

Does Student Philanthropy Work? A Study of Long-term Effects of the “Learning by Giving” Approach

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Abstract Student philanthropy is a teaching strategy designed to engage students actively in the curriculum, increase awareness of social needs and nonprofit organizations, and teach grant-writing and grant-making skills. This is the first study to examine long-term effects of student philanthropy by surveying alumni years after their experience with this teaching strategy. A majority of respondents indicated that student philanthropy had a positive effect on their awareness, learning, beliefs, and intentions. Further, 86% of student philanthropy alumni had recently made charitable contributions, 71% reported volunteering, and 15% served on nonprofit boards – all of which are much higher than the national averages for these behaviors.

Key words Student philanthropy · Charitable contributions · Volunteerism

Introduction

Student philanthropy is a teaching strategy that developed about 10 years ago, and its use in colleges and universities in the United States has been steadily increasing (Millisor and Olberding 2009). A number of studies have examined this “learning by giving” approach; but they have focused on the short-term effects, immediately following the experience, on participants’ awareness of social problems and nonprofit organizations, their beliefs about personal responsibility and self-efficacy, their learning and application of course content, and their intentions to donate money to and volunteer for nonprofit organizations (e.g., Ahmed and Olberding 2007/2008; Irvin 2005; Olberding 2009; Olberding et al. 2010;

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Sigler 2006; Smith and Brooks 2009). However, no published work has addressed the long-term effects of student philanthropy beyond the higher education experience.

The article begins by providing a review of the literature on student philanthropy, including a definition, proposed goals, and effects. I then discuss the research design for the study including the research questions, the student philanthropy program that was the focus of this study, the survey instrument, and the sample. Next I present the quantitative and qualitative results and discuss them in terms of their contributions to the literature and their limitations, which lead to suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Definition and Models of Student Philanthropy

Student philanthropy has been defined as “an experiential learning approach that provides students with the opportunity to study social problems and nonprofit organizations, and then make decisions about investing funds in them” (Olberding 2009, p. 463). It is a relatively new teaching strategy (Millisor and Olberding 2009); and there are at least two models of student philanthropy- 1) the traditional direct giving model approach and 2) the indirect giving model (Olberding 2009; Olberding et al. 2010).

Having begun in the late 1990s, the direct giving approach provides one or more classes with a certain amount of real funds. These funds are usually in the range of \$1,000 to \$5,000 per class, and they generally are donated by a local corporation or foundation. Students in the class or classes decide in which nonprofit organizations to invest the funds. More specifically, the students research social needs and nonprofit organizations, invite a number of nonprofits to apply for grants through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, evaluate applications or proposals, and make collective decisions about which ones to fund. “This model is known as ‘direct giving’ since students have the responsibility for making decisions that directly impact the funding of nonprofits” (Olberding et al. 2010, p. 14). Usually, colleges and universities implement the traditional direct giving model in the classroom for academic credit, but a few of them have implemented it through a special student club or council (Colgate University n.d.; Midland College 2007).

The “indirect giving” model, which was developed at Northern Kentucky University (NKU) in 2007, partners a class with a corporation or foundation. Students evaluate real grant proposals submitted by nonprofit organizations to the corporation or foundation, conduct additional research about the nonprofits, do site visits, and make recommendations about which proposals should be funded. The corporate or foundation board members consider these recommendations in making their final funding decisions. To emphasize, with this model the students do not have funds that they directly contribute to or invest in nonprofits; but rather they have the opportunity to influence the grant-making decisions of a corporation or foundation, hence the name “indirect giving” (Olberding 2009; Olberding et al. 2010). So far, classes at NKU have worked with Citigroup’s regional office in Erlanger, Kentucky, and Toyota Motor Manufacturing and Engineering North America, which is also located in Erlanger.

During the past decade, the teaching strategy of student philanthropy has diffused across the United States to at least 40 colleges and universities; and there is reason to believe that it will continue to spread during the coming years. According to a survey of faculty members and administrators, a majority indicated that they have plans to expand their

current efforts. In addition, a majority of the responding faculty and administrators said they have been contacted by other colleges and universities interested in starting their own student philanthropy course or program (Millisor and Olberding 2009).

