or the lack thereof.

The Midwestern University’s African-American Alumni Council (AAAC)

The creation of the African-American Alumni Council (AAAC) is an initiative designed to expand alumni participation and commitment for this group of alumni. The African-American Alumni Council is a pivotal building block to the University’s commitment to advance experiences and opportunities for African-American students, staff, and alumni and to enhance their participation in the University’s initiatives. This council has been developed as a means to bridge the gap between African-American Alumni and the University. It is the hope of the institution that the African-American Alumni Council will be a sounding board for African-American concerns and a platform for their giving. The relationship marketing theory, defined as “establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges” (Hunt & Morgan, 1994, p. 20) lend credence to the creation of the AAAC by the University Foundation in an effort to develop long standing relationships with Black Alumni. Research suggests that African-American alumni give back to their alma mater based on the relationship between the institution and their personal agenda (i.e. motivations, opportunity for advancement, engagement, and so forth) (Spears, 2008).

Personal motivation provides the foundation for all giving (Drezner, 2008). While it is desirable to increase African-American giving to higher levels, there are settings in which Blacks routinely and unselfishly donate. It is necessary to understand the giving trends and motivations for the populace the Midwestern University African-American Alumni Council serves.

The African-American Alumni Council has developed the following initiatives to address the challenges of African-American alumni: Scholarship, Service, and Programs. Briefly explained, the initiatives of the African-American Alumni Council include the following:

1. Support the engagement and continuing development the African-American Leadership Conference, held each spring for students.
2. Develop initial fundraising plans to support student scholarships and staffing of African-American Alumni Council efforts.
3. Create a comprehensive database of African-American alumni.
4. Explore social media opportunities, to determine the best ways to stay in touch with and solicit support from African-American alumni.
5. Develop, in cooperation with appropriate University staff and departments, a plan to increase retention of African-American students through designated scholarships, summer programs and alumni connections to internships or other appropriate programs.

The African-American Alumni Council will work to engage the Midwestern University's African-American alumni by coordinating reunions and alumni events, providing networking and mentoring opportunities, and keeping them abreast of the progress of the University. The AAAC will also work to engage current students by providing alumni mentors, facilitating

alumni workshops and discussion panels, providing invaluable networking and internship opportunities.

Virgil E. Ecton, a former senior executive of the United Negro College Fund shared, “Unless there are outcomes and signs that progress is being made, minority efforts at predominantly White institutions won’t work” (Roach, 2001, p. 48). As this Midwestern University continues its commitment to increasing diversity, it remains important to build meaningful relationships with African-American alumni. The development of the African-American Alumni Council is a step toward achieving these goals.

Statement of the Problem

There is limited research regarding African-American’s donor motivation and behavior. Much of the research concerning alumni giving has been completed in dissertations versus peer reviewed journals (Mackey, 2008). However, we are beginning to understand the African-American donor motivations. Literature demonstrates that African-Americans are historically philanthropic, giving in order to meet the needs of one another in an oppressed society. Literature suggests that African-Americans giving more philanthropically, percentage wise, than white counterparts. Literature also shows that African-Americans are motivated to give when there under the pretense of racial uplift. “The crux of racial uplift is the belief that hard work and faith will overcome oppression, not only for individuals but for the entire African-American community” (Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003, p.23). Some other common trends among the existing literature in reference to the African-American community’s motivation behind philanthropy include the fundraising traditions of the Black church, and the importance of engaging young alumni. The lack of research and lack of understanding of African-American alumni motivations and perceptions of philanthropic giving is the problem for this case study.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study is to case study the African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors at a predominantly white Midwestern institution, exploring their motivations for volunteering their time, talent, and treasure. The researcher examined the motivations behind African-American alumni philanthropy at a predominantly White institution.. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the giving history of the University's African-American Alumni in general and specifically to the University?
2. What influences African-American giving to this Midwestern University?
3. What are the African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors explicit expectations for their philanthropy to the Midwestern University?

Statement of the Need

This study is an analysis of this University Foundation's development of the African-American Alumni Council. This study expands our understanding in general and will assist Foundation leadership in expanding philanthropic activity and giving.

Statement of Assumptions

1. The researcher assumes that the participants of the personal interviews will be candid and truthful in their responses.
2. The researcher is operating from a pro-race fundraising perspective. In other words, race-specific fundraising efforts will not harm and will most likely increase activity and giving from the target population.

Statement of Limitations

1. The results of this case study will not technically be generalizable as they pertain specifically to the African-American Alumni Council of this particular Midwestern University. However, implications may be transferable to other predominantly white institutions that desire to further engage and solicit philanthropy among their African-American alumni. However, it does inform us about the population of this University's African-American alumni.
2. All participants of the study are from one specific (African-American) minority ethnic group; therefore, results cannot be generalized to other ethnic groups.
3. The researcher encountered various roadblocks in the data collection stage of the research. While the sample population was fairly small, the researcher found it difficult to confirm availability and execute personal interviews, as each board member is a professional of some sort and inundated with other responsibilities. It was the hope of the researcher to interview each board member at a full AAAC board meeting in Naples, Florida. The meeting had been scheduled months in advance and each board member was expected in attendance.

