ABSTRACT

Title of Document: MANAGING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STUDENT AND THE UNIVERSITY, A CASE STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS

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In this exploratory study, the relationship management perspective was used to understand how students and university agents make meaning of the mutual benefits and expectations in their relationship and how the relationship between students and the University informs the relationship between alumni and the University. The study used qualitative interviews with students and professionals from the development and alumni relations divisions of the University, as well as internal documents, participant observation, statistical data, and external publications in a case study framework. Findings suggest that the relationship management perspective can be used to understand student and alumni relationships with the University, however, the relationships are exchange oriented and are better conceptualized at the macro level and the micro level. Students and some professionals are defining philanthropy in broad terms. Theoretical implications expand relationship management theory, and practical implications suggest ways that the University can better manage the relationship with students.

MANAGING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STUDENT AND THE UNIVERSITY, A CASE STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS

by

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Dedication

To my parents, Robert G. and Joelen K. Merkel, for providing a lifetime of support, inspiration, and love.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Research Problem

Institutions of higher education are facing dwindling public financial support. As governmental appropriations to higher education decrease, colleges and universities are finding themselves increasing reliant on private contributions and the fundraising processes that secure them (Chung-Hoon, J. Hite, & S. Hite, 2007; Elliott, 2006; Worth, 2002). The largest segment of this private support comes from financial donations made by individual donors (Wagner, 2003). Naturally, many of these individuals are members of the institution's alumni public. These alumni donors have a unique relationship with the institution – a relationship that was created during their time as students and continues to be cultivated by managed communication with alumni relations and development representatives of the institution. As significant as it is to the mission of educational institutions, the area of alumni relations and development continues to be under-researched and under-theorized (Wedgeworth, 2000; Cook & Lasher, 1996; Tindall, 2007; Kelly, 2002), thus stunting the growth of these areas professionally and limiting the capacity of educational institutions to secure the capital necessary to fully realize their mission. Furthermore, it is logical to assume that the majority of an academic institution's student public will eventually belong to the alumni public of the same institution. However, very little research investigates the relationship between the institution and its student public in the context of development. Although all students are potential donors, they are rarely treated or studied as such.

The purpose of this thesis is to increase the understanding of the relationship between a university and its student public in the context of fundraising, and how that relationship transforms into one between the University and its recent graduate public. I am primarily interested in the cultivation of the relationship for an eventual contribution by the alumnus or alumna, but am also interested in the benefits derived by the University and current students. This study investigated how the relationship is developed from the period when the individual is a student.

This investigation is a relational study that focuses on a single "case," that of a large, mid-Atlantic research university. The unit of analysis is the University community that includes staff, current students, and alumni. Data represent both the perspective of the University, as well as the student. I used multiple streams of data to capture the relationship cultivation within its real-world context in order to give a holistic description of a specific situation (the case university). Relationship management theory, including the relationship dimensions of trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999) were used to guide the study.

Implications of the Study

Data for this study were collected from a number of sources. I conducted in-depth, qualitative interviews with a group of current students at the case university and a group of staff in alumni relations and development. Additionally, documents, statistical information, participant observation, and external publications were collected. The qualitative approach allowed for flexibility to explore nuanced areas of the relationship between the parties and uncovered areas for future research. The study was guided by a set of research questions that were formulated after a review of literature in the areas of relationship management, fundraising, and alumni relations. Theory in all of these areas, especially fundraising and alumni relations, is embryonic, lending to the exploratory nature of this study.

This study helps to clarify the relationship that exists between the case university and its student publics. By looking at the relationship from the perspective of students and university administration a more holistic picture of the relationship was formed. This study adds to the body of knowledge surrounding alumni relations, and assists in the conceptualization of the university-student relationship as a phase of the university-alumni relationship. Additionally, this study extends relationship management theory and tests the connection between public relations theory and fundraising practice.

Thesis Organization

This thesis includes a review of relevant literature relating to the relationship management paradigm of managed communication, fundraising, and alumni relations. Research questions, which were guided by this review of literature, are then presented. The methodology section includes an overview of relationship evaluation, the qualitative approach to research, and case study framework. Also included in the methodology section is a data analysis plan, comments on validity in qualitative research, a reflexivity subsection, and a procedures subsection that details the ways in which data were collected. A results section presents the findings of the research, organized by research questions and divided into sections for students and university representatives. A conclusion provides discussion, practical and theoretical applications, limitations, and suggestions for further research. Following the references, the appendices include both interview protocols (Appendices A and B), and Institutional Review Board approval (Appendix C).

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Literature and research from several areas have informed this study and assisted in the development of the research questions. Communication theory, fundraising literature, and work done in the field of alumni relations will all be reviewed in this section. The study uses relationship management theory as its primary theoretical framework, and, thus, draws heavily on public relations and communications theory, which have contributed to this emerging paradigm. As fundraising is an embryonic area in the scholarly world, the literature draws from a variety of areas, including public relations, higher education administration, marketing, and practitioner publications. Lastly, alumni relations will be explored as a distinct and significant field, although it is acknowledged that the field of alumni relations is closely related to fundraising. Like fundraising, alumni relations is a developing area, with most of the literature being generated by research-minded practitioners as opposed to researchers per se.

Relationship Management

Definition and theoretical background

Defining and characterizing relationships has proven to be a difficult task for communication scholars. Slowly, there has been a shift away from the overly simplified belief that "good" public relations automatically led to "good" relationships (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 2000). Through continuing research and discussion, scholars have generally come to agreement on several characteristics of relationships: they are dynamic (Dougall, 2005; Seltzer, 1999), measurable (Seltzer, 1999), based on shared perceptions of both parties (Seltzer, 1999; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Dimmick, Bell, Burgiss, & Ragsdale, 2000), and involve a flow of resources and information (Broom, et al., 2000).

Each relationship situation is unique (Toth, 2000). Hon and J. Grunig (1999) suggest that relationships are situational and behavioral, and must involve two or more parties. Through this discourse, accepted definitions of relationships have slowly coalesced. This study will be guided by two definitions, the first from Ledingham and Bruning (1998):

> An organization-public relationship is the state which exists between an organization and its key publics, in which the actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural or political well being of the other (p.62).

The second definition comes from Broom, et al. (2000):

> Organization-public relationships are represented by the pattern of interaction, transaction, exchange, and linkage between an organization and its publics. These relationships have properties that are distinct from the identities, attributes, and perceptions of the individuals and social collectivities in the relationships. Though dynamic in nature, organization-public relationships can be described as a single point in time and tracked over time.

Communication itself, which has been described as a tool in the relation management process (Ledingham & Bruning 2000a) will be defined by the following (J. Grunig, 1997):

> Behavior – of people, groups, or organizations, that consists of moving symbols to and from other people, groups, or organizations… Public relations professionals plan and execute communications for the entire organization or help parts of the organization communicate. (pp.242-243)

This definition is especially applicable to this study, as it demonstrates the ability of communication professionals to represent the voice of the organization. Development and alumni relations professionals, who execute communication for the University, will be used to represent the organizational side of the relationship in this research, while students will represent the publics side of the relationship.

Relationship management as a concept of public relations is quickly growing in popularity. Although Ferguson (1984) was the first to propose the idea of studying the holistic relationship between the public and the organization more than 25 years ago, it is in the last ten years that research has accelerated on relationship management as a lens through which to define and analyze the public relations function. More than a model or theory for describing an individual concept, relationship management is an all-encompassing framework for directing theoretical growth for the entire area of public relations (Ledingham, 2006) and is perhaps even an emergent paradigm. Previous public relations research focused on communication at the program level, the functional level, the organizational level, or the societal level, (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 2001). However, in relationship management, the unit of analysis shifts to the relationship that exists between the communicators (Seltzer, 1999). "The relationship perspective of public relations suggests that balancing the interests of organizations and publics is achieved through management of the organization-public relationships" (Ledingham, 2006 p. 465). Relationship management scholars claim that they are ultimately interested in mutual management (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a) and that by focusing on the mutual management of the holistic relationship, manipulation by either side is minimized (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b).

A primary theoretical pillar for relationship management, especially in the context of development and alumni relations, is social exchange theory (Hung, 2007; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Broom, et al., 2000), which suggests that two parties enter into a relationship when they expect an exchange of resources, which could include information, social status, money, services, intimacy, friendship, etc. (Hung, 2007). The theory suggests that voluntary transactions lead to mutual benefit and goal attainment for both parties (Broom, et al., 2000) and can be used to explain why and when relationships begin, are maintained, and are dissolved (Thomlison, 2000). Broom, et al. (2000) also argues that in social exchange theory, the expectations that the two parties hold of each other are significant, and if these expectations are not met, the relationship may be damaged. Similarly, if the expectations were never defined, or if the parties have different expectations of each other, relational damage occurs (Ledingham, 2006). If mutual expectations are established and met, identification between the parties in the relationship is increased and the relationship endures (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Ledingham, 2006).

In addition to social exchange theory, relationship management includes theory from a number of other areas. Interpersonal communication theory is a frequently cited contributor to relationship management theory (Dougall, 2005; Broom, et al., 2000; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). Relationships are the combined product and producers of the interpersonal interactions and the activities of those interacting. The pattern of interaction contributes to the formation of the relationship (Broom, et al., 2000). Inter-organizational theory, which focuses on the interdependency of organizations and the exchange of resources between these groups, has been a popular area of research that also contributes to a relationship management framework. (Dougall, 2005; Broom, et al., 2000; Post, Preston, & Sachs, 2002). An additional source for relationship management theory is system's theory, which contributes perspectives on how units interact with each other and how interdependencies form between these units (Dougall, 2005; Broom, et al., 2000). Other sources of theory on which relationship management scholars rely are psychotherapy (Dougall, 2005; Broom, et al., 2000), conflict resolution (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999), and resource dependency theory (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000).

There are many theoretical links between the existing excellence/management paradigm of public relations and the emerging paradigm of relationship management. Excellence theorists have long suggested that strategic communication can help the organization manage the relationship that it has with its publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a; J. Grunig, 2006), a concept that relationship management scholars have expanded upon. Additionally, the management paradigm of public relations insists that well-managed communication adds value to the entire organization (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a; J. Grunig, 2006). Developing this concept of adding value, relationship management suggests that the value is added in the form of quality relationships between the organization and strategic publics (J. Grunig, 2002; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999).

Defending the management paradigm, J. Grunig and Huang (2000) claim that the shift to a focus on relationship management is an effect of the transition from one-way to two-way communication within the two-way symmetrical worldview. Additionally, the spectrum from symmetrical to asymmetrical communication, also originally developed by the scholars of the management paradigm (Dozier, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1995) laid the foundation for the development of categories of relationships - an early iteration of relationship management theory. Hung (2007) developed a spectrum of relationship types based on the interests of the involved parties that included exploitive, exchange, and communal relationships. J. Grunig and Huang (2000) also discuss asymmetrical relationships, characterized by contending and avoiding behavior, and symmetrical relationships where participants use strategies of cooperation, being unconditionally constructive, or declaring a win-win or no-deal situation (Plowman, Briggs, & Huang, 2001).

Special attention should be paid to communal and exchange relationships, as J. Grunig and Hon (1999) developed them into one of six dimensions that define relationships and also serve as outcomes. Additionally, the dichotomy between communal and exchange relationships has become a popular means of discussing relationship management (J. Grunig, 2002; Paine, 2003). Hon and J. Grunig (1999) were especially interested in communal relationships, as they described them as completely altruistic and the result of particularly high quality relationship management. They suggest that many relationships will begin as exchange relationships, but will be cultivated into communal ones. Hung (2007) offers a wider spectrum of relationship categories. Exchange relationships fall in the middle, with exploitive relationships, categorized by extreme self interest of the parties, on one side and communal relationships on the other.

The emerging paradigm of relationship management has enjoyed success partially due to its applicability to many areas and its re-conceptualization of the role of communication in public relations. Additionally, using relationship metrics, proponents of relationship management argue that they can measure a return on investment linked to relationship cultivation (Ledingham, 2006). With scholars espousing that the fundamental goal of public relations is the formation of long term relationships (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999), the relational approach can logically be applied to several sub-fields of the discipline. Relationship management has been applied to issues management, crisis management, community relations, media relations, and public affairs (Ledingham, 2006). Waters (2008) has recently applied it to donor management. Relationship management has developed theory in all of these areas by shifting the focus from being specifically on the communication to looking at the holistic relationship (Ledingham, 2006; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). Relationship managers argue that communication is one of many tools in building the relationship and must be studied in the context of other factors (Toth, 2000). The outcomes of communication are just as important, if not more so, than the communication itself (Ledingham & Bruning 2000a).

Benefits of relationship management

A fundamental defining characteristic of the relational perspective is the mutual benefit of both parties in the relationship. Research shows that in a high quality relationship the communication between the parties was considered beneficial to both parties (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b). Additionally, by shifting the focus from looking at the organization or the public independently to looking at the relationship between the two, it becomes easier to evaluate the public relations programming in terms of quality, rather than quantity, of communication (Ledingham, 2006). If the relationship is to be measured accurately, both parties must be considered and the benefits they are receiving from the relationship must be analyzed equally. This forces the researcher into a two-way perspective (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, Dozier, et al., 1995).

Another benefit of relationship management is that practitioners (and scholars) who have adapted this perspective further elevate public relations into a managerial role (Ledingham, 2006). Moving the public relations function from a technical to a managerial focus has long been a focus of public relations scholars (J. Grunig, 2006; Dozier, et al., 1995). In relationship management, the public relations practitioner identifies which publics to form a relationship with, how to cultivate that relationship, and also how to evaluate it (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999). Organizational goals are then developed around the relationships that the organization has with its key publics (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Ledingham, 2006; O'Neil, 2007), and the mission of the organization is affected by these relationships (Ledingham, 2006). Using communication as a tool, the public relations manager can link the long term goals of the organization to short term tactics by how they manage the relationship (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999, Dozier, et al., 1995).

Maintenance and outcomes of relationships

Managing perceptions of both sides in the relationship is vital for maintaining the overall relationship. Managed communication can influence perceptions of the organization-public relationship (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b; O'Neil, 2007). As important as the perceptions are that each side holds of the other, they may still be lopsided in favor of one party or the other. These differences commonly have to do with the values of both parties, or the flow of information. In a study conducted by Dimmick, et al. (2000), results indicated that patients trusted their doctors much more than the doctors trusted the patients, however, the doctors continued to provide direct benefits and thus the relationship was still functional. Although this would be categorized as an exchange relationship (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Dimmick, et al., 2000), it was still a relationship.

When using the relationship as the unit of analysis, outputs become secondary to outcomes and objectives (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Broom, et al., 2000). These outcomes are, in turn, seen in the context of what value they add to the holistic relationship. Reasoning in the opposite direction, the quality of the relationship can be seen as an indication of the effectiveness of the public relations and communication programming (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000). Measuring the relationship also empowers practitioners by allowing them to attach value to the public relations programming (J. Grunig, 2002; Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; Dozier, et al., 1995). J. Grunig (2002) points out that in relationship management, objectives should be split into two categories – process objectives, which are involved with building and cultivating the relationship, and outcome objectives, which are what the organization and/or the public wishes to achieve through the relationship (J. Grunig, 2002).

Dimensions for evaluation of relationships

Very much connected to the outcomes of the relationship are the metrics and variables used to measure the relationship. Without metrics of evaluation, it will be difficult to develop relationship theory and apply it to practice (J. Grunig & Huang, 2000). Traditionally, evaluation began at a basic level, using specific goals of the organization and benchmarks to guide evaluation (Paine, 2003). In marketing literature, the quality of a relationship is directly tied to benefit outcomes such as profit (Mann, 2007; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, & Gremler, 2002), however, this approach is less appropriate in the communication field.

Much academic discussion on the topic of relationship dimensions has yielded a long list of dimensions that scholars have used as variables to measure organization-public relationships. These dimensions include: mutual legitimacy, mutual understanding, reciprocity, and credibility (Dimmick, et al., 2000), involvement and investment (Ledingham, 2006; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b), benevolence of the organization (Bennett & Barkensjo, 2004), accountability and transparency (Waters, 2008), time (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b), and openness (Ledingham, 2006; Dimmick, et al., 2000; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b).

A discussion of relationship outcomes would not be complete without special mention of trust, control mutuality, commitment, and satisfaction. These outcomes, which have been theorized extensively by Hon and J. Grunig (1999) and J. Grunig and Huang (2000) have become a popular set of variables by which to measure relationships in public relations (Waters, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; O'Neil, 2007; Seltzer, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b). Trust includes confidence and openness between the parties, and the belief that goodwill will not be exploited. Control mutuality involves the agreement of a power balance between the parties in the relationship, which does not necessarily have to be equal. Satisfaction is the degree to which expectations are met and the parties feel favorable towards one another. Finally, commitment is the extent to which both parties feel that the relationship is valuable, worth maintaining and promoting (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000).

The use of these dimensions to evaluate relationships has been criticized. Seltzer (1999), argues that J. Grunig and Hon's (1999) last two dimensions, communal and exchange, should not be included, as they are types of relationships and not independent outcomes. These dimensions have also been critiqued on the grounds that they are not as effective for evaluating relationships over periods of time (Seltzer, 1999; Dougall, 2005). Dougall (2005) argues that relationships should be evaluated over an extended period of time, and that information and resource flow should be measured longitudinally. She theorizes a continuum between conflict and cooperation as another way to conceptualize the relationship. Other critics suggest that, like many concepts in public relations, relationships are prone to be measured from the perspective of the organization, as the organization frequently has more resources than the public (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000; Dougall, 2005). Whatever means of evaluating the relationship are ultimately used, scholars should work to eliminate this bias.

Fundraising and Development

Introduction, background, and definitions

Philanthropy and the efforts to improve the human condition through the giving of resources are long and firmly embedded in the American culture (Klein, 2003; Maxwell, 2003; Kelly, 1998; Cutlip, 1990). Although much giving occurs at an institutional level, such as foundations making grants or corporations sponsoring causes, the largest segment of philanthropy is giving that takes place at an individual level (Wagner, 2003). Perhaps because of its nature, education has always been an early adaptor in the fundraising world (Cook & Lasher, 1996; Cutlip, 1990), and has developed systems of development that are comparatively sophisticated (Worth, 2002). Educational institutions generally cluster public relations, alumni relations, governmental relations, and fundraising efforts together into units titled Development or Institutional Advancement (Cook & Lasher, 1996).

