

# Athletic Giving and Academic Giving: Exploring the Value of SPLIT Donors

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This study introduces and explores the value of SPLIT donors (donors making gifts to both academic and athletic programs at educational institutions). Detailed empirical records of donor giving to three NCAA Division I institutions establish that significant value of SPLIT donors to educational institutions. In the short term, SPLIT donors give higher total average gifts than donors making athletics-only gifts. In the long-term, SPLIT donors are retained at a higher rate than donors making academics-only gifts. The combination of gift size and retention rate maximizes the lifetime value of SPLIT donors to the institution. However, despite having higher lifetime value to the institution, there may be a disincentive for athletic programs to cultivate SPLIT donors. While the average total gifts of SPLIT donors are higher than the average gifts of their counterparts supporting only athletic programs, their average gift to athletics is lower.

In 2008, private contributions to educational institutions reached an all time high, totaling \$31.6 billion (Masterson, 2009). The 6.2% growth in contributions during 2008 included increases in individual giving of 5.2% by alumni and 8.3% by nonalumni. Individual donors account for nearly 50% of the total monies raised despite decreasing alumni participation rates (percentage of an institution's alumni base making a gift). Yet, despite the record levels of support, many educational institutions find themselves in "a precarious position" (Shoemaker, 2004). The Council for Advancement and Support of Education predicts the first decline in giving in five years in Fiscal Year 2009 (Masterson, 2009).

A recent report issued by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education noted the decline in state support as a large reason for the increased attention paid to other revenue sources such as tuition and private support. According to the report, state funding reached a 25-year low in 2005. As well, prospects for improvement look bleak, with "fully 50 of the 50 states expected to experience long-term structural

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deficits in funds for postsecondary education” (Federal Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006, p. 5). The Council for Aid to Education noted that private support cannot itself replace state support for public universities (Council for Aid to Education, 2007). Many factors prevent the widespread use of private contributions to offset increased expenditures and/or declining state support. First, the growth in private support is not equally distributed. The top ten institutions in fundraising (only two of which are public) account for over 50% of the growth in donations. Further, the growth is driven primarily by increases in average gift size as opposed to increases in the number of donors, particularly alumni, making gifts. The growth in donations would appear more sustainable if there was also a substantial increase in the number of donors making gifts. Finally, many donors direct or restrict their gifts to certain programs, making it difficult to use the increased support to offset many increased operating expenditures (Strout, 2007). The increased prominence of athletic fundraising provides one such example. In some cases, all or a substantial portion of an institution’s growth in private support is being directed to the school’s athletic programs (Stinson & Howard, 2007).

Few studies have thoroughly examined how changes in individual giving patterns have resulted in the trends identified above. Most studies have a limited focus, investigating only specific donor groups based on the donors’ relationships with the institution (i.e., alumni vs. nonalumni) or by the university unit designated as the beneficiary of the gift (i.e., academic vs. athletic). Studies using alumni status to categorize donors have focused almost exclusively on alumni segments, presumably under the assumption that alumni are more likely than nonalumni to make financial gifts to an institution (e.g., Harrison & Mitchell, 1995; Okunade & Wunnava, 1994; Tom & Elmer, 1994). Other studies have grouped donors by area of support, primarily separating donors into groups that support academic programs (or the institution as a whole) and groups that support athletic programs. Again, most studies segmenting donors in this way tend to focus on only one group or the other. Several of these studies have focused on academic and/or general institutional support (e.g., Cunningham & Cochi-Ficano, 2002; Grimes & Chressanthis, 1994; Humphreys & Mondello, 2007; Rhoads & Gerking, 2000), while others have focused entirely on donors making gifts in support of intercollegiate athletic programs (e.g., Gladden, Mahony, & Apostolopoulou, 2005; Mahony, Gladden, & Funk, 2003).

Very few studies have examined both alumni and nonalumni, as well as both academic and athletic donors in the same paper. In a case study of Clemson University donors (McCormick & Tinsley, 1990), the researchers examined the relationship between giving to athletics and giving to academics. The authors concluded that at Clemson, a 10% increase in private support of athletics was associated with a 5% increase in private support of academic programs. The authors did not investigate whether these “symbiotic” effects occurred in the giving patterns of individual donors.

A longitudinal case study of donors at the University of Oregon (Stinson & Howard, 2004) also examined the relationship between athletic and academic support by both alumni and nonalumni donors, though at the individual donor level. Contrary to the symbiotic effects found at Clemson University (McCormick & Tinsley, 1990), the authors identified “crowding-out” effects whereby increases in athletic donations were associated with decreases in academic donations. The authors also analyzed individual giving patterns according to how donors

distributed their gift(s) across university programs. Donors were classified into one of three groups: athletic-only (ATH) donors, academic-only (ACAD) donors and SPLIT donors (donors making gifts to both athletic and academic programs). The giving patterns of ACAD donors were not influenced by the athletic-related independent variables. ATH donors' giving patterns correlated with major athletic events, especially related to the football team, including a major stadium renovation and significant bowl appearances. The most interesting finding, however, was the substantial shift in split donor allocation priorities. Between 1994 and 2003, split donors displayed an increasing preference for athletics. Each year showed a progressively greater share of their overall annual gift committed to athletics, with often a commensurately smaller share (and actual amount) directed to academics.

Importantly, the authors of the study did not address the fact that in eight of the nine years of data examined, SPLIT donors gave larger total gifts to the University of Oregon than either ATH or ACAD donors. Despite the diminished support for academics, the data indicated that SPLIT donors may be of greater value to the institution in terms of their *total* level of financial support than either of the other two groups of donors.

Given their value, and the fact that SPLIT donors comprised about a third of all alumni and a quarter of all nonalumni donors (Stinson & Howard, 2004), it is surprising that no previous research has specifically investigated these donors. The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, we seek to explore conceptually, using exchange theory, why SPLIT donors might respond with higher average total gift amounts than ATH and ACAD donors. Second, we seek to extend the limited available analyses focused on SPLIT donors in an effort to better understand their giving patterns. We will conclude the paper by examining the implications of this research for both theory and practice.

## Exchange Theory

Much academic work in the nonprofit marketing and fundraising literature has used exchange theory to explain individuals' philanthropic actions. McLeish (2001) outlined the role of exchange theory in fundraising. The author explored the role of self-interest in philanthropy, noting that just as in other types of exchange; both parties in fundraising should perceive greater benefits than costs in the charitable transaction. Donor segments are likely to place different values on various sets of benefits received in exchange for their donations. Some segments may value tangible benefits (e.g., access to football tickets, membership in a social club) while other segments may value an intangible benefit (e.g., warm-glow, identification with the organization) more highly. Implicitly, many donor segmentation systems use the differential value of tangible and intangible benefits to group donors. One such segmentation system was developed by Prince and File (1994). The authors grouped donors into seven segments based on the primary donor motives for making the gift:

- Communitarians: give to improve the communities in which they live
- Devout: give out of religious obligation
- Investors: give for tax breaks or other personal economic benefit
- Socialites: give for social access and benefit

- Repayers: give in exchange for previous or expected service from the organization
- Altruists: give to selflessly help others
- Dynasts: give out of family tradition

Whereas investors presumably placed higher value on tangible benefit, donors in the socialite and altruist segments may have placed higher value on intangible benefits. Other segments, repayers for example, may have seen the most value in a mix of tangible and intangible benefits.