Statement of Methodology

The population for this case study is the African-American alumni of a predominantly white Midwestern institution. The sample was the newly developed University developed African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors. This group of individuals has been developed to spearhead the philanthropic efforts of the African-American alumni community.

Sources of data for this case study include (1) personal interviews of the Board members of the African-American Alumni Council. An interview guide sheet that explores the Board

member's giving history and motivations for giving was developed and exhaustive field notes of each interview were taken. (2) artifacts such as AAAC meeting minutes and relevant letters from engaged alumni, and existing ex post facto data (i.e giving records, profiles, and so forth) were examined and (3) observations such as AAAC Board meetings were analyzed. Exhaustive field notes have been analyzed thematically. Commonalities found in the interviews, artifacts, and observations have been reported.

Statement of Terminology

Philanthropy- having an “altruistic concern for human welfare and advancement, usually manifested by donations of money, property, or work to needy persons, by endowment of institutions of learning and hospitals, and by generosity to other socially useful purposes” (Dictionary.com).

African-American- an American of African and especially of black African descent. For the purpose of this study, international African students were not to be considered a part of the specified sample. However, if an international African student has received American citizenship, they are then by this researcher' definition, African-American.

Alumni- a person who has attended or graduated from an institution

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis is a qualitative case study on African-American philanthropic motivations and fundraising strategies employed to increase African-American alumni giving at a predominantly White Midwestern institution. A thorough relevant literature review was conducted on African-American giving and relevant literature. The literature examined is categorized into the following sections:

Employing Race-specific Fundraising at a Predominantly White Midwestern University

“The approach to fundraising for higher education has shifted from charity to philanthropy in the last 100 years” (Hunter, Enid, & Boger, 1999, p. 528). According to Giving USA (2011) report estimated that the total of charitable giving rose 3.8 percent. Charitable contributions are a vital source of income for higher education institutions. “Although African-American communities are generous with philanthropic dollars, participation in fundraising campaigns (at the higher education level) is low, simply because they are often not asked to give” (Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins, 2003, p. 18).

Research indicates that all alumni, regardless of race, are motivated to give back to higher education based on the experiences they have had while attending the institution (Gasman, 2001; Holloman, Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003). Alumni must feel a personal connection to

the institution to which they give. Seymour (1988) argued that motivation is based on engagement with the given University.

Westgard's (2011) reported the overall lifetime giving of both African-American alumni and Caucasian alumni at this university. (See Table 1.0)

Data Point	African -American Alumni	Caucasian Alumni
Lifetime Giving Average	\$217.67	\$326.01
Lifetime Average Gifts	3.5	4.7
Lifetime Participation Rate	14.7%	20.5%
Lifetime Average Gift Size	\$62.19	\$69.36

Table 1.0 Giving at Indiana State University 2012

It is important to note that the African-American alumni are self-identified as African-American in the University's Foundation alumni database. All alumni have not been racially identified. Therefore, there are African-American alumni that have not been racially segmented, but rather are identified as White alumni by default. As the table illustrates, alumni giving across the board is lagging, yet African-American giving is lagging as compared to that of their White counterparts.

In an effort to strategically solicit African-American alumni, Indiana State must develop fundraising strategies that are specific to their alumni (Weber, 1991). The current University leadership is aware of the lack of African-American alumni giving to their alma mater; hence, the development of the African-American Alumni Council. The AAAC has been developed to be a bridge for the University's African-American alumni. The AAAC will be a vehicle by which the University will segment race-specific direct mailings, solicitations, and events. African-Americans historically have had a distinct experience in the United States in regards to freedom, civil rights, attaining education, and so forth. Thus, African-Americans embrace values,

perspectives, beliefs, and traditions distinct from White individuals. Understanding African-American alumnus motivations for giving is not simple; however, it is essential in developing successful fundraising strategies.

Philanthropy at Historically Black Colleges and Universities

In response to legal segregation and isolation, Black colleges and Universities were created to serve African-Americans. There are currently 105 HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities), most of them being four-year institutions. HBCUs make up 3 percent of higher education institutions but enroll 14 percent of the nation's African-American student population (Abelman and Dalessandro, 2007). Unfortunately, HBCUs are also up against challenges in financing their programs, despite their historical significance and contribution to society (Allen, Jewell, Griffin, & Wolf, 2007; Hunter, Jones, & Boger, 1999., Trent Jr., 1958). According to Thompson (1973) Black colleges have survived "on the proverbial 'shoestring' since their inception" (p. 246).