An important distinction in individual fundraising is that of annual giving and major gift fundraising. Annual giving programs focus on securing smaller amounts of money contributed by a larger amount of people, with the hope that these people will repeat their gifts every year. Major gift campaigns target a small number of individuals who have a capacity to give large gifts. Annual giving tactics include direct mail, phone-a-thons, and special events (Klein, 2003), and donors who give to these appeals generally do so from their discretionary fund and place minimal restrictions on the gift (Schroeder, 2002; Russo & Schwartzberg, 2003). Because of the broad nature of the public targeted in annual giving appeals, annual giving tends to be more robust (Schroeder, 2002). However, the allure of large donations provided by major gift donors may lead fundraisers to favor major giving strategies. Organizations are becoming increasingly strategic in their cultivation of annual givers (Waters, 2009a; Schroeder, 2002). Membership, which requires a dues payment, such as at a museum or in an alumni association, is a form of annual giving and is considered particularly useful in that it creates a unique sense of belonging between the giver and the organization (Bhattacharya, et al., 1995). Many would say that the fundamental goal of an annual giving program is to move the donor into the major donor category. Annual giving programs are "building blocks" in the fundraising process, as they are both a source of revenue and also a source of potential prospects for future major gift cultivation (Schroeder, 2002; Russo & Schwartzberg, 2003). Waters (2009a) argues that the annual giving appeal is the beginning of what will hopefully be a continuous relationship.

Fundraising theory and research

Scholars and practitioners agree that, considering the importance and size of the non-profit sector in the United States, fundraising is under-theorized (Wedgeworth, 2000; Cook & Lasher, 1996; Tindall, 2007; Kelly, 2002). However, scholarly interest in fundraising is growing (Weerts & Ronca, 2007; Kelly, 1998). Professional organizations such as the Association for Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) are sponsoring research (Kelly, 2002, 1998), and CASE publishes the *International Journal of Educational Advancement*. Occasionally, research from other fields touches on subjects of interest to fundraising professionals, such as the effects of nostalgia on giving behavior (Merchant & Ford, 2008) or philanthropy and library science (Wedgeworth, 2000).

The theoretical work that is available to scholars interested in fundraising comes from several areas. Economic theory has been used as the foundation for research on models of decision making and who influences the decision to give (Rooney, et al., 2007), if a crowd-in or a crowd-out mentality can be applied to giving behavior (Gottfried, 2008), and the extent that market forces (tax shields, the stock market) influence giving (Mann, 2007). Interestingly, Andreoni (2008/1998) uses highly quantitative economic models and game theory to discuss the influence of seed money and lead gifts on capitol campaigns.

Marketing theory is also a popular framework for research on how donors perceive and identify with non-profit organizations (Hart, 2002; Mann, 2007; Bhattacharya, et al., 1995). However, McAlexander and Koenig (2001) suggest that the complex nature of the donor-organization relationship makes traditional marketing metrics such as brand loyalty and customer satisfaction are no longer appropriate.

Bhattacharya, et al. (1995) use social identification theory to argue that paying membership dues is an action that extends the self and the identity. Additionally, they believe that group identification helps to bring order to the self concept, and that the perception of the non-profit organization's prestige and the frequency of contact are both significant to identification with the organization. All of these finding are significant to fundraising research and show the usefulness of social identification theory to the field.

Related theory dealing with organizational identity assists in the conceptualization of the sense of belonging that donors feel with the organizations they support (Sun, Hoffman, & Grady, 2007; Mann, 2007; Bhattacharya, et al.., 1995). Social exchange theory has been used in research on the interdependence between the donor and the organization (Sun, et al., 2007; Cook & Lasher, 1996). Sun, et al. (2007) suggests that public good theory, equity theory, and symbolic interaction theory all hold value for scholars wishing to do research in fundraising. Scholars have also taken a historical approach to philanthropy (Curti, 2008/1957; Cutlip, 1990). Waters (2009c) links crisis fundraising to cognitive dissonance theory.

Fundraising and relationships

Development practitioners know well the adage that "fundraising is about relationships" (Klein, 2003 p. 289). Many will go as far as linking relationship management directly to their job description, such as Temple (2003), who states that "Fundraisers assist donors in recognizing their values and aim to align both the donor's values and the giving" (p. 12), or Worth (2002), who argues that "Development requires a broader understanding of the institution and its mission as well as patience, judgment, and sensitivity in building relationships over time" (p. 7). Professionals and scholars know that responsible fundraising requires developing new relationships while also cultivating old ones (Waters, 2008; Kelly, 1998), yet history shows that less resources are required to maintain an existing relationship than to begin a new one (Kelly, 2001; Bennett & Barkensjo, 2004). This further underscores the importance of investment in holistic relationship management and not merely relationship creation. Organizations that recognize this and develop complex strategies for relationship cultivation outperform those that did not (Chung-Hoon, et al., 2007). Wagner (2003) believes that the donor has gained more power through the current trends in fundraising, and Klein (2003) suggests that recent research shows the increasing importance of word of mouth in building relationships.

Research on how to measure and evaluate the specific relationship between a charitable organization and its donors has been sparse. Waters (2008) suggests that communication management is too limiting in evaluating donor relationships, which further underscores the need for a more holistic, relational approach. Waters (2008) tested variables from relationship management (commitment, satisfaction, trust, and control mutuality) and found them to be significant when evaluating donor relationships. Waters (2008) also observed that individuals who give multiple times report stronger relationships, and that repeat donors are more likely to define the relationship as communal. Many practitioners and scholars define the relationship between donor (or potential donors) and the organization as "involvement." Noonan and Rosqueta (2008) found involvement to be the second highest criterion for giving and went on to suggest that it was an "absolute precondition" for a gift. Kelly (2002, p. 49) proposes the reverse, suggesting that "giving engenders involvement."

Fundraising and public relations

Fundraising has also been strongly linked to public relations (Wedgeworth, 2000) through the excellence/management body of theory. One of the cornerstones of the management paradigm was the four models of public relations: press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical (Dozier, et al., 1995). These models conceptualize fundraising practices in research by Kelly (1995, 1998), and fundraising became an accepted branch of public relations (Botan & Hazleton, 2006; J. Grunig, 2006). Tindall (2007) found evidence of all four models in educational fundraising, with an emphasis on the one-way models. J. Grunig (2001) later re-conceptualized his four models by incorporating mixed motive theory (Murphy, 2007) into excellent two-way public relations, placing the position of the organization and the position of the public at opposite ends of a sliding spectrum with a "win-win" zone in the middle. J. Grunig (2001) argues that public relations could now be categorized by four discreet models and mapped managed communication with a newly created series of spectra, ranging from two-way to one-way communication, symmetrical to asymmetrical, interpersonal to mediated, and ethical to unethical. Merkel (2010) has found evidence that the first three of these spectra are also applicable to major gift fundraising at a large research university.

Predicting and explaining giving

Research has also explored the reasons that individuals give to charitable organizations. Researchers agree that donors give for a variety of reasons: gaining prestige, respect, friendship, avoiding scorn (Mann, 2007), altruism, reciprocity, direct benefits (Mann, 2007; Bruggink & Siddiqui, 1995), religious and philosophical beliefs, guilt, recognition, self preservation, fear, obligation, self-respect (Elliott, 2006), emotional and economic gain (Merchant & Ford, 2008), and direct involvement in the organization (Seiler, 2003). Although tax rewards are a commonly mentioned motivation for giving (Elliott, 2006), research by Kelly (1998) suggests that they are rarely significant. Kelly (1998) goes on to argue that while economists tend to frame giving behavior in terms of self-interest, donors are more likely to describe their giving in terms of altruism. Kelly's (1998) mixed motive model of giving (not to be confused with mixed motive *theory*) attempts to explain these complex behaviors by showing that individuals can be motivated my multiple forces simultaneously. Donors will not give to a cause merely because there is need (Russo & Schwartzberg, 2003).

A popular stream of fundraising research is using quantitative methods to determine what variables are useful in predicting or influencing giving (Rooney, et al., 2007; Sun, et al., 2007; Weerts & Ronca, 2007). Significant findings for specifically educational giving include: as the number of children in a family increases so does the likelihood of a gift to education (Rooney, et al., 2007; James, 2008), educational attainment is positively correlated to giving (James, 2008; Rooney, et al., 2007), interest is the most powerful segmentation tool for potential donors (Seiler, 2003), and involvement in alumni activities (which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section) leads to a significant increase in giving (Patouillet, 2001; Sun, et al., 2007; Bruggink & Siddiqui, 1995). Sun, et al. (2007) found that gender and student experience were all significant variables, and Bruggink and Siddiqui (1995) found that marital status, Greek affiliation, major, and distance from the school were all significant variables in predicting individual giving to an alma mater. Bruggink and Siddiqui (1995) concluded that age is an important factor in predicting giving, with a .5% increase in donations with every passing year, and Sun, et al. (2007) found that number of years since graduation, a variable related to age, was significant. However, McAlexander and Koenig (2001) found that year of graduation had the least impact of the variables tested.

Stewardship

A final, relevant area of discussion in fundraising theory is stewardship. Scholarly and professional focus on stewardship has increased in recent years (Waters, 2008; Worth, 2002; Patouillet, 2001), with special attention on the use of the internet as a stewardship tool (Hart, 2002, 2003; Waters, 2007). Kelly's research (2001) defines stewardship as the component of the fundraising communication process that makes the relationship continuous. It reinforces previous giving behavior while also forcing practitioners to be attentive to every aspect of the relationship (Kelly, 2001). Research by Noonan and Rosqueta (2008) showed that many major donors wished they received more feedback from the organizations to which they donate, but they do not want to create stain on the organization by vocalizing this request. Research such as this suggests that nonprofit organizations still have room for improvement on the stewardship area.

Four dimensions of stewardship have been developed for use in fundraising and public relations: reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing. Reciprocity involves organizations demonstrating gratitude for a gift (Waters, 2009a). Kelly (2001) suggests that this tied to a charitable moral code. Responsibility is fulfilling obligations and promises to donors (Waters, 2009a). It is linked to social responsibility

(Kelly, 2001). Reporting entails keeping public informed of relevant issues (Waters, 2009a) and maintaining standards of accountability (Kelly, 2001). The final dimension, relationship nurturing involves measures to set the relationship in a long-term context (Waters, 2009a) and keeping the donor at the forefront of the organizational consciousness (Kelly, 2001). Research by Waters (2009a) shows that while all four dimensions of stewardship are practiced, reciprocity is the most common.

Fundraising evolving

Both sides of the fundraising process, the organization and the donor public, are in constant shift. Practitioners and scholars agree that organizational fundraising programs are situational (Cook & Lasher, 1996), and continuous (Worth, 2002). Two major trends in development are the increasing use of long-term strategy on the part of fundraising professionals, and the evolving role of the donor in the process. Practitioners and scholars agree that development is becoming more strategic (Nichols, 2002; Elliott, 2006; Wagner, 2002; Wagner, 2003; Dellandrea & Sedra, 2002), although there is not as much agreement on exactly what this entails. Nichols (2002) suggests that the increasing use of research and technology in the development world is forcing practitioners to become more strategy-orientated. Wagner (2003) argues that donors are becoming more involved with the management of their gifts, which is bringing about an increase in the strategic planning behind the fundraising process. It appears that development is paying more attention to how donors want their money used (Elliott, 2006), which is shifting more power to the donor in the organization-public relationship. Wagner (2003) has observed that in the past a cause in need would approach a potential donor with a giving concept. Now, more donors can be seen going to causes that they like, bringing with them an idea and the financial resources to back it up. Temple (2003) conceptualizes this as fundraising switching from “demand side” with the focus being on what the organization needs, to “supply side” with the focus falling on what the donor wants.

Trends on the donor side of the development equation are also having profound effects on fundraising. Demographically, donors are becoming more ethnically diverse (Elliott, 2006; Nichols, 2002), and, due to the wealth accumulated in the technological sector, younger. In many cases, these young donors lack experience with traditional philanthropy (Elliott, 2006; Wagner, 2002; Temple, 2003), and see the giving of resources and volunteerism as a social activity in addition to an economic one (Temple, 2003). Annual giving campaigns targeting young donors have also become much discussed topics. The Obama Presidential Campaign showed how large amounts of money could be raised by collecting small gifts from large amounts of people, particularly young people (Parry, 2009). Because such success had never been seen in this area, educational institutions with young alumni are tapping this resource through social media (Lavrusik, 2009) and retooled annual giving programs (Parry, 2009).

Alumni Relations

Alumni relations and fundraising

In the collegiate setting, alumni relations and communications are frequently associated with fundraising and development. At many schools, alumni relations, public relations, fundraising, and governmental relations are departmentally clustered together or have overlapping administration (Worth, 2002). Because educational institutions have a history of early adaptation in development (Cook & Lasher, 1996), efforts to systematically communicate with alumni are as old as the universities themselves. In some cases, the alumni relations function of the institution predates the development office (Dolbert, 2002). The nature of this area is such that relationships form naturally, thus alumni relations professionals see their overall goal not as creating, but rather increasing and cultivating involvement (Dolbert, 2002). Although alumni relations are frequently associated with annual giving (Dolbert, 2002) (because of the dues that are normally charged for membership in an alumni association), traditional wisdom and research show the importance of alumni relations activities to major giving drives. Patouillet (2001) found that members of alumni associations are three times more likely to give to the institution than nonmembers. Membership in the alumni association is frequently seen as a significant step in the donor cultivation process.

Like the field of fundraising, theory and academic research in the area of alumni relations in limited. In profiling involved alumni, Weerts and Ronca (2007) discuss several bodies of theory that can be applied to alumni relations. Again, social exchange theory can be used, as both the alumnus and the institution expect to receive benefits from the relationship. Expectancy theory can be used on the alumni side of the relationship, as giving by this group reflects expectations they have about the future of the institution. Finally, Weerts and Ronca (2007) use investment models to explain alumni giving by analyzing the costs associated with the individual being in or out of a relationship with the institution. Other researchers in this area have used systems theory and co-orientation/matching needs theory as a framework for their study (Patouillet, 2001; Waters, 2009b).

The relationship that alumni share with their alma mater is unique. For an educational institution, alumni represent a "natural constituency" (Seiler, 2003) who are often interested in staying involved after they have graduated (Dolbert, 2002; Weerts & Ronca, 2007). Both parties benefit from this involvement. Frequently, there is a significant emotional attachment on the part of the individual (Weerts & Ronca, 2007). Some alumni see the relationship as timeless, and may even request to be buried on their campus (Bartlett, 2009). Research by Merchant and Ford (2008) suggests that higher educational institutions have a closer connection to their giving publics than most institutions because of the shared experiences between the two groups, and that much of this connection is associated with nostalgia. Weerts and Ronca (2007) believe that the strength of the relationship can also be partially explained by the cost, to the alumnus, of withdrawing from the relationship. Research by Patouillet (2001) indicated that the educational experience is the component of the overall university experience that has the most influence on giving.

In fundraising, this unique relationship between alumni and their educational institution is a prerequisite for successful fundraising (Cook & Lasher, 1996), and the development professional will attempt to use the strength of this relationship to move the donor up through levels of giving (from annual to major donor) (Mann, 2007). To do this, Weerts and Ronca (2007) argue that the institution has to shape the alumni's expectations of the relationship. However, Bennett and Barkensjo (2004) suggest that individuals will expect a relationship that is fully interactive, and Dellandrea and Sedra (2002) argue that when the goals of the institution are "owned" by the public, they will feel more involved with the cause. Seen in this way, a strong relationship leads to giving, and giving then strengthens the relationship. Successful development campaigns might even be a factor in increasing institutional pride (Dellandrea & Sedra, 2002). Benefits of the relationship between the alumnus and the institution, however, do not have to be strictly philanthropic. Alumni may give recommendations for enrollment, purchase university services, such as professional education courses or sporting merchandise, or help promote the institution at a grass roots level (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001).

Forming alumni relationships

Research is attempting to better understand the relationship between the educational institution and its alumni publics, especially how the relationship is formed and how it can be evaluated. It is conventional wisdom that alumni bonds to their institution are strongly influenced by the experience they had while a student (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001), which has led researchers at the University of Indiana's Center for Philanthropy (Conley, 2000) to suggest that the emotional connection between alumni and school starts at the student level, and should be studied as such. Scholarly work by McAlexander and Koenig (2001) has shed additional light on the nature of the relationship, concluding that alumni form relationships with the institutional identity of their school, and presenting evidence that time is a significant factor in the relationships – they will decay as the alumnus grows older if they are not cultivated. McAlexander and Koenig (2001) go on to frame the academic experience as a "challenging consumption situation" for the alumni. By presenting individuals with a challenging life experience as students, institutions are building a stronger relationship. Research participants who reported feeling especially challenged in college also reported high levels of giving, contradicting the belief that "having fun" in college had the most impact on the relationship (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). Sun, et al. (2007) found that students who believed their university had contributed to their career goals and were satisfied with their experiences gave more, and that alumni who reported being better informed also reported higher donations. Other research shows that students who were involved in a philanthropically-focused group while in school were more likely to give back to their institution in some way – in some cases the giving rate was six times as high (Conley, 2000).

The communication techniques that institutions use to create, build, and maintain relationships with alumni are changing. Dolbert (2002) reports that alumni say they want to move away from print media, however, they also say they feel more connected when they read physical materials. The internet is becoming a very important means of communication between the institution and alumni (Hart, 2002; Lavrusik, 2009; Parry, 2009), however, Hart (2002) does not believe that it will replace direct mail, telethons, and other traditional alumni relations techniques. Internet applications, such as social media networks, are also being used to connect alumni to each other (Lavrusik, 2009).

One trend in alumni relations is the increase in the connection between the alumni affairs function of the campus and the current students of the institution. This can be seen in the increase in on-campus programming by alumni associations (Dolbert, 2002). Following calls from practitioners and scholars that educational institutions should view current students as future donors (Sun, et al., 2007; Dolbert, 2002), such programs are an attempt to create a culture of significant relationships while the students are still on campus (Sun, et al., 2007). Additionally, such tactics help students identify with the alumni association early on (Dolbert, 2002).

Implications of the literature

This study builds on the limited theoretical base of development and alumni relations, in a way that is beneficial to scholars as well as practitioners. The relationship management perspective (Ledingham, 2006) and its four corresponding variables of commitment, control mutuality, satisfaction, and trust (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999) provided a useful way to better understand the relationship between students and the case university in the context of development and alumni affairs. The social exchange pillar of relationship management (Hung, 2007; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000) was especially useful, as it focuses on the transaction of benefits and the alignment of expectations in the relationships. Students and young alumni are still in the formative stages of their relationship with the University and are still highly active in receiving and providing benefits to the institution, thus, an emphasis on exchange has emerged in the literature. Along these lines, theory surrounding exchange relationships (Hung, 2007) was useful in describing the university-alumni relationship and predicting how it will evolve. Annual giving cultivation theory (Schroeder, 2002; Russo & Schwartzberg, 2003; Waters, 2009a) and stewardship theory (Kelly, 2001; Waters, 2009a) may also provide a useful perspective for examining the processes that the institution uses to move students and young alumni to consecutively higher levels of giving.

