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### **Donation Intention in Current Students: An Analysis of University Engagement and Sense of Place in Future Athletic, Academic, and Split Donors**

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*Understanding the underlying reasons for giving to universities and athletics departments has become increasingly important. Furthermore, as the revenue and expenditure trajectories of major athletics departments climb as a result of competitive necessity, it is vital to maximize revenue streams to remain relevant. Within this framework, the development of donor relationships should be considered. This study investigates donation intention in current students, through university engagement, sense of place within the university setting, and as a factor of donation intention to athletic, academic, or split causes at a Power 5, Division I FBS institution. Findings suggest that current student university engagement, particularly in student groups and sport and recreation-related activities, is predictive of heightened feelings of sense of place. In addition, current students who considered future donations to both academic and athletic causes expressed greater intentions to donate. As a result, fundraising approaches may benefit in the long run if athletics and institutional development objectives focus on valuable, socially validating, and integrated experiences that support broader and deeper university relationships.*

*Keywords: university engagement, sense of place, fundraising, giving, development*

Understanding alumni contributions to university athletic programs and the underlying factors associated with giving is a critical concern for both public and private colleges. During 2015, colleges and universities received charitable contributions, vital to their economic livelihood, in excess of \$40 billion (Council for Aid to Education, 2016). More specifically, as of 2013, such contributions reflected, on average, between 7% and 20% of total revenue for NCAA Division I athletic programs (Fulks, 2014). To remain competitive within the highest levels of intercollegiate athletics (i.e., Division I), university athletics departments are continually challenged to bolster budgets and expend resources (Fort, 2016). As budgets within some Division I athletic departments rise into the hundreds of millions of dollars, so too does the need for universities and athletic departments to continually identify, foster, and maximize available revenue opportunities. Expectedly, the study of the processes, intentions, and impact of donor contributions to universities and athletic departments has received a wide range of attention in the sport management literature (Stinson & Howard, 2004, 2007).

Studies addressing the measurement of athletic donor motivational constructs (Staurowsky & Parkhouse, 1996; Verner, Hecht, & Fansler, 1998), program success (Frank, 2004; Humphreys & Mondello, 2007), stakeholder theory (Covell, 2005), gender differences (Tsiotsou, 2006), and donor behavior within the framework of academic and athletic charitable contributions (Koo & Dittmore, 2014; Stinson & Howard, 2010a) have provided important considerations for sport management researchers and practitioners. While these and other inquiries have framed much of the knowledge base associated with universities and athletic department donor behavior, the research focus has generally been on individuals, alumni, fans, and others who have or are currently providing charitable contributions. One area that may provide additional insight to the understanding of donor behavior as well as an avenue for practical intervention by universities and athletic departments is the investigation of the propensity to donate in current students. Per Smith and McSweeney (2007), donor intentions have been considered a viable predictor for making future charitable contributions. Thus, understanding the philanthropic dispositions in current students may be important to universities and their athletic departments in identifying and fostering future giving.

Many factors have been associated with giving behaviors in alumni, which are established during their time as undergraduate or graduate students (Hoyt, 2004; Lara & Johnson, 2008; Monks, 2003; Skari, 2011; Wunnava & Lauze, 2001). For instance, academic and athletic alumni donors have reported engagement in campus activities (Skari, 2011), trust (Wang, Ho, & Zhang, 2012), satisfaction and value (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003; Brady, Noble, Utter, & Smith, 2002), and interaction with the athletic department (Popp, Barrett, & Weight, 2016) as influential to their decision to donate. Each of these factors contributes to the relationship alumni have with their alma mater (Sung & Yang, 2008). This relationship, established and developed throughout college attendance as well as post-graduation has been operationalized through constructs such as attachment, allegiance, and organizational identification (Covell, 2005; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Identification can materialize based on one's physical interaction with a location, or "*sense of place*," explaining the cognitive, affective, conative, and social interactions one has with and within a particular place, in this case a university (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006).

The interplay amongst these experiences, accumulated during and after attending college, help define one's comprehensive association with the university, and may differentially impact whether, where, and how alumni choose to support their alma mater (Kim, Chang, & Jae Ko, 2010; Sung & Yang, 2008). With this in mind, Stinson and Howard (2010a) discussed the dichotomy of academic and athletic giving and the tremendous value of these donors. In the final year of their case study at the University of Oregon, Stinson and Howard (2004) found that nearly 70% of "alumni donors allocated at least a portion of their [total university] gift to athletics" (p. 133), with many of those donors initiating as athletic only donors and converting to split donors over time (Luher, 2014). Despite the utility of split donors to athletic department and university giving, these relationships have not been thoroughly investigated in current students. As a result, this study seeks to enhance the sport management and giving literature by assessing: engagement in university sport and non-sport activities during college attendance, feelings of attachment in current students, and how such characteristics are related to their intentions to donate to academic, athletic, or split causes. From a practical standpoint, this research may entice university and athletic department advancement offices to encourage greater engagement and foster deeper and more enduring relationships with current students in order to enhance alumni connectedness and donation potential in the future.

## Literature Review

### *Organizational Identification as a Characteristic of Donation Intention*

To begin, Staurowsky and Parkhouse's (1996) uncovered donor motivations to athletic departments through identifying six underlying factors associated with giving; enhanced social opportunities, power to influence, success, philanthropic, and individual benefits (e.g. tickets, tax benefits). These findings suggest a range of factors, representing a largely altruistic-egoistic model and inherent connectedness to the university and association through the athletic department. Simultaneously, within the general giving literature, the services-philanthropic giving (SPG) model was developed using a sample of current university students to explore underlying reasons for intentions to give (Brady et al., 2002). This model combined a service-oriented model along with a philanthropic effects model to develop a nuanced manner in which to approach the complex process for why organizations and individuals give. Specific to this inquiry, organizational identification exhibited a significant relationship for the intention to give (Brady et al., 2002). Organizational identification also had a particularly unique and overriding impact on the explanation of the intention to give when modeled with satisfaction (Brady et al., 2002). As a result, Brady et al. (2002) suggested that within the university setting, "organizational identification fills a central role in influencing [donor] outcomes" and that "assessments of satisfaction are less salient than are the deeper and longer-lasting feelings of identification engendered from years of relations with a [university]" (p. 936).