**Intangible Benefits.** Traditional fundraising research focused on the intangible benefits associated with giving. This makes sense as philanthropic gifts have not, until recently, been closely associated with significant tangible benefit accruing to the donor. Philanthropic exchanges are valued in “affective” currency that would include many of the intangible social and psychological benefits associated with charitable activity (Schervish, 1997). Concepts such as warm-glow and prestigious affiliation (Harbaugh, 1998) have been proposed in the economics literature as intangible factors that offset the financial cost a donor incurs in making a charitable gift. Mael and Ashforth (1992) argued an important role for organizational identification in alumni decisions to give to their alma mater. Social identification has also been recognized as an important, yet intangible, benefit associated with giving to a museum (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995). Involvement with the nonprofit organization has been associated with donor decisions to give, as well (Wunderink, 2002). Venable, Rose, Bush, and Gilbert (2005) asserted that these social benefits of exchange in the nonprofit setting are typically more salient to the donor than financial or economic benefits (e.g., tax breaks).

Barnes and McCarville (2005) identified three categories of “incentives” including both tangible (addressed below) and intangible benefits that organizations offer in exchange for donors’ charitable gifts. Two of the three incentive categories can be considered intangible. Solidary incentives represent the benefits associated with social exchange, including membership in a certain group, affiliation with a prestigious organization, and access to social events or settings. Purposive incentives represent the psychic benefits gained by the donor through the exchange with the charitable organization. A sense of making a difference and “warm-glow” are examples of purposive benefits. Donors making gifts to the organization (in this case, a symphony) seeking solidary or purposive benefits were categorized as Philanthropists.

Several predictive models have been developed that rely most heavily on intangible exchange to explain charitable actions. The Identity Salience Model of Nonprofit Relationship Success (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2002) proposed a central role for social identification and the desired donor affiliation with beneficiary organizations. In his Model of Individual Charity Giving Behavior, Sargeant (1999) included many “intrinsic determinants” to explain an individual’s giving behavior. These determinants are intangibles centered on social and psychic benefits donors receive in exchange for their gifts. Mathur (1996) empirically examined the social exchange motives of donors over 50 years of age, concluding that intangible benefits of social interaction (inclusion) and control (voice in decision making) were important predictors of giving. Clearly, intangible benefits are an important

consideration in charitable giving, but recently, research has more directly and prominently examined the role of tangible benefits in fundraising.

**Tangible Benefits.** Many authors have focused on the tangible benefits donors receive in exchange for their gifts as primary motivations for making those gifts. Ostrander and Schervish (1990) contended that “donors and recipients both give and get in the social relation that is philanthropy” (p. 93). Schervish (1997), in his Identification Theory of Charitable Giving, asserted that models of charitable behavior rooted in altruism are insufficient to explain donor behavior. Rather, he indicated that the tangible benefits received by the donor in exchange for a gift must also be considered. Donors contributing most of their gifts to organizations from which they receive self-benefit participate in “consumption philanthropy” (Schervish, 1997). These donors are inclined to give amounts that are consistent with the benefit they have received, or expect to receive from the organization. For example, a donor motivated to give a gift to a college or university in exchange for football tickets would likely be classified as participating in consumption philanthropy. Barnes and McCarville (2005) also studied the role of tangible benefit as a primary motive in giving to a symphony. The authors identified material incentives representing tangible benefits that are associated with the economic value of a gift. Material incentives include tax benefits and items received by the donor in exchange for their gift (e.g., items in a charitable auction, apparel with the organization’s logo). Donors motivated by these material incentives were classified as Patrons.

The role of tangible benefit may be particularly important in giving to college and university athletic programs. For many intercollegiate athletic programs, “required” gifts that are made in exchange for the right to purchase football tickets have become a large source of revenue (Fulks, 2005; Howard & Crompton, 2004). These “required” gifts are based at least in part on the desire for the tangible, commercial benefits associated with the tickets and, therefore, are difficult to explain through models of giving centered only on intangible benefits.

Left mostly unconsidered are transactions that involve both tangible and intangible benefits. In many contexts, such as with SPLIT donors, the exchange may be predicated on both tangible (e.g., football tickets) and intangible (e.g., membership in club, affiliation with alma mater) benefits. Previous research has indicated that giving to athletics and giving to academics are independent decisions influenced by different factors (Stinson & Howard, 2007). It is conceivable that SPLIT donors may be seeking two different sets of benefits by making gifts to both programs. While some conceptualizations of giving have included both sets of benefits, the relationship between these tangible and intangible benefits has remained largely unexamined. For example, Barnes and McCarville (2005), while identifying both tangible and intangible incentives, did not examine the interactions between those incentives nor did Schervish (1997) comment thoroughly on the relationship between commercial and adoption philanthropy. It seems possible that each set of benefits may result in different types of charitable behavior. For example, donors participating in consumption philanthropy might be inclined to give amounts that are consistent with the tangible benefit they have received, or expect to receive from the organization, potentially creating a ceiling effect. These donors will not give more than the economic value received in exchange for the gift. In contrast, when donors support organizations or individuals where the benefit from the gift accrues to a beneficiary other than the donor (Adoption Philanthropy) the value of self-benefit may be a less important determinant of gift amount.

The Services-Philanthropic Effects Model (Brady, Noble, Utter, & Smith, 2002) does conceptualize intent to give to organizations that offer both tangible (service or product) and intangible (physic or social) benefits to the donor. Unlike Barnes and McCarville (2005), who grouped donors into mostly tangible (i.e., Patrons) and intangible (i.e., Philanthropists) benefits segments, Brady et al. (2002) asserted that giving to these “hybrid” organizations is the result of the “joint effects” of a donor’s satisfaction with the product or service (commercial exchange) and the social and psychic motives that are more commonly linked with philanthropic exchange. While this model allows for the consideration of both tangible and intangible benefits, it does not consider if or when one set of benefits may predominate over the other. For example, if a football team wins a national championship, thus increasing the commercial value of tickets, will the commercial exchange effects predominate over philanthropic exchange effects? It seems quite possible that the answer may depend on donor type. An ATH donor in this context may act more similarly to a Patron and focus almost exclusively on commercial exchange, while a SPLIT donor may continue to balance joint effects in their giving. The next section of this paper seeks to understand the behavior of SPLIT donors by applying these conceptualizations of exchange.