Research Questions

The research areas of relationship management, fundraising, and alumni relations were all used to provide the research questions for this study.

RQ1. How is the relationship between the University and students cultivated?

Before philanthropy can exist, a relationship must be created and cultivated. This question seeks to understand what tactics and channels of communication are used by all parties, and will focus on the creation and stewardship of a fruitful relationship.

RQ2. To what extent do the relationship outcomes of control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, and trust exist in the relationship between students and the University?

The four relationship outcomes of control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, and trust, theorized by Hon and J. Grunig (1999), have proven to be valid measures of relationship quality within scholarly discourse (Waters, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; O'Neil, 2007; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000b). This question will evaluate the quality and depth of the dimensions by examining them from the perspectives of involved parties.

RQ3. What expectations and perceived benefits characterize the relationship between students and the University?

The relationship is the result of shared expectations and understanding by participants (Ledingham, 2006). When mutual expectations are not being met, the social exchange component of the relationship may be damaged (Broom, et al., 2000). This question is concerned with how participants make meaning of their involvement in that relationship, and it also includes the expected, perceived, and actual outcomes of the relationship.

RQ4. How does the relationship between the University and the students inform the relationship between the University and recent graduates?

Due to the nature of the University community, the majority of the student public will eventually become part of the recent graduate public. This question will guide inquiry into how the relationship formed between the University and students is transformed into a relationship between the University and recent graduates.

Chapter 3: Method

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology was used in this study to determine how the relationship between a university and its student publics is managed. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define qualitative analysis as a process examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (p. 1). Corbin and Strauss (2008) go on to argue that qualitative methodology is a fluid and evolving approach to research that discovers, rather than tests, variables. “Why” and “how” questions are better understood and discussed using qualitative methodology, which, in the process of answering these questions, brings forward essential details that might have been difficult for a quantitative research to observe (L. Grunig, 2008). Qualitative methodology will also take into account the social setting of the research, as the individuals in that setting are analyzed (Berg, 2009). L. Grunig (2008) and J. Grunig (2002) both argue for the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the research participant in qualitative research, and L. Grunig (2008) goes on to suggest that qualitative research need not maintain strict objectivity, as the research and the people who created are connected.

The relationship between students and their university is indeed a complex one, and nuances would be lost in a quantitative analysis. J. Grunig (2002) states that “Relationships can not always be reduced to a few fixed response items on a questionnaire” (p. 2-3), and Berg (2009) believes that qualitative research is better able to access “meanings individuals assign to experience” (p. 16), than quantitative research.

Case Study

The case study method was used in this thesis. A case study fundamentally relies upon combining several forms of data to create a picture of reality (Tuten, 2009a; L. Grunig, 2008). This picture is made richer and more substantial by the combination of these lines of data in a process of triangulation (Berg, 2009). Case studies have been characterized by their holistic description of a research situation, deep information on a specific subject (Tuten, 2009a) and as an excellent way to guide further research (Berg, 2009). Case studies are becoming increasingly seen as a social science research tool (Yin, 2003), but are also more associated with theory building than theory testing (Berg, 2009). Yin (2003) formally defines the case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." (p. 13). Berg (2009) defines a case study as "a method involving systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how the subject operates or functions." (p. 317). Although case studies have been criticized for lacking rigor, Yin (2003) contends that this might be due to confusion with case studies that are intended to be teaching tools (as in medicine or law). The facts that case studies have less basis for generalization, take a great deal of time and effort, and can easily suffer from poor method quality due to the broad definition of the approach are also justifications for what Yin (2003) considers to be unfair criticism.

This study was a case study for a number of reasons. Yin (2003) states that a case study is a valuable research methodology when: "how" and "why" questions must be answered, there is a real-life context to the research, behavior cannot be manipulated, complex social phenomena at the individual, group, or organizational level exist, and events are contemporary. Berg (2009) goes on to add that a case study is desirable when the research is seeking great nuances in the interaction between factors. All of these criteria are met with this study, which features the case university's alumni relations as its unit of analysis. The availability of large amounts of data, as well as many different types of data, makes the University a valuable location for a case study on relationship management.

Procedures

Pilot study

A pilot study for this research was completed with approval of the Institutional Review Board and under the supervision of Dr. Linda Aldoory. During this study, four students were interviewed to address the following research questions: How do students evaluate their relationship with their university?, what expectations do students have of their post-graduation relationship with their university?, and how do students make meaning of philanthropic donations to their university by alumni?. Results from these in-depth interviews offered insight when formulating the research problem, questions of this study, and protocol. Because the pilot study dealt only with students, the most significant contributions to the thesis research were in the wording of questions and probes for the student protocol. The pilot study also exposed areas of the relationship with the University that students were able and willing to discuss, which resulted in changes to questions and probes. For example, the question "As a student, how do you feel that you have been affected by alumni philanthropy at the University?" in the pilot study was changed to "As a student, to what extent are you affected by the alumni of UMD?"

because students did not necessarily feel they had enough knowledge of alumni *philanthropy* to answer the former question, but the broader, latter, question elicited more of a response.

In depth interviews

In-depth interviews are not only a frequently used means of collecting data in qualitative research (Tuten, 2009b; L. Grunig, 2008), but they are also an "essential source of case study evidence" (Yin, 2003, p. 92). Yin (2003) describes in-depth interviewing as a researcher holding a guided conversation with the research participant, where the researcher has the dual responsibility of asking his or her own questions, and also following up on the points presented by the participant. In-depth interviews allow the researcher to explore comments of the participants deeply (Tuten, 2009b), but the interviews themselves are also prone to bias on the part of the interviewer or interviewee, poor recall by the participant, etc. (Yin, 2003). Triangulation of the data from in-depth interviews with other streams of data minimizes these issues.

In-depth interviews were the most valuable research tool in this study for a number or reasons. Tuten (2009b) believes that in-depth interviews reveal attitudes, motives, and behaviors surrounding complex phenomena, and that the interview tactic "helps researchers understand participants on their own terms and in their own words" (p. 289). H. Rubin and I. Rubin corroborate this, stating that interviews are especially valuable at describing social processes and personal issues, and that they are able to bring out nuance and subtlety in the research. In-depth interviews allow stakeholders in the research to be on their own terms, and give the research direct quotes from the participants, which empowers the participants of the research (L. Grunig, 2008).

Interviews are also useful for tracing a situation through a series of events (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 2005), which is pertinent to this case, as the cultivation of the institution's relationship with a developing public will be assessed. Additionally, interviews allow the researcher to work with a small group, and still collect a large amount of quality data (Tuten, 2009b). Interviews have been said to be a significant tool for collecting data in the context of relationship management theory, as they are "especially useful for assessing relationships because they help professionals grasp what motivates people" (L. Grunig, 2008, p. 130). The nuances provided by interviews assisted in constructing the pattern of expected benefits that was necessary for establishing the social exchange and exchange relationships between students and the University.

Semi-standardized interviews were used in this study (Berg, 2009), meaning that the questions were asked in a systematic way, but interviewer and interviewee had the ability to digress from the central question, with probes as the interviewer saw fit. The interviews were audio-tape recorded, to allow for transcription, and were generally held in a face-to-face fashion for maximum depth of verbal and non-verbal communication. When a face-to-face interview was not possible, a phone interview was be arranged. I held the interviews in locations that were most convenient for the participant, such as the office of the interviewee, a classroom, or other neutral location on campus.

Participants

I conducted twenty one in-depth interviews to collect data from two different groups; 13 with current students and eight were conducted with development and alumni relations professionals. McCracken (1988), suggests that eight interviews is generally sufficient to reach data saturation. However, because of the availability of students, and the richness and variety of the data that I was collecting, I decided to conduct more interviews with the group. Both the student and professional group brought a different perspective on the relationship between the University and the students. Different perspectives were also reflected within the groups. These varieties of perspectives strengthened the research (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 2005). Current students were recruited through classes offered by the Communication Department. I asked fellow teaching assistants to announce the study to classes they teach, and to offer extra credit to students who participate. Alumni affairs and development professionals were recruited through personal contacts and references. Once I identified professionals who were interested in participating, I asked those participants for further references, thus “snowballing” the sample (Berg, 2009).

Interview protocol

Two different protocols were designed, one for each group being interviewed. These protocols can be found in Appendices A and B. The interview protocols for each of the groups were pre-tested on three graduate students. The questions were read aloud and the graduate students were asked to give short, mock responses to the questions. This helped me to uncover problems with clarity of wording, ambiguous meanings, etc. that existed in the protocol. Additionally, at the end of the pre-test, I asked the pre-test participants for holistic feedback on the protocol. This resulted in a stronger and more focused set of questions, better order in the protocol, and the elimination of any questions that might be inappropriate, misleading, or poorly worded.

Research questions were answered through questions in the protocol. RQ1, dealing with how the relationship between the University and students is cultivated, was explored by questions that investigated the current or past involvement of the students with the University and to what extent they enjoyed or are enjoying their time at the University. RQ2 involved the elements of the relationship – trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, and commitment. Protocol questions associated with this research question focused on the extent to which the relationship is two-way, asking students how they feel the University treats them and asking professionals to what extent they are meeting the needs of the students and alumni. RQ3 looked to the future, by including expectations and perceptions of benefit in the relationship. Accordingly, the protocol questions asked students to forecast what the relationship will or should look like in the future. The fourth and final research question tied the student and the alumni experience together.

Protocol questions inquired about how participants operationalized the concept of communication, how alumni and current students interact, and how the development professionals factor into this interaction. Several questions directly explored how students received, understood, and defined "communication", such as "How does the University communicate with you?" and "How do you want the University to communicate with you after you graduate? To what extent will social media be involved?" Many other questions indirectly explored the student operationalization of communication, including "What interaction have you had with alumni of the University?" and "What will you do to stay involved with the University of Maryland after you graduate?" For alumni, this operationalization of "communication" was also achieved through direct (ie. "What channels are used by your department to communicate with students? To what extent is social media involved") and indirect questions (ie. "What interaction do recent alumni have with current students at the University?"). A rich understanding of how both sides of the relationship make meaning of mutual communication was provided by the overall protocol. A chart showing how protocol questions correspond to research questions can be found in Appendix C.

Consent and confidentiality

I am aware of the importance of maintaining confidentiality and high ethical standards in conducting a study that deals with fundraising and donor communication. The Institutional Review Board of the University of Maryland has approved the study. The standard consent form, which was signed by each interview participant before they were interviewed, was used. Before the interview began, participants were told that they were being audio-recorded for the purpose of research, and that they had the right to refuse to answer any question, or withdraw completely from the study at any time. Participants were also told that there are no known risks to participating in this research and that if they have any questions about confidentiality, I would gladly address the topic.

Participants' names were separated from their responses in the data analysis. Direct quotes are attributed to ambiguous titles (for example, "A student claims that…" or "A development professional stated that…")

Internal document analysis

Documents, as a form of data, are relevant to almost every case study (Yin, 2003). They are valuable as a way to corroborate and augment data from other sources, and are also helpful for gaining specific details (spellings of names, exact dates, etc.). Additionally, an analysis of documents can expose the tone and culture of the environment under investigation (Berg, 2009). Sensitive issues associated with this form of data include possible bias and inaccuracies in the documents themselves (Yin, 2003), over-reliance on the part of the researcher, and confidentiality problems created by personal information in the documents.

In general, documental data might include letters, agendas, minutes from meetings, administrative memos, newspapers clippings, etc. (Yin, 2003). In this study, internal documents were a rich source of data and included strategic plans for student and alumni activities, marketing plans, research reports, budgets, etc.. They revealed interesting information about the benefits, expectations, and stewardship goals of the relationship, primarily from the University side. I asked interview participants if they would be willing to share documental sources for the sake of the study. The number and type of documents used are summarized in the following table:

Type of Document	*Number (in pages)*
Program description/overview	*14*
Alumni board material	*21*
Policy statements	*2*
Correspondence	*14*
Reference material	*32*
Findings from benchmarking research	*18*
Findings from original research by the case university	*71*
Findings from research conducted by outside parties	*50*
Spreadsheet of benchmarking data	*1*
Marketing timeline	*1*
Total	*224*

Participant observation

Participant observation is a special form of direct observation in which the researcher assumes a variety of roles within the case study situation (Yin, 2003). This form of data collection offers an excellent opportunity to gather valuable data from an insider's perspective, but also includes risks. Such risks include the researcher injecting bias into the study by assuming an advocacy role for the observed organization, or coming to support the given organization in other ways (Yin, 2003).

I am a member of the University of Maryland College of Arts and Humanities Alumni Association Chapter Board, which is responsible for planning programming that connects current students to alumni. I collected data by observing meetings of this board and other student-related philanthropy events (December of 2009 through March of 2010). However, as such meetings and events were rare, (only three and a half hours of observation were made) these data only made minor contributions to the study. Additionally, data from participant observation tended to duplicate what was found in documents and in-depth interviews.

Statistical information

Statistical information was used as supplemental data in this study. Typically, statistical data derive from files, records, maps, charts, lists, and survey data (Yin, 2003). In this study, it included the number of students (broken down by demographics and psychographics) who attended certain events, participation rates, giving rates at peer institutions, results of student surveys, and marketing research information. The usefulness of statistical data can vary between case studies (Yin, 2003), and was, in fact, not of great use in this study. Participants were hesitant to share this type of data, as it was considered particularly sensitive. Berg (2009) argues that statistical data is almost always produced with a certain audience in mind, and that audience is rarely a researcher performing a case study.

External publication analysis

In this study, publications produced for students and alumni by the case university were analyzed as an anecdotal and supplemental source of data. Such items included websites (1), blog entries (6), promotional posters and flyers (8), an event program (1), emails intended for general distribution (5), and promotional items (6). These items were obtained through the permission of professionals involved in development and alumni relations at the case University and complimented other sources of data in demonstrating stewardship tactics and benefits offered to the student public by the University.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data is a continuous process that takes place during the collection of data as well as afterwards (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 2005). During the interviews, I audio recorded the participants, with their permission, so that transcriptions could be made of the conversations. The transcripts allowed me to use direct quotes from research participants, thus improving the quality of the research and giving the participants a more direct voice in the study (L. Grunig, 2008). The transcripts also allowed for "checks" on the data, by asking a participant to review comments made or further clarify a subject. While collecting data, I made also make liberal use of memos and observer comments (in many cases recording them after the interview), which were then be inserted into the transcripts. Included in these observer comments and memos were reactions and feeling about the data collected in the interview, biases, and descriptions of the interviewees.

This helped to minimize biases, remember judgments made while collecting data, and also remember the identities of the research participants.

When analyzing the data generated by in-depth interviews, I used a pattern matching technique. This involved taking a predicted pattern and comparing it to what was actually observed (Yin, 2003; Tuten, 2009a). After data were transcribed, it was be coded for themes. The research questions, of course, served as guides in generating themes, and the aforementioned relationship indicators were be useful in discerning themes in the data (J. Grunig, 2002). For data collected by way of interviews, quotes were used as evidence for fleshing out various themes (J. Grunig, 2002; L. Grunig, 2008). When matching quotes with themes, I tried to interpret the data in a logical way so that other researchers doing the same study and working with the same data set might be able to interpret similarly.

Data gathered through other methods - participant observation, document analysis, etc. - were similarly coded by themes. As before, themes were created in the context of the research questions as well as the relationship indicators. Patterns that arose from these streams of data were then compared to patterns that had already emerged from data collected through in-depth interviews. The result was a collection of themes within each channel of data, but also across channels, allowing the different types of data to truly supplement each other in the study. Quotes were taken from documents, archival records, and artifacts. Because the participant observation component of this study was not transcribed, no direct quotes were generated by that channel of data. For participant observation and documents, the visual presentation of content was also noted.

Validity

Several types of validity are associated with case study research. Yin (2003) discusses three types of validity, construct, internal, and external, and how they interact with this method. Construct validity entails establishing the correct operation measures for the concept that is being studied, and is especially problematic with case studies where borders tend to be blurred. In order to ensure that the researcher is measuring what is meant to be measured, Yin (2003) recommends multiple sources of data, establishing a clear chain of evidence, and letting research participants review the data. Internal validity is significant in exploratory research and studies where a causal relationship must be established, and deals with measuring to what degree did one event lead to another. This can be significantly problematic in case studies, where many inferences are made, but can be combated using techniques such as pattern matching, explanation building, logic modeling, and addressing rival explanations. Finally, Yin (2003) discusses external validity, which is associated with defining the domain to which the studies findings can be generalized. Critics say that case studies have minimal generalizability, however, Yin (2003) argues that case studies rely on analytical, rather than statistical generalizability, and that theory can be created when the findings of one case study are used to back up similar studies in different environments.

Kvale (1995) discusses three ways that validity can be conceptualized in a qualitative methodology: through craftsmanship, dialogue, and pragmatism. “Validity is ascertained by examining the sources of invalidity” (Kvale, 1995, p. 26) meaning that the quality of the craftsmanship of the study, including a strong interview protocol and the credibility of the researcher, is correlated to validity. By constantly monitoring the quality throughout the study and properly using triangulation, a researcher can ensure a higher degree of validity. Secondly, validity is associated with the quality of the dialogue that occurs within the qualitative study. Just as Corbin and Strauss (2008) argue that what is uncovered about reality in a study depends on the perception of the knower, Kvale (1995) suggests that incorporating multiple perspectives, increasing the number of interviewees, and using participants who are legitimate to the conversation will increase validity. Lastly, validity can be seen as an issue of pragmatism (Kvale, 1995). Does the study result in behavioral change or corrective action? Under this view, the answer to "what is validity?" lays in the consequences of the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Alternatives to validity have also been discussed by scholars. Corbin and Strauss (2008) prefer using "credibility" to evaluate the value of qualitative research. L. Grunig (2008) also discusses alternatives. Dependability of the study involves the researcher's adaptation to the situation being studies. Confirmability is another metric that indicates that there is enough agreement in the data analysis so that others scholars might make the same conclusion. Finally, transferability deals with applying the results of a study to relevant new situations.

Reflexivity

In the qualitative tradition, the values of the researcher are embedded so strongly into the study that the investigator must analyze how his or her presence is influencing the research. Thus, reflexivity is a hallmark of qualitative research (L. Grunig, 2008). Through reflexivity, the researcher can increase the quality of the communicative exchange in interviews by increasing his or her own neutrality (H. Rubin & I. Rubin, 2005). The researcher can also neutralize the power dynamic between the investigator and the participants (Berg, 2009).