In developing the Identity Salience Model, Arnett, German, and Hunt (2003) moved beyond SPG to note that "identity salience plays a key role in mediating the relationships between relationship-inducing factors and supportive behaviors" (p. 100). In their analysis, participation was measured as a factor of how active alumni were in university extracurricular activities as an indicator of social connections developed with the university (Arnett et al., 2003). Findings noted that active engagement in on-campus activities, especially activities that alumni found important and could identify with, positively influenced both connectedness and

supportive behavioral outcomes (Arnett et al., 2003). Similarly, Ko et al. (2013) developed a model of athletic donor motivations (MADOM) based on three dimensions: growth needs, relatedness needs, and existence needs. Ko et al.'s (2013) growth and relatedness constructs were good predictors for donor intentions and included indicators that explained and mirrored attachment concepts discussed within the sport management and giving literature; the display of commitment, a sense of belonging, and pride, among others, as an overall manifestation of allegiance indicative of a donor's level of identification with their university (Covell, 2005; Wang et al., 2012). Accordingly, such a "sense of being connected... (i.e. "we-ness") is a central determinant of giving behavior" as well as donor motivation and subsequent behavioral intentions (Ko et al., 2013, p. 531).

### *Dimensions of Organizational Identification: Sense of Place*

Within the university donor literature, the philanthropic factor of organizational identification includes only subtle differences. Mael and Ashforth (1992) defined it most simply as the feeling of perceived oneness with one's alma mater. Other inquiries have considered organizational identification as: emotional attachment, solidarity, affiliation, and even identity salience (Ko et al., 2013; Tsiotsou, 2007). From a sport perspective, Wang et al. (2012) denoted sport program commitment as a matter of loyalty, attachment, and belongingness. While each of these definitions are representative of feelings of generalized affiliation or belongingness with a university or organization, they do not fully differentiate "the complex [cognitive, affective, and conative] relationships [associated with one's] *experience* of a place" (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006, p. 316). As such, and unique to alumni who attend a university, identification is not only derived as a cognitive association, but also as an expression of physical experience filled with emotion and influenced by engagement and symbolic action (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Zott & Huy, 2007).

To parse organizational identification into multiple terms, the present study borrows the construct of "*sense of place*" from environmental research as an alternative characterization. It has been indicated by Jorgensen and Stedman (2006) that sense of place serves as a complex, multidimensional concept that addresses the beliefs, emotions, and behavioral commitments of an individual toward a geographical place. Along these lines, sense of place is defined through dimensions such as: place attachment, place identity, and place dependency. From this, place attachment is associated with an individual's positive emotions or bonding with a geographical place, place identity refers to believing the physical environment has a role in self-identification, and place dependence is when a location provides advantages based on certain features (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2006; Williams & Vaske, 2003). In addition to these traditional constructs, social bonding has also been considered an important element of sense of place given that geographical locations are contextual in nature (Kyle et al., 2005). While sense of place constructs have not been investigated within the context of higher education giving, they have been associated with other place-based prosocial and philanthropic behaviors such as civic engagement (Payton, Fulton, & Anderson, 2007), environmentally responsible behaviors (Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001), community development (Manzo & Perkins, 2006), local grassroots activism (Mihaylov & Perkins, 2015), and social capital (Lewicka, 2011) among others. Given the close connections between attachment concepts and organizational behavioral support in current students (O'Reilly III & Chatman, 1986), as well as the unique psychological and physical experiences students have while attending a university, sense of place

may provide additional explanation regarding the student-university relationship and its effects on donation intention.

### *Athletic and Academic Department Support and Organizational Identification*

In regards to athletic support and donation, Covell (2005) considered the importance of alumni fan identification with an intercollegiate sport program as influential to charitable contributions made within the Ivy League. Further, the findings suggested that attachment and allegiance were vital factors to whether alumni made the decision to give, more so than the on-field performance of teams (Covell, 2005). According to Covell (2005), an alumni's identification is established as an undergraduate and occurs as a matter of progression leading to attachment. Likewise, Wang et al. (2012) found similar manifestations in college-aged intercollegiate sport consumers. Their investigation noted positive associations between affective commitment, which includes factors such as loyalty and attachment, relationship quality, and donor intentions to athletic departments in intercollegiate sport fans (Wang et al., 2012). Additional research argued that university belongingness was associated with giving to athletic departments in both alumni and non-alumni donors and that identifying and increasing enthusiasm in these donors hinged on improving a sense of belongingness within the vital donor-university relationship (Tsiotsou, 2007).

In further examinations of donor behaviors, Stinson and Howard (2010a) suggested that the most successful academic and athletic advancement opportunities may be those "that seek to socialize [all] donors and cultivate the emotional connection formed with the athletics program" (p. 320). In this vein, they argued that athletics programs are the main channel that allows donors to have connections with a university (Stinson & Howard, 2010b). Similarly, it is noted that fandom in intercollegiate athletics, as well as behavioral support (i.e., purchasing merchandise), was fueled through points of attachment at both the athletic program and university level (Kwon et al., 2005). Further assessments factoring age and fan identification in regards to donor behavior found that fans first identified with intercollegiate athletics teams prior to attending college (Popp et al., 2016). While no differences were identified between age of identification and giving patterns with current students, fan identification was influenced by factors such as team success, attending a sporting event in person, meeting a coach or player, and having parents who were fans (Popp et al., 2016). Under these pretenses, Frank (2004) reasoned that athletic departments may be important as focal points in uniting parties from diverse interests in a shared experience that may entice both university and athletic department attachment and support.