### **SPLIT Donors and Exchange**

Colleges and universities provide a rich context in which to study donor decision making, as ample tangible and intangible benefits are available for donors making gifts to various programs (Brady et al., 2002). This potentially allows donors to use a variety of motives or decision-making criteria to make giving decisions in multiple contexts. Stinson and Howard (2007) contended that the set of benefits offered by athletic and academic programs tend to be quite different. Athletic programs have a long history of seeking charitable contributions in exchange for commercial benefits such as tickets and parking (Gladden, Mahony, & Apostolopoulou, 2005). In contrast, academic programs typically offer very little in terms of tangible benefit that would support commercial exchange. In addition, the potential social benefits associated with academic giving are more limited (as compared with athletics), especially for low or moderate levels of giving. While there are often various “clubs” that a donor may join, such as the President’s Club, in exchange for a certain level of academic gift; rarely do these “clubs” provide an actual social outlet. The social and psychological benefits associated with naming of buildings, endowed programs, and other similar giving programs are limited to only the highest levels of academic donors. While for most donors there may be some prestige associated with membership in a given club (Harbaugh, 1998), the benefits of academic giving are often less commercial in nature. As a result, academic donors may be more influenced by the adoptive benefit (e.g., students receiving scholarships) than self-benefit. If so, academic giving may be more closely related to the intangible benefits of philanthropic exchange than the giving supporting intercollegiate athletic programs.

Given the potentially different sets of benefits received (and, therefore, presumably sought) by donors to athletics programs and donors to academic programs, it is critical to understand the relationship between the two types of giving. An important consideration is whether a donor’s decision to give to athletics is related to the decision to give to academics. Stinson and Howard (2007) concluded that the decision to give to athletics was independent of the decision to give to academics. Donors often

cited other forms of entertainment (e.g., vacations, theater packages) as competition for their athletic gifts. Other charities (e.g., American Cancer Society, church) are often mentioned as competition for academic gifts (Stinson & Howard, In Press). In other words, donors evaluated the potential exchange associated with a donation to each respective program separately. Nevertheless, the authors acknowledged an apparent "indirect" relationship between the two types of giving. For donors making gifts to both athletic and academic programs at an institution, capacity constraints may result in the donor's inability to support each program as fully as if the donor were giving to only one or the other (Stinson & Howard, 2007). Such a pattern is indicated in the University of Oregon data reported by Stinson and Howard (2004). While the total average gift of SPLIT donors was higher than other donors in most years, the SPLIT donors' average gifts to athletics and academics, respectively, were lower than the average gifts of their ATH and ACAD donor counterparts. Still, the higher average total gift by SPLIT donors indicated that there was an institutional incentive to cultivate and solicit these donors.

Some authors have noted that successful athletic programs may help institutions attract new donors (e.g., Daughtrey & Stotlar, 2000; Stinson & Howard, 2008). Successful athletic programs increase the demand for priority seating, tickets, and other benefits associated with athletic events. As both the tangible and social value increased due to a team's success, so did the ability to attract donations in exchange for these benefits. The ability of successful athletic programs to attract additional donors to make a gift suggested that a commercial exchange model may be well suited for soliciting new donors. However, the size of gift may have been significantly influenced by the perceived economic value of the desired benefits (consistent with Barnes and McCarville's discussion on material incentives). For example, athletic donors may have exhibited similar behavior, giving only at levels commensurate with the value of the tickets, parking, and club access that were typically received in exchange for athletic gifts, creating a potential ceiling on the amount of gift.

Alternatively, donors whose giving is motivated more intrinsically (consistent with Barnes and McCarville's solidary and purposive incentives), are less likely to determine the value of their gift solely in terms of tangible self-benefit. As a result, any ceiling effects attached to the tangible value of a commercial exchange may disappear as the donor also values the intangible benefits and the benefits that accrue to the beneficiary of the gift (i.e., adoptive philanthropy). The end result is that a more philanthropic exchange rooted in intangible benefits, or a combination of commercial (tangible) and philanthropic (intangible) exchange, may offer a platform for eliminating the potential ceiling effects of commercial exchange. Still, it is difficult for a new donor (with no existing relationship to the organization) to immediately proceed to "adoptive philanthropy," that may be centered on organizational identification, involvement, or other intangible benefits (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Schervish, 1997; Wunderink, 2002). Attracting new donors, by offering valuable tangible benefits, may allow the organization an opportunity to develop a relationship that will support a shift to a more philanthropic exchange, ultimately increasing potential levels of charitable support.

It is evident, given the magnitude of their institutional support, that SPLIT donors are a valuable donor segment deserving of more careful study. Both the limited available empirical consideration of SPLIT donors (Stinson & Howard, 2004) and the various exchange models reviewed, indicate SPLIT donors may be an extremely valuable donor segment. This paper, through extensive empirical analysis, seeks to specifically examine the value and cultivation of SPLIT donors at three large, public universities. Among the critical research questions (RQ) that the study attempts to answer are:

RQ1: Do SPLIT donors contribute more in total annual dollars to universities than donors supporting only athletic or academic programs (Replication and extension to multiple universities of Stinson and Howard's (2004) case study)?

RQ2: To what extent do ATH donors eventually expand their giving to support academic programs? Is there evidence that athletic boosters can be converted to provide broader institutional support?

RQ3: If ATH donors can be converted into SPLIT donors, how will their giving patterns toward the athletics change?

Findings central to these questions will be interpreted through the models and conceptualizations of exchange theory discussed above.

## Methods

The data for the study were collected from three selected institutions. Institutions were chosen both as a result of their willingness to share detailed donor information and their variance on selected institutional criteria, including records of athletic success, academic rankings, geographic location, and size. Athletic success and academic ranking have been used previously to explain disparate findings of the relationship between athletic giving and academic giving (Stinson & Howard, 2007). Regional differences in giving are have been noted (Gittell & Tebaldi, 2006), and size of the alumni base has been employed as a control on academic support (e.g., Cunningham & Cochi-Ficano, 2002). While many other institutional factors may be important determinants of giving and have been previously studied, the availability of detailed donor records at these three institutions necessitated a trade-off between level of detail and number of institutions. While the results here may, therefore, not be generalizable to all institutions, the depth of data allows for the most detailed consideration of SPLIT donors to date. Table 1 provides an overview of each institution.