I am a white male student, in my mid twenties, who is pursuing a master's degree in public relations. As an undergraduate, I was involved with a capital campaign to rebuild the chapter house for the fraternity I was involved in and became interested in fundraising. I have since held many internship positions in this area and have made development communication my primary research area. In addition to research, I am interested in fundraising professionally, and have greatly enjoyed past interviews with professionals, donors, and potential donors about philanthropic giving. By completing this project I hope to assist in the development of theory, but also further my own understanding of fundraising and alumni relations. My attitudes towards philanthropy are extremely positive and I believe fundraising to be a noble career that ultimately provides a great deal of assistance to many areas in our society. I was raised in a family with strong philanthropic convictions and was taught that there was great value in being generous with one's resources.

I am particularly interested in higher education philanthropy for several reasons. I believe higher education to be of critical importance to our world and think that educational institutions must be provided with adequate resources if they are to continue adding value to our society. The belief that philanthropy to higher education can change the world for the better is my motivation for research on donor communication, and I feel that this research could have great pragmatic application if notable results are revealed.

I also have a strong personal connection to higher education. I was extremely involved with my undergraduate institution and truly believe that I "made the most" of my time there, developing both socially and academically. Both my parents are alumni of this institution and my mother is involved at an administrative level. I consider myself to have a strong relationship with my undergraduate institution and I plan on supporting it financially for the rest of my life. I benefit greatly from this relationship and believe that all alumni would benefit from such a strong relationship with their ala mater. My status as a recent alumnus of a large state university strengthens the research in that it allows me to "put myself in the shoes" of many of the interview participants – I have recently been a student and am currently a recent alumni of a university. However, I know that I must be careful not to project my beliefs of what a relationship with a university should be onto my research participants.

Chapter 4: Results

In the following section, findings from this study will be presented based on the research question to which they correspond. For the sake of clarity and organization, each research question is subdivided to present data gathered from the student side of the relationship and then data gathered from the professional side of the relationship.

RQ1: How is the relationship between the University and students cultivated?

Results from Students

In the context of relationship cultivation between the University and the student population, several themes emerged. In many instances, the relationship started very early, before the individual was formally a part of the University community. Students also discussed the ways that they consume information regarding the University, how becoming involved in various functions strengthens the relationship, and how the University offers strong academic as well as social opportunities. The challenging work associated with college strengthens the relationship as well. Lastly, data reflect areas where students feel the relationship is weakened.

The relationship starts early

Many students reported that their relationship with the University started well before they attended the University. For some, this was because of experiences they had in high school, such as visiting the campus or listening to a representative from the University speak. After learning about the University one student described it as his "dream" to attend, while another specifically mentioned that she attended the University because of its reputation and the expectations that she associated with it while in high school. Legacy students, individuals who have had family members attend the University, start forming relationships early because of these connections. Students who had parents or relatives attend the University used them as a resource for additional information about collegiate relationships. According to one student, “Last year was the first year I started talking to my parents about that kind of stuff, and I really loved hearing about that. It really made me feel that my parents care, and I liked that.” Even if their relationship with the University did not predate enrollment, students indicated that the University clearly tried to connect with students as soon as they started classes.

Learning about the University

Students learn about their environment at the University in a variety of ways. Several students discussed communication channels that are linked to the physical campus, such as the school newspaper (*The Diamondback*), messages from instructors, word of mouth from other students, and flyers and posters around campus. Publications and documents provided by the University indicate that the latter two channels are especially popular. Some students hear about events and happening through the clubs and organizations they are involved with. Electronic communication has also become increasingly popular for connecting students with the University, with one student remarking, “Email is *the* way to communicate between the University and the students, they send out a mass email to everyone and you know exactly what’s going on.” Another student specifically mentioned the value of receiving emails directly from the President of the University. Social media is another way that students learn about their environment, although some students expressed hesitations about interacting with University representatives directly via social media. One student remarked, “I feel like that would be a little embarrassing for UMD to utilize those methods. I don't think that's very professional."

For the most part, students were satisfied with the degree of communication they were engaging in with the University. Some students conceptualized the communication as "a two way street" noting that at times it is up to the student to initialize communication. It is also a responsibility of the student to be receptive to the communication offered. One student commented, "I think UMD made it widely known if you need help with something you can get it… It's made pretty well known if you want help, it's there, you've just got to ask for it." Several students also commented that the vast majority of communication they receive in regards to the University environment is not representative of the entire institution, but rather of just one division, such as an Academic Department, the Student Government, or a campus organization.

Getting "involved" with the University

Students report that their relationship with the University is built and cultivated by involvement with some aspect of the University community. Over half of the students specifically referenced the value of working with a member of the University faculty as a means of campus involvement, although students primarily conceptualized "getting involved" as joining some type of student organization, club, team, etc.

The advantages of getting involved with some aspect of the University community are many. Students discussed meeting other students and making friends through their organizations, help in finding a job upon graduation, gaining real world experience, being around other individuals with similar interests or backgrounds (such as by joining a cultural association or veterans club), and making a difference on campus. In terms of communication, one individual believed that being involved on campus was linked to an understanding of the University, stating, “The less you are involved the less you get to see the infrastructure and you may feel more like a number, but if you get involved – people do care and you can get things done if you get involved.” Another participant believed that involvement supplements the academic experience, allowing students to personally grow, claiming, “College and graduate school are not just about the academics. I think it’s growing as a person and finding out who you are. You’re not going to figure that out in just four years, but it will help you a lot.”

Academic and social opportunities

Students discussed opportunities that the University offers to them, which I broadly categorized as academic and social. Many students mentioned large events such as concerts, rallies, and Homecoming festivities as not only ways for students to bond with the University, but also for alumni to relive their connection. One student mentioned sporting events in the same context, while others mentioned the whole “atmosphere” of the University being very social and exciting. Another common theme was the number of people that the student participant has met during his/her time at the University. Some students also discussed that their relationship with the University was a mix of social and academic experiences. Students saw relationship value in both the high quality faculty and facilities that the University has to offer. One participant believed that the extremely active academic life of the University opened the minds of students, while another commented that the academic environment of the University fosters a sense of activism in the student population. Statistical data on students revealed that 89% of students report "Wanting to be at UMD to learn" while only 25% report "Wanting to be at UMD to party".

Challenging work

Many students believed that their academic lives were characterized by hard work. This degree of difficulty, in some cases, was reported to strengthen the relationship with the University. One student participant believed, "… in college I'm actually learning things, I'm becoming a more well educated person. Really for the first time in my class, although school is so hard, I'm enjoying it because I pick my classes. I really love it." Many individuals discussed their majors in positive terms, and several believed that the University was giving them, as one student put it, "a taste of the real world," yet also providing help if it was needed. In slight disagreement, one student did not see the University assisting her often, but also did not believe this to be a negative, as that is how the professional sphere will operate:

> We have a big school here but we have amazing faculty members and if you think that an opportunity like getting close to these people is just going to fall into your lap then you're joking yourself. You actually have to put yourself out there and really have to try and develop a relationship with them and that's what I did.

Weaknesses in the relationship

Although they were sparse, some participants did mention how weaknesses of the University were impacting the cultivation of their relationship. One student linked the theme of large classroom sizes to his relationship with the University, but admitted that he saw little way to remedy the issue. Another student believed that the location of the University, so close to Washington, DC, detracted from the college spirit of the school and town.

Results from University Representatives

Data from the University side of the relationship generated a number of themes relating to how the relationship was cultivated. University Relations (UR), the division of the University responsible for communicating with alumni and also students in the context of development and alumni relations, uses a variety of tools, as well as segmentation strategies, to reach out to students and young alumni. In an effort to cultivate the relationship with students before they graduate, UR attempts to engage current students with alumni, create events and traditions to connect them to the University, and has carried out extensive research projects related to these functions. This research has lead to a restructuring of the UR division, as well as a redefinition of how it interacts with the alumni relations and fundraising units within the colleges. The research has also lead to a re-characterization of philanthropy to include the giving of time to the University. In turn, this has lead to an increase in the number of channels for volunteer engagement available to alumni.

Communicating with students and alumni

Development and alumni relations professionals frequently spoke of "getting the word out" or "raising awareness" of the Alumni Association and the needs of the University as the first step in developing the relationship between the students and the University. One professional stated that, "So as long as the *(case university)* Alumni Association has been established, the first priority has been getting the word out that we're here, to where we are now, which is being more intentional of facilitating direct student to alumni interactions." Another professional specifically stated that he believed the University was meeting with success in these efforts.

To accomplish these goals, the University employs a wide range of communication tools. Email is used extensively to communicate with students and alumni, with one interviewee claiming that reports generated by the University's mail servers show that messages from the Alumni Association are being widely opened (and presumably read) by students, although these messages are bundled with other messages from other University Departments in emails. Websites are useful tools as well, with a survey taken at a student event showing that 44% of students reported visiting their college's website, although only 3% claimed to do so once a week or more. Social media sites, including a customized virtual network, are increasingly being used to communicate with both young alumni, and as marketing plans indicate, with students. Channels of communication physically linked to the campus, such as distributing flyers, placing ads in the school newspaper and "chalking" (leaving temporary chalk messages on campus pathways) are popular for use on student publics, while alumni receive more direct mail, which is not confined to the physical campus. Confirming the use of multiple communication channels, students who attended an alumni networking event were asked how they learned of the program, and responded with the following, noting more than one source could be selected: 62% through email, 9% through the Career Center, 16% through the College website, 28% through an advisor or faculty member, 29% through flyer or ad, 13% through postcards, 14% through special promotions, 31% through a friend, 13% through a class announcement, 15% through a student group, and 18% through Facebook.

The purpose of creating these channels of communication is to create an engaged relationship between the students and the University, which will hopefully translate into an engaged relationship between young alumni and the University. Two interviewees discussed that within UR the Development divisions were more focused on fundraising and rarely interact with students, while the Alumni Association was more involved with creating engagement, and thus it was the latter that was charged with connecting with students. The theme of "engagement" was found extensively in documents generated and used by the Alumni Association and UR, such as the overview items for The University Cause website program, and the findings presentation of the Millennial Task Force. One professional pointed out that the University administration was closely monitoring how student relationship cultivation was progressing by holding frequent meetings and requiring multiple reports by staff working on the function.

The Alumni Association is using a variety of means to connect with students to begin this engaged relationship. The Alumni Association is partnering with student organizations or co-sponsoring events in an effort to raise awareness of alumni relations and philanthropy, with one professional reflecting, "It's so important now, in our student engagement activities, that we are connecting with these groups now and partnering with them so they know who we are before it's ten years from now." The Alumni Association is also coordinating with the Career Center to enhance professional programs for students. Several interviewees discussed the role of technology, especially digital communication, as just a mechanism in cultivating the relationship, but not as a component of the relationship itself, as one participant put it, "Technology will never replace relationships, but technology we have to see as an added tool." Accordingly, UR is enhancing word-of-mouth communication by recruiting high-visibility students to serve as ambassadors for the unit. In emails to organization presidents and other involved students, representatives of UR ask recipients to spread the word to their friends and peers. The physical building where the Alumni Association is headquartered has proven to be an integral component of relationship cultivation. According to one alumni relations professional who works in the building:

> This building has only been on campus since 2005. Before then, it was a lot harder for the Alumni Association to get our name out there because it was more about an idea or a concept than this space on campus that people associated with our activities. Having the (*name of building*) has been huge.

An example of the use of the alumni center as a physical tool for relationship management was the Student Philanthropy Summit. The Summit, held in the alumni center, was promoted in documents as a way to engage students in an "open dialogue about student philanthropy at the (*case university*)." It consisted of approximately 30 students, many of whom were active in leadership roles on campus, discussing issues related to philanthropy in a workshop-like style. UR sponsored the Summit with the belief that students, in general, are not familiar with the opportunities they have to give back to the University and to remain connected after graduation. One of the many purposes of the Summit was to determine how to make students more aware of philanthropy, both to the University and otherwise. Students who attended received emails afterwards asking for feedback on a variety of issues, including University initiatives to engage and educate students about philanthropy.

Segmentation strategies

An additional strategy for communicating with and connecting to both students and alumni groups is segmentation. Several interviewees spoke of the success that UR was having by subdividing student and alumni publics based on academic and geographic area, as well as areas of affinity. One individual believed it was difficult for anyone to relate to the University as one large unit, saying, "We can't just have one big *(the case university*) event and have everyone get warm and fuzzy; it just doesn't work that way." For communicating with students, UR representatives are breaking the general student body down by involvement area and using student representatives or faculty to penetrate targeted areas. For example, UR marketing plans show that directors of "living learning communities" are being targeted as opinion leaders for disseminating information. Success has also been had segmenting alumni groups by affinity, ethnicity and amount of time out of school.

Bringing students and alumni together

The University is working to cultivate the relationship with students using structural means. By increasing the number of networking events that bring students and alumni together, the University is hoping to increase interaction between those two groups. Some academic and scholarly programs are even requiring students to attend events where they have a chance to engage alumni. In addition to connecting students and alumni to each other, such events should connect students (and alumni) to the University environment. In the words of one professional, large events, particularly those associated with athletics, build a sense of community: "I think that for many people, it's a very positive thing, in terms of giving them fond memories that they build on, and they come back with their friends, and that's good too. It's all part of community." Furthermore, many participants discussed the relevance of school traditions in linking students to the long term mission of the institution. UR is devoting increasing resources to strengthening old and creating new programs that will hopefully become traditions in the eyes of students.

The role of research in the relationship

Cultivation of the University-student relationship is increasingly being driven by data, and there is much evidence from interviews, documents, archival information, and observation that UR is undertaking research efforts to be better able to cultivate the relationship, and according to interviewees, better serve alumni and students. Primary research, undertaken by the University, used focus groups to gather data that centered on student commitment to the University, the quality of the student experience, incentives to give to the University, and student understanding of philanthropy. Secondary data and benchmarking are also being used. UR representatives have explored how peer universities cultivate student relationships. As an example, records show that the framework for The University Cause (the name of this website has been altered to protect the identity of the case institution), a soon-to-launch on-line giving forum, was based on a program developed by the University of California at Berkeley. The University, additionally, has associated with a research firm that is compiling and analyzing data from a number of universities for the benefit of the whole group. The aforementioned Student Philanthropy Summit was a means of gathering data on students' perceptions of philanthropy, with two interviewees stating that the findings of the Summit did result in adjustments to UR's strategy in relationship cultivation.

The University's most extensive foray into original research on students was the Millennial Task Force. The task force worked from January to June of 2009 with the goal to "Create strategies to increase alumni participation, particularly from the

Millennial Generation of young alumni," according to documents. (The Millennial Generation was defined as individuals born between 1982 and 2002). The research included a review of literature, brainstorming sessions and "town hall meetings" in College Park and across the country, a survey to members of the Alumni Association and attendees of a large campus event, and in-depth interviews. Three objectives of the research centered around how to create a culture of lifelong relationships between alumni and the University, demonstrating the impact and benefit of philanthropy, and making it easy for alumni to give. Suggested initiatives included developing a micro-cause giving platform, enhancing alumni pride and value added services, creating a philanthropic education program, and formalizing a University wide volunteer structure. Implementation began in July of 2009.

Restructuring the University Relations (UR) division

The report of the Millennial Task Force is one of several factors contributing to a restructuring of how UR accomplishes its mission of engaging alumni. Two individuals specifically referenced how the "paradigm is shifting" to focus more on students and the giving of time as a resource. Another professional claimed that UR tries to slowly shift alumni into a giving mindset, although this effort takes a great amount of time. Accordingly, other interviewees discussed, and documents reflect, the need to cultivate in students a habit of giving as soon as they enter the University community. To do so, UR is trying to strengthen existing relationships that students have with causes and also build new ones. Additionally, UR is broadening its mission of serving alumni to also serving students. One professional discussed UR being the "ears" of the University, which now must be attuned to students as well as alumni. Changes can also be seen structurally, as

UR is increasing the integration between the Alumni Association and other divisions with the UR umbrella to assure that alumni and student engagement is not solely associated with the Alumni Association. The relationship between the central office of UR and the individual alumni relations and development units of each college will continue to evolve under this new paradigm, as the college units are more focused on major gifts, and thus do not traditionally work with students.

Time as philanthropy

Another significant effect of the Millennial Task Force report was the reconceptualization of philanthropy to include the giving of time. Not only do members of the Millennial Generation think of volunteering as being equivalent to giving financially, some of them believe the former to be superior. This lead several UR representatives to advocate the broadening of the definition of philanthropy, placing more value on volunteerism. As one interviewee remarked, “I think a challenge is that the way we define giving back is different… what we are learning is that we need to celebrate their definition and recognize it…” Although some claim that this new model of giving is little understood, the University is still moving forward to create initiatives and programs that place greater emphasis on the giving of time. As an example, the introduction to the strategic plan for The University Cause website, UR’s platform for micro-causes, reads: “In light of a national economic decline that has emboldened the challenge of soliciting private support, the University is searching for new, innovative, and creative ways to engage alumni and friends in giving back.” One individual believed that this spirit of volunteerism could eventually lead to monetary gifts. While the theme of students and young alumni wanting to give time instead of money was pervasive, one interviewee believed this trend was not unique to the Millennial Generation, instead believing that it has always been a factor in philanthropy, but the Millennial Task Force made it salient.

Accordingly, UR is working to create opportunities for alumni to give their time to the University in some capacity. Discussion of committees and increased use of alumni volunteers at campus programs was a common theme in interviews and documents. Many participants stressed the need to make these opportunities to give time meaningful and impactful for both the institution and the alumni participants.

RQ2: To what extent do the relationship outcomes of control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, and trust exist in the relationship between students and the University?

Results from Students

In some instances, students were able to speak about their relationship with the University on a broad level, although most of the themes that arose were more appropriately categorized within the limits of the four relationship outcomes. In regards to control mutuality, student data showed ways that students attempt to make their voices heard in the campus environment and their ability to do so. Channels of empowerment also emerged. Students discussed ways they are committed to the University, as well as their perceptions of the University's commitment to them. Themes within satisfaction polarized between ways the University has satisfied the students, and areas where they feel dissatisfied. Data in regard to trust was meager, although a final theme of manifesting the relationship with the University through giving did emerge.

The general relationship

Some students were able to generalize about their relationship with the University. In summing up his thoughts during an interview, one student described the relationship as transactional:

> The University system has given me all these cool things, but I really don't think that they have given me a lot of extra. They didn't give me any academic scholarships for coming here, they didn't give me any kind of breaks. The only reason I know all these administration people is that I had to do something for the organization, so I made it a point to know who I needed to get to. They didn't offer those people to me, I had to go out and track them down.