The United Negro College Fund (UNCF) was established in 1944. "The UNCF's mission was to provide assistance to Black college students through scholarships and raise operating funds for its then 27 member colleges and universities" (Drezner, 2008, p. 17). Nonetheless, there continues to be a need for increased support of HBCUs. For instance, in 1993, Howard University, a premier HBCU, received philanthropic gifts from merely 4 percent of their 60,000 alumni juxtaposed against Vanderbilt receiving donations from 28 percent of their 80,000 alumni (Hunter, Jones, & Boger, 1999).

According to Evans, (1987) Historically Black Colleges discovered that institutions were more successful in soliciting funds when HBCU presidents are perceived to be effective communicators, offer quality programs, offer quality alumni programs, and produce positive

undergraduate experiences. Again, research has shown that fundraising strategies at even the Historically Black Colleges and Universities should be race-specific given the unique mission of HBCU and racial uplift (Gasman & Drezner, 2009).

Understanding the motivation behind the donor giving is just as important at Historically Black Colleges and Universities as it is at predominantly White institutions. Hunter et al. (1999) indicated that HBCU alumni financial support is based on their belief in the “need” for Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Evans (1987) study on Morgan State University, an HBCU, indicated a significant relationship between the attitudes of their alumni and financial support of their alma mater. Allen (1981) demonstrated the significant relationship between alumni giving and the alumnus’ engagement in alumni associations and social groups. Allen concluded that (1) financial contributions are made by alumni that are socially involved and motivated, (2) donors are those typically satisfied with their undergraduate experience, (3) and giving increases when alumni are made aware of the University’s need.

Gasman and Anderson-Thompkins (2003) indicate that

For many Blacks-college alumni, the bond between alma mater is formed long before they arrive on campus-especially in the case of legacies...The college is “alma mater” in the truest sense because it nurtured them much like a mother gave them skills that they might not get elsewhere in a White dominated society. If nurtured and rekindled regularly, the surrogate parent image can be beneficial to institutional fundraising; if neglected, it can be devastating to alumni giving (p. 37-38).

Hunter et al. (1999) concluded that since alumni engagement is motivation for alumni giving, Universities must provide staff to coordinate alumni programming, reunions,

associations, and activities. In addition, because graduates with advanced degrees tend to be philanthropic at higher levels, Universities should work to provide financial assistance to graduate students.

African –Americans and the Wealth Gap

Over the last decade, the wealth gap between African-Americans and Whites has widened (Graves, 2011). The typical African-American family holds 11 percent of the wealth a White family holds; and the median net worth of African-Americans totaled \$4,418, Whites median net worth totaled \$45,740...ten times higher (Smith 2000). Conley (2000) revealed that 30 percent of African-American families possess no liquid assets. Conley (2000) continued by explaining intergenerational transfers and inheritances are the biggest factor explaining the wealth gap between African-Americans and Whites.

However, despite, the disparity, African-Americans give more of their discretionary income to non-profit organizations than white counterparts and their giving continues to increase (Wright, 1997). Evidence demonstrates that African-American households give 25 percent more of their discretionary income to philanthropic activities than Caucasians (Anft & Lipman, 2003; Gasman, 2006). African-Americans are working to close the wealth gap as they increase stocks, real estate, and savings (Shin, 2010). African-Americans have a growing buying power approaching and yet a “historical mistrust of organized philanthropy” (Gasman, 2010, p. 5). Consequently, it is vital to understand the motivations behind African-American philanthropic giving or the lack thereof. As African-Americans become more affluent, the opportunity to channel more resources from the African-American community will increase too. Nevertheless, philanthropic giving is not about the amount, but rather focusing the resource on worthy causes.

Philanthropy in the African-American Community

In general, the African-American community has been philanthropic, specifically with one another. However, the Black community does not speak of “philanthropy” in those terms, but rather, meeting a neighbor’s need. African-American communities have a long standing history of raising monies and means for their communities (Madison, 1987, Petty, 2002; Pierce, 2008; Shin, 2006). It was the charitable efforts of Whites and African-Americans that propelled the Underground Railroad; the charitable resources of African-Americans and their White counterparts that supported social and civil rights movements in the African-American community.

The Black Church

Fundraising is most successful and closely linked to the traditions of the Black church. The African-American church is a significant example of philanthropy among friends. “Since its inception, the Black church has been the center of African-American fundraising and the single most effective fundraising mechanism for Blacks” (Holloman, Gasman, & Thompkins, 2003, p. 137). Billingsley (1991) indicated that 76 percent of Blacks feel that church “was a very important institution in their early childhood socialization” (p. 428).