In addition to the diffusion of student philanthropy as a teaching strategy, there has been an expansion in the size and scope of student philanthropy, especially the direct giving model. Two examples of direct giving programs that expand beyond the borders of one college or university are Students4Giving and Pay It Forward (McDonald and Olberding *in press*; Olberding et al. 2010). Students4Giving is a national program created through a partnership between Campus Compact, a national coalition of more than 1,000 college and university presidents dedicated to promoting service learning and civic engagement, and the Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund, an independent public charity with the mission of furthering the American tradition of philanthropy. Students4Giving was designed to provide a long-term vehicle for student philanthropy by providing selected institutions with a Donor Advised Fund (DAF) in the amount of \$15,000. “Each class is asked to distribute between 50-75% of the fund, with a focus on retaining some funds for additional cycles and on replenishing accounts” (Campus Compact 2010). Pay It Forward was created in 2009 as a collaborative effort among the three state offices of Campus Compact in Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan; and it seeks to distribute \$1.4 million through 162 student philanthropy classes over three years (Olberding et al. 2010).

Goals and Outcomes of Student Philanthropy

Student philanthropy is a relatively new teaching strategy; and, thus, the literature focusing on it is relatively sparse. Olberding (2009) looked to the more extensive literature on service learning, which is similar to student philanthropy in that they both are experiential education strategies that integrate academic study and community service to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities. The key difference is that service learning involves the “time and talents” of student participants while student philanthropy uses the “time and talents” of student participants as well as “treasure” or funds that comes from foundations, corporations, government agencies, and even individuals via students’ fundraising efforts. This review of the literature and descriptions of student philanthropy programs and courses on web sites resulted in the identification of the following goals for student philanthropy (Olberding 2009):

- & enhance awareness of social problems and nonprofit organizations in the community;
- & increase knowledge of philanthropic processes, particularly grant seeking and grant making;
- & influence attitudes, interests, intentions, and behaviors related to civic engagement and social responsibility;
- & enhance understanding of the academic content of the course by integrating theory and practice; and
- & improve critical thinking, communication, leadership, and other work-life skills.

There is some empirical evidence that student philanthropy programs and courses have indeed made progress toward these goals. Ahmed and Olberding (2007/2008) examined the effects of student philanthropy on participants’ awareness, beliefs, and intentions related to the nonprofit sector. They analyzed data from end-of-semester surveys from nearly 1,000 students who had participated in the direct giving model of student philanthropy at NKU

between 2000 and 2005. An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that the student philanthropy experience made them more aware of nonprofit organizations (94.9%) and social problems (89.6%), increased their sense of responsibility to help others in need (88.6%), and enhanced their intentions to donate money to charity (83.7%) and volunteer (82.6%).

McDonald and Olberding (*in press*) have conducted the first quasi-experimental study of student philanthropy, involving a control group as well as pre-test and post-test surveys. Specifically, the authors examined the effects of student philanthropy on awareness, learning, beliefs, and intentions by analyzing pre-test and post-test data for students in a criminal justice course titled "Race, Gender and the Law" who participated in a philanthropy experience (experimental group) relative to students in the same course taught by the same instructor who did not participate (control group) in this experience. Their analysis concluded that student philanthropy participants were significantly more likely to be aware of nonprofit organizations in their community than nonparticipants. Further, the change scores of student philanthropy participants for social problem awareness and interest in helping others were significantly greater than the change scores of nonparticipants.

Research Design and the Study

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the long-term effects of student philanthropy. That is, it focused on the degree to which student philanthropy programs are effective in achieving lasting impacts on participants' awareness, learning, beliefs, and intentions related to the nonprofit sector and, most importantly, the actual behaviors in which they engage with the nonprofit sector. The specific research questions were:

- & Do alumni of a student philanthropy program believe that this experience enhanced their awareness of social problems and nonprofits, their learning about the subject matter, their beliefs about personal responsibility and self-efficacy, and their intentions to donate money to and volunteer for nonprofit organizations?
- & Do alumni of a student philanthropy program believe that this experience enhanced their engagement with the nonprofit sector and their communities through activities such as volunteering, participating actively in a group or association, helping to raise money for a charitable cause, and voting in elections?
- & Are individuals who have participated in student philanthropy more involved in the nonprofit sector than the general population in terms of donating funds, volunteering and serving on boards of nonprofit organizations?

The Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project

In order to address these research questions, this study collected data from one student philanthropy program: the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project at Northern Kentucky University (NKU *n.d.*). Created in 1999 and first implemented in 2000, the Mayerson

project is one of the oldest and most well-established student philanthropy programs in the country; and it is one of the largest in terms of the number of disciplines, students, nonprofit organizations, and funding levels. Through the Mayerson project, student philanthropy has become a teaching strategy in more than 40 courses, involving more than 2,000 students. These courses include graduate courses in public administration, marketing, and public history as well as undergraduate courses in criminal justice, communication, English, environmental science, marketing, music, philosophy, social work, sociology, and theatre. "Faculty use student philanthropy as a way to teach their subject more deeply, engaging students' minds in active learning" (Olberding et al. 2010; p. 4). For example, an environmental science class focused on the social issue of water quality in the region and requested grant proposals or applications only from nonprofit organizations with a mission that involves improving water quality. A music class homed in on the limited opportunities for lower-income children to experience live classical and jazz music and requested proposals or applications only from nonprofits that try to enhance these opportunities.

To date, the Mayerson classes at NKU have invested more than \$500,000 in nonprofit organizations in the Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati metropolitan area (Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project 2010). "At NKU, the funds invested in nonprofits come from a variety of sources, including foundations, corporations, government agencies and even individuals via students' fundraising efforts. This mix of funding sources seems to be similar to the sources of funding at other colleges and universities" (Olberding et al. 2010; p. 6).

For this study, I designed a plan to collect information from NKU alumni who had participated in student philanthropy; and I developed a survey instrument based on the student philanthropy literature. I submitted the research plan and survey instrument to NKU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects, which approved them and the research.

Survey Instrument

One set of items on the survey instrument asked alumni to assess the effects of the student philanthropy experience on their awareness, learning, beliefs, and intentions (or intended behaviors). These items on the alumni survey were the same items that are on student surveys at the end of each semester. Alumni responses, which were provided years after the student philanthropy experience, could be compared to student responses, which were provided immediately after the experience. In other words, the long-term outcomes could be compared to the short-term outcomes. Specifically, the survey asked alumni to assess the effects of the student philanthropy experience on 17 items using a five-point scale from "very negative effect" to "very positive effect." Examples of these items are: "your awareness of problems or needs in the community," "your awareness of nonprofit organizations in the community," "your belief that you have a responsibility to help others in need," "your belief that you can make a difference in the world," and "your sense of personal responsibility to the community in which you live." (See Appendix A for the complete survey instrument.)

A second set of items asked alumni to assess the effects of the student philanthropy experience on their behaviors related to the nonprofit sector and their communities. These items were based on previous studies of the effects of service learning on participants' behaviors, particularly related to civic engagement. The survey asked

alumni to assess the impact of student philanthropy on 11 behaviors using a five-point scale from “very negative effect” to “very positive effect.” Examples of these items are: “your volunteering for one or more nonprofit organizations,” “your serving on the board of directors for one or more nonprofit organizations,” “your working with someone or some group to solve problems in the community,” “your donating money to a charitable organization,” and “your voting in elections.”

A third set of items was designed to measure the actual behaviors of student philanthropy alumni. These items on the alumni survey were the same as items on the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) surveys that relate to charitable giving and volunteerism. Thus, the average responses by the student philanthropy alumni for volunteerism and charitable giving could be compared to average responses by the general population – that is, national averages. It should be emphasized that the student philanthropy survey and the BLS surveys used the same language to ask respondents to self-report their behaviors; thus, if there is any bias (or biases) in self-reporting, such as the social desirability (i.e., the tendency of respondents to reply in a way viewed favorably by others), it should be similar across both surveys. Two additional questions asked about a specific type of volunteerism – that is, service on the board of directors for a nonprofit organization – including whether respondents have served on a nonprofit board during the past year and the number of nonprofit boards on which they have served since graduating from college.

The final set of items on the alumni survey included four open-ended questions. The questions asked respondents to explain what they most enjoyed or appreciated about their student philanthropy experience, what they did not enjoy or appreciate about it, any suggestions for improving it, and any changes to their perceptions of it since they graduated from college.

Survey Administration

The survey of student philanthropy alumni was administered electronically, specifically using email messages and a web-based survey on SurveyMonkey.com. Recent studies indicate that electronic surveys have similar response rates to traditional mail surveys (e.g., Kaplowitz et al. 2004). A benefit of electronic surveys is that they can provide higher-quality responses because people tend to provide longer responses to open-ended questions on email and web-based surveys than on other types of surveys (Paolo et al. 2000). Another benefit of electronic surveys, of course, is that they are less expensive to administer than a postal mail survey; some studies have found the cost of an email survey to be a fraction of the cost of a postal mail survey, between 5% and 20% (Sheehan and Hoy 1999; Weible and Wallace 1998).