Another student seemed to echo this sentiment of a transaction, although he added that he does not always expect much from the University, because he does not always invest himself in it. In response to being asked whether the energy he was putting into the relationship was being reciprocated, he commented:

> In certain aspects yeah, and in certain aspects, I don't put in that much effort. Like I don't always give back to community service and charity events at the Business School, and at the same time, I put energy into trying to make my college experience better, and they aren't all there, so it's a fifty-fifty.

Another student claimed that in order to have a relationship with the University in general, relationships must first be formed with part of it, saying: "In order to really love this University, you have to find something you do love about it." While a different student stated that by not being involved with the University in some way, the relationship suffered, stating: "I feel like it (the relationship) is not as strong with UMD, because I haven't gotten as involved as I like." Following the lines of this fragmented relationship, some students stated that a deficiency in one area of their relationship with the University could be made up in another.

Control mutuality

Students discussed several ways that they feel they exercised power in the University environment. For several students, talking to advisors, course evaluations for instructors, and working with the Student Government Association were all ways that students could express their opinions to the University, and possibly see results. A couple of students specifically mentioned the accessibility of administrators when needing to deal with their issues with the University. One individual claimed that it was much easier to deal with complaints and the opinions of students at the Departmental level, rather than with the entire University unit.

Although several channels of communication were identified, students' thoughts on their ability to voice opinions to the University were varied. A majority of students believed they could make their voice heard within the University community, but have not yet tried, with several adding that the amount of effort this would require makes them unwilling to attempt it. Two students felt that they had privileges that other students did not have on campus, due to their involvement with athletics and the military, while some others voiced their concerns that the University was only receptive to the voices and opinions of "important people" such as donors. One of these students added that this mirrors the real world. A student who was expressing his frustrations with a certain division of the University (The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life) indicated the University held most of the power, because his barriers to action were too high. He said, "…the University, they don't care, once you come here, you can't just transfer just because you are disappointed in OFSL, so they kinda have a monopoly on that aspect of my life, and they don't have an incentive to change, really." Others recognized that the perspectives of the students are very different from those of the administrators. In the words of one student, "…that's coming from the student's perspective and I know that it's obviously different from when you are in a position of power and have responsibilities and do these things."

Several students believed that they could empower themselves by uniting in large numbers, or becoming more involved. It was agreed upon that large groups of students have a louder voice. According to one student, "They had a protest in front of the diversity hall – that got a lot of attention- voices were heard – it was in the paper. If a group of kids are that passionate about something, even if the UMD didn't want to listen, it would be heard anyway." In respond for being asked if he felt he held any power with the University, another student commented, "Not individually, we have 35,000 kids on this campus, so individually, no, but if you got a lot of people together, and they all had the same thought as you, then I think they would have a lot of impact on the University." Lastly, several students referenced empowerment through involvement. According to one, "When I came to UMD, I wasn't really involved, not that I didn't have a voice - no one was hearing me because I wasn't taking the steps needed to be heard – it's a two way street. If you want to be heard you have to take the steps."

Commitment

In terms of Commitment, two themes emerged – the commitment of the student to the University, and the perceived commitment of the University to the student. Students felt that their commitment to the University was manifested through their commitment to individual organizations, with one individual pointing out the "ownership" he takes in his particular group. Others claimed to be committed because they had received benefits from the University. One stated, "I'll have (*the case university*) to thank for helping me get to where I want to be in life." Paradoxically, many students felt that the University's commitment to them could be seen in the "real world" experiences they were receiving. By mitigating "hand holding", the University was giving students a degree of tough love. Students believed that the University ultimately wanted them to succeed, with some pointing out how attentive the institution had been to their unique situation.

Satisfaction

Students articulated many broad areas of satisfaction with the University. Many students expressed pleasure with the academic and social opportunities provided to them, as well as the overall reputation of the school. Comments regarding involvement opportunities on campus were especially meaningful, with one student claiming, "I feel like if I wasn't in a fraternity or on the wrestling team, I probably wouldn't be as happy as I am now" and, later in the interview, saying, "I feel like the University absolutely gives all the opportunities in the world, it's just up to you as to if you take them." Another student echoed this, "I feel like being involved makes you that much closer and that much more fond of the University." Students report positive experiences with staff and administrators of the school. After personally conversing with the President of the University, one interviewee remarked, "I'm not important. I thought it was really cool, it made me feel like this campus is a lot smaller than it actually is." Many students were pleased with the size of the institution, as it was what they were looking for in an institution. Many also felt that they were being treated fairly, and two commented that they would encourage their siblings and other friends to attend.

Students expressed dissatisfaction with the University as well, including the unmanageable size of the school, perceived poor quality of education, and isolated negative experiences within the University environment. The most prevalent dissatisfaction was the large size of the school, which lead to larger than expected classes, students "feeling like a number," the inability to connect with other students, and the inability to find assistance when needed. One student participant stated, "I really hate that there are so many students, sometimes it is hard to get help from the University." Students also expressed displeasure with the education they were receiving, claiming they were not getting what they were paying for, or that the quality of the academic experience did not match the overestimated reputation of the school. In some cases, the large size of the University was linked to students' issues with quality, as when one participant remarked, "…the class sizes are not what I was expecting, and I think that it itself is a detriment to education and my opportunities, because it takes a lot more to learn."

Other grievances were more isolated, yet still significant. One student felt extremely disconnected from the University because he did not gain admission to the college program he wanted and was not offered membership in a fraternity. Another student felt that his high school expectations of the University were not being met. Another student blamed complications she was having on a division of the University, but recognized that the University as a whole was not to blame, saying, "I don't think it's a UMD thing I think it's a DOTS thing." Many students reported individual times when they did not feel fairly treated by the University, due to individual members of the staff or instructors, but these complaints did not reflect an overall negative attitude towards the University.

Trust

Themes dealing with trust were few. Two individuals who were involved in founding organizations felt that they had left a permanent mark on the campus, and indicated trust in those organizations. Additionally, some students remarked that they would trust the University to deal with resources wisely, although only one was able to articulate that this trust was placed in the institution because his experience with it has been so overwhelmingly positive:

> I trust this University because they treat me well. So far, I've never had a bad experience here, and I've had great classes. I think based on my experience here - that has solidified my trust. I know more people under me, the undergrads, for years to come, and they're experiences will be great too, so, just believing in this University and having it be a part of my life for four years, that is a big chunk of me, trust just comes along with that.

Although only two students specifically stated that they would trust the school with donated resources, a majority of interviewees did express interest in contributing to the school in some capacity in the future. Another individual expressed that he hoped to have a desire to give back by the time he graduated. Many students discussed a giving relationship in terms of a specific division of the University, expressing interest in philanthropy directed at a specific student organization or department of the University. One student said, "It (the philanthropy) would have to have a purpose and I think that purpose is what I was involved in when I was an undergrad." Another student remarked, in regards to an organization he helped develop, "I would also come back and support that particular program at all costs because it is something I have ownership in, and I think it would benefit persons like me." A different individual put forth a different theme, believing that the student part of the relationship with the University was about receiving while the alumni period was about giving back.

Results from University Representatives

Like data collected from students, the data reflecting the University's perspective on the relationship displayed themes relating to relationships on a broad topic, but also fit within the relationship outcomes of control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, and trust. Control mutuality focused on how the University receives and acts on input from students, and commitment involved data for both alumni and students, while data pools for satisfaction and trust centered on relationships with alumni.

The general relationship

Many professionals agreed that the students and young alumni of today are the major donors of the University's future. Some documents refer to work on student philanthropy as a "long term investment" for the University. However, many members of the UR units are in a "major gift mindset" and, thus, do not focus on current students or young alumni, because the monetary gifts are too small. One individual suggested that involvement and giving are linked to each other, because, "you don't get a big gift without involvement , but you can't have involvement without giving" and went on to argue that the involvement with students should start in high school or earlier, "because as soon as they commit to the University, that's when the relationship should start. Maybe it even starts when you're wooing them, I don't know." However, when the relationship is in the embryonic stages, student and young alumni participants are looking for different outcomes than older alumni demographics. Referring to the young alumni relationship, the same professional stated, "…it can be a bit more transactional than it is later on in life, because I think people that are recently out of college are looking for value added services from their alumni association in ways that older alumni don't."

Control mutuality

Several research participants referenced the Millennial Generation's desire to have their opinions and feedback heard, with some even referring to them as activists. Access to information has fueled these tendencies, which have been especially exemplified by students. Two interviewees suggested that student feedback is best received by groups such as the Student Government Association and the Senior Council. They did not believe that it was the Alumni Association's purpose to receive feedback from the students, as its mission should be focused more directly on the alumni population. However, another individual described the Student Philanthropy Council as a means of giving students control over philanthropic issues, saying:

> They (The Student Philanthropy Council) will be the main go to group for getting opinions on things and trying to devise some of these programs. We really want this program to be run by students. We can't sit here and get students to participate in things if we don't even know that they would want to in the first place.

After the Council met, emails were sent to students asking for feedback on some of the University's philanthropic initiatives. Data also showed that the giving of time and money is another channel for voicing feedback, with one development officer claiming that the donor always has ultimate control over where the money is used at the University. However, speaking on student and volunteer feedback, another interviewee believed that while it should be integrated into the entire process of creating new outreach events, focus on the bottom line sometimes hampers its reception and implementation, stating: "The challenges are that the focus is sometimes so much to get it done, get it done before the end of the fiscal year or to meet these certain goals, sometimes you'll hear that you don't have time for volunteer input, you just have to run with it."

Commitment

The commitment to the relationship by the University is best exemplified by the programs and services offered by the University. The programs attempt to connect the student population to the University, and also show the students how they can cultivate the connection in the future. Several interviewees mentioned UR's efforts to develop new and strengthen existing traditions on campus. These are traditions that "that bring the student body together" in the words of one UR representative. The use of traditions as relationship building tools is also referenced in literature used by UR. Upon graduation, students are offered free Alumni Association membership for one year, although not all students sign up for the offer. Philanthropically, the University is trying to build a "culture of volunteerism" on campus and also educate students about philanthropy. UR is providing direct matching funds to causes that students are passionate about in order to energize student excitement about giving. The forthcoming University Cause website will allow student groups to promote causes with which they are affiliated. The website will also allow students to donate time or money directly to these causes, many of which are not directly associated with the University, but that follow parallel missions.

The University's commitment to young alumni is directed at getting them engaged with the University as soon after graduation as possible. According to one professional, prompt engagement will lead to greater philanthropic giving later on:

> There was a study done looking at donors going back to the late 1950's and what they found was that in terms of every single person – every person who gave a million dollars or more – they started giving within three to five years of graduation - one dollar, three dollars. So it's the early adoption of that pattern which is so crucial for philanthropy.

Two individuals claimed that because UR has a limited budget, the institution can only focus on cultivating relationships with individuals who self select. However, there was much discussion on the amount of resources being committed to engaging students and young alumni. For one college, over $6000 was allocated from the Dean's fund and the Student Career Initiatives Fund for a student/alumni networking event. At the University level, the Millennial Task Force report called for $235,000 to enhance career services for young alumni and also create a "volunteer clearinghouse." Other interviewees pointed out that there are many alumni programs offered by the University of which alumni are unaware, and others suggested that the emphasis on student and young alumni giving was partially due to the University's current capital campaign.

Satisfaction

The University is seeking to increase student and alumni satisfaction in the relationship, and defines the giving of time and resources by those groups as an indicator of their satisfaction. After the report of the Millennial Task Force, UR increased career services for alumni to increase the value they add to the relationship. Additional opportunities to meaningfully give time were also devised so alumni could be more satisfied with their gifts. Ultimately, when alumni engage the University philanthropically, they are indicating their satisfaction and also self selecting themselves as a group who wants to continue the relationship. One interviewee discussed how alumni give because they are satisfied with the experience they had, and paraphrased what she has heard satisfied alumni say:

> I really gained a lot from my (*the case university*) experience – I found my wife here, my best friends, fraternity or sorority brothers and sisters, if that's what they did, or some other organization, and I've been successful. I want to give back in some way, and not just by writing a check, I really want to impact my experience and knowledge on the next generation of students here.

By giving, alumni create deeper channels of communication, and more meaningful connections with the University that are then used to further cultivate the relationship.

Trust

As with the student, specific references to trust in the data from the University were unusual. However, the issues was described as being highly complex, and tied to transparency. Several participants' feelings about building trust through transparency are echoed by one interviewee, "Simply by being transparent and honest about our intention, what we're hoping to do and accomplish and why we need their help." The theme of transparency is also found throughout documental data, and an espoused purpose of the Student Philanthropy Summit was to allow the students to learn about UR from direct and transparent contact. Alumni also build trust in the University when they see other alumni engaged in trustful relationships with it. A complex issue, the University has several means of gauging trust. One interviewee discussed the importance attached to something as seemingly trivial as contact information, "Not everyone wants a phone call or an email, some of them don't trust us to give us their cell number, so they'll give us their home number… so building trust with contact info so we can keep in touch with them is an issue." Trust given by the individual is reciprocated by the University. According to one development professional, "I've never had an issue of trust with individuals, because once they are engaged they know that part of that two-way relationship is that they have to give back too."

RQ3: What expectations and perceived benefits characterize the relationship between students and the University?

Results from Students

Themes regarding this research question emerged around benefits in the future and the expectations of these benefits. Students discussed how they wished to stay connected to the University in the future and what they believe they are receiving in the present. Themes also included perceptions of alumni held by students, how and why alumni give to the University, and the benefits received by the University, students, and alumni as a result of this philanthropic relationship. Finally, the obligations of the relational parties to each other were discussed.

Almost all students expressed a desire to stay connected to the University after their graduation. Many students wish for this communication to be electronically based, with many mentioning email and some discussing social media. The purpose of this communication would be to stay informed, and possibly to reminisce about the undergraduate experience. Two individuals expressed a desire to have more personal communication than mass emails and letters upon graduation.

What students receive from the relationship

Student interviewees discussed a variety of benefits they were receiving from the University. Foremost, they are receiving degrees that will be valuable in the professional world, although they are also learning how to interact with large groups of people, gaining independence, gaining access to a large network of alumni, and being offered many opportunities and tools for exploration. Even if these opportunities are not taken, the benefit of having them available still exists. A student said, "I think what (*the case university*) gives us is a way to open up doors if we choose to walk down them." Several students believed that the success they hope to have in life would not be possible without the contributions of the University.

Perceptions of alumni relations

Students believed their knowledge was limited regarding expectations about their alumni relationship with the University. The majority of students had heard of the Alumni Association of the University, but were unfamiliar with any kind of Alumni Association programming. One stated, "You hear stuff like that but you never really know what they do – you don't really know, you just hear that the alumni love their school." Younger students did not feel the need to think about the alumni experience, with some adding that as they move closer to graduation, it will become a more salient issue, and others feeling they will learn more about it as they become more engaged with the University. Students who were knowledgeable of the Alumni Association learned about it from parents or friends who were members, or through campus jobs.

Although claiming a lack of knowledge, many students were able to discuss items that they associated with alumni of the University. Predominately, students link alumni support to buildings, classrooms, and other physical structures on campus that are named after donors. Many students also associated being alumni of the University with going to special events and dinners. Students also discussed famous alumni, athletic events, and tailgating as components of the University life linked to the alumni experience. One individual mentioned that because he has only been exposed to highly successful alumni through interaction events, he feels like his expectations and perceptions were unrealistic and unfairly contrived by the University.

Student perceptions on how the alumni population of the University was affecting their personal lives varied greatly. While a small group felt that they were affected, but did not know how, many students felt they had been touched by alumni philanthropy in many ways, both formal and informal. These students believed that alumni can be excellent business contacts, provide help while looking for jobs, assist with internships, etc. One individual conceptualized alumni support communally, saying, “I feel like everyone on the campus has benefited from donations. Someone donated something – to build the buildings, so we all benefit from the donations. It’s more like a community benefit though than a personal benefit.” An equally large group was not able to recognize personal value in the relationship between the University and the alumni population. Some felt that they would benefit more as they moved closer to graduation, while another individual saw other divisions of campus benefiting, but thought that her department was unfairly lacking in support. A student who was a member of a fraternity was only able to see the personal benefits of alumni philanthropy within the confines of his student groups, but not the University as a whole. He said, “In the smaller groups of athletics and fraternities and clubs, I can definitely see how graduates have impacted their lives individually. Unfortunately I haven’t been assisted other than Greek life.”

Alumni philanthropy

Students conceptualized “giving back” by alumni in a striking variety of ways. Almost all students recognized donating money or financial resources as a way of giving back to the University, but the notion of alumni volunteering for the University was also widely mentioned. One student said, “If you have the time, why not call the school and see if there is anything that you can help with, anyone to give a tour, anyone that I can talk to about my experience at school. Everyone can help out in some way.” Other channels of giving and engagement that students identified included assisting students with internships, coming back to teach or give a presentation to a class, doing charity work in the name of the University, working for the school, advising one of their former student organizations, and by simply building the “atmosphere” of the school. One individual believed that giving one’s time was actually more beneficial than giving financially:

> People who donate that much money, I feel like they might miss out compared to somebody who donates their time… I’ll be walking down the street and a homeless man asks for money and you give him change and you just keep on walking, but if you were to actually got to a homeless shelter and actually spend an hour serving meals or something, you are going to remember that a lot more than just giving change to the homeless man.

A plethora of reasons that alumni give was also generated. Many students believed that alumni give to the University to aid in the memory of their youth. Other individuals said that alumni give and stay engaged because they had such an enjoyable time at the University, and because they feel that the University assisted them to such a degree. Two students specified that the benefits received by alumni in the giving relationship were life-long, while other students identified outcomes of the giving relationship such as self satisfaction, power and influence, connections and a professional network, increased chances of their children being admitted to the University, and assistance in finding employment after graduation. Another theme was that alumni give in order to help students, either because they used to be in the position of the student, or because they feel that the alumni before them gave, and this cycle of assistance should be continued. One interviewee stated, "You go back and you have the satisfaction of knowing that you passed on what was passed on to you at this University from somebody else." A blog entry written by a student who had been matched with an alumni mentor also reflects this, saying, "His (the mentor) commitment to helping new generations of graduates succeed in their careers is an admirable and much appreciated gift to our community."

How the University benefits from the alumni relationship

The University benefits in many ways from its relationship with alumni. Students recognized that the University receives input from the alumni, and also is able to use them for advertising and recruitment of students. Many students believed that alumni engagement was important. In the words of one, "brings the school together" and helps build morale, pride, and spirit. One student commented that, "Maybe students will be excited seeing that people who have graduated not only are successful but still think that (*the case university*) is a good place to go and have a lot of value for students." While another student again linked alumni relations to her own pride and also a physical location, stating that, "Seeing the alumni wall in the engineering building makes me feel proud – those that graduated still love the school and wish they could come back." Other interviewees believed that the main benefit that the University received from alumni was assistance for its students, and that alumni input was more valuable than feedback from other sources because the alumni had experienced student life at the institution. One individual stated that the University gets more out of the relationship than the alumni.