The majority of African-Americans are taught from a young age that they have an obligation to give to the church” (Holloman et al, 2003; White, 2007). According to Robinson (2000), 90 percent of African-American giving is channeled through the Black church. A 1998 Lilly Endowment funded study found that 96 percent of members of the Black church believed they should make regular offerings while 85 percent felt it was their responsibility to give 10 percent of their income, as a tithe. Hunter et al. (1999) indicated that there is a significant

relationship between church affiliation and philanthropy. Musick, Wilson and Bynum (2000) suggested that Blacks may not view themselves as “needed” in mainstream America and as a result turn to the church as an outlet. Musick et al. (2000) reported, “Blacks are less likely to be asked to volunteer than Whites, despite having more social resources” (p. 1543) African-Americans look toward the church to fill this void.

Johnson (1934) summarized the role of the African-American church in his classic study as follows:

It is in a very real sense a social institution. It provides a large measure of the recreation and relaxation from the physical stress of life. It is the agency looked to for aid when misfortune overtakes a person. It offers the medium for a community feeling, singing together, eating together, praying together, and indulging in the formal expressions of fellowship. Above this it holds out a world of escape from the hard experiences of life common to all. It is the agency which holds together the sub-communities and families physically scattered over a wide area. It exercises some influence over social relations, setting up certain regulations for behavior, passing judgments which represent community opinion, censuring and penalizing improper conduct by expulsion (p. 150).

For many African-Americans in this country’s formative years, the church was an institution that provided opportunity for effective organization, an outlet for expression, and a safe haven for social activities; the institution of the Black church met a variety of needs.

Perhaps the ministers of the Black churches can be credited for being instrumental in the encouraging the giving of their congregations. The ministers work to build trust and rapport with their members. W.E.B Du Bois (1903) specified Black clergy as the following, “The preacher is

the most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil. A leader, a politician, an orator, a “boss,” an intriguer, an idealist-all these he is” (p. 190).

Based on God’s Word, ministers encourage and train members that there is a responsibility to contribute. Many ministers openly share from where the money collected will be distributed. Church funds collected work to feed the hungry, provide housing, educate, and meet the needs of those less fortunate. According to White (2007), the minister in the black church makes appeals to the congregants in a way that is qualitatively different, addressing issues of the heart and drawing on spiritual and moral resources. Over the decades, the Black church and Black ministers have been a platform for African-Americans to educate Black youth, address social injustices and oppression, battle for Civil Rights, mobilize boycotts, and so forth. Consequently, it seems reasonable that a challenge for higher education institutions is to tap into this philanthropic nature that already exists in the African-American church and perhaps, if possible, enroll the ministers who are bridges between Black and White communities and encourage the importance of education and economic growth. As indicated by Holloman et al. (2003) Black congregants rely on their ministers to be their representative spokespersons, ministers are willing to endorse worthy causes from the pulpit, however, they are not always asked.

Uplifting a Race

Studies indicate that African-Americans are motivated to give when they feel they are “uplifting the African-American race” (Drezner, 2005; Gasman & Thompkins 2003; Spears 2008). “In response to slavery and segregation, Black philanthropic efforts became a means of ensuring survival through self-reliance and economic prosperity” (Tilghman, 2007, p.71). The idea of supporting one another and meeting needs has long existed in the Black community.

There is an adage, “If I’ve got a dollar, you’ve got a dime.” The meaning of that saying is, if I have it and you need some of it, it is yours...which exemplifies the sense of community that has been instrumental in the survival of African-Americans.

The National Black United Fund was established in 1972. This fund was established as a vehicle for African-Americans charitable giving toward African-American organizations working for human services, development, and social change. The National Black United Fund was a platform for the systematic charitable donations of African-Americans to institutions they believed would uplift African-American community as a whole (Pierce, 2008).

In an interview conducted to identify reasons linked toward giving to one’s alma mater, one college graduate shared, “We the children had to give back for those who were less fortunate because this courtesy had been given to my parents and other Blacks-my father always told us to remember the bridge that has brought us over. It is our duty to help pull those who are waiting across just as someone has done” [for us] (Holloman et al., 2003, p. 154).

This philosophy of “uplifting the race” was exemplified in a capitol campaign letter used by HBCU, Hampton Institute (1964). The letter read,

Next June, a young Negro who has the capacity to realize his dream of becoming a famous lawyer will be graduating from high school. To earn his diploma, he has had to surmount the handicaps of extreme poverty and the shortcomings of a segregated school system. He would like to attend Hampton Institute...without scholarship aid Hampton is out of the question for him...This able young Negro need not be consigned to a lifetime of unfulfilled potential, unrecognized ability and unremitting economic hardship. Won’t you help make real for him the promise of equal educational opportunity for all?