No matter how a survey is administered, achieving the highest response rate possible should be a goal. The literature has identified three key factors in increasing response rates, particularly with email or web-based surveys: pre-notification, post-notification and issue salience. Pre-notification has been found to increase response rates and speed for both email and postal mail surveys (Mehta and Sivadas 1995; Sheehan and McMillan 1999; Taylor and Lynn 1998). Mehta and Sivadas (1995) went so far as to say it is imperative that researchers use pre-notification for e-mail surveys. For this study of alumni who had participated in student philanthropy, I sent a pre-notification email message to potential respondents two days prior to the email message with the link to the web-based survey. I based the timing and language of this message on recommendations and samples in Dillman’s seminal work on survey design (2000, 2008).

Post-notification, which is a reminder or follow-up message, is another factor that has been found to increase response rate. Sheehan and Hoy (1999) found that post-notification about an e-mail survey increased response by 25%. For this survey, I sent a post-notification message to potential respondents one week after the email message with the survey link. Again, I based the timing and language of this message on Dillman's work (2000, 2008).

The salience of an issue to the sampled population is a third key factor in response rate for email, web-based, and postal mail surveys (Sheehan and McMillan 1999). In other words, the more salient – that is, the more important and timely the issue – the greater percentage of the sample will respond. Studies have found that issue salience had greater influence on survey response rates for surveys than other factors, including monetary incentives and contact with respondents (Heberlein and Baumgartner 1978) as well as survey length (Bean and Roszkowski 1995). For this study, the email messages communicated that each potential respondent had “a unique perspective,” and the introduction to the on-line survey said that he or she was “one of a few hundred Mayerson alumni” being asked to complete a survey. In addition, the email messages emphasized the importance of this study by saying that “there is almost no information on the longer-term impacts of the Mayerson project” or other student philanthropy programs across the country.

Sample

The sample for this study began with the identification of all NKU alumni who had participated in the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project between spring 2000 and spring 2009. This time frame started with the first semester in which a course incorporated student philanthropy as a teaching strategy (spring 2000) and went through the semester that was one year before implementation of this study (spring 2009). Thus potential respondents were alumni who had taken a course with student philanthropy at least one year prior to the survey and up to 10 years prior to it. The Office of the Registrar and Office of Advancement Services helped to identify a total of 1,349 alumni who were in these classes. A total of 1,959 individuals had been in these classes, but 608 of them were still students – and thus not alumni – when the survey was administered, and two persons had passed away.

The Office of Advancement Services had active and valid email addresses for 430 of these 1,349 alumni. After I emailed the initial notification message with the link, 70 alumni responded to the online survey; and after the post-notification or follow-up email message, an additional 57 alumni responded. In total, 127 of the 430 persons contacted completed the survey for a response rate of 30%. This rate is comparable to many online surveys (Sheehan 2001).

Results

Quantitative Results

Table I provides the results for the 17 items designed to measure the effects of student philanthropy on participants' awareness, learning, beliefs, and intentions. As explained above, these items on the alumni survey were the same as those used on student evaluations at the end of the semester in which they had participated in student philanthropy. In

Table I Impacts of student philanthropy on awareness, beliefs, learning and intentions

	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Awareness			
1 Your awareness of nonprofit organizations in the community	0.0%	4.8%	95.2%
2 Your awareness of problems or needs in the community	0.0%	10.4%	89.6%
Beliefs			
3 Your belief that you have a responsibility to help others in need	0.0%	21.0%	79.0%
4 Your sense of personal responsibility to the community in which you live	1.0%	21.0%	78.1%
5 Your belief that you can make a difference in the world	0.0%	24.3%	75.7%
Learning			
6 Your interest in the course	3.0%	18.0%	83.0%
7 Your ability to apply principles from the course	3.0%	18.8%	82.2%
8 Your academic skills or knowledge	1.0%	29.7%	73.3%
9 The development of your functional life skills (e.g., communication, assertiveness, problem solving)	1.0%	32.0%	71.0%
10 Your sense of purpose or direction in life	1.0%	46.5%	56.6%
11 Your desire to stay in college or complete degree	1.0%	54.5%	48.5%
Intentions			
12 Your intention to give money to a charity to help those in need	3.0%	25.3%	75.8%
13 Your interest in taking another course with a student philanthropy or service component	5.9%	22.8%	75.2%
14 Your interest in doing community service	1.0%	23.8%	75.2%
15 Your intention to do volunteer work	1.0%	28.7%	74.3%
16 Your intention to work on behalf of social justice	1.9%	38.1%	60.0%
17 Your intention to work in the nonprofit sector	6.9%	40.6%	56.4%