Obligations in the relationship

A final theme presented by students was one of obligation between the University and the alumni public, although some students were uncomfortable with a word as strong as “obligation”. Only one individual believed that the two parties have no obligations to each other, while some believed that the University had greater obligations to the alumni than the alumni had to the University. Many student participants suggested that the institution was obligated to keep alumni informed, and that the University was obligated to offer opportunities for alumni to be involved and give back.

Students’ opinions were varied when addressing their own obligation to the University. Many believed that, as they had already paid tuition, they would have no obligation to the University upon graduation. Some stated that obligation was a personal matter, different for each individual. One student felt that alumni should give back because they wanted to, not out of a sense of obligation, while another believed that donating resources to the University was meaningless, as it was already subsidized by the state. Differing in opinion, other students did feel an obligation to give back to the University because they felt that they had received so much, with one individual stating that it was a student’s obligation to be as successful as possible with the education and experiences received from the school. According to one student, “But I’m probably going to feel obligated towards the wrestling team and towards (my fraternity) and whatever other organizations I was in because I was a part of them, and they did give me a lot and they helped shape my undergraduate experience.”, indicating that he might feel greater obligation to the student organizations and team sports he was involved with than the University as a whole.

Results from University Representatives

Data regarding this research question focused on the themes of student expectations, benefits received by alumni and the University, and the obligation that all parties of the relationship have to each other. Although not students themselves, University representatives operate under certain assumptions of what students expect from the relationship they have with the institution. Data also coalesced around how and why alumni participate in an engaged relationship with the University, and what alumni and the University receive from the relationship.

Perceptions of what students want from the relationship

University representatives were in agreement that the students and young alumni want relationships that were meaningful, however, they are not always knowledgeable of what that relationship entails. The idea that young alumni and students want increasingly personal interaction was common in documents and interviewees. Many professionals also stressed the importance of tangible impact, such as coming back to the physical campus. Documents describing The University Cause website stated that the website "will be done in a way that demonstrates meaningful, goal-oriented impact" and a development officer also stressed the point:

> I think unless you're creating quality experiences that create impact, I think it's hard to get them to think philanthropically. … if you're going to get them involved, especially at a younger age, it needs to be a way to give back that has impact they can observe. Observable impact – write that down!

However, many agreed that, as individuals who are yet to graduate, students do not have a clear conception of alumni relations and do not realize the extent to which they are being affected by alumni philanthropy. Accordingly, University programming that brings together students and alumni attempts to cultivate the student (and alumni) relationship with the University while also educating the student. Documents showed that goals of one such program included objectives such that students should “learn about leadership from role models, acquire understanding of being successful in a given field, receive tangible information to inform their career decisions, and understanding of how their undergrad education is linked to their career success.”

Just as student and young alumni perceptions of a philanthropic relationship with the University is nebulous, UR professionals were grappling with ways to engage these groups. Almost all interviewees acknowledged that students and young alumni do not have a great deal of money to donate, so time is a more manageable, and possibly even more valuable, resource for them to give. One professional stated, “The Millennial Generation is very clear that what they find valuable is their time.” One individual felt that this behavior might not be unique to just young alumni and students, stating, “Somebody may not feel that writing a $10,000 check is as important as donating their time or serving on the Board of Governors.” Non-monetarily, several UR representatives conceptualized giving input to the University as a type of giving back, with one individual describing these people as “thought leaders”. Several other non-monetary means of giving back to the University were described, including mentoring current students, volunteering in the name of the University (such as doing community service with an alumni club), assisting the admission office, connecting other alumni to the

University, advertising the University, and assisting in jobs and internship placement for students.

Why alumni give

Several reasons why alumni give back were identified. In many cases, benefits received by alumni were defined in terms of students. Many University professionals alluded to a cycle of giving and receiving that exists between the students and alumni – alumni give because the alumni before them did, and the current generation of alumni want to ensure that students in the future have even greater resources. Alumni may also give because they want students to have as positive an experience as they did, or because they felt that something was negative or lacking in their own student experience, and want to remedy this perceived problem. Some sources indicated that alumni give simply because they want to engage directly with students. One University agent said, "When they (alumni) come back they want to give to the students intellectually and with advice, and that's what really gets them interested and re-invested in their alma mater." The description for one alumni/student networking program has a section describing "Benefits for Alumni" that focuses on direct engagement with students, nurturing the next generation of students, and becoming ambassadors of the University.

Other reasons for giving were defined in more direct relation to the donors. The majority of interviewees indicated that alumni know that by giving back to the University they are increasing the prestige of the institution, which is directly correlated to the value of their degree. Other values that alumni derive from the relationships include a sense of satisfaction, influence within the University community, opportunities to network with other successful alumni, social benefits such as invitations to events and athletic tickets, and the ability to professionally recruit students from the University. Several UR representatives also spoke of alumni giving in order to become a part of a community, or something that is bigger than them. One said, "Honestly just the benefit of having your opinion asked and then seeing part of it implemented. The benefit is being part of something bigger than yourself, that's a benefit anyone can relate to, and in my opinion, that's why anyone gives money."

How the University benefits from the relationship

Data from interviewees indicated that the relational benefits received by the University, outside of monetary support, are hard to quantify. One representative remarked, "Some of the development officers, they can show their progress by what checks are written, but for me it's the relationships, and relationships you can't always quantify with a formula." Several professionals argued that by cultivating the relationship, the University is building pride and spirit in its alumni population, which leads to indirect benefits, such as alumni becoming advocates and advertisers for the University. Many mentioned that alumni engagement is a factor in college rankings. Volunteerism also proved to be a nebulous subject, as it is not formally counted in alumni statistics, and to which it is hard to attach a value. However, one of the initiatives proposed by the Millennial Task Force, the Volunteering Clearinghouse, would assist in the quantification and valuation of volunteerism. Documents spelled out benefits to the University in more concrete terms, describing, for example, that The University Cause website will:

- Aid the University in the economic downturn by preserving and strengthening key initiatives
- Help achieve the University's Strategic Plan

- Strengthen relationships between (*the case university*) and students, young alumni, and other audiences and
- Foster the creation of new, meaningful relationships and opportunities for the University

Obligations in the relationship

Final themes for the third research question centered on the obligations in the relationship. Several interviewees linked the obligation of the University to its students and alumni to the mission of the institution, with one claiming, in regards to obligation, "It's not to throw them parties and make them feel good, although we do that as part of the cultivation process, but our obligation is to be the best we can be and to meet the mission that we say we want to meet." Other interviewees suggested that, for the good of the students, alumni, and even the state, the University was obligated to constantly improve itself, and also to continuously develop its brand image. She said, "We are obligated to continue to steward that brand and make sure we value that brand and protect it, because if something happens to that, that is going to be a reflection on alums." In regards to alumni, interviewees felt that the University was obligated to continue educating its students after graduation, continue to keep them informed, and to allow them to have a voice in the University community. Several UR representatives felt that a central obligation of the University is to provide alumni involvement opportunities and other such "tools and resources to make the relationship sustainable."

Data on student and alumni obligation to the University was found to be sparse. Some participants were uncomfortable saying that alumni had any kind of obligation. One individual believed that obligation between the University and its alumni was a two-way street. Many University representatives argued that while there is no obligation on the part of the alumni, if you had a positive experience, you should want to give back, although that giving need not be financial. One professional noted, "I think financial is just one aspect, every alumni is capable of speaking well of the institution, if they had a good experience, to family members, to their friends, sharing their pride of the institution, and sharing in our successes and failures."

Other interviewees did argue that alumni had obligations – to take pride, ownership, and assist the University in accomplishing its mission. One referenced the motto of "give, join, volunteer, share, or cheer" commonly found in promotional material for UR as possibilities of obligation. Lastly, a participant, using the obligation that Ivy League alumni have to their institution as an example, argued that while alumni do not have an obligation to the University, they might want to have it as a means of strengthening the relationship.

RQ4: How does the relationship between the University and the students inform the relationship between the University and recent graduates?

Results from Students

Data from the student side of the relationship reflected themes associated with student organizations and alumni interaction as ways for students to transform the relationship they have with the University as undergraduates into a relationship as alumni. Students primarily discussed their involvement and engagement with the University as what will connect them to the University in the future. Additionally, students believed that their interaction with alumni as undergraduates would inform their own alumni experiences, and discussed their expectations of the alumni experience, and how they were engaging with these alumni.

Connections students have to the University

Several dimensions of campus life will serve as connection points for students once they graduate. The majority of interviewees expressed a desire to physically revisit the campus in some capacity after they graduated. Connected to this, many hope to continue to attend University sporting events after graduation. Some students discussed the importance of the physical buildings and campus grounds in regards to their relationship with the University and how it will evolve once they have graduated.

The most powerful connection that students claim they will have to the University when they graduate is the organizations and involvement opportunities they were engaged in as undergraduates. Many students wish to continue the connection they have to these campus organizations after they have become alumni:

> I feel like being involved in one of those organizations creates a greater connection that people will feel after they graduate. They may have had more fun, they may have felt more love for the University… I feel like I'm always going to have a stronger affiliation with it than most people because of that fact that I was involved in so many things.

One participant expressed confusion as to how he would stay connected to the University, since the fraternity he was involved with was just removed from campus. He said, "That's a difficult question (How he will stay connected), because my fraternity just got kicked off, and I always viewed myself as being really active in that aspect of (*the case university*) life, so I don't know what's going to happen with that." Building on the theme of fraternity and sorority involvement, many students, even those who were not members of such organizations, acknowledged the significance fraternities and sororities hold in keeping alumni engaged with the institution. Statements, such as, "I think that (the fraternity) is one of the best things that has ever happened to me because I've met so many good people and I've learned about something that is bigger than myself" were commonly heard from research participants who were involved in fraternities and sororities. Student relationships with organizations could also have a negative impact on the alumni experience, as students who harbor unconstructive attitudes towards certain student groups and campus divisions claim that they will hold on to those feelings after graduation. Similarly, one individual discussed being excluded from certain opportunities, in both the alumni and student relationship, as the result of not being a part of certain groups or organizations. Many of the positive effects of organizational involvement were summed by this student, who also acknowledged that relationships with student groups are only one part of the relationship with the overall University:

> Every time I see my brother come back, it's for a fraternity event, but he was a *(colloquial name of students at the case university)* too, and he realizes that it isn't just the fraternity, it's *(the case university)* too in a bigger picture. But I think it's more possible through smaller organizations to handle alumni… I get the feel that a lot of alumni who were on the basketball team and football team and whatever come back and watch the games together, but that's the only thing I've seen with alumni that are grouped together at some type of event.

In addition to connecting to organizations they were involved with as students during their alumni experiences, students believe that college involvement might be an indicator of alumni involvement in other ways. Two individuals believed that students who worked hard to empower themselves on campus and made their voices heard as students will continue to do so as alumni. Another student echoed this, claiming that if you are not involved as a student, it is unlikely that you will become involved as an alumnus or alumna. Students who worked hard as undergraduates will have all the more reasons to celebrate these accomplishments as alumni.

Expectations of the alumni experience

Students are clear in many expectations they have of their own alumni experience, although these expectations vary. Several wish to stay involved with the University by mentoring students or helping them in some way. Some interviewees added that they want to assist future students who are “like me.” One individual believed his story is unique and would be helpful to non-traditional students, and thus would like to share his experiences with future generations of students in order to motivate them. Only one individual specifically expressed a desire to join the Alumni Association, while another said that she will hold off on getting involved until it was time for her children to go to college. In terms of alumni events, one participant wanted experiences that would connect her to other members of her professional field, while another wanted events that were meaningful and tied to campus in some way, “not like alumni bowling leagues but something to keep grads in touch with stuff going on campus.” Several students were aware that they were going to be solicited for money upon graduation, and were uncomfortable with this.

Interacting with alumni

Students are interacting with alumni in a multitude of ways, both on campus and off campus, and many students saw great value in these interactions. For some, alumni engagement begins before the student arrives at the University; legacy students had a family member who went to the University, while several other students reported having family friends that were alumni of the University. A large number of students expressed the excitement they feel when they casually meet alumni in random social situations, including events in their hometowns, or even seeing someone wearing a school-spirited hat at the grocery store.   One student expressed pride upon seeing alumni from the University active in her local community. Alumni interaction also occurs on campus, as students meet alumni when the alumni present in classes, when students hold jobs on campus, when students attend alumni events, or through university involvement. A participant spoke of particularly enjoying meeting alumni through his fraternity, as he knows they will have many things in common.

Although several students believe that their interaction with alumni is limited, many of them, including those who claim little alumni engagement, were able to talk about experiences with graduates of the University. In many cases, alumni encounters are with young alumni of the University, individuals who have only been out a few years and are more likely and able to return to campus. Overwhelmingly, students spoke positively of these interactions, recalling alumni who reminisced about their undergraduate experiences and who enjoyed their time on campus enough to stay engaged and possibly even give of their money or time. In one case, experiences with alumni were a factor in a student's decision to attend the University. Another student discussed wanting to interact with more alumni who had similar experiences as he did, and yet another felt that interacting with former students made her want to be more involved after graduation herself, saying, "I spoke with both of them (alumni) and they both had the best things to say about (*the case university*), so I hope to, when I graduate, to still be involved, and still have (*the case university*) be a part of me, and still help out the University."

In contrast with their peers, some students discussed alumni interaction in negative terms. One student felt that interacting with alumni reminded him that his own college experience was going to eventually end, while another interviewee believed his interaction with alumni had been casual and shallow. Finally, a student was very upset about a situation that occurred at a presentation where alumni were asked to come back to the University to speak to students. The student felt that the alumni he interacted with were under-prepared and insincere in their desire to assist the students. The student remarked, "My experience is limited, but in that limited experience, there has been nothing to give me the drive to go out and have more encounters. It was such a negative experience; I no longer have an interest in it."

Most students, however, reported positive effects of alumni interaction. Interacting with alumni made students feel excited about the University, and witnessing the success of these alumni makes students value their degrees more. Blog entries from students as well as interviewees confirmed that students feel that they can learn from the experience from alumni.

Results from University Representatives

Themes from the University side of the relationship focused on how the UR division is strengthening the relationship between students and the University by educating the students and also by creating connections between students and alumni. UR has defined students and alumni as fundamentally the same group, and has thus concluded that by educating students about philanthropy and the needs of the University community, those individuals will have stronger philanthropic relationships with the University upon graduation. Strengthening and creating student relationships with alumni and student organizations at the University is another way of accomplishing this goal. Unfortunately, this might lead to tension between the relationship of students and the University and the relationship between students and sub-units of the University.

Students and alumni as the same group

There is agreement that the relationship between the University and alumni and the relationship between the University and students is related. The alumni relationship starts when the individual is a student:

> …for most people it (the relationship) starts as a student. It comes back to your student engagement. How did you find your niche on campus? What groups were you associated with? What committee or activity, maybe it was a sports team, a place where you feel like you were welcomed and taught to excel and listened to.

One individual specifically stated that the two relationships are, in fact, the same, saying, "Students are alumni who for the moment only happen to be students. And we never thought about it that way."

The student experience is the beginning of what many University representatives hope will be a life-long relationship with the University. This is referenced by the "Student now, (*the case university mascot*) forever" slogan that is used in programming, and the first objective of the Millennial report, which focuses on the creation of a culture of life relationships. Connected to this, some development officers believed it was a goal of the University to slowly shift the alumni into a giving mindset, a process that takes a long time. Students and young alumni are in a different phase of this development than more mature alumni. One University representative believed, "Young donors aren't going to come in and make a $20,000 gift, they aren't in a position to, and they aren't even thinking like that. It takes people a long time to get comfortable with that philanthropic mind set."

The role of the University Relations division in the relationship

The conviction that the relationship with alumni should be life-long combined with the emerging belief that the student experience is the commencement of the alumni experience has led to a shift in the role of UR in the relationship. Many interviewees also expressed a desire to see students attach meaning to the Alumni Association before they graduate, although professionals stated that engaging young alumni not just a task of the Alumni Association, but now falls across the entire UR division. Students must also see that the education they are receiving is impacting their entire life. Ultimately, the University would like students to cultivate a "habit of giving" before they graduate.

Connecting with students is difficult, as UR is attempting to target especially motivated students who will become leaders as alumni, but also make their message known to the masses. The University tries to quickly identify motivated students and build a connection so that, upon becoming young alumni, the relationship already exists and the individual is "in the pipeline." University representatives claim that when they attempt to communicate with a young alumna/us who was identified during their time as a student as being particularly active, the chances of the communication being successful are higher than average.

However, UR is also attempting to communicate with the students as a whole, in order to increase general participation levels:

> ...this campaign's success will also be driven by participation, and in order to have strong participation numbers, we need our Millennials and our students to understand the importance of giving back to their alma mater,

> so a lot of these strategies, we hope that in the long term will drive our participation rates up.

Contrarily, some participants fear that the University is only reaching highly motivated students. Data show that messaging is not directed at a mass audience, some promotional material is specifically directed at student leaders and observation of events shows a high concentration of this psychographic. Statistically, seniors on the job market are the most engaged in Alumni Association programming, and students also cluster around programs geared towards their major.

Redefining philanthropy

Another challenge for UR is students' conceptualization of philanthropy. Participants argued that students support causes they cared about, but the University is too large of a cause for them to comprehend. Students gain understanding of "giving back" through their group experiences and academics, not from their general University experience. Several sources referenced "micro-sources" as another remedy to this issue:

> …rather than just looking at the University as a whole and being in need of philanthropy, they are looking at separate little micro-causes of the University. I think they do feel like they need to put their efforts towards the University, but it's more specific, it's more geared towards their own individual values.

Other professionals argued that students cannot build meaning around major gifts, as they have only had personal experience with smaller gifts.

Teaching philanthropy

To solidify student understanding of philanthropic giving, the University is taking steps to educate students in this area before they graduate. Data show that extensive benchmarking research has been done on peer institutions, resulting in the University creating new and altering existing programs. For example, the University intends to directly assist student organizations in their support and fundraising for various causes, even if those causes are not directly affiliated with the University. In some cases, the University will match the amount of money raised for a cause, or provide a donation if certain volunteer goals are met. These initiatives will be widely promoted throughout campus. Many UR representatives agree that this is "so we can get them engaged in philanthropy now and then giving to the university down the road." The University is also revamping the senior gift program so that all students, not just seniors, are included, and also celebrating smaller gifts from students to a greater extent. A Student Philanthropy Council is being formed, which will advise the University on philanthropy issues and that will include representatives from many demographic groups. One of the professionals working with this Council stated, "we want it to be really diverse so we get the largest amount of opinions as we can." Alterations are even being made academically, as a new program in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Management is being established in the School of Public Policy whose goal is "to produce graduates committed to advancing the work of nonprofits and to introduce students to the importance of philanthropy in society and their own lives." University representatives hope that the philanthropic relationships that individuals learn about as students will spill into their alumni relationship with the school.