The Importance of Engaging Young Alumni

While engaging young alumni is not a motivation, literature suggests that institutions should approach and engage alumni much sooner. Nayman, Gianneshi and Mandel (1993) encouraged higher education institutions to begin instilling a culture of giving among students as soon as they arrive on the campus. Drezner (2007) suggested that higher education institutions are doing themselves a disservice by not developing a culture of giving in current students and by not instilling the importance of giving back to one's alma mater, while students are yet in the classroom. After all, today's student is tomorrow's alumni.

Gasman and Tudico (2008) shared the thoughts of Former President of Clark College of Atlanta,

“If you are going to develop responsive alumni you don't do it by talking to them when they are in their caps and gowns ready to go, and then expect them to respond by giving some handsome gifts to the college...the need is to develop a systematic plan for the alumni to contribute and stimulate their interest through what is done while they are at college for four years, and if you don't get a good response out of them during those four years, the chances are 99 (percent) that you won't get much of a response after they have gone” (p.18).

The African-American student enrollment at this Midwestern University has increased annually. In 2010, the University enrolled approximately 11,500 students. Of the population, nearly 1,725 students were African-American (indstate.edu). As suggested by Gasman (2006), the increasing numbers of African-American alumni are an untapped resource with an enormous fundraising potential for higher education; hence, the importance of developing fundraising

strategies to increase African-American alumni giving (Carson, 2001; Gasman, 2001; Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003; & Worth, 2002).

As past research indicated, alumni are motivated to give based on the experiences they have had (Gasman, 2001; Holloman, Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003). To promote positive undergraduate experience university programming and race-specific programming should be developed. The University's African-American Cultural Center serves current African-American current student body by providing opportunities to get engaged in the development and coordination of cultural specific programming. The Center promotes an atmosphere of self-identification, historical and contemporary culture, and promotes positive relationships. The African-American Cultural Center is a learning environment conducive not only students, but also administrators, faculty members, and citizens of the community to be made aware and appreciate the contributions made by African-Americans people. The Center provides an atmosphere conducive for addressing psychological and social needs of African-American students; such as general issues of race relations. The Center has an overall goal to make society aware of the need for racial justice.

According to Hunter et al. (1999), one's undergraduate experiences such as the participation in Greek life and extracurricular activities are also significant factors. Drezner (2008) suggested that students will become better alumni if they are guided as students by engaged alumni.

Training current student on what is expected from them as alumni can result in more active alumni engagement (Drezner, 2009). Many universities miss the opportunity to establish a habit of giving among recent college graduates by not approaching them upon graduation, but rather ten or more years down the road. Worth (2002) indicated that the new breeds of donors are

young and willing to be engaged. “Perhaps these new graduates cannot give back financially during their first few years on the job, but involving them in the institution in other ways can lead to financial payoffs down the road” (Gasman, 2006, n.p).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This thesis is a qualitative case study of African-American philanthropic motivations and fundraising strategies employed to increase African-American alumni giving at a Midwestern predominantly white institution. The lack of research and lack of understanding of African-American motivations and perceptions of philanthropic giving is the problem for this case study. The purpose of this study is to scrutinize the University's African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors, exploring their motivations for volunteering their time, talent, and treasure. This study expands our understanding in general and will assist Foundation leadership in expanding philanthropic activity and giving.

Population and Sample

This University is a predominantly white four year institution located in the Midwest. In 2011, enrollment was approximately 11,500 students. The population for this case study is the University's African-American alumni estimated at 6,000 individuals, overall. The sample was the newly developed University's African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors, (N = 7, 5 male participants, 2 female participants). As stated earlier, this group of individuals has been developed to spearhead the philanthropic efforts of the African-American alumni community.

Data Collection

The case study method was employed because this method allowed the researcher to take an in-depth, holistic examination of many related factors associated with the giving of the African-American Alumni of the Midwestern University. The case study methodology provided the researcher with the tools to explore the “case” within its context. Rather than look through a single lens, such as simply surveying the sample, the case study approach offered the researcher the ability to look through many lenses, thus enabling many facets to be revealed. As noted by Yin (2012) “...case studies are pertinent when your research addresses either a descriptive question...or an explanatory question...the other methods are not likely to provide the rich descriptions or the insightful explanations that might arise from doing a case study” (p. 5).

The study included seven personal interviews of the University African-American Alumni Board of Directors. The researcher provided each participant information regarding the interview being voluntary and confidential. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. An interview guide sheet that explored the Board member’s giving history and motivations for giving was developed and exhaustive field notes of each interview were taken. (See Appendix A). There were no audio nor video recording of the interviews. The researcher recorded the field notes and ensured they were accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of processing the field notes, the field notes were destroyed. Additional sources of data included African-American Alumni Council meeting minutes, relevant letters from engaged alumni, and observations from AAAC Board meetings.