Stinson and Howard (2007, 2008) also provided an important examination of donor behavior within intercollegiate athletics, considering the relationship between academic and athletic giving to Division I-A, I-AA, and I-AAA institutions in the NCAA. Findings from this research indicated that schools with high academic reputations were not as likely to see large fluctuations in donations based on the performance of sport teams (Stinson & Howard, 2007). However, this research did show that a higher percentage and total dollar amount of donations were being given to athletic departments instead of academic programs (Stinson & Howard, 2007). This finding was not consistent at the Division I-AA and I-AAA levels where athletic success improved support for both athletic and academic programs (Stinson & Howard, 2008). Follow-up work in this line of study considered split donors, and concluded that these donors were more likely to be retained, and gave gifts more often than donors who only gave to academic programs (Stinson & Howard, 2010). Overall, what can be discerned from this line of studies is that athletics can serve as a gateway for donors of an educational institution, and thus

there is need to consider athletics as potentially serving greater benefits in drawing contributions to both athletic and academic causes (Luher, 2014).

Considering the importance of alumni to the donation process, and the fact that feelings of attachment robustly materialize during the student years, it is necessary to understand how engagement in campus activities may impact feelings of identification in current students. Moreover, given the overriding impact of identification generally on donation behaviors, the present study moves to isolate domains of the overarching construct of identification through the concept of sense of place and to further explore the unique impacts of academic, athletic, and split donor profiles in current students. This donor group has been marginally investigated, but has an important and complex relationship with institutional and athletic department giving. Therefore, the aim of this inquiry is to investigate the effects of student engagement, in particular sport and non-sport behaviors, on the promotion of attributes of university sense of place, preferences for donation destination, and how such associations may influence giving intention in current students. From this we develop the following research questions:

- RQ1: What is the relationship between student engagement and feelings of sense of place in current students?
- RQ2: What is the relationship between student engagement and the intention to donate to a university in current students?
- RQ3: What is the relationship between sense of place and the intention to donate to a university in current students?
- RQ4: Do student engagement and sense of place have an incremental relationship with the intention to donate to a university in current students?
- RQ5: Do student engagement, sense of place, donation destination, and familiarity of mechanisms for donation have an incremental relationship with the intention to donate to a university in current students?

## **Methodology**

In order to build a survey to measure the behaviors and the intention to donate to a university among current students, a number of constructs were considered based on the literature and prior surveys conducted on similar groups of individuals.

### *Student Engagement*

To begin with, six total on-campus student involvement items were formulated from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (Pace & Kuh, 1998) and undergraduate activities considered relevant to charitable university giving as assessed by Arnett et al. (2003), Holmes (2009), and Skari (2011). Items addressed individual participation in on-campus sport and recreation activities, attendance at on-campus sporting events, participation in on-campus clubs or student groups, participation in on-campus cultural or social events, engagement in academic lectures and events, and attendance or participation in on-campus musical and artistic opportunities. Items served to identify the physical attendance or participation of students in on-campus, social events ranging across several disciplines. Each item was scored on a 5-point likert scale ranging from “Never” (1) to “Very Often” (5). This produced six ordinal predictors representative of separate types of on-campus activity engagement. In order to prepare the

variable for statistical analysis, activity prevalence was dichotomized. Items scored as “Never” or “Rarely” were coded as 0 and items scored as “Sometimes”, “Often”, or “Very Often” were coded as 1. Dichotomization was considered appropriate in this case as the collapsing of ordinal data was minimal given the limited number of response options (Labovitz, 1970). Student engagement variables were used as predictors for both sense of place and donation intention within a stepped modeling procedure.

### *Sense of Place*

To account for concepts related to sense of place, the present study relied on questionnaire items from Jorgensen and Stedman (2006). Specifically, the scales represent three separate concepts; place identity, place attachment, and place dependence. Social bonding items were utilized from Kyle et al. (2005) and were included in the study as an additional dimension of sense of place. All items were adapted to fit the university setting. Each sense of place concept included four items that were assessed on a 5-point likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree” (1) to “Strongly Agree” (5). Item responses for each concept were summed yielding a single total value, with higher values representative of stronger associations related to each sense of place concept. Overall, scale measures were considered reliable for this study (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ : place identity = .798, place attachment = .867, place dependency = .859, social bonding = .752).

### *Donation Destination and Intention*

Donation destination and intention indicators were prepared by the investigators in reference to the charitable giving literature. Participants were asked to indicate future donation intention, the preferred destinations of their future donation, and participants’ familiarity with the donation process as well as their familiarity with the academic and athletic offices involved in fundraising (e.g., alumni association and athletics development office). Donation destination was observed using a single question noting a variety of university giving destinations. This item was designed to accommodate the selection of multiple university causes for which participants could donate in the future. Item response options included both academic and athletic specific causes as well as options for general fund contributions. Per Humphreys and Mondello (2007) and Stinson and Howard (2004, 2010a), general fund contributions were considered academic donations. To prepare the data for analysis, 3 categorical variables were created: “athletic donor”, “academic donor” and “split donor.” Selecting future donation to only Intercollegiate Athletics yielded a 1 in “athletic donor,” selecting future donation to any destinations other than Intercollegiate Athletics yielded a 1 in academic donor, and selecting future donation to both Intercollegiate Athletics and any one academic donation destination yield a 1 in “split donor.” Donation destination and familiarity items were included as independent variables to address RQ5. These items were included as predictors to identify whether awareness of the donation process and preferred donation recipient had any influence on current students’ propensity to donate in the future. Development office relationships and preferences for donation destinations are noted as potentially relevant factors associated with donor behavior, particularly within the context of intercollegiate athletics (Stinson & Howard, 2004; Stinson & Howard, 2010).