The institution will also work to educate students about its own needs. One interviewee does not believe that students currently see the University as having a need. They think of philanthropy as giving to funds that have obvious needs such as breast cancer or AIDS research. Echoing this, another participant argued that while individual departments or organizations within the University community educate their associated students about their needs, the University as a general unit is not doing this. Several sources of data indicated that educating students of the needs of the institution, and demonstrating that the cost of education at the University is more than what they are paying, was a long term goal.

Student relationships are correlated to alumni relationships

While data showed that students who are active on campus are more likely to be active as alumni, sources also indicated alumni who are currently active had an engaged student experience. According to one University representative who works with alumni, "I can tell you that if I want to recruit an alumni leader, I turn to those that were student leaders, because nine times out of ten if they were engaged as students, they still have that commitment." One interviewee who works with major gift donors stated that many of them had a strong relationship with the University as students, while other interviewees extended this statement beyond donors to all active alumni. One stated, "There are very few alumni that I have ever met that could not speak about something on campus that was powerful for them." Another participant echoed this:

> The alumni that I meet with who want to be engaged felt a greater experience, and most of them were involved in some way outside of the academics. Being a student leader, or just being in a student group, their connection to the University is enhanced therefore they feel a greater need to give back and stay involved.

While building new relationships with students, the University is simultaneously attempting to strengthen existing alumni relationships. The creation of alumni groups was described as a chief way of doing this, with geographic, affinity, or academic groups "filling voids" that exist in the alumni network. Examples of geographic alumni groups include a Floridian Alumni Club, or a Los Angeles Alumni Club. Academic groups are clustered by the alumni of a given academic college or department. Affinity connections have been a more recent approach to segmenting alumni and include ethnicity, Greek affiliation, sexual orientation, etc. Such groups can also support corresponding student groups, as exemplified in the first stated purpose of the Latino affinity group: "Maintain channels of communication among the alumni, staff, and students of the University." However, students are not mentioned in the mission statement of the organization. According to one representative, affinity is especially relevant because, "the Alumni Association is seeing it as a priority because although we can identify people geographically, affinity seems to be a much stronger connection." While policy statements on the criteria of alumni groups do not mention "affinity," the concept is associated in the founding documents of the Latino Alumni Club in reference to diversity and building community.

Students' relationships with the University are influenced by alumni

A major theme found throughout the data was the belief that students' conceptualization of their own alumni relationship with the University is influenced by their interaction with other alumni. Supporting this, interviewees claimed that legacy students, who have a longer history with alumni, tend to have stronger alumni relationships themselves. University representatives suggest that when students see alumni, they want to be part of that experience, and perhaps even model their own alumni behavior on what they see. One said, "We love to get students in here (The Alumni Center) for the programs so they can wrap their minds around this concept of alumni." Accordingly, UR aims to expose students to both highly successful alumni who can serve as outstanding models, and also young alumni, to whom the students will have an easier time relating. Documents reflect that while young alumni are commonly used in alumni programming, it is the outstanding, highly successful young alumni who tend to be the most involved.

Students interact with alumni in a variety of ways. Before they arrive on campus, students have the opportunity to engage with alumni at a series of summer events hosted by those alumni. Data showed that once on campus, students connect with alumni through professional programming events, by seeing alumni make presentations in classes, through campus organizations, at special campus events, and athletic events. Etiquette Dinner, a program sponsored by the Alumni Association that allows students to sit down with alumni and etiquette instructors in a formal setting, was frequently mentioned. Scholarship recipients also are given opportunities to meet their benefactors. The desired outcomes of Access2Leaders, a college-level program that pairs students with alumni mentors, states, “Students will have the opportunity to understand the connection between their undergraduate education and their future professional success” underscoring the importance placed on alumni/student engagement.

Continued connections

University representatives acknowledge that, after they graduate, students will continue to be connected to the organizations they were engaged with as undergrads. One individual remarked, “People are really connecting by the groups they were a part of, that’s why they can identify in terms of their *(the case university)* experience, that’s where they really develop as a person and where they made those life-long relationships.” Because some of these organizations have even created their own culture of giving back and alumni volunteerism within the organization, one participant noted that linking the University's alumni relations function to these student groups was both practical and highly relevant for all parties. Greek organizations were commonly mentioned as a powerful alumni connector, as were athletic events, with one individual remarking, "The main entrée for any alumnus is athletics. It's a great marketing point for the institution; we are a large public university, fairly recognizable athletics programs. The students identify with a number of sports."

Relationship cannibalization

With such strong relationships to student groups and programs being described, the theme of relationship cannibalization became apparent. UR representatives discussed the possibility of alumni feeling more of a connection to a student group, campus division, professor or academic department than with the general University. One interviewee commented:

> We have learned in our alumni relations work that many of them retain those relationships with affinity groups, fraternities or sororities, or maybe (*a popular campus organization*) might have a small reunion, but they aren't coming to the larger reunions, or connecting back to the official structure that manages alumni relationships. They go to those smaller groups and do things with them.

Sources mused that reasons for this might include that some students have negative experiences with the University, academically or otherwise, and feel that the student organizations they were a part of were more nurturing. Another representative suggested that the attraction to the affinity groups might also be explained by the lack of school spirit at the University, compared to its peers. Representatives agreed that the University cannot let its brand be overwhelmed by smaller organizations under its umbrella.

Other sources took more positive perspectives on the possibility of relationship cannibalization. One interviewee argued that the relationship is not mutually exclusive; you can identify with affinity groups and student organizations and still have a relationship with the University. Another suggested that the relationship with the smaller organization be used as a foundation to build off of, saying, "It's probably a good thing, and I think we need to figure out how to use that as a base and use it to broaden their relationship with the University, but it strikes me that it's so much better than having no relationship at all." While another interviewee suggested is can be used as a bridge:

> We want to connect the dots and make it easier for many of these groups… What we try to do is connect to initiatives where something like that is already happening, and we act as facilitators and we let the process come together and be driven by them, but I think what we are able to do with that is we show that we support them, then they can support us.

A final individual described the possible tension between the relationships as a positive, explaining that it might help the University understand what it needs to improve upon:

> …you have to go through that storming phase of the group forming in order to get to a better place… the University might need to hear something about that experience, or maybe the University is doing something wrong, or vice versa. Maybe that's a symptom of something else we need to be getting into and addressing.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Exploring data from both the student and University side of the philanthropic relationship provided a rich understanding of the perspectives that each side holds of the other. Because it focuses on both sides of the relationship and is interested in mutual expectations and perceptions, relationship management theory proved to be a useful lens for conducting this study. Within this discussion section, implications for the relationship management will be presented, focusing on how the data fit into the four variables of relationship management (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999), and a new model that I have developed to account for the complex and fractured relationship between the students and the University will be put forward. Discussion of exchange relationships, properties of the relationships, the conceptualization of time as philanthropy, and the management of students and alumni as different phases of the same public will also be discussed. Theoretical and practical implications are included, and research limitations and suggestions for future research are given.

Relationship Nodes

The most significant finding of this study was that the student relationship with the University is comprised of a number of smaller relationships with various components of the University community. One student interviewee clarified this by claiming that before you had a relationship with the University, you had to have a relationship with something "*about*" it. The data showed that students feel that they have relationships with a variety of things in the University community – professors, sports teams (which students either participated in or considered themselves fans of), and clubs and organizations. The large number of student organizations offered by the University were seen as ways that students could "get involved" with the University. Although it was not universally understood by students, some of the students, and many of the University representatives, understood that these smaller relationships (which I will call "micro-relationships") are what the relationship between the student and the University as a whole (which I will call the "macro-relationship") is built upon.

The micro-relationships were also influential in how students operationalized communication – most communication was seen as a result of one of the micro-relationships and not the macro-relationship. In agreement with J. Grunig's (1997) emphasis on the ability of "parts of the organization to communicate," students received their communication from components of the University, such as list serves for academic departments or student organizations, or word of mouth from classmates.

Accordingly, I propose a new model of "relationship nodes" to understand that the micro-relationships facilitate connections between the student and the University as a whole. The attachment that a student feels to the University is defined by the number of nodes he or she is connected to and the strength of those connections. Greek chapters, intramural athletic teams, student groups, professors, and academic departments are all examples of possible relationship nodes, of which the University can have an unlimited amount. A student who is active on the swim team, is assisting a professor in a research project, and is a member of a student organization that advocates for social change might be connected to the University by these three nodes. I believe that conceptualizing the interaction between the micro- and macro- relationship in such a way will facilitate further discussion by scholars of research management theory and practitioners managing communication between a university and its alumni.

Involvement activities on campus were constantly referenced in the data and are the most popular form of relationship node. The interviewees who spoke the most positively of the University/student relationship were those who also labeled themselves the most involved, while students who did not consider themselves to be involved on campus expressed feeling less of a relationship with the entire University. Some connections to involvement-oriented relationship nodes will maintain through graduation, as students expressed a desire to stay engaged with the organizations in which they are involved. The importance of involvement with some aspect of the University can be seen in two ways. Involved students, student who are connected to a large number of relationship nodes, say they want to be more engaged as alumni, and according to University representatives, alumni who are engaged claim they were involved as students, indicating that node connections can outlast the student experience.

The relationship node model can also be used to understand fundraising and giving to the University. Upon becoming alumni, students will continue to engage nodes with which they had a strong relationship and are more likely to support those connections with a financial contribution. The type of nodes that students attach to during the college years can be used to predict other causes to which they will be philanthropically drawn. A student involved in intramural sports or who regularly attends athletic events should logically be cultivated for a gift to recreational or athletic facilities or scholarships.

Dimensions of Relationship Management

Control mutuality

Control mutuality entails the balance of power between the parties in the relationship, which does not necessarily have to be equal, but should be agreed upon (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000). Students' lack of desire to exercise control mutuality in the relationship with their University was telling, as it stemmed from the belief that to do so would require too much effort. This is also indicative of the imbalance of power in the relationship, as the institution holds several forms of power over the student, and students think that their options are limited. Terminating the relationship, which would involve leaving the University, comes at a much higher price to the individual than the University.

Channels for individuals to exercise control mutuality do exist. Many students felt that they could utilize these channels if the need surfaced. University representatives presented many manners in which they engage students, but many of them offered little means for student feedback to truly become engrained in the strategy of the institution. Programs like the Summit on Student Philanthropy and the Student Philanthropic Council empower students, although these channels are embryonic and are limited in the number of students they affect. The need to involve student feedback is recognized by the University, although it remains to be seen if that feedback will be used as a tool for developing a more symmetrical mission or for merely cultivating relationships for the purpose of financial gifts.

Shifting the relational unit from the entire University to individual relationship nodes offers a new perspective on student empowerment. If the power of students was mitigated by high barriers to action at a University level, dealing with individual student organizations, groups, teams, etc. might lower those barriers and, thus, increase action. Bringing about change in the University community is daunting for students, but first participating in strategic development of a single student organization is a way to lay the foundation of greater change affecting the entire University community. Data showed that students also associated larger numbers with greater means of exercising control mutuality. Relationship nodes may serve as centers around which large numbers of students coalesce, thus increasing power on that side of the relationship.

Commitment

Commitment is the degree to which the relationship is valuable, and must be maintained and promoted (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Grunig & Huang, 2000). Students make sense of commitment in the relationship through their connection to relational nodes. Data showed that individuals believed they were committed in so far as they participated in student activities, attended athletic events, worked hard in their majors, etc. The commitment that the students felt to each node they were attached to translated into an overall commitment to the University. Reciprocal commitment was also channeled through the nodes, as individuals were able to make little meaning of how the general University was committed to them. Instead, commitment to the relationship from the University was seen by students in how many opportunities were offered to them to get involved or participate in sporting events. The quality of education provided by the University, by way of majors and academic departments, was also evidence of commitment for students.

The University is highly committed to strengthening the relationship. Ultimately, the University wants students and alumni to feel life-long connections back to the institution and is devoting considerable resources to this goal of relationship maintenance. Initiatives such as the Millennial Task Force and structural changes such as the shifting of roles in University Relations (UR) and the strengthening of campus traditions are evidence of this. The University wants to learn more about the relationship with students so that it can promote it and cultivate it in order to make it last longer. In these ways, the University is committed to making the public side of the relationship more committed. However, commitment by the University is primarily focused on individuals who self select in the relationship, such as those who join the Alumni Association or choose to get involved in activities as students.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction involves met expectations and the degree to which both parties feel favorable towards one another (Hon & J. Grunig, 1999; J. Grunig & Huang, 2000) Satisfaction on the student side of the relationship was tied to the quality and quantity of relationship nodes offered by the University. Students who conceptualized their relationship with the University as primarily academic linked their satisfaction to the quality of education, the amount of opportunity they were afforded to do research with professors, interesting classes, etc. Students with a more social worldview drew satisfaction from opportunities for interaction with fellow students and extracurricular engagement opportunities. Data on satisfaction from the organization side of the relationship were thinner, indicating that this component of the relationship is difficult to conceptualize and perhaps an assumption for the University. Representatives indicated no instances of dissatisfaction with any individual who self selected to have a relationship with the university.

Students, however, did indicate areas of dissatisfaction. In many cases, these complaints focused on the size of the University and the inability to feel included in the University community, two concepts that can be understood through the perspective of relationship nodes. If students are not finding areas of the University community to form micro-relationships with, they will be unable to break down the University to a manageable size, thus reducing their satisfaction. Students also reported dissatisfying experiences with certain aspects of the University, indicating that not all micro-relationships with nodes are positive. The number and intensity of negative connections to nodes directly affect the level of satisfaction felt towards the entire University.

Trust

Trust, based upon openness between parties and the confidence that goodwill will not be exploited (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Grunig & Huang, 2000), was a complex dimension of the relationship between students and the University. University officials stressed the need to create trust through transparency, which dovetails with the concept of openness in the definition. One of the ways that the University is creating this transparency is by informing current students of the needs of the institution. Data surrounding trust on the student side of the relationship were meager, and pointed to the past experiences that students have had with the University when it did exist. These two perspectives create a dissonance, as the two sides of the relationship associate trust with different things.

This dissonance might be explained by taking into account the developing nature of the relationship between the student and the University. For students, especially young ones, the relationship is in its infancy and trust is not fully developed yet. Data show that this dimension of the relationship is the most complex and also perhaps the last to form for students. There is also evidence that students associate trust in the University with giving to the University. As giving does come later in the relationship, this is an indication that trust does as well. Again, the use of relationship nodes proves useful, as students associate trust of the general University with positive previous experiences. The nodes are a gateway for building greater trust – if an individual has a positive and trustful relationship with a component of the University, that trust will be translated to the macro-relationship.

For the University, the lack of data can be seen as an indication that trust is assumed. When an individual self selects to have an engaged relationship with the University, the university has confidence that goodwill will not be exploited. Thus, the University's attention, in regards to trust, is directed at making students trust the institution, not at bringing the institution to trust the students.

Exchange Relationships

Evidence shows that that relationship between students and the University is exchange oriented in many respects. Exchange relationships are categorized by members benefiting from one another in response to benefits received in the past or expected in the future (Hung, 2007). Discussing the "hard work" associated with college, students took an exchange perspective by arguing that the more they put in, the more they got out of their college experience. Many students conceptualize the tuition they are paying as a benefit they are providing to the University. In return, they are receiving or expect to receive a quality education, a positive social experience, opportunities for involvement, etc. Some students are adverse to the idea of giving further resources to the University because they feel that having paid tuition, they have completed their side of the transaction. This pattern of expectations and benefits is characteristic of social exchange theory (Ledingham, 2006).

Additionally, many students conceptualize the relationship between alumni and the University as exchange. Interviewees were able to quickly identify quantifiable benefits received by both sides of the relationship. Students claimed that they are not receiving benefits from alumni contributions to the University. This indicates that students are lacking understanding of the alumni relations function. Donor support of a university, in fact, offers benefits, such as new facilities or increases in the number of faculty members, which directly impact the student body. When students suggest they receive no benefit from the relationship between the University and alumni, the students seem to be oversimplifying that relationship.

Professionals recognize this exchange perspective, especially in young alumni. Alumni are said to give back because it enhances the value of their degrees, among other reasons. Theory dictates that exchange relationships should be developed into communal relationships (L. Grunig & Hon, 1999), where there is less expectation of a return of benefits from the other side in the relationship (Hung, 2007). This development can be seen in the "pipeline" described by University representatives where students and prospective donors are moved along a cultivation process in the hope that they make a major gift to the institution.

Although University representatives acknowledged the transactional orientation of the relationship with young alumni, there was also a significant focus on the cultivation of a "life-long" relationship between alumni and the University. This emphasis on continuity of this relationship, which begins when individuals are students, shows that stewardship theory (Kelly, 2001) can be used to categorize the components of the communication between the University and students that encourage a long-term relationship. Evidence was also found supporting Kelly's (1998) work linking fundraising communication to the excellence theory. Data showed that both sides of the relationship see obligation as a two-way matter.

Characteristics of Relationships

When using the relationship node perspective to conceptualize relationship management, certain properties of the nodes are observed. Each node represents a different component of a larger relationship, and nodes representing strong relationships may compensate for nodes representing weaker ones. Although further research is needed, data indicate that a negative connection to one relationship node can be counterbalanced with positive connections to other nodes. Several students spoke of isolated negative experiences with the University, or dislike of certain divisions at the institution. However, a variety of positive connections to other divisions of the University resulted in a macro-relationship that was positive for these individuals. Indeed, no individuals had a relationship with the University that was without flaw, indicating that almost every macro-relationship will be composed of a combination of positive and negative connections, with the former hopefully carrying more weight than the latter.

Data indicated the possibility (although there were no direct examples) that relationship nodes may encroach upon one another or upon the macro-relationship. In this situation, the connection to the node becomes so strong that it becomes more significant than the macro-relationship, and, thus, may even become a macro-relationship in itself. This phenomenon will be referred to as relationship cannibalization. An example might be when a student feels so strongly connected to his fraternity, that he considers himself a fraternity brother first, and a student of the University second. This might be caused if the majority of a student's connections to relationship nodes are negative, resulting in him or her attaching extreme value to the one or two connections that are positive. A student who encountered overt discrimination in many areas of the University community, but then finds acceptance with a particular student organization would exemplify this scenario. Accordingly, the institution must carefully manage the relationship to assure relationship cannibalization is mitigated. Some professional interviewees dismissed the danger of cannibalization by arguing that any relationship with a component of the University can be used as a foundation for a positive macro-relationship with the institution. For one individual, cannibalization could have a silver lining, as it exposes areas where the University needs to improve its student services. (As in the aforementioned example, the University would recognize and work to mitigate the sources of discrimination the student felt while on campus.) More research in this area is needed.