previous studies of student philanthropy, end-of-semester data generally have been reported by collapsing the “very positive” and “positive” responses into one “positive” category, collapsing “very negative” and “negative” responses into one “negative” category, and putting all “neutral” responses in one “neutral” category. Overall, the findings of this study indicated that, well after students had graduated from college or university, an overwhelming percentage reported that their student philanthropy experience had a positive impact on their awareness of nonprofit organizations (95.2%) and their awareness of problems or needs in the community (89.6%). A majority also reported that the student philanthropy experience had positive effects on their beliefs including their belief that they have a responsibility to help others in need (79.0%), their sense of personal responsibility to the community in which they live (78.1%), and their belief that they can make a difference in the world (75.7%).

In terms of learning, 83% of respondents indicated that their student philanthropy experience had a positive effect on their interest in the course; and 82.2% said that it had a positive impact on their ability to apply principles from the course (see Table I). In addition, a majority responded that the experience had a positive effect on their academic skills or knowledge (73.3%) and their development of functional life skills such as communication, assertiveness, and problem solving (71.0%).

In terms of their interests and intentions, 75.2% of respondents indicated that the student philanthropy experience had a positive impact on their interest in taking another course with a student philanthropy or service learning component as well as their interest in doing community service (see Table I). Further, a majority indicated that the experience had a positive effect on their intention to give money to a charity (75.8%) and their intention to do volunteer work (74.3%). To a lesser degree, this experience impacted their intention to work on behalf of social justice (60.0%) and to work in the nonprofit sector (60.0%).

In addition to items on the short-term effects of student philanthropy on their awareness, learning, beliefs and intentions, which had appeared on end-of-semester surveys, the survey of alumni also had several items measuring actual behaviors, particularly those related to engagement with the nonprofit sector and their communities (see Table II). The percentages on these items measuring the effects on actual behaviors are lower than those on items measuring effects on awareness, learning, beliefs, and intentions (or intended behaviors). This was somewhat expected because it is more difficult to impact behavior than it is to impact awareness, learning, beliefs, and intentions. Further, these long-term effects of student philanthropy on behavior are worth noting because, again, this is the first time that a study has attempted to measure them. According to Table II, about two-thirds of respondents indicated that their participation in student philanthropy had a positive effect on their donating money to a charitable organization (63.7%), volunteering for one or more nonprofit organizations (62.7%), and working with someone or some group to solve problems in the community (62.7%). A majority also reported that student philanthropy had a positive impact on other behaviors including belonging to and participating actively in a group or association (61.8%); helping to raise money from others for a charitable cause (59.8%); voting in elections (55.9%); and personally walking, running, or cycling for a charitable cause (53.9%).

Table II Impacts of student philanthropy on behaviors related to community engagement

		Negative	Neutral	Positive
1	Your donating money to a charitable organization	2.0%	34.3%	63.7%
2	Your volunteering for one or more nonprofit organizations	1.0%	36.3%	62.7%
3	Your working with someone or some group to solve problems in the community	1.0%	36.3%	62.7%
4	Your belonging to and participating actively in a group or association	0.0%	38.2%	61.8%
5	Your helping to raise money from others for a charitable cause	0.0	40.2%	59.8%
6	Your voting in elections	2.0%	42.2%	55.9%
7	Your personally walking, running or cycling for a charitable cause	0.0%	46.1%	53.9%
8	Your contacting an elected official to voice your opinion on a matter that concerned you	2.9%	59.8%	37.3%
9	Your serving on the board of directors for one or more nonprofit organizations	2.0%	72.5%	25.5%
10	Your attending a meeting of city council or another body of elected officials	2.9%	72.5%	24.5%
11	Your writing a letter to the editor on a matter that concerned you	2.9%	76.5%	20.6%

The next set of results includes the percentages of student philanthropy alumni who reported that they had made a financial contribution or volunteered for a nonprofit organization during the previous 12 months. Again, the language for these survey items is the same as that used in surveys by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Of the alumni who had participated in the student philanthropy program, 85.6% indicated that they had made a financial contribution to at least one nonprofit organization during the past year; and 71.1% indicated that they had volunteered through or for an organization during the past year. Further, 14.6% of the respondents had served on the board of at least one nonprofit organization during the past year.