Data Analysis Methods

Exhaustive field notes were analyzed thematically. Additionally, ex-post facto regarding the AAAC Board of Directors was analyzed. Through triangulation, the researcher analyzed the

data for commonalities. Commonalities found in the interviews, artifacts, and observations have been reported.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This thesis is a qualitative case study on African-American philanthropic motivations and fundraising strategies employed to increase African-American alumni giving at a predominantly white Midwestern institution,. The lack of research and lack of understanding of African-American motivations and perceptions of philanthropic giving is the problem for this case study. The purpose of this study is to case study the University's African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors, exploring their motivations for volunteering their time, talent, and treasure. This study expands our understanding in general and will assist Foundation leadership in expanding philanthropic activity and giving.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the University African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors, exploring their motivations for volunteering their time, talent, and treasure. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the giving history of the University's African-American Alumni in general and specifically to the University?
2. What influences African-American giving to this Midwestern University?
3. What are the African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors explicit expectations for their philanthropy to the Midwestern University?

Through the data collection, these research questions have been addressed by the themes which emerged regarding motivations toward philanthropic giving. The relevant themes include: the sense of obligation, the importance of the church in the black community, and the importance of this University's inclusion of the African-American student body. As the AAAC Board of Director's responses are presumed to be reflective of the University's African-American alumni body at large, some responses are sample specific. For instance, all members of the sample are members of a church.

The AAAC Board of Directors Make-up

The population for this case study is the African-American alumni of a Midwestern University. The sample was the University's newly developed African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors. This group of individuals has been developed to spearhead the philanthropic efforts of the University's African-American alumni community. (N =7, 5 male participants, 2 female participants). The board members range from 31 to 60 years of age. They range from years 1973-2004 in graduation from the University. All are considered successful professionals, as they are sales professionals, work in school corporations, are human resource consultants, and so forth. One board member is retired. Their individual annual salaries range from \$30k to \$200k.

What is the giving history of the University's African-American Alumni in general and specifically to this Midwestern University?

A vast majority of the AAAC Board indicated that the importance of giving was instilled in them at a young age through the examples of their parents, extended family, friends, and elders in the church. One Board member humorously shared being "forced into giving" by being made to do yard work and compelled to volunteer. Another shared that their philosophy of giving

came from their mother who “gave to a fault.” In spite of not having much of her own, their mother shared what she had by feeding the community and benevolently opening her pocketbook to make sure family members in need were able to pay their bills. The example of mentors graciously giving despite limited resources was the story of many of the AAAC Board of Directors.

Each member of the AAAC Board of Directors is philanthropic to some degree, supporting a vast array of nonprofits. Some of the nonprofits financially supported by these members include: 100 Black Men, Americares, the African-American Chamber of Commerce, the Boys and Girls Club of America, Boys Scouts, Diverse Focus, Goodwill, Inner City Missions, Kenneth Copeland Ministries, the NAACP, St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital, the United Negro College Fund, the United Way, the Urban League, and the YMCA. Not only does the Board support nonprofits financially, there are those that give their service through fraternal associations and give of their time at nursing homes and in grade schools tutoring and coaching young people. “I wanted someone there for me when I was growing up (and now I’m in a position) I can give back and share lessons of my own experiences,” shared a board member. The philosophy of “giving back” rang true for majority, if not all, of the board members. Some even communicated the specific words “give back.”

All of the AAAC Board of Directors indicated that they are a member of a church and give to their church, over 60 percent shared that their association with Christianity shaped their belief toward giving philanthropically. Many proudly shared that they tithe 10 percent of their income to the church to which they belong. Growing the institution, endorsing the mission of the church, reaching people, and believing God will individually bless them for obedience were the expectations for their giving through the church.

What influences African-American giving to this Midwestern University?

Interestingly enough, all of the AAAC Board of Directors reflected on their time at this specific University as a pleasant experience; despite the fact that many of the board members attended the University during the tumultuous post-Civil Rights period of time. Some participants reported experiencing racism from some professors and students, yet still they expressed that their feelings of pride in their alma mater overshadow the unjust experiences they faced during that time.

All shared with the researcher positive, “warm, and fuzzy” memories of the University. All of the AAAC Board of Directors indicated that this Midwestern University contributed immensely to their development. The consensus is that African-American alumni want to see this University continue to grow, attract, and retain students, especially diverse students. Yet, when the researcher focused the conversation on their motivations for giving back to their University the sentiment of some of alumni changed.

One board member, that attended college during the nineties, shared that they felt their experience at the University was positive as a whole, but in a sense, enrolled African-American students of their generation made “lemonade out of lemons.” As shared by this particular alumnus, the positive experience had at the University is one that African-American students cultivated among themselves, because the University was not inclusive and did not offer enough to African-American students. The alumnus, along with others, shared the feeling of not belonging to the University and not having many outlets. White students seemed to enjoy all of college life: trike races, homecoming, the Bally, concerts, and parties. While the African-American Cultural Center, a gathering place and outlet for African-American students, for years,

was the furthest building located on the campus; which sent the message to African-American students (now alumni) that “You’re here but you’re not here.”