Data were collected and analyzed using a multimethod approach. The primary empirical portion of the study involved the analysis of over 15,000 donors making annual gifts of \$1,000 or more to one of the three institutions. While donors at this level comprise only about 5% of total donors to the institutions studied, their gifts account for over 70% of the total dollars raised from individuals by these schools, making these critical and valuable donors. Further, this allowed us to include the

**Table 1 Profile of Participating Institutions**

	School #1	School #2	School #3
NCAA classification	I-A	I-A	I-A
Location (city size)*	West (Midsize)	East (Urban)	South (Urban)
Enrollment*	16,529	38,479	14,995
Number of Alumni Solicited	115,414	273,272	88,414
Number of Major Donors	2309 (51% ATH; 28% ACAD; 21% SPLIT)	6630 (30% ATH; 43% ACAD; 27% SPLIT)	2676 (54% ATH; 39% ACAD; 7% SPLIT)
Middle 50% Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Critical Reading*	490–610	550–650	490–610
Middle 50% SAT Math*	500–610	580–680	500–640
Middle 50% American College Testing (ACT) Composite*	NA	25–29	21–27
<i>US News and World Report</i> ranking classification	Tier 2/3	Tier 1	Tier 3/4
Athletic Tradition (Bowl, NCAA appearances since 1960)**	18,6	39,24	13,34
Athletic Budget	\$44.6M	\$101.8M	\$31.9M
Football Record over Past 12 Years	94–50	116–33–3	89–54

\*Information collected from The College Board

\*\*Measure adapted from Rhoads and Gerking (2000) and Stinson and Howard (2007).

entire population of “major” donors to each university in the empirical study. Detailed records of annual giving were collected for each of the donors from Fiscal Year 1994 through Fiscal Year 2005, resulting in a data set in excess of 200,000 gifts. The detailed, individual giving records allowed for the analysis of changes in individual giving patterns. Capital and other one-time gifts were excluded from the analysis as they are irregular in nature and confound understanding of the changing patterns of more regular annual giving. Donors were categorized by both alumni status and by gift type: Athletics only (ATH), Academics only (ACAD), and SPLIT donors. All empirical data were analyzed using SPSS 14.0.

## Analysis and Results

### Gift Support of SPLIT Donors

The first question analyzed was whether SPLIT donors supported their respective institutions with larger gifts than their counterparts supporting only athletic or academic programs. Several measures of SPLIT donor support were examined in comparison with other donor groups. First, year-to-year means were calculated for ATH, ACAD, and SPLIT donors for each of the three institutions. The means provided an obvious measure of absolute annual dollar value of these donors to the institution. Second, two sets of retention rates were calculated for each group of donors. Retention rates combined with annual gift amounts to determine the lifetime value of the donor (see Sargeant & Woodliffe (2007) for a thorough discussion of donor loyalty and retention). Those donors making the highest annual contributions while being retained at a high rate have the most lifetime value to an institution. SPLIT donors fit that profile at all three institutions studied. Year-to-year data for each institution are reported in Tables 2–5.

As indicated in Tables 2–5, the total size of the average annual gift made by SPLIT donors was substantially larger than the average size gift made by ATH donors, and either higher or equal to the average gift of ACAD donors at all three institutions. While the degree of difference between the groups of donors varied by institution and year, the pattern across the schools clearly indicated that donors supporting both athletic and academic programs were providing increasingly higher levels of individual support to the institution than donors only supporting athletics.

The value of SPLIT donors was enhanced further by their high retention rates. Examination of year-to-year retention rates for each group (Table 5) showed that at all three schools, SPLIT donors were retained at significantly higher rates than ACAD donors, and at rates similar to or significantly higher (Institution #2) than ATH donors. The retention of SPLIT donors was even more significant when “lifetime,” as opposed to year-to-year, retention rates were examined. Lifetime retention was calculated based on a donor’s continuous giving since the year of their first gift (censored at 1991; all previous gifts coded as FY 1991 first gift). On average, the lifetime retention rate of SPLIT donors was greater than 60% over the period studied. ATH donors were retained at just under 50%, while ACAD donors were retained at about 21% over the 12 years included in the sample. At all three institutions, SPLIT donors were retained at significantly higher rates than ACAD donors, and at both Institutions #1 and #3, SPLIT donors were retained at significantly higher rates than ATH donors. At Institution #2, the difference between SPLIT and ATH donors was not significant. Still, the combination of making larger average gifts than ATH donors, and maintaining higher retention rates than ACAD donors made SPLIT donors an extremely valuable donor segment to the universities

### SPLIT Donor Cultivation

Despite the heightened institutional value of SPLIT donors, less than a third of all donors at the three institutions studied gave to *both* athletic and academic programs. One plausible explanation for the relatively small proportion of SPLIT donors is that many institutions have separate fundraising units for athletics and

**Table 2 Average Gift Size for Athletics Only Donors by Institution**

Year	School #1			School #2			School #3		
	# donors (Lifetime retention rate)*	Avg. gift	# donors (Lifetime retention rate)	Avg. gift	# donors (Lifetime retention rate)	Avg. gift	# donors (Lifetime retention rate)	Avg. gift	
1991	202 (37.5)	\$1479	367 (59.4)	\$2803	40 (100.0)	\$645			
1992	240 (37.0)	\$2453	392 (49.5)	\$3255	33 (100.0)	\$27138			
1993	195 (18.1)	\$1711	366 (51.5)	\$3768	1404 (49.5)	\$1630			
1994	249 (21.0)	\$2213	378 (56.3)	\$3321	1472 (35.1)	\$1644			
1995	362 (40.0)	\$2097	412 (54.9)	\$3066	1714 (29.9)	\$1632			
1996	429 (36.6)	\$1799	451 (78.4)	\$4053	1705 (45.2)	\$1600			
1997	514 (40.6)	\$2133	510 (63.7)	\$5202	1537 (22.3)	\$1552			
1998	554 (40.7)	\$2074	591 (54.8)	\$5021	2029 (17.3)	\$8283			
1999	596 (44.3)	\$2119	729 (63.2)	\$4951	1702 (38.8)	\$1802			
2000	676 (40.0)	\$2099	928 (71.5)	\$4664	1623 (40.0)	\$1858			
2001	853 (53.3)	\$2295	1555 (65.2)	\$3471	1729 (36.1)	\$1918			
2002	1124 (40.7)	\$2749	1552 (58.4)	\$4456	2101 (44.3)	\$2391			
2003	1475 (41.7)	\$2841	1697 (74.1)	\$3919	2085 (41.2)	\$2347			
2004	1493 (44.4)	\$2742	1834 (77.4)	\$4331	2030 (54.1)	\$2371			
2005	1232	\$2453	2001	\$4071	1290	\$2939			
Avg. Lifetime Retention Rate	38.27%		62.73%		46.7%				

\*Lifetime retention rates calculated as the percentage of donors who make a first gift in a particular year who are retained throughout the course of the study. All from before Fiscal Year 1991 were coded as the first gift year being Fiscal Year 1991.