Qualitative Results

The survey of student philanthropy alumni also included open-ended questions that allowed respondents to add narrative comments. These qualitative data add some depth to our understanding of the student philanthropy experience and its effects. One open-ended question on the survey was as follows. “What did you most enjoy or appreciate about your experience with the Mayerson project at NKU?” Some responses by alumni to this question focused on how the experience impacted their awareness related to social needs and nonprofit organizations. Following are some sample responses:

- & “I enjoyed working with people in the community and understanding the issues that surround our region.”
- & “I both appreciated and enjoyed how the Mayerson project opened my eyes to be more socially aware. Sometimes it’s nice to look over past your own backyard to not only appreciate what you have but to use what you have to help others as well.”
- & “Going out into the community and learning about all of the volunteer activities that are out there.”
- & “Helped me to truly realize the total number of organizations out there that are doing great, charitable work on very limited budgets.

Other responses from alumni to this question focused on how the student philanthropy experience influenced their learning about the nonprofit sector and applying the course material to the nonprofit sector. Here are a two sample responses:

- & “To me, the best part about the two Mayerson classes that I took as part of my Nonprofit Management certificate program was the active engagement in work directly with or on behalf of nonprofit organizations. The project allowed us to apply the practices and principles we learned in class to directly assist an organization in need, which was an immensely rewarding experience, and a strong motivation to do the best work possible.”
- & “Applying the theories/ideas learned in the course readings to practice. This helped me to learn the material more thoroughly and made it more meaningful for me. It was also enjoyable to feel like we were making a difference and contributing to our community in a positive way. Overall, it was an extremely fulfilling experience.”

Still other responses to the question about the most enjoyable or appreciated aspect of the student philanthropy experience touched on alumni’s intended behaviors and actual behaviors. In other words, these responses linked the alumni’s student

philanthropy experiences to their behaviors related to the nonprofit sector. Here are a few examples:

- & “Learned the problems in community and motivated me to think how to solve them.”
- & “It gave me hands on experience working with the non-profit sector and motivated me to get more involved in my community.”
- & “This experience allowed students with very limited means to make a difference in the community. It also gave us insight into new organizations I was not aware of previously, and I have had occasion to give to some of these since that time.”

Discussion

This study examined the effects of student philanthropy as a teaching strategy from the perspective of alumni, from one year to 10 years after their experience. Interestingly, these findings are similar to previous student philanthropy studies that have conducted surveys of students immediately following their experience. While the study reported here approached student philanthropy from a different perspective, its findings fit very well into the existing research. For example, this study found that an overwhelming majority of alumni believe that their student philanthropy experience had a positive effect on their awareness of nonprofit organizations (95.2%) and their awareness of problems or needs in the community (89.6%). An earlier analysis of end-of-semester data from about 1,000 student philanthropy participants had revealed that 94.9% indicated this experience had made them more aware of nonprofit organizations and 89.6% indicated it had made them more aware of social problems (Ahmed and Olberding 2007/2008). Thus, the percentages of alumni, one to 10 years after their student philanthropy experience, were nearly identical to the percentages of students immediately after their experience, providing some evidence that the effects of student philanthropy last beyond the higher education years.

In addition to supporting existing literature on student philanthropy, this study provides new findings that are unique and interesting. Most importantly, it yielded some evidence that student philanthropists become “real” philanthropists at relatively high rates – certainly at rates higher than the general population. Specifically, it found that about 86% of respondents who participated in a student philanthropy program at one university made a financial contribution to at least one nonprofit organization in 2009; this percentage is about 15 to 20 percentage points higher than the general population. A panel study by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University found that about 65% to 70% of households give to charity (Philanthropy Statistics, 2008). In addition, this study of student philanthropy alumni found that 71% of the respondents volunteered through or for an organization in 2009, which is about 30 to 45 percentage points higher than the general population. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010) reports that only 26.8% of the Americans volunteered through or for an organization in 2009, and only 42.8% of Americans with a bachelor’s degree or higher volunteered. So another way to look at it is that these student philanthropy alumni volunteer for nonprofits at about one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half times the rate of the general population. Further, this study found that 14.6% of student philanthropy alumni served on the board of at least one nonprofit in 2009, which is much higher than the national average of about 5% (Management Strategies 2008). Thus, these student philanthropy alumni serve on nonprofit boards at a rate that 10 percentage points higher the general population. Another way to express it is that student philanthropy alumni serve on boards at three times the rate of the general population.