These African-American students crossed the graduation threshold and became alumni. The importance of celebrating their college experience and friendships were present, yet the feeling of not belonging to the University were ever present, too. Again, making “lemonade out of lemons,” African-American alumni developed alumni groups and networks independent of the University. So, the AAAC being the first University recognized African-American alumni group, but it is not the first African-American alumni group. In fact, a couple of years prior to the development of the AAAC, independent African-American alumni that wrote letters to the University urging their alma mater to develop an alumni association for African-American alumni, started the momentum for the development of the AAAC.

A number of alumni shared that prior to the involvement with the AAAC, the University had not personally reached out to them, and the development of the AAAC was the first call of engagement they had received. Alumni shared that before the development of the AAAC, giving to the University was not a priority. Others shared that they had been solicited via telephone, yet felt it was a “slap in the face” to be asked for money after 30 years of feeling that the University did not care. However, as a result of the creation and engagement of the African-American Alumni Council, each member reported that their giving has increased, as they serve to support the initiatives, programs, and students the Council supports. One of the younger alumni shared that their interest in giving comes from the Foundation’s solicitations for engagement and simply asking for support. As one board member shared comically, their giving has increased because it is mandated through their involvement with the board.

What are the African-American Alumni Council Board of Directors explicit expectations for their philanthropy to the Midwestern University?

As financial giving from African-American alumni increases, there are explicit expectations for the funds received through the AAAC vehicle. A number of board members demanded transparency. A couple of alumni shared that their philanthropic support is not to be used toward building salaries. One alumnus shared that they “work too hard to just give it away!”

The Board of Directors desire that financial support go toward the recruitment and retention of African-American students and professors. One Board member shared, “If I give a thousand dollars to [the University], I would expect that a scholarship would support our African-American student’s books or tuition.” They expect the money be directed toward leadership development and scholarships for African-American students. Their individual expectations for their benevolence are aligned with the goals, initiatives, and expectations of the newly developed AAAC.

Other Findings

Additional information emerged in various interviews with the AAAC Board of Directors. One individual felt significance in sharing the importance in having University alumni as Foundation staff. This individual expressed the importance of being able to connect with the personnel that represents the University as well as the African-American Alumni Council. As this point of conversation was not guided by the interview guide sheet and therefore not explored in each interview, the researcher wonders if this one’s experience and perception is consistent with others.

Summary of Results

In summary, the results demonstrate that all members of the AAAC Board of Directors give philanthropically at some level. All are motivated to give to their alma mater based on the positive memories and relationships that were formed during their college experience. The expectation is that their financial support to the University will support the African-American students and staff of the University.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussions

In spite of the range of salaries for the Board of Directors, each member of the AAAC gives financially to nonprofit organizations. As is evident in the nonprofits represented and supported by the AAAC Board of Directors, the African-American alumni of Indiana State support nonprofit agencies that have been constructed to support people who are having difficulties due to circumstances beyond their control and agencies that help individuals achieve success. Thus refuting the notion that African-Americans do not give and confirming the theme of current literature that suggests that African-Americans give of their discretionary income, in fact, more than white counterparts (Anft & Lipman, 2003; Gasman, 2006).

All of the nonprofits supported by these African-American alumni are not race-specific, though the AAAC Board of Directors does proudly support many nonprofits that specifically address crisis and need in the African-American community. The AAAC board's resolve to give to their African-American community in order to meet needs and improve conditions reinforces the theme of giving in order to uplifting a race in literature.

Each member of the AAAC shared the name of more than one nonprofit organization to which they give; each included their church and their Midwestern University alma mater. As the literature indicates, Alumni make financial contributions to universities where they have had a

positive undergraduate experience and also continue to feel connected (Allen, 1981; Evans, 1987; Gasman 2001; Holloman, Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003).

Over 60 percent reported giving 10 percent of their earnings to the not-for-profit church of their belonging, thus exemplifying the importance of philanthropy in the African-American community. Holloman (2003) and White (2007) indicated that African-American young people that are raised and instructed in the church are taught in their early years the importance and obligation of giving philanthropically.

Board members shared that being asked to serve on the AAAC Board of Directors was the first call of engagement to some alumni in thirty years. Board members shared their frustration in being solicited for University dollars after decades of no communication with the University. However, when asked if they financially support the Midwestern University, each responded yes. The researcher was led to believe that being asked to give was not the reason for the frustration of the African-American alumni, but rather the approach and the University's level of communication leading up to the "ask." The alumni seemed to be offended that the University had let three decades pass before a call for both engagement and solicitation. This feeling of frustration for lack of communication between alumni and the University confirms the importance engaging young alumni and the importance of continual cultivation (Drezner, 2007; Gasman & Tudico, 2008). Board members shared that ultimately, they will give to the Midwestern University expecting that African-American students be provided with scholarship and opportunity.