**Table 3 Average Gift Size for Academics Only Donors by Institution**

Year	School #1			School #2			School #3		
	# donors (Lifetime retention rate)	Avg. gift							
1991	237 (13.6)	\$2556	1143 (23.7)	\$8344	1233 (23.7)	\$4692			
1992	222 (26.0)	\$1992	1145 (21.6)	\$9567	1344 (20.8)	\$4132			
1993	271 (13.0)	\$4000	1238 (15.9)	\$8813	1128 (31.6)	\$5510			
1994	282 (7.5)	\$2919	1420 (17.2)	\$9071	1003 (14.6)	\$11685			
1995	336 (22.2)	\$3301	1480 (16.1)	\$11024	783 (17.6)	\$9685			
1996	358 (23.4)	\$3272	1713 (18.8)	\$8873	819 (14.4)	\$8562			
1997	390 (22.4)	\$3066	1866 (22.2)	\$9771	803 (17.0)	\$11377			
1998	407 (20.0)	\$2852	2018 (21.4)	\$10979	800 (20.3)	\$16970			
1999	460 (25.7)	\$3396	2436 (17.6)	\$13228	801 (12.9)	\$21322			
2000	471 (23.4)	\$3256	2517 (19.4)	\$9188	891 (19.4)	\$29921			
2001	483 (28.4)	\$3393	2393 (19.4)	\$10019	845 (20.6)	\$19892			
2002	541 (31.7)	\$3290	2490 (21.6)	\$10129	831 (18.0)	\$22249			
2003	597 (33.5)	\$3067	2811 (26.9)	\$16416	779 (20.5)	\$14147			
2004	606 (37.3)	\$3120	2698 (33.8)	\$11092	752 (19.3)	\$10572			
2005	680	\$3294	2824	\$16667	923	\$7998			
Avg. Lifetime Retention Rate	23.43%		21.11%		19.33%				

Lifetime Retention Rate Comparisons

- Institution #1: SPLIT (64.92) more than ATH (38.27)  $t(13)=4.537$   $p=.001$ ; more than ACAD (23.43)  $t(13)=6.507$   $p=.000$
- Institution #2: SPLIT (68.71)  $n/s$  more than ATH (62.73)  $t(13)=1.418$   $p=.180$ , more than ACAD (21.11)  $t(13)=12.993$   $p=.000$
- Institution #3: SPLIT (65.91) more than ATH (46.7)  $t(13)=2.324$   $p=.037$ ; more than ACAD (19.33)  $t(13)=4.882$   $p=.000$

**Table 4 Average Gift Size for SPLIT Donors by Institution**

Year	School #1			School #2			School #3		
	# donors (Lifetime retention rate)	Avg. gift							
1991	108 (100.0)	\$4991	353 (88.3)	\$7303	13 (100.0)	\$1044			
1992	125 (100.0)	\$5163	406 (62.7)	\$7229	14 (100.0)	\$840			
1993	147 (25.0)	\$3571	415 (66.6)	\$5715	503 (50.0)	\$2666			
1994	248 (0.0)	\$2859	469 (90.5)	\$5913	404 (42.8)	\$2667			
1995	324 (63.9)	\$3253	545 (70.0)	\$6058	255 (25.0)	\$4900			
1996	333 (69.2)	\$3242	633 (80.7)	\$9873	247 (75.0)	\$4874			
1997	409 (68.3)	\$3274	724 (64.4)	\$9819	238 (100.0)	\$9618			
1998	453 (72.5)	\$3354	806 (69.54)	\$10005	251 (20.0)	\$21397			
1999	492 (66.6)	\$3142	938 (69.1)	\$11245	226 (50.0)	\$13191			
2000	468 (83.8)	\$3169	1297 (57.0)	\$12726	226 (100.0)	\$6073			
2001	607 (60.2)	\$3599	1624 (70.3)	\$12640	220 (0.0)	\$13010			
2002	644 (62.9)	\$3954	1598 (53.0)	\$11007	195 (100.0)	\$11994			
2003	472 (56.6)	\$4177	1668 (64.6)	\$28598	274 (60.0)	8936			
2004	433 (80.0)	\$4129	1681 (55.3)	\$14850	239 (100.00)	\$4663			
2005	526	\$4284	1805	\$10282	158	\$12128			
Avg. Lifetime Retention Rate	64.92%		68.71%		65.91%				

## Average Gift Size Comparisons

- Institution #1: SPLIT (3704) more than ATH (2388)  $t(5398)=14.964$   $p=0.000$ ; more than ACAD (3040)  $t(9727)=6.14$   $p=0.000$
- Institution #2: SPLIT (12817) more than ATH (4116)  $t(15064)=4.039$   $p=0.000$ ; n/s more than ACAD (11389)  $t(19181)=0.622$   $p=.534$
- Institution #3: SPLIT (8957) more than ATH (2757)  $t(3955)=6.066$   $p=0.000$ ; n/s more than ACAD (12241)  $t(18927)=-1.673$   $p=.094$

**Table 5 Year to Year Retention Rates**

FY	School #1				School #2				School #3			
	Total	ATH	ACAD	SPLIT	Total	ATH	ACAD	SPLIT	Total	ATH	ACAD	SPLIT
1992	76.25	84.37	59.09	100	84.38	86.92	77.51	100	67.39	57.5	67.45	92.23
1993	89.28	87.03	91.83	88.88	86.04	89.81	82.05	94.33	101	100	60.63	100
1994	118	110	116	125	86.94	92.69	80.86	100	85.1	96.93	73.13	78.92
1995	54.46	65.06	47.05	54.54	87.78	91.56	81.4	104	86.55	100	62.22	62.12
1996	56.04	67.06	46.18	53.06	87.62	92.38	82.83	98.07	92.58	96.38	83.39	95.29
1997	74.67	84.46	62.06	80.76	87.21	97.92	81.49	95.87	83.18	83.57	78.75	95.14
1998	74.26	79.56	60.89	92.36	87.9	94.91	82.4	97.89	103	110	80.69	103
1999	79.12	83.29	73.8	79.19	88.28	96.74	83.39	94.82	82.11	82.1	79.87	89.24
2000	81.16	90.85	69.38	86.17	86.93	91.74	78.18	106	93.22	93.88	90.01	99.55
2001	86.53	91.36	70	110	85.26	94.44	77.79	94.78	85.84	102	76.87	97.34
2002	82.83	84.47	80.41	82.26	86.38	88.84	81.93	92.08	99.05	100	78.69	88.18
2003	81.98	83.5	67.27	102	87.32	94.54	80.95	92.31	92.54	93.81	80.26	102
2004	80.37	80.74	76.74	83.98	80.42	92.61	68.74	90.59	90	95.06	81	86.49
2005	80.07	72.44	84.01	108	80.71	92.29	67.39	91.32	74.1	62.06	102	66.1
	79.64	83.15	71.76	89.01	85.94	92.67	79.06	96.57	88.26	90.94	78.21	89.68

\*\*Retention rates over 100 possible given renewed donations of lapsed donors.