While this study has some interesting findings and implications, it is important to keep in mind that it is the first to examine the long-term effects of student philanthropy and that it collected data from a limited number of participants (N=127) in a student philanthropy program at one university. Thus, it should be seen as an initial step in a comprehensive program on the long-term effects of student philanthropy.

One direction for future research is to conduct similar studies of alumni who have participated in student philanthropy programs at other colleges and universities. Ideally, such studies would use similar measures so the findings could be compared across colleges and universities. Again, Appendix A includes the text of the online survey instrument used to collect data from alumni for this study. It should be noted though that one challenge with this research agenda is the fact that only a few student philanthropy programs have been in existence for five years or more and thus have a substantial number of alumni to make up the population for a longitudinal study.

Another direction for future research is to include quasi-experimental design elements that further isolate the effects of student philanthropy on individuals' awareness, learning, beliefs, and behaviors – specifically, a control group. This study compared the behaviors of college alumni who had participated in student philanthropy to the general population. A stronger design would include a control group of alumni from the same college during the same time period who did not participate in the student philanthropy program. As McDonald and Olberding (in press) suggested, “Any steps that can be taken to further isolate the effects of student philanthropy will add to our knowledge and understanding and, ultimately, enhance our use of them.”

Conclusion

Student philanthropy is a relatively new and innovative teaching strategy. This “learning by giving” approach was initiated by one university about 10 years ago and now is being used at about 40 colleges and universities (Millisor and Olberding 2009). A number of scholarly articles have examined the degree to which a hands-on philanthropy experience has immediate, short-term impacts on student participants as measured at the end of the semester. This is the first study that begins to address the question of long-term impact on participants in the “real world.” Specifically, are students who participate in a philanthropy experience more likely to become “real” philanthropists in terms of donating their time, talents and treasure?

This study looked at one of the oldest, most established, and largest student philanthropy programs in the country: the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project at NKU. Over the past 10 years, students involved in the Mayerson project have invested more than \$500,000 in nearly 300 nonprofit projects or programs in the metropolitan area. The survey of 127 alumni found that years after their student philanthropy experience a majority of them said it had positive effects on their awareness, learning, beliefs, and intentions. Further, results indicated that relative to the general population a much larger percentage of student philanthropy alumni donated money and volunteered and served on a nonprofit board.

These findings provide some evidence that individuals who have participated in a student philanthropy experience are more likely to engage with the community and become “real” philanthropists than those who have not participated in one. This represents an important contribution to the literature on teaching and learning as well as the literature on philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. However, again, since it is the first study of the long-term effects of one student philanthropy program, additional research is needed to examine the degree to which other student philanthropy programs have had lasting impacts on participants.

Appendix A—Survey Instrument

Introduction and consent

Thank you for helping with this study of the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project at Northern Kentucky University (NKU). You are one of a few hundred Mayerson alumni that we are asking to complete a survey. The information and ideas that you provide will be used to assess the long-term impacts of the Mayerson project and identify opportunities for improving it in the future.

This survey should take about 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary; you may decline to participate at any time without a negative consequence. Your responses will be kept confidential. The survey results will be presented in an anonymous way; no respondent will be identified by name.

If you have questions about this study, please contact Dr. Julie Olberding at olberdingj@nku.edu or 859-572-1953. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research, please contact Dr. Philip J. Moberg, IRB Chair, Northern Kentucky University, at mobergp1@nku.edu or 859-572-1913.

*Do you consent to participate in this study? (Your consent is required before you can complete the survey.)

NO
 YES

Basic information

To begin, please type your FIRST NAME in this box: _____

Please type your LAST NAME in this box: _____

Please type your MAIDEN NAME in this box (if applicable): _____

This question is designed to assess the degree to which the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project was a MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE for you, relative to other class experiences at Northern Kentucky University. Based on the following 5-point scale from "least memorable" to "most memorable," please select the one that best reflects your experience with the Mayerson project:

Least memorable
 One of the less memorable
 Neutral
 One of the more memorable
 Most memorable

Impact on awareness, beliefs, intentions and learning

This set of items asks you to assess the various IMPACTS of the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project on your AWARENESS, BELIEFS, INTENTIONS and LEARNING. Using the five-point scale from "very negative effect" to "very positive effect," please select the response that best represents the effect of the Mayerson project on each of the following:

Very negative effect Negative effect Neutral Positive effect Very positive effect