Data from this study lends additional support to the issue raised by Gasman & Drezner (2009) that race-specific fund raising is significant for all higher education institutions and not only for HBCUs. Focusing institutional efforts on specific alumni groups may be one method of

successfully increasing their sense of engagement (Allen, 1981) and increase their likelihood of donating to this institution.

Recommendations

As evident in the responses from this Midwestern University's AAAC Board of Directors, the philosophy of giving philanthropically is significant to University African-American alumni. African-American alumni have shared their sense of obligation to give of their time, talent, and financial resources. They have shared the sense of obligation to give to those in need and the obligation to "give back" to the next generation in an effort to "push them forward." Because the notion of "uplifting the race" is accurate and alumni want to ensure that this University exists for future generations, alumni are willing to give.

1. As this institution works to develop race-specific fundraising strategies, it is important to work to make the alumni, both young and mature, feel as though they still belong to the University. Evidence suggests that there is a perception that the University does not do enough to keep in touch with alumni. These relationships must be nurtured for years; consistently encouraging engagement. As suggested by a board member, the University should not wait thirty years after graduation to approach alumni who is then assumed to be established and prepared to give back; young alumni must be nurtured and engaged. On a broader scale, it is the responsibility of the University to make current African-American students feel as though they belong to the University. The Foundation would be well served to encourage the University to make this a priority and to train them on how to do it effectively
2. Alumni suggested personally calling African-American alumni to update them on University developments, invite them back to campus, and invite alumni to events hosted

in larger hub cities. Some alumni believe that utilizing African-American students and alumni as solicitors on AAAC fundraising telethons will send a message of authenticity and increase African-American giving. After all, it is important in sales to make sure that the person selling the product (AAAC initiatives) relates to the customer (African-American alumni).

3. The data supports the recommendation that this Midwestern University's fundraisers embrace the black church as they develop strategies. As the literature shares and as the researcher's interview responses indicate, that for children brought up and instructed in the church, the importance of giving philanthropically is instilled at an early age. University development officers are encouraged to recruit potential students from the church base and also cultivate the relationships among alumni that are members of the African-American church. These students are more inclined to have an understanding regarding membership and the importance of giving and may be more inclined to understand the importance of giving to the alma mater as an alumnus. University recruiters are encouraged to utilize alumni that are members at each church to help in the recruitment of students from the churches.
4. The researcher recommends that University development officers and fundraisers engage the pastors of the churches. For many pastors, asking for money is second nature. For example, Universities could suggest that churches develop and support scholarships specific to students that align with their missions; thus increasing University revenue and potentially increasing enrollment.

5. The sample for this case study was clearly a convenience sample that was accessible for the researcher. Future research should continue to broaden the scope by utilizing a much larger random sampling technique.

Conclusion

There is no evidence that refutes the willingness of African-American alumni giving toward this Midwestern University. As the University has made progress, in regards to race relations, in the creation of the African-American Alumni Council, the call for authenticity, transparency, and relevancy is essential to the council's success. It is the desire of the researcher that the findings and recommendations of this research be considered in the development of the University's race-specific fundraising strategies.

Engaging and developing fundraising strategies for the untapped resource of this University's African-American alumni is important, yet the importance and feelings of inclusion to African-American alumni cannot be overstressed.

While this University's development officers and fundraisers may be inclined to develop African-American alumni groups and programming, invite only African-American alumni to African-American alumni events, send African-American recruiters to African-American students, the researcher has found that, on some levels, doing precisely that will be appropriate. However, African-American alumni are accustomed to developing programming for their own community; Moreover, the University will engage and motivate African-American alumni to give when the University is able to make African-Americans feel as though they belong to the entire University family.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDESHEET

(To be read aloud to each participant) The researcher is gathering data to examine the motivations of alumni philanthropic giving toward Indiana State University. Your participation is appreciated, voluntary, and confidential.

1. Tell me about your undergraduate experience at Indiana State University. (Would you say that it was a positive or negative experience?)
2. What is your favorite memory of your ISU experience?
3. Do you give, in general?
4. What motivates you to give in general?
5. To what charities do you give?
6. What are your expectations for the charities to which you give?
7. Are you a member of a church?
8. Do you regularly give to the church?
9. What are your expectations for your giving through the church?
10. (From your responses, it seems as though giving is important) Where did you learn the importance of giving?
11. Do you give to your higher education institution? Why or Why not?
12. What makes or would make you give to your university?
13. What are your explicit expectations for giving to the university?
14. Do you have any suggestions for ISU's development of race-specific fundraising strategies?

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