Year to Year Retention Rate Comparisons

- Institution #1: SPLIT (89.01) n/s more than ATH (83.15) t(13)=1.585 p=.137; more than ACAD (71.76) t(13)=4.406 p=.001
- Institution #2: SPLIT (96.57) more than ATH (92.67) t(13)=2.458 p=.029; more than ACAD (79.06) t(13)=11.881 p=.000
- Institution #3: SPLIT (89.68) n/s more than ATH (90.94) t(13)=-287 p=.779; more than ACAD (78.21) t(13)=2.531 p=.025

academics (Howard & Crompton, 2004). A majority of large-scale athletic programs have established their own athletic support organizations. The primary, if not exclusive, purpose of these fundraising units is to raise money in support of the athletic department. At the same time, most U.S. universities have established independent, nonprofit foundations for the express purpose of soliciting gifts in support of broad-based academic initiatives (e.g., student scholarships, endowed professorships, new buildings). Donor interviews from previous studies (Stinson & Howard, *In Press*) suggested that there may be considerable competition between the athletics and academic fundraising units. Where competition does exist, it is reasonable to assume that donor prospects would likely see solicitation appeals that reflect only the fundraising priorities of the organization making the presentation, either the University Foundation or the athletic support organization. Rarely, if ever, would a prospective donor be presented with a "menu" combining opportunities to give to both academic and athletic programs. Without definitive data, it is not possible to calculate the extent to which the two fundraising entities impact each others' efforts. This lack of cross-solicitation may explain why such a relatively small proportion of all institutional donors gave to both athletics and academics.

Still, the results of the current study revealed that a number of contributors who had previously given only to athletics became SPLIT donors. Empirical analysis of the current data set uncovered that on average from 5% to 15% of ATH donors expanded their giving each year from strictly athletics to become SPLIT donors (See Table 6). From a university perspective, this finding was encouraging given the broader institutional benefits realized from SPLIT donors.

Table 6 demonstrates substantial variation across the three institutions in the proportion of donors choosing to expand their giving beyond athletics from year to year. While a full explanation for these differences is beyond the scope of this study, determining why one institution was able to achieve sustained "conversion" rates of almost 15% as compared with 5% at another deserves careful consideration.

None of the institutions included in this study had explicit strategies for cultivating athletic donors into SPLIT donors. However, the schools employed very different fundraising structures. The two schools with higher percentages of SPLIT donors and higher conversion rates of ATH donors to SPLIT donors both used more integrated athletic and academic fundraising structures than the other school. Institution #2, which demonstrated the most success in developing SPLIT donors, had a fully integrated structure, whereby athletic and academic fundraisers reported through a unified administrative structure. Development officers assigned to the athletic department reported directly to the same Vice President for University Advancement as the academic development officers. Appeals to donor prospects were carefully coordinated and tangible giving incentives were often shared across program areas. Donors making significant gifts to academic programs were accorded many of the same privileges (access to preferred season ticket packages for football, VIP parking) as those making gifts to the athletic program. Such a structure allowed for better sharing of information, common evaluation, and incentive systems to maximize giving, and provided a platform for communicating cross-cultivation solicitations. Clearly, it is impossible to generalize from these three schools. Still, examining the role of fundraising structure in cultivating SPLIT donors offered a promising path for future research.

**Table 6 Annual Conversion rates of ATH to SPLIT donors**

FYear	Institution #1			Institution #2			Institution#3		
	ATH to SPLIT	Previous FY ATH	ATH to SPLIT%	ATH to SPLIT	Previous FY ATH	ATH to SPLIT%	ATH to SPLIT	Previous Year ATH	ATH to SPLIT%
1992	24	202	11.88	51	367	13.90	2	40	5.00
1993	56	240	23.33	67	392	17.09	8	33	24.24
1994	24	195	12.31	61	366	16.67	72	1404	5.13
1995	28	249	11.24	69	378	18.25	60	1472	4.08
1996	18	362	4.97	70	412	16.99	101	1714	5.89
1997	34	429	7.93	67	451	14.86	90	1705	5.28
1998	47	514	9.14	93	510	18.24	78	1537	5.07
1999	36	554	6.50	96	591	16.24	114	2029	5.62
2000	40	596	6.71	126	729	17.28	109	1702	6.40
2001	65	676	9.62	151	928	16.27	78	1623	4.81
2002	50	853	5.86	222	1555	14.28	65	1729	3.76
2003	125	1124	11.12	202	1552	13.02	140	2101	6.66
2004	75	1475	5.08	241	1697	14.20	94	2085	4.51
2005	169	1493	11.32	211	1834	11.50	71	2030	3.50
	791	8962	8.83	1727	11762	14.68	1082	21204	5.10

## Effect of Cross-Cultivation

An important concern for the institution considering developing an explicit strategy to cross-cultivate donors was determining the impact the transition to SPLIT donor would have on the donor's giving patterns. While the analysis above provided supporting evidence that SPLIT donors gave more, and were retained at equal or higher rates, it did not provide a clear indication of how individual donors changed their gift-giving behavior when becoming a SPLIT donor. To explore the impacts of this transition, the change in giving for each donor moving from a strictly ATH donor to a SPLIT donor at each of the three institutions was examined. At each of the three schools, donors making the transition to SPLIT donor significantly increased their individual total annual gift to the institution. However, one apparent consequence of this broader institutional generosity was diminished support for athletics. As shown in Table 7, SPLIT donors, on average, slightly reduced their annual giving to athletics when their contribution expanded to include academic programs. Changing gift patterns for these donors are reported in Table 7.