Donation intention served as the primary dependent variable throughout this study, with exception to the analyses associated with RQ1. Donation intention was measured using three likert items developed by the research team: “I plan to make a monetary donation to my current

university in the future,” “it is important that I make a monetary donation to my current university in the future,” and “I have thought about making a monetary donation to my current university in the future.” Item responses were totaled to yield a single donation intention score. Overall, the scale for donation intention was considered reliable for this study (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ : donation intention = .888).

### *Procedure and Analysis*

A questionnaire including multiple choice questions, rating scales, and open-ended questions was administered to students at a large Midwestern university from August 2013 through March 2014. The university enrolls more than 30,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students annually, and is a Power 5, Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) member. Athletic and other events are widely publicized and students have regular opportunities to engage in various types of on-campus activities. A call for the opportunity to participate in the study was disseminated as part of a regularly scheduled campus-wide email and verbally in a variety of courses subsequent to Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The questionnaire was administered electronically, informed consent was provided, and participation in the study was considered voluntary. As an incentive, participants were provided the opportunity to enter a random drawing for a \$100 gift card. Measures of variables in the study were based on prior measures utilized in student involvement, environmental, and charitable giving research.

Multiple dichotomous dummy variables for each category of gender, age, race and ethnicity, academic year, academic major, and student-athlete status were included as covariates for statistical analysis given their inclusion in previous giving literature (Clotfelter, 2003; Holmes, 2009; Monks, 2003). Reference groups for each set of dummy variables were male (gender), 18-24 year olds (age), White (race and ethnicity), senior academic level (academic year), and Agriculture majors (academic major). To note, previous inquiries have considered academic major as an important proxy for wealth potential as well as a factor closely associated with student engagement (Holmes, 2009). International student status was initially considered as a covariate. However, the covariate was dropped from final analysis as there were no statistically significant differences in any sense of place or donation intention outcome measures between international students and domestic students via t-tests nor indication of significance in a set of alternative regression models ( $p < .05$ ). To account for changes in sport season and team performance over the duration of the survey (August 2013 – March 2014), Massey Ratings for the men’s football program were added to each participant as a covariate corresponding to the date in which the individual completed the online instrument (“Massey Ratings,” 2017). The Massey Ratings for the men’s football program were utilized due to the fact that a majority of the survey responses were obtained during the fall sport season.

To assess relationships between student engagement, sense of place, and donation variables, the sample was analyzed in several steps via hierarchical multiple linear regression. Covariates were included a priori in the first step of all models. The first regression analyses sought to address RQ1 by identifying the unique relationships between student engagement measures and individual sense of place items. The second regression analyses were undertaken to assess RQ2 to determine the predictive relationship between student engagement and donation intention. RQ3 was explored by analyzing the exclusive contribution of the sense of place items to donation intention. To investigate RQ4, an analysis was conducted to assess the incremental contribution of both student engagement and sense of place to donation intention. This approach



was applied given that both student engagement and attachment variables have been associated with giving intentions in the literature (Brady et al., 2002; Clotfelter, 2003; Monks, 2003). Moreover, analysis was carried out in this fashion to determine whether variables from either construct were separate from or overriding when predicting donation intention. For RQ5, donation destination and familiarity of donation variables were added as predictors to the model estimate for RQ4 to determine their unique contribution to donation intention over and above covariates, student engagement, and sense of place. Table 1 includes generalized regression equations for each research question and analysis procedure noted above.

Table 1

*Generalized Regression Equations for the Analyses in the Study*

Research Question	Equation
RQ1	$Sense\ of\ Place^* = \beta_1 (Sport/Rec) + \beta_2 (Student\ Group) + \beta_3 (Cultural\ Event) + \beta_4 (Academic\ Event) + B_5 (Sport\ Event) + \beta_6 (Artistic\ Event) + Covariates$
RQ2	$Donation\ Intention = \beta_1 (Sport/Rec) + \beta_2 (Student\ Group) + \beta_3 (Cultural\ Event) + \beta_4 (Academic\ Event) + B_5 (Sport\ Event) + \beta_6 (Artistic\ Event) + Covariates$
RQ3	$Donation\ Intention = \beta_1 (Place\ Identity) + \beta_2 (Place\ Attachment) + \beta_3 (Social\ Bonding) + Covariates$
RQ4	$Donation\ Intention = \beta_1 (Sport/Rec) + \beta_2 (Student\ Group) + \beta_3 (Cultural\ Event) + \beta_4 (Academic\ Event) + B_5 (Sport\ Event) + \beta_6 (Artistic\ Event) + \beta_7 (Place\ Identity) + \beta_8 (Place\ Attachment) + \beta_9 (Social\ Bonding) + Covariates$
RQ5	$Donation\ Intention = \beta_1 (Sport/Rec) + \beta_2 (Student\ Group) + \beta_3 (Cultural\ Event) + \beta_4 (Academic\ Event) + B_5 (Sport\ Event) + \beta_6 (Artistic\ Event) + \beta_7 (Place\ Identity) + \beta_8 (Place\ Attachment) + \beta_9 (Social\ Bonding) + \beta_{10} (Academic/Athletic/Split\ Donor) + \beta_{11} (How\ to\ Donate) + \beta_{12} (Alumni\ Association\ Familiarity) + \beta_{13} (Athletic\ Development\ Familiarity) + Covariates$

\*Sense of Place represents each variable analyzed (place identity, place attachment, and social bonding) to address RQ1.

## Results

Data was screened and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 23 ®. Overall, few cases exhibited missing items, thus pairwise deletion was utilized for missing data. Two cases containing extreme univariate outliers were removed (z-score of +/- 3.29). The final data set met all assumptions for multiple linear regression (n = 266). Multicollinearity was assessed using correlations greater than  $r = .70$ , variance inflation factors less than five and tolerance values greater than .30 for all variables (Dormann et al., 2013; Marquardt, 1970; Mason & Perreault, 1991). One correlation, namely between place attachment and place dependence ( $r = .755, p < .001$ ), was greater than  $r = .70$ , suggestive of a multicollinear relationship. To address this issue and limit redundancy within the regression models, place dependence was dropped from further analysis. Place attachment was retained due to its established relationship to giving per the literature. Split donor and non-split donor variables, in particular the academic donation category, were considered inversely multicollinear and assessed independently during the final

step. The total sample, considering all covariates and independent and dependent variables, exceeded power analysis estimates for multiple linear regression.