- Your awareness of problems or needs in the community
- Your awareness of nonprofit organizations in the community
- Your belief that you have a responsibility to help others in need
- Your belief that you can make a difference in the world
- Your sense of personal responsibility to the community in which you live
- Your interest in doing community service
- Your intention to work on behalf of social justice
- Your intention to do volunteer work
- Your intention to work in the nonprofit sector
- Your intention to give money to a charity to help those in need
- Your interest in the course
- Your interest in taking another course with a student philanthropy or service component
- Your academic skills or knowledge
- Your ability to apply principles from the course
- The development of your functional life skills (c.g., communication, assertiveness, problem solving)
- Your desire to stay in college or complete degree
- Your sense of purpose or direction in life

Impact on behaviors

This set of items asks you to assess the IMPACT of the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project on your BEHAVIORS, specifically related to engagement or involvement in the community. Using the five-point scale from "very negative effect" to "very positive effect," please select the response that best represents the effect of the Mayerson project on each of the following:

Very negative effect Negative effect Neutral Positive effect Very positive effect

- Your volunteering for one or more nonprofit organizations
- Your serving on the board of directors for one or more nonprofit organizations
- Your belonging to and participating actively in a group or association
- Your working with someone or some group to solve problems in the community
- Your donating money to a charitable organization
- Your personally walking, running or cycling for a charitable cause
- Your helping to raise money from others for a charitable cause
- Your attending a meeting of city council or another body of elected officials
- Your contacting an elected official to voice your opinion on a matter that concerned you
- Your writing a letter to the editor on a matter that concerned you
- Your voting in elections

Employment sector

Now we want to ask a couple questions about the sector in which you have been employed. First, we want to ask you about the sector in which you are CURRENTLY EMPLOYED - that is, the sector in which you are PAID FOR WORK. Please select the sector in which you are currently employed:

- For profit (private)
- Government (public)
- Nonprofit
- Not employed at this time

Since you graduated from Northern Kentucky University, have you EVER been employed in the NONPROFIT SECTOR?

NO
 YES

Volunteer activities

Next we want to ask you about your VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES. Volunteer activities are defined as those efforts for which you are NOT PAID, except perhaps expenses. We want you to consider only volunteer activities that you did through or for an organization, including schools and/or youth organizations. Also, be sure to include activities that you did only once in a while.

Based on this definition, have you done any volunteer activities through or for an organization during the past 12 months (June 2009 to June 2010)?

NO
 YES

Please provide an estimate how many HOURS PER MONTH - on average - that you VOLUNTEERED. For example, if you have volunteered eight hours per month (about two hours per week), then type "8" in the box. If you have not volunteered at all during the past year, then type "0" in the box. _____

Service on nonprofit boards

Did you serve on the BOARD OF DIRECTORS for one or more NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS during the past 12 months (June 2009 to June 2010)?

NO
 YES

Since you graduated from Northern Kentucky University, how many NONPROFIT BOARDS have you served? For example, if you have served on three nonprofit boards since graduation, then type "3" in the box. If you have not served on any boards, then type "0" in the box. _____

Financial contributions to charitable organizations

Now we want to ask you about your FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS to charitable organizations. A financial contribution is defined as money given by cash, checks, money orders or credit cards to benefit:

- 1) educational institutions;
 - 2) religious organizations, including churches, temples and mosques but not including parochial schools;
- or
- 3) charities and other organizations, such as the United Way, American Red Cross, etc.

Based on this definition, have you or any members of your household made a contribution during the past 12 months (June 2009 to June 2010)?

NO
 YES

Please estimate the AMOUNT OF YOUR FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS to each of the following kinds of organizations during the past 12 months (June 2009 to June 2010). For example, if you contributed \$1,000 to educational institutions during the past year, then type "1000" into the box (no dollar sign or comma). If you did not contribute to one or more of these organizations, then type "0" (zero) in each relevant box.

Educational institutions: _____
Religious organizations: _____

Charities and other organizations: _____

Open-ended questions

Now we want to ask a few open-ended questions that ask you to write brief narrative responses - that is, one or a few sentences. First, what did you MOST ENJOY or APPRECIATE about your experience with the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project at Northern Kentucky University?

If there were one or more things that you DID NOT ENJOY or APPRECIATE about the Mayerson project, briefly describe them here: _____

Do you have any suggestions for IMPROVING the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project? If so, briefly describe these suggestions here: _____

Since you graduated from Northern Kentucky University, have your perceptions of the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project changed? If so, briefly discuss these changes here: _____

This is the end of the survey on the Mayerson project. If you are finished, please hit the "Done with survey" button below. Thank you!

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