An examination of giving patterns found that payment levels required by athletic programs in order for donors to secure prescribed benefits (preferential seating, access to coaches) were highly correlated with the actual amounts given annually by athletic department supporters. To determine the extent to which athletic giving may be commercially motivated, the fixed effects of "required gift"

**Table 7 Changing Gift Patterns of First-year SPLIT Donors**

<b>Institution #1</b>	
<b>ATH to SPLIT Donors (Year 1 of Switch) <i>N</i> = 814</b>	
Total Gift Change	861.24
ACAD Gift Change	919.71
ATH Gift Change	-58.02
<b>Institution #2</b>	
<b>ATH to SPLIT Donors (Year 1 of Switch) <i>N</i> = 1606</b>	
Total Gift Change	650.36
ACAD Gift Change	654.88
ATH Gift Change	-4.51
<b>Institution #3</b>	
<b>ATH to SPLIT Donors (Year 1 of Switch) <i>N</i> = 1146</b>	
Total Gift Change	1038.26
ACAD Gift Change	1183.14
ATH Gift Change	-144.88

amounts to secure football tickets were calculated for ATH and SPLIT donors at each of the three schools in the sample. Theoretically, a donor making a commercially-motivated gift, seeking only the ticket benefits offered by the institution, should give no more than required to receive preferred seating. In this case, the fixed effects should be close to \$1.00 of gift for each \$1.00 required to access the ticket benefits (For example, a donor needing to give \$500 to secure season ticket benefits should give close to \$500). Table 8 reports the fixed effects estimates for ATH and SPLIT donors at each of the three schools. Again, while there was interinstitutional variance, in general, the results indicated that donors were highly responsive to the required gift amounts when determining their level of support for athletics. At institution #2, both donor groups gave within ten cents on the dollar of the required gift amounts. At Institution #3, donors were within 15 cents on the dollar. At both institutions, nearly half of donors gave exactly the amount required to secure football tickets. Donors at Institution #1 were not as responsive to the required gift levels. This may have stemmed from the limited number of required giving levels at Institution #1, where during the time frame of this study, the highest annual required gift level was \$1,500 per year (as compared with \$100,000 at Institution #2 and \$4,800 at Institution #3). The percentage of donors giving at required minimum levels was similar at Institution #1 to the other two institutions. It is important to note that actual ticket prices and costs were not considered here. At each of the three institutions, making the required gift only allowed the donor the right to actually purchase the tickets in the respective preferred seating area.

The empirical evidence indicates that for a large percentage of donors the required gift amount essentially dictated the amount of the ATH gift. The commercial nature of athletic giving appeared to have a strong governing effect on both ATH only and SPLIT donors. Both types of donors tended to give at, or near, those levels necessary to secure the tangible benefits offered by the athletic department. Thus, while the actual amount given to athletics by SPLIT donors was smaller than the amount that they had previously contributed as ATH-only donors, the difference was relatively modest because to retain key privileges, the SPLIT donors had to continue paying the required fee imposed by the athletic department. So, when combined with the additional giving to an academic program, the donor's total gift to the institution increased substantially. Still, the disincentive for athletic fundraisers to assist in cross-cultivating donors for academic purposes was evident in the analysis, and must be accounted for in any strategy designed to increase the number of SPLIT donors.

The exploratory analysis documented a relatively consistent change in gift patterns as donors transitioned from ATH to SPLIT donors at each of these three institutions. Upon deciding to make an academic gift in addition to their athletic gift, SPLIT donors slightly reduced their athletic giving, though they significantly increased their total gift. Thus, while there was a clear benefit to the institution of transitioning donors, there appeared to be little incentive for athletic fundraisers to participate in any cross-cultivation efforts. Again, the ability of the institution to coordinate and cross-solicit donors might be critical in maximizing the financial support from their donor base.

**Table 8 Fixed Effects of Required Gift Amount**

<b>Institution #1 ATH and SPLIT Donors (Fixed Effect Estimate of Required Gift=\$1.86)</b>			
<b>Required ATH Gift</b>	<b>Average Actual ATH Gift</b>	<b>Number of Donors</b>	<b>Number giving minimum</b>
500	707.05	801	175
1000	1036.22	2274	1491
1250	3343.85	2861	222
1500	3662.54	5432	553
<b>Institution #1 SPLIT Donors (Fixed Effect Estimate of Required Gift=\$1.65)</b>			
<b>Required ATH Gift</b>	<b>Average Actual ATH Gift</b>	<b>Number of Donors</b>	<b>Number giving minimum</b>
500	717.65	601	90
1000	1053.61	408	77
1250	3859.94	678	2
1500	4071.1	1298	27
<b>Institution #2 ATH and SPLIT Donors (Fixed Effect Estimate of Required Gift=\$0.97)</b>			
<b>Required ATH Gift</b>	<b>Average Actual ATH Gift</b>	<b>Number of Donors</b>	<b>Number giving minimum</b>
1000	1171.4	7878	4239
1500	1673.28	1548	844
2000	5152.88	2708	1202
2500	2816.63	5525	2802
5000	6159.09	2431	618
10000	19867.01	1676	124
100000	324246.5	104	10
<b>Institution #2 SPLIT Donors (Fixed Effect Estimate of Required Gift=\$1.07)</b>			
<b>Required ATH Gift</b>	<b>Average Actual ATH Gift</b>	<b>Number of Donors</b>	<b>Number giving minimum</b>
1000	1195.95	3167	1510
1500	1698.22	670	306
2000	6279.79	1072	428
2500	2889.35	2386	1035
5000	6165.62	1128	241
10000	20459.77	841	58
100000	382654.7	66	7

<b>Institution #3 ATH and SPLIT Donors (Fixed Effect Estimate of Required Gift=\$1.13)</b>			
<b>Required ATH Gift</b>	<b>Average Actual ATH Gift</b>	<b>Number of Donors</b>	<b>Number giving minimum</b>
600	701.96	4830	3469
1200	1347.82	6812	4984
2400	2920.49	4048	2560
4800	19792.25	1871	195

  

<b>Institution #3 SPLIT Donors (Fixed Effect Estimate of Required Gift=\$1.15)</b>			
<b>Required ATH Gift</b>	<b>Average Actual ATH Gift</b>	<b>Number of Donors</b>	<b>Number giving minimum</b>
600	700.25	611	434
1200	1349.18	960	662
2400	2710.92	475	268
4800	33849	284	21

## Discussion

The findings of this study, while limited by the fact that donors were selected from three large public universities, provided meaningful direction for both practice and future research on fundraising. First, results from RQ#1 indicated that SPLIT donors gave substantially more in total gifts than ATH donors and were retained at equal or higher rates than other donors indicating the significant value of SPLIT donors to the institution. Future research should continue to explore why this pattern occurred. Stinson and Howard (In Press), in a qualitative study, suggested that donors' gifts to athletics were primarily driven by commercial benefits. Subsequent academic gifts, when a donor made the transition to being a SPLIT donor, were categorized as more philanthropically motivated. Future empirical work should examine the various motivations for athletic and academic giving, and perhaps more importantly, the interactions between the two. Examining the interactions of incentives offered in exchange for a gift (i.e., Barnes & McCarville, 2005) or the interactions between commercial and adoptive philanthropy (i.e., Schervish, 1997) might provide insight into why SPLIT donors made larger average gifts than those limiting their contributions to strictly athletics. One plausible explanation for this behavior that merits further study was that targeting both the commercial and philanthropic motives of donors may have expanded the pool of resources that the donor considered available for gifts, increasing their perceived capacity to give (see Heath & Soll, 1996 for an explanation of mental budgeting). Previous research asserted that donors often referred to different sets of competition when considering athletic versus academic gifts (Stinson & Howard, In Press). Athletic gifts were most commonly described as in competition with other leisure and/or entertainment expenses, whereas academic gifts were commonly reported to be in competition with other charitable organizations. Whether the ability to expand the perceived capacity of the donor, to offer multiple incentives for gifts, or meet

multiple motives with different gift opportunities was responsible for explaining the larger average gift sizes of SPLIT donors, this is an important area for future consideration.