All of the 266 participants were current students. Gender was equally distributed across the sample (n = 133 males). Most participants were between the ages of 18 and 24 (n = 239). Over three quarters of the sample identified as White (n = 216), with those identifying as Black or African-American (n = 22), Asian (n = 14), Hispanic (n = 7), and other (n = 7) comprising the remainder of the sample. A large proportion of the participants were undergraduate students (n = 228) compared to graduate or professional students (n = 38). Overall the sample represented a variety of colleges within the university. Eighteen percent of the participants were student-athletes (n = 47) and seven percent were international students (n = 17). Frequency and descriptive statistics are included in Table 2. Academic major was not included in Table 2 due to the large number of majors represented.

Table 2

*Frequencies and Descriptions of Variables in the Study (n = 266)*

Variable	n (%)	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
<i>Demographic / Covariates</i>					
Gender (Male)	133 (50.0%)	0	1	.50	.50
Student-Athlete	47 (17.7%)	0	1	.18	.38
International Student	17 (6.4%)	0	1	.06	.25
Age: 18-24	239 (89.8%)	0	1	.90	.30
25-34	23 (8.6%)	0	1	.09	.28
35-44	2 (0.8%)	0	1	.01	.09
45-54	1 (0.4%)	0	1	.00	.06
55-64	1 (0.4%)	0	1	.00	.06
Race: White	216 (81.2%)	0	1	.81	.39
Black or African-American	22 (8.3%)	0	1	.09	.28
Hispanic	7 (2.6%)	0	1	.03	.16
Asian	14 (5.3%)	0	1	.05	.22
Other	7 (2.6%)	0	1	.03	.16
Status: Freshman	28 (10.5%)	0	1	.11	.31
Sophomore	26 (9.8%)	0	1	.10	.30
Junior	51 (19.2%)	0	1	.19	.39
Senior	123 (46.2%)	0	1	.46	.50
Graduate Student	32 (12.0%)	0	1	.12	.33
Professional Student	6 (2.3%)	0	1	.02	.15
Massey Rating (Football)		4.0	47.0	33.58	13.83
<i>Student Engagement</i>					
Engage in Sport/Recreation	226 (85.0%)	0	1	.85	.36
Engage in Student Groups	205 (77.1%)	0	1	.77	.42
Engage in Cultural Events	160 (60.2%)	0	1	.60	.49
Engage in Academic Events	133 (50.0%)	0	1	.50	.50
Attend Sport Events	177 (66.5%)	0	1	.67	.47

Attend Artistic Events	77 (28.9%)	0	1	.29	.45
<i>Donation Destination and Familiarity</i>					
Academic Donor Intention	147 (55.3%)	0	1	.56	.50
Athletic Donor Intention	43 (16.2%)	0	1	.17	.37
Split Donor Intention	68 (25.6%)	0	1	.26	.44
Familiar w/ How to Donate	90 (33.8%)	0	1	.34	.47
Familiar w/ Alumni Association	161 (60.5%)	0	1	.61	.49
Familiar w/ Athletic Development	125 (47.0%)	0	1	.47	.50
<i>Sense of Place</i>					
Place Identity		4.0	20.0	13.40	2.87
Place Attachment		4.0	20.0	13.87	3.31
Place Dependence		4.0	20.0	13.48	3.56
Social Bonding		8.0	20.0	16.65	2.65
<i>Donation</i>					
Donation Intention		3.0	15.0	9.22	2.86

Table 3

*Correlations of Sense of Place and Donation Intention Variables (n = 266)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Place Identity	1.00				
2. Place Attachment	.670**	1.00			
3. Place Dependence	.649**	.755**	1.00		
4. Social Bonding	.620**	.590**	.567**	1.00	
5. Donation Intention	.526**	.470**	.398**	.422**	1.00

### *Student Engagement and Sense of Place*

In regards to RQ1, three separate hierarchical regression models were estimated predicting place identity, place attachment, and social bonding from the six engagement items. First, the model predicting place identity was significant while accounting for covariates,  $F(37, 227) = 2.404$ ,  $p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .164$ , with participation in sport and recreation activities,  $B = 1.227$ ,  $SE = .560$ ,  $p = .030$ , and engagement in student groups,  $B = .955$ ,  $SE = .475$ ,  $p = .045$ , serving as significant contributors. Covariates for the 25 – 34 year old age category, junior level academic status, and music major were also significant in the full model ( $p < .05$ ). Second, the model predicting place attachment was significant while accounting for covariates,  $F(37, 227) = 2.574$ ,  $p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .181$ , with participation in sport and recreation activities,  $B = 1.723$ ,  $SE = .640$ ,  $p = .008$ , serving as a significant contributor. Student-athlete status and music and veterinary academic majors were also significant in the model ( $p < .05$ ). Lastly, the model predicting social bonding was significant,  $F(37, 227) = 1.629$ ,  $p = .017$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .081$ , with

engagement in student groups,  $B = 1.127$ ,  $SE = .460$ ,  $p = .015$ , serving as a significant contributor. The 25 – 34 year old age category was also significant in the full model ( $p < .05$ ). Overall, engagement in student groups and participation in sport and recreation activities were influential to current students’ feelings of identity, attachment, and social bonding within a university setting. Relevant results from these analyses are included in Table 4.