Relationship nodes can be connected to physical places and happenings in the University community. Although relationships are not formed with physical places and events on campus, per se, the places and events offer a tangible dimension of the connection to a particular relationship node. For a member of a fraternity or sorority, the festivities surrounding Homecoming were referenced as events that reinforced the relationship between the student and that relationship node, as was the fraternity or sorority house. If a student feels a connection to the University's football team, the stadium where games are played may represent a tangible symbol of the relationship. This emphasis on physicality ties into the linkage that students draw between fundraising and physical spaces, a very common motif in the data. From the student perspective, a benefit that donors to the University receive from their contribution might be having their name attached to a building or part of campus. Because such emphasis is put on physical space in the relationship, this relational benefit is seen as especially valuable and salient to students.

Expanding the Definition of Philanthropy

Data showed that the definition of philanthropy is dynamic. Students do not see philanthropy as simply the giving of financial resources to a cause. This study confirms findings of the Millennial Task Force, which suggest that students attach great value to the giving of time in the form of volunteerism. Interviews with students showed that not only is giving time to a cause just as valuable as giving money, it might even be more so. Although representatives of the University acknowledge this broader definition of philanthropy, it has not yet become totally integrated into the mission or operation of the University. The University, for example, is still developing strategies to steward donations of time and non monetary resources. Additionally, University officers generally see volunteerism as a mediating phase in the philanthropic relationship. With additional cultivation, students and alumni who give time can be transformed into donors of financial or tangible resources. This additional step in the philanthropic process is not a part of the student perspective. It is unclear if students see volunteering as a “gateway” to philanthropy, which will eventually lead to giving money. Although more research is needed, if an individual sees the giving of time as more valuable than the giving of money, a solicitation for tangible resources might be seen as a regression of the relationship.

Students and Alumni as the Same Group

In the context of development and alumni relations, the University conceptualizes the student experience on campus and the alumni experience off campus as two different phases in the same cultivation relationship. The assumption by the University that students and alumni are fundamentally phases of the same public is seen in the efforts by the University to educate students about philanthropy during their time at the University, as opposed to allowing them to gain such an education on their own after they have completed their time on campus, or not learn about philanthropic concepts at all. Commonly seen in the data from University agents were deviations on the statement that “students are the donors of tomorrow”. Accordingly, the University believes that part of the cultivation process for students involves slowly moving them into a “habit of giving” (another commonly heard statement in interviews), preferably before they graduate. However, if a broader definition of philanthropy is applied, one that includes the giving of time as a channel of philanthropy, the number of students who can be said to be in a “habit of giving” at the time of graduation increases considerably.   Data showed students commonly participate in service activities directed at the University community or general community as part of their connections with various relationship nodes. This also explains why many alumni who are philanthropically engaged with the University were as involved during their time as students. The student involvement was the foundation of later philanthropic behaviors.

A theme of cyclical philanthropy emerged in the student/alumni public. Some students who did recognize the benefits of alumni philanthropy back to the University believed that they had an obligation to give back to the school when they became successful alumni so that future students could have the same or better resources and opportunities. This cycle is also seen in data from University officials, who believe that one of the reasons alumni give to the school is to assure that current students have as positive an experience as possible. Although this theme was seen on both sides of the relationship, it was not embedded in relational communication and is thus not being cultivated as a mutual expectation in the relationship.

Students as Stakeholders

Analysis of the data yielded many results which might have been better understood through the perspective of stakeholder theory. Relationship management theory, while very useful in understanding the findings, is interested in organization-public relationships (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000a), which are inherently linked to publics theory. Such theory holds that "publics" center themselves on situational issues (Vasquez & Taylor, 2001), as well as historical and political effects (Chay-Nemeth, 2001). Rawlins (2006) believes that "publics" are discussed in terms of their relationship to the message, while "stakeholders" are identified by their relationship with the organization. Bornsen, Ostrom-Blonigen, and Plowman (2008) tie the concepts of the organization and the message together, in the context of stakeholder theory, by arguing that stakeholders can be categorized according to their impact on the organization based on their possible reaction to an issue. The welfare of these stakeholder groups is directly affected by the actions and the fate of the organization (Post, et al., 2002). Furthermore, J. Grunig and Repper (1992) argue that publics choose the organization, while the organization chooses stakeholders. After they chose to attend the University, the students have little choice but to deal with the institution, a fact that was voiced by some student participants, and which puts the student group more securely in the realm of stakeholder theory.

Use of stakeholder theory to supplement the perspective of relationship management theory might have helped account for the wide variety of expectations and perceptions the students held of the University. Such theory would have also fit well with the strategic management perspective that evolved in the research (Post, et al., 2002). Because their involvement is focused around the organization itself, rather than the issues or communication associated with that organization (Rawlins, 2006), the student group has less to unify them, which might have accounted for the greater diversity of perspectives given by the students (hence the need for a greater number of interviews and the higher saturation point). In turn, this might offer some explanations as to why the student perceptions of the relationship did not match the reality of the relationship. Stakeholder theory, which holds that stakeholders who become especially active can be conceptualized as members of a "public" (J. Grunig & Repper, 1992), might have offered a richer understanding of the student attitudes towards philanthropy and the institution in this study.

Practical Implications

Students and alumni as the same group

University professionals perceive students and alumni as the same group, differentiated only by the development of their relationship with the institution. The shift in conceptualizing current students as embryonic alumni has lead to significant changes in strategy for the UR division. However, practitioners must examine if the University/alumni relationship truly does start when current students step onto campus. As some interviewees suggested, the relationship might start even earlier, when students are researching universities in high school, or, in the case of legacy students, when the individuals begin to interact with family members of even friends who were alumni of the institution. The relationship with the University begins at different times for students, and professionals must overcome the strict belief that the alumni relationship begins upon graduation, or even when the individual comes to campus.

The relationship that students and young alumni hold with the University was exchange-oriented in many cases. Keeping in mind that the institution wants students and alumni to see their relationship with the institution as life-long, University representatives must show that the benefits received by students from the relationship are also long-term. Emphasizing that the relationship that individuals develop with the University will generate benefits for their entire life, might trigger the need for additional transaction, and help students overcome the belief that by paying tuition, they have fulfilled their obligations to the University. Accepting that student and young alumni relationships are exchange orientated, professionals should also follow relationship management theory (J. Grunig & Hon, 1999), which states that efforts should be made to shift the relationship to a communal one where less emphasis is placed on benefits received. Massaging alumni into communal relationships through cultivation and stewardship of gifts made while in the exchange phase of the relationship will enhance the potential for transformative gifts.

Expanding the definition of philanthropy

The student perspective of volunteerism as a means of philanthropy is a concept that many professionals might need time to accept. That students and young alumni might attach more value to volunteering than they do to money will be even harder to build into development strategy. However, by broadening conceptualizations of philanthropy, professionals will recognize a plethora of new channels for instilling a "habit of giving" in students. Although it is rarely labeled as "volunteering", when students become involved with some aspect of the University community, as many of them do, they are giving their time to some component of the University community. A student who is involved in the student government, for example, is ultimately giving time in a way that improves the University community. By celebrating this giving of time as a philanthropic exchange, development and alumni relations professionals can help students see that they are already engaged in giving to their institution. Many students reported unease with being solicited for a monetary donation immediately after graduation, and the University must be mindful of asking students to give money after they have become accustomed to giving time (especially if the giving of time is given more value by the student). Defining both financial donations and volunteerism under the umbrella of philanthropy will help smooth this transition.

Building on existing relationships

Data show that students make meaning of their macro-relationship with the University by breaking it down into smaller micro-relationships with relationship nodes. Development and alumni relations professionals should incorporate these micro-relationships into strategic attempts to increase the strength of the macro-relationship. Instead of attempting to create new relationships with students after they leave the institution, emphasis should be placed on using relationships that already exist as foundations for greater engagement. Furthermore, many students learn about alumni issues in the context of these micro-relationships, making linkages between the centralized alumni relations function of the University and relationship nodes additionally effective. Strategic incorporation of relationship nodes can also be used in managed communication. University agents are using all the channels of communication that resonate with students (emails, campus publications, etc.) however, the effectiveness of this communication could be increased by connecting it to campus nodes. A message delivered by an alumna/us of a student organization, for example, will be more impactful on the current members of that organization than a message delivered by a previously unknown administrator. Such communication requires segmentation techniques that are both precise and affinity based. Rather than using communication to create relationships, existing relationships should be seen as a way of enhancing communication.

This perspective of using existing relationships to enhance communication can also be useful on an interpersonal level. The University frequently attempts to facilitate direct interaction between alumni and current students in order to strengthen the relationship between the alumna/us and the institution, and to educate the current student about the post-graduation relationship with the University. Such interaction also occurs on an informal basis, without the coordination of the University (such as when students casually meet alumni at sporting events). For students, the most meaningful alumni interactions are ones that occur casually through relationship nodes because both parties share a common connection to the University. Examples would include students meeting alumni of the same major at a department specific job fair or a sorority member meeting an alumna of her chapter at Homecoming. Alumni relations professionals must strive to create more meaningful experiences for students by facilitating interaction between those students and alumni who share similar relationship nodes. This would also lead to more meaningful experiences for the alumni. The component of time is also relevant, as students reported generally enjoying interaction with young alumni. This may be because the relationships between these young alumni and their relationship nodes have not had time to decay over time and are thus stronger. Although alumni relations professionals strive to connect students with the "most successful" alumni, these alumni tend to be more removed from the institution. Care should be taken to ensure students are also interacting with younger alumni, with whom students will form a more valuable connection on account of a similar pattern of relationship nodes between the students and young alumni.

Development and alumni relations programming that links students' existing relationships to the macro-relationship with the University will resonate with students. Students feel that they have benefited greatly from their micro-relationships with various components of the University, and feel an obligation to give back to them. By solidifying the connection between micro-relationships and the macro-relationship under the umbrella of philanthropy, students desire to support the University will be enhanced. An excellent example of this type of programming is the University Cause website, currently under development, which allows students to give money to or volunteer with charitable causes with whom they already have a relationship or aligned values. The fact that this giving is being facilitated by the University will reinforce the macro-relationship. Co-sponsorship initiatives by the Alumni Association will also continue to be effective, as they build the relationship students have with the Alumni Association upon micro-relationships that already exist. The Student Philanthropy Summit program, while an excellent way to receive student feedback, will require more time to become meaningful with the students, as it is asking students to form a relationship with UR, a division of the institution with which few students have ever directly interacted and thus have no previous relationship with.

Emphasis on awareness and understanding

The current focus of communication from the University to the students in the context of development and alumni affairs is generating awareness. A major motif of data collected from the University side of the relationship was “getting the word out” and gaining “awareness” of the student body. This effort is meeting success in that students are aware of the existence of the Alumni Association and, to a much lesser extent, philanthropic activities. As aware as they may be, students do not have a clear understanding of these issues. Students suggesting that they do not benefit from alumni philanthropy and that their tuition completely covers the expenses associated with their education shows that they do not understand the reliance of the institution on private funding, nor are they making meaning of the communal impact of much of that funding on the entire campus. Evidence of students wanting to take action on the Alumni Association was even slimmer. While almost all students were aware of the existence of the Alumni Association, only one wanted to join it. This lack of understanding or desire to take action can be linked to the exchange nature of the relationship – students do not see the benefits they are receiving from UR related activities, and thus choose not to cultivate a greater understanding of those areas.

The objective of the University is to increase participation of students and young alumni in volunteerism and philanthropic activities. Increasing participation requires action and action requires understanding. In order to truly affect action, the University must shift its message from one of awareness to one of understanding the alumni relations and development functions. Incorporating the tangible and observable benefits of alumni philanthropy into communication messages to students could be used to increase understanding, as the connection between students' understanding of philanthropy and tangible impact has already been shown. Direct student interaction with alumni could also be a tool to create greater understanding of the alumni relations function. Interaction between students and alumni that is facilitated by the institution almost always focused on career-related issues. With this topic inarguably significant (as it involves an observable outcome), interaction between students and alumni should also focus on the relationship the alumni have with the institution. Getting pertinent career advice is meaningful, but students should also use the opportunity to communicate directly with alumni to learn about the alumni relationship with the University.

Student involvement as a tool of alumni relations

The University should reconceptualize student involvement as not just an issue of the Student Affairs division, but as a tool of the UR division. Student organizations and other campus involvement opportunities were referenced constantly and significantly as means of engagement for students in the University community. Clearly, student involvement is an important way that students make meaning of their relationship with the University. Student organizations are pre-formed relationship nodes that the students have in many cases self selected. This underscores affinity connection as a powerful student and alumni segmentation tool, which can also be linked to fundraising. A student who chooses to participate in the marching band, for example, can be grouped with other students or alumni who have made the same self selection. Although accomplishing such precise targeting would be difficult, a campaign tailored to such an affinity group might prove to be highly effective.

Communication can be enhanced by incorporating the micro-relationships that students develop as a result of their involvement activities. Students report that they receive communication not from the University, but rather from components of the University (such as their academic departments, the Student Government Association, etc.). This indicates that mass communications and messages will likely have little effect on the student body, other than creating the aforementioned awareness. Using relationship nodes as channels and means of targeting communication will be more effective. The use of "student ambassadors" by UR follows this strategy, as the ambassadors carry the messages back to their organizations, and presumably customize them. This tactic results in highly targeted messages being delivered in an interpersonal manner by individuals which whom students have a pre-existing relationship.

Greater integration between UR and the Student Affairs division would be beneficial. The current trend in UR is towards greater internal integration and existing connections between the Alumni Association and Student Affairs are competencies off of which to build this strategy. The Development and Alumni Relations Offices of individual colleges appear to be especially isolated from student life activities, as they are focused on major gifts and the later stages of the cultivation process. Although this focus on major gifts is essential, college level professionals are in the unique position of being closer to the micro-relationships that students may form with academic departments or extracurricular activities that are attached to a specific college. Professionals at the college level should thus incorporate existing micro-relationships into communication strategy just as thoroughly as professionals at the University level.

Managing relationship nodes

The University must take an active role in managing relationship nodes that connect the students to the University. This requires coordination across the University, as nodes could be athletically orientated, academically orientated, or linked to student involvement programs. Generally, UR agents should advocate for increases in the number of available relationship nodes (additional clubs, sports teams, etc.) and should monitor relationship nodes that are weakening or disappearing from campus (the dissolution of a sports team or fraternity/ sorority chapter, for example). One interviewee whose fraternity chapter was recently removed from campus expressed confusion as to how he was going to continue his relationship with the University after graduation. He expressed extreme distrust and dissatisfaction with the division of the University that handles fraternity and sorority affairs, and claimed that he never wanted to interact with this component of the University in the future. However, the individual was still positive in his relationship towards the University as a whole. This indicates that negative relationships can be carried over from the student experience to the alumni experience, but also that the macro-relationship can be salvaged if weakened nodes are managed correctly.

Not all relationship nodes are equal, as some of them provide stronger connections (as per the four variables of relationship management theory) between the student and the University than others. Students believed that hard work was a cause for strong relationships with the University, a concept that can also be observed at the micro-relationship level. A student who is a member of a sports team might spend several hours a week practicing and in competition. This sports team will thus be a stronger relationship node than a committee that only meets once a semester and requires little dedication of time or effort. Determining the strength of relationship nodes is important in managing them, as deficiencies in weak nodes can be compensated by stronger nodes in the context of the macro-relationship. Individuals who have weak connections to their academic department can still have sturdy macro-relationships with the institution.

The management of relationship nodes also entails monitoring the connection between the nodes and the central organization. If a student has a connection to the swim team, for example, the team must remain integrated with the University as a whole in order for it to function as a successful node in the relationship between the student and the institution. Individual nodes also cannot be allowed to overpower the macro-relationship, as this would effectively turn the node into the organization in the organization/public relationship. In this case, relationship cannibalization would occur, with the connection to the node becoming so strong that the connection to the macro-relationship is weakened. Such a result would clearly result in lost benefits for the organization, and possibly confusion for the individual.

Limitations of the Research

Limitations of this research focus on the data collected, especially from the interviewees, as well as the possible biases of the researcher. Because development at a large university such as the one in this case study involves large monetary sums by definition, professionals may be hesitant to share information that they feel violates donor confidentiality, paints the institution in a negative light, or reveals "trade secrets" of the development of alumni affairs staff. This limitation was present in this study and resulted in difficulties gathering data in some cases.

Data collected from interviewees must also be seen in a critical light. Many of the professionals I interviewed were people I had little, if any, interaction with prior to the interview. Because of this, professionals might have felt the need to present information in a way that flattered both them personally and their department as a whole. Professionals are unlikely to share critiques of their organization with a student researcher with whom they have never had a relationship. Student interviewees may have also presented data in a way that creates an ideal situation. As many students were doing these interviewees for extra credit, they might have felt the need to give what they thought was the "right answer" to a question, or embellish facts to make themselves look more involved or connected to the Institution. For example, over half the student interviewee stated that they wanted to contribute time or money to the University after graduation. As the University's giving and volunteer rate is nowhere close to this level, these responses might be embellished. Additionally, the means of recruiting student volunteers led to a biased collection of interviewees (although this research makes no claims at using probability sampling). Students who respond to a request for an interview in exchange for extra credit could be more motivated than their peers, and thus attach more value to campus involvement and their relationship with the general University than the "average" student.

Although I attempted to analyze the relationship between the University and the students as a whole, without privileging one side of the relationship over the other, I realize that this research is biased in favor of the strategic management perspective of public relations. Public relations scholarship has been critiqued for favoring the organizational side of the relationship (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000) on the grounds that many organizations have, at their disposal, a team of communication professionals who are able to present a unified and strategic plan of relationship management. Public and stakeholder groups are rarely in such a position. This case was no exception, with the University agents who contributed to the data set providing more unified themes than the student participants. The theories selected, as well as my own perspective as a researcher, may have constrained the data analysis to this more strategic orientation. As was explored in the discussion section, including the perspective of stakeholder theory, in which the organization is situated at the center of a web of stakeholder groups (Post, et al., 2002), would have been beneficial and might mitigate this bias in future research.

My position as a graduate student who has earned an undergraduate degree within the last five years, and who was extremely involved in student affairs at my undergraduate institution might also be construed as a limitation of this research. My past, extremely positive, experiences with