In addition to making larger annual gifts than ATH donors, SPLIT donors were retained at equal or higher rates than the other donor segments. As a result, not only were SPLIT donors more valuable to the institution in the short-term (i.e., average gift size), but also in the long-term (i.e., retention rate). Larger annual gifts sustained over a longer period of time significantly increased the lifetime value of SPLIT donors compared with other donors. Future research also needs to explore this phenomenon, again specifically focusing on why SPLIT donors were retained at high rates. Several potential explanations for high retention rates might be examined. The fact that SPLIT donors had a relationship with multiple programs at the institution may have resulted in stronger identification with the organization (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). The multiple points of attachment may have also increased donor involvement with the organization (Wunderink, 2002). It is also possible that offering multiple benefits immunized the donor against potential negative outcomes associated with one program or the other. For example, SPLIT donors, in this case, might continue to make gifts in light of losing football teams given their stronger attachment to the institution. Alternatively, the donor might have made satisfaction judgments (Brady et al., 2002) holistically. As a result, any negative information from one program might have been mitigated by positive information from the other program. Future research is warranted to understand the basis for the stronger retention of SPLIT donors.

RQ #2 examined whether athletic-only donors could be converted into SPLIT donors. The empirical evidence clearly indicated that over time, a number of donors expanded their giving from strictly athletics to broader institutional support. The data revealed that each year between 5% and 15% of ATH donors became SPLIT donors at the three institutions in this study. These individuals gave more and were retained at a higher rate underscoring the value of SPLIT donors.

Importantly, the single largest source of SPLIT donors was those individuals who were originally athletic-only contributors. At all three universities examined in this study, nearly 70% of those making SPLIT gifts made their *first* gift to athletics. This finding provided additional empirical support for previous research demonstrating the ability of athletics to attract new donors to the institution (Daughtrey & Stotlar, 2000; Stinson & Howard, 2008). Significantly, the results of this study revealed that many of these initially athletic-only donors eventually expanded their giving to support academic programs. In fact, the analyses related to RQ#3 showed that as SPLIT donors increased their overall giving in support of other, nonathletic university programs, a smaller portion of their annual gift was directed to athletics. The empirical evidence in this study suggested this conversion pattern appeared to have only a modest impact on athletic giving. The amount of the gift allocated to athletics from donors moving from ATH-only to SPLIT status declined on average only 2% at Institution #1, less than 1% at Institution #2 and less than 5% at Institution #3. As noted previously, these modest declines were likely the result of donors maintaining athletic gift amounts at required levels to gain access to desired ticket benefits.

Nonetheless, given the declining level of support for athletics, it might be difficult to expect fundraisers acting on behalf of the athletic department, particularly

in a decentralized organizational structure, to embrace a cross-solicitation strategy designed to convert those who had given only to athletics to become SPLIT donors. However, if the “conversion” strategy were viewed in a broader perspective in which athletic programs could be acknowledged, even rewarded, for bringing more donors to the institution, it seems conceivable that athletics could demonstrate its value to the broader academic institution more strongly. Not only do athletic programs bring new and more donors to institution, but the empirical evidence here indicated that some of those donors were cultivated to make significant academic gifts. Without athletics, these gifts might never have been realized by the respective academic programs.

These findings suggested the need for strong institutional leadership to implement fundraising structures that encourage and reward the sharing of donor information and cross-cultivation efforts on the part of programmatic fundraisers. Exploring the role of fundraising structure as it pertains to an institution’s ability to cross-cultivate SPLIT donors might provide tremendous insight as to how such a strategy may be most effectively implemented.

Finally, approaches for developing and cultivating SPLIT donors deserve important consideration. Previous research has suggested that successful athletic programs are an important tool in recruiting new donors to a university (Daughtrey & Stotlar, 2000; Stinson & Howard, 2008). The data collected for this study indicated that these new ATH donors tended to only give the amount necessary to receive offered commercial benefits. For donors to give above that ceiling, they had to develop a more highly involved relationship with the institution to support what appeared to be more philanthropic exchange. It seems possible in the university context that athletic programs allowed a donor the opportunity to become more aware of the academic mission of the institution, perhaps, providing a platform for the development of adoptive philanthropy. For example, Institution #2 used scoreboard exposure during games to reinforce the academic programs and values of the institution. Over time, a donor who made a donation to secure tickets (commercial exchange) might have recognized the value of Institution #2’s academic programs and been inclined to make an annual gift that was philanthropic in nature. From a donor development perspective, these findings indicated the possibility that an organization that initially attracted donors with commercial exchange might have used that platform to develop philanthropic exchange opportunities. Commercial exchange has been used in a variety of other contexts such as symphony (Barnes & McCarville, 2005) and museum memberships (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995) to attract new donors. Like educational institutions, these organizations benefit from donors also making gifts based on philanthropic exchange. At the very least, the potential ceiling effects of commercial exchange might be mitigated. Future research should explicitly examine the order and timing of commercial versus philanthropic benefits in soliciting and cultivating donor groups.

In practice, this study’s findings suggested that stronger cross-cultivation efforts may be warranted by multiunit organizations. This often means overcoming competitive relationships between programmatic fundraisers. In the case at hand, the relationship between academic and athletic fundraisers is often antagonistic, as opposed to cooperative. This may prevent the organization from recognizing a donor’s true full gift potential. Cross-cultivation and cooperation have the potential for substantially increasing giving to the organization. In the current study, only

about 10% of donors in any given year transitioned from making only an athletic gift to also supporting an academic unit. Increasing this conversion rate even by a small amount could substantially increase the amount of funding raised for academic programs.

Obviously this study is limited by both the number of institutions participating and the number of donors' giving histories examined. The goal of this study was not to exhaustively understand SPLIT donors, but to document their value and potential to institutions actively fundraising for both athletic and academic programs. The behaviors of SPLIT donors documented here establish this group as relevant for continued research. That research will continue to clarify the nature of giving decisions and how donors might be best cultivated to maximize their value to an organization. In addition to other research directions previously discussed, future study should include the examination of restricted versus unrestricted gifts, differences in giving patterns based on the donor's primary sport of interest, and whether the academic performance (e.g., graduation rates) of the athletic team influences the donor's decision to support academic programs. With the increased reliance of many colleges and universities, as well as other nonprofit organizations on private charitable support, understanding SPLIT donors is critical.

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