*Student Engagement and Donation Intention*

For RQ2, Table 4 displays a summary of student engagement variables as predictors for donation intention. The model was significant while accounting for covariates,  $F(37, 227) = 1.814$ ,  $p = .005$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .102$ , with participation in student groups,  $B = 1.123$ ,  $SE = .489$ ,  $p = .023$  and attendance to on-campus sporting events,  $B = .994$ ,  $SE = .463$ ,  $p = .033$ , serving as significant contributors. None of the covariates were significant in the full model. As a result, this finding puts forward that donation intention is influenced through greater engagement in student groups and increased attendance to on-campus sporting events.

Table 4

*Prediction of Sense of Place and Donation Intention from Student Engagement<sup>a</sup>*

	Place Identity		Place Attachment		Social Bonding		Donation Intention	
	<i>RQ1<sup>b</sup></i>		<i>RQ1<sup>c</sup></i>		<i>RQ1<sup>d</sup></i>		<i>RQ2</i>	
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Engage in Sport/Rec	1.227*	.560	1.723**	.640	.995	.542	.944	.577
Engage in Student Group	.955*	.475	.895	.542	1.127*	.460	1.123**	.489
Engage in Cultural Events	.084	.442	.892	.505	-.008	.428	-.278	.456
Engage in Academic Events	.370	.378	-.218	.432	-.420	.366	.543	.389
Attend Sport Events	.756	.449	.673	.513	.536	.435	.994*	.463
Attend Artistic Events	.364	.426	.035	.486	-.149	.412	.062	.439
Constant	10.799**	.911	10.438**	1.040	14.982**	.881	7.220**	.938
$R^2$	.282**		.296**		.210*		.228*	
Adjusted $R^2$	.164**		.181**		.081*		.102**	
$F$	2.404 (37,227)		2.574 (37,227)		1.629 (37,227)		1.779 (37, 227)	

<sup>a</sup> Covariates for categories of gender, age, race, academic year, academic major, student-athlete status, and Massey Rating included in analysis, but not included in table. Covariates were not significant in the model unless noted per superscript.

<sup>b</sup> Significant covariates in this model ( $p < .05$ ): 25-34 age category, junior academic status, music major

<sup>c</sup> Significant covariates in this model ( $p < .05$ ): Student-athlete status, music and veterinary majors

<sup>d</sup> Significant covariates in this model ( $p < .05$ ): 25-34 age category

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

### *Sense of Place and Donation Intention*

To address RQ3, a regression predicting donation intention from the three sense of place measures was calculated. Overall, the model was significant while accounting for covariates,  $F(34, 230) = 4.327, p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .300$ , with place identity,  $B = .320, SE = .079, p < .001$ , and place attachment,  $B = .172, SE = .068, p = .012$ , serving as significant contributors to the model. Social bonding,  $B = .111, SE = .079, p = .160$ , was not a significant contributor for the intention to donate when considering the spectrum of sense place variables. No covariates associated with this model were significant. These results indicate that current students' feelings of identity and attachment within the university setting are predictive of whether they feel compelled to donate in the future. Findings associated with the prediction of donation intention from sense of place items are noted in Table 5.

Table 5

#### *Prediction of Donation Intention from Sense of Place<sup>a</sup>*

<i>RQ3</i>		
<b>Variable</b>	<b><i>B</i></b>	<b><i>SE</i></b>
Place Identity	.320**	.079
Place Attachment	.172*	.068
Social Bonding	.111	.079
Constant	1.400	1.192
$R^2$	.390**	
Adjusted $R^2$	.300**	
$F$	4.327 (34,230)	

### *Student Engagement, Sense of Place, and Donation Intention*

A model predicting donation intention from student engagement and the sense of place items simultaneously was estimated to investigate RQ4. The model including student engagement and sense of place variables as predictors for donation intention was significant while accounting for covariates,  $F(40, 224) = 3.918, p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .307$ . Sense of place variables explained about 18% more variance in donation intention when compared to the estimate utilizing student engagement alone (Table 4),  $\Delta R^2 = .183$ . Overall the model explained approximately 41% of the variance associated with donation intention when considering traditional  $R^2 = .412$ . This  $R^2$  estimate is relatively consistent when compared to the model estimating donation intention from the sense of place items only (Table 5), suggesting only a

small unique contribution from the student engagement items. Place identity,  $B = .281$ ,  $SE = .080$ ,  $p = .001$ , and place attachment,  $B = .171$ ,  $SE = .069$ ,  $p = .014$ , served as significant contributors in the model. Social bonding,  $B = .113$ ,  $SE = .080$ ,  $p = .158$ , was not significantly predictive of donation intention and engagement in student groups,  $B = .575$ ,  $SE = .436$ ,  $p = .189$ , and attendance to on-campus sporting events,  $B = .606$ ,  $SE = .410$ ,  $p = .140$  lost significance when included in the same model as the sense of place items. Of the covariates, accounting, education, and liberal arts academic majors were also significant within the full model ( $p < .05$ ). This finding suggests that student engagement and sense of place do not significantly incrementally predict donation intention, but rather indicates that sense of place is overriding to student engagement when predicting donation intention.

### *Student Engagement, Sense of Place, Donation Destination, and Donation Intention*

A final model including student engagement and sense of place items as well as categories for type of donor and familiarity with the mechanism and campus offices associated with university fundraising was estimated. The full model was significant while accounting for covariates,  $F(44,212) = 4.358$ ,  $p < .001$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .366$ . Overall, the full model explained around 48% of the variance in donation intention given traditional  $R^2 = .475$ . Approximately 6% of the variance in the full model was explained by the addition of donation destination and familiarity variables beyond student engagement and sense of place,  $\Delta R^2 = .063$ . Identification as a split donor,  $B = 1.047$ ,  $SE = .394$ ,  $p = .009$  and familiarity with how to make a university donation,  $B = 1.196$ ,  $SE = .384$ ,  $p = .002$ , were positive and significant predictors for the intention to donate in the future considering all variables examined. Place identity,  $B = .230$ ,  $SE = .079$ ,  $p = .004$ , and place attachment,  $B = .173$ ,  $SE = .067$ ,  $p = .011$ , remained significant within the model. Covariates for the majors of accounting and education were also significant within the full model ( $p < .05$ ). Athletic and academic only donation was assessed separately given the inverse multicollinear relationship with split donation. Place identity, place attachment, and familiarity with how to make a donation remained positive and significant contributors for donation intention in the alternative model, whereas academic only,  $B = -1.261$ ,  $SE = .449$ ,  $p = .005$ , and athletic only,  $B = -.732$ ,  $SE = .506$ ,  $p = .150$ , donation served as negative predictors for donation intention. This finding suggests that the consideration of split donation is a stronger predictor for the intention to donate than compared to academic or athletic donation only. Statistical outcomes associated with this model suggest that the consideration of split donation as well as familiarity with the process for how to make a donation are incrementally predictive of donation intention when considering sense of place.

Table 6

*Prediction of Donation Intention from Student Engagement, Sense of Place, Donation Destination, and Familiarity of Donation Mechanisms<sup>a</sup>*

Variable	<i>RQ4<sup>b</sup></i>		<i>RQ5<sup>c</sup></i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Engage in Sport/Rec	.193	.516	.022	.504
Engage in Student Group	.575	.436	.531	.424
Engage in Cultural Events	-.453	.405	-.493	.398
Engage in Academic Event	.524	.347	.540	.339
Attend Sport Events	.606	.410	.366	.405
Attend Artistic Events	-.029	.387	-.191	.382
Place Identity	.281**	.080	.230**	.079
Place Attachment	.171*	.069	.173**	.067
Social Bonding	.113	.080	.080	.080
Split Donor			1.047**	.394
Athletic Donor <sup>d</sup>			-.732	.506
Academic Donor <sup>d</sup>			-1.261**	.449
Familiarity of How to Donate			1.196**	.384
Familiarity of Alumni Association			.156	.399
Familiarity of Athletics Development			.319	.372
Constant	.715	1.251	.967	1.225
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.412**		.475**	
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.307**		.366**	
$\Delta R^2$	.183*** <sup>e</sup>		.063**	
<i>F</i>	3.918 (40,224)		4.358 (44,212)	

<sup>a</sup> Covariates for categories of gender, age, race, academic year, academic major, student-athlete status, and Massey Rating included in analysis, but not included in table. Covariates were not significant in the model unless noted per superscript.

<sup>b</sup> Significant covariates in this model ( $p < .05$ ): Accounting, education, and liberal arts majors

<sup>c</sup> Significant covariates in this model ( $p < .05$ ): Accounting and education majors

<sup>d</sup> Estimated separately due to multicollinear relationship to split donor.

<sup>e</sup>  $\Delta R^2$  representative of change in  $R^2$  estimate when predicting donation intention from student engagement alone (Table 4).

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

## Discussion and Implications

Findings from this study correspond to previous inquiries suggesting that identification and attachment play an important role within the framework of university and athletic department giving. In regards to student engagement, affiliation with student groups and attendance to athletic events were directly related to current students' intentions to donate. Moreover, university identification and attachment in current students were influenced through on-campus engagement in sport and recreation-related activities and participation in student groups. Place identity and place attachment were overriding and robust predictors for donation intention. Further, the split donor profile and knowledge for how to make future donations were also influential to current students' intention to donate. Importantly, these relationships held when controlling for a variety of demographic and short-term sport performance metrics. Per this inquiry, there appears to be a potential link between student engagement, the materialization of enhanced feelings of identification and attachment, and ultimately prospective feelings of philanthropic support.

Such findings in current students mimic suggestions from Stinson and Howard (2007) that "exposure to and involvement with intercollegiate athletic programs" (p. 241) as well as other opportunities for student engagement are important to the development of identification with an academic institution. Understanding the consistency of this relationship in both current students and as they transition to alumni is important to the development of mechanisms that effectively and continually encourage and sustain engagement with universities and their athletics departments beginning at initial enrollment or earlier if possible (Popp et al., 2016). These approaches may result in earlier, more profound, and ultimately vested bonding between alumni and institutions where athletic and other programs serve as tools for the fostering of attachment, identification, fandom, and positive student experience throughout their time as a student and beyond (Covell, 2005; Stinson & Howard, 2010b). More importantly, a vested, experiential, and consistent university relationship may result in more involved and enduring loyalty and behavioral support in the long run (Covell, 2005; Koenig-Lewis, Asaad, Palmer, & Petersone, 2016; Stinson & Howard, 2010b).

The present study broadens the giving literature by expanding the conceptualization of the student-university relationship via constructs associated with sense of place. This approach considers not only students' cognitive identification, but also their emotions, behavioral commitments, and social relationships associated with an institution. Specifically, this inquiry identified place identity and place attachment as constructs heavily influenced by student engagement, namely by way of participation in sport and recreation activities and student groups, and most associated to future giving intentions. Therefore, much like Mael and Ashforth (1992) and Brady et al. (2002), individuals who identified with and felt attached to their university felt more compelled to support it. Such a finding also infers that on-campus engagement in sport and recreation activities and student groups may serve as important experiential touch points that encourage students to develop feelings of personal and symbolic connectedness and commitment to an entity much larger than themselves (Popp et al., 2016; Stinson & Howard, 2010a).

Social bonding was not directly important to whether individuals felt compelled to support their institution when accounting for the full spectrum of sense of place variables. This may best be explained per Kyle et al.'s (2005) approach, where social bonding is an indirect, but equally important factor that contributes to the global construct of human-place attachment. For instance, when considering human-place attachment, the meanings that people develop often



include memories, experiences, and connections made with others in the physical setting (Kyle et al., 2005). Similarly, the amenities and opportunity to engage in preferred activities that promote personally relevant and shared experiences, is also important to identifying with and behaviorally supporting a particular place (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). Thus, the development of meaningful interpersonal connections and the opportunity to build them through available programs is incrementally important to identifying with, feeling attached to, and feeling compelled to donate to a university in the future. Rooting out the spectrum of sense of place variables within the framework of a university setting is vitally important to better understanding the nuances of the student-university relationship, how it is developed, and how it may correspond to future behavioral support.

Additionally, students who endorsed split donation, or potential future support for a range of athletic and academic endeavors, had higher levels of donation intention overall. This may be representative of a student-university connection that spans a variety of touch points and personal connections across campus with participation in student groups and sport and recreation-related activities leading the charge. Such a comprehensive connection to a variety of university programs and the people within them may also translate to greater support to both athletic and academic programs over time compared to those who feel compelled to donate to only athletic or academic causes (Stinson & Howard, 2010a). Further, building expansive (athletic and academic) and meaningful relationships with current students may result in the more immediate realization of the “broader institutional benefits” (Stinson & Howard, 2010a, p. 758) that split donors can provide. This approach may also reduce the volume of future alumni donors requiring conversion to the more valuable split donor profile. Interestingly, knowledge regarding the donation process was also predictive of future intention to donate in this inquiry. With this in mind, Stinson and Howard (2010a) proposed an integrated fundraising structure that nurtures unified relationship building from both athletic and academic perspectives as well as provides education on the functional process and benefits of institutional donation as most advantageous to cultivating the split donor. Given this inquiry, applying such a framework may also be important to maximizing university attachment and giving potential in current students.

## Limitations and Future Research

While this inquiry provides an updated and interesting perspective on the student-university relationship and giving intentions, there are noted limitations and directions for future research. First, this inquiry assessed limited opportunities and variability of frequency in regards to student engagement. The use of predefined, generalized, and dichotomous engagement categories may be limiting to the full range and specifics of activities and events students find important and rewarding during their university attendance. Thus, it may be important for future research to identify specific activities or elements associated with student engagement that influence feelings of university attachment in relation to intent to donate. Though not considered in the current study, academic experiences and other personal associations with a university are important to describing the comprehensive student-university relationship and eventual support within the framework of sense of place (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2016). The notion of self-selection bias with respect to student engagement profiles may also be impactful to the outcomes in this inquiry and may need to be considered in future research. The present inquiry also considers perceptions from a limited sample at a single institution. Moving forward, researchers should seek to explore a broader range of university feelings and experiences in conjunction with

student engagement that may impact feelings of attachment and behavioral support in current students. The assessment and comparison of such factors across a variety of college and university settings is important to develop a more explanatory and applicable blueprint for university and athletic department fundraising. Such insight may provide more detailed, structured, and integrated approaches university and athletic fundraisers can take when building and supporting relationships in current students and as they transition to alumni.

Secondly, this inquiry considered sense of place variables as distinct factors, whereas they may be considered factors associated with the global concept of human-place attachment. Therefore, further studies should seek to utilize concepts such as place identity, place dependence, and social bonding as factors associated with place attachment overall and employ methodology that accounts for these relationships. The potential redundancy, as evidenced in this study, of these constructs is difficult to dissect and is therefore something to consider when assessing sense of place items in future research. In addition, this study did not discriminate the types or extent of social bonding that may contribute to a feeling of connectedness with a university or athletics department. Future research may look to investigate the differential effects of peer to peer, student to faculty, student to family (i.e., alumni or fan), or other social interactions and how sport, recreation, and other activities foster feelings of belongingness for students in the university setting. Given the predictive relationships identified in this study, future research may also seek to further investigate the potential mediated relationship of the overall student experience on prospective, current, and retroactive behavioral support through more global constructs such as identification and attachment.

Thirdly, while this inquiry did not investigate a mediation relationship, findings suggest that sense of place may serve as a construct through which student engagement indirectly influences considerations for future giving. Changes in significance in the student engagement variables and the consistent predictive value of place identity and place attachment when predicting donation intention in this inquiry is potentially indicative of a mediated relationship (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Future research may employ methodology to better assess whether student engagement has a direct relationship to giving intention or rather contributes to such intentions through a more generalized student-university relationship.

Fourthly, this study explores feelings of attachment and behavioral support in current students only. While such feelings have been noted as important in alumni and other donors, there is little evidence that suggests intention to donate in current students leads to donation as alumni. However, existing research has identified the retroactive influence of student engagement (Clotfelter, 2003; Monks, 2003) as well as a potential link between student involvement (Berger & Milem, 1999) and the more developed “student experience” as significant to loyalty and supportive behaviors over time (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2016). Therefore, and most pressing, it is imperative that the research associated with university giving be expanded to account for these experiences, the student-university relationships, and how they are related to philanthropic dispositions between current students and alumni longitudinally.

## Conclusion

Findings from this inquiry align with the notion that the experiences and interactions current students have with and within an institution and its athletics program are influential to whether they feel connected to their university and compelled to provide behavioral support in the future. These experiences and interactions occur over a broad range of social and physical

environments surrounding current students' attendance to a university. Thus, it is important for fundraising approaches to consider such a framework when developing alumni donors from current students. Developing a feeling of institution-wide attachment, filled with memorable experiences, good emotions, and feelings of inclusivity, materializes through a variety of valuable on-campus experiences, the development of meaningful personal relationships, and through engagement in personally-relevant and socially rich on-campus activities. As evidenced, athletics and other university programs serve as important tools in providing such experiences to donors and seem to be equally as important in developing the current student-university relationship and feelings for behavioral commitment (Stinson & Howard, 2010b). Under this pretense, the cultivation of future donors may be most effective when athletics and other opportunities are used to strengthen a current student's holistic relationship with a university rather than as a single mechanism to define it. Developing student-university relationships may be important in the long-run to maximizing behavioral commitments in alumni donors in both academic and intercollegiate athletics contexts. Fundraising approaches may also benefit to a greater extent if the focus for athletics and other institutional development objectives hinge on the facilitation of valuable, socially validating, and integrated experiences that support a broader and more profound university relationship for every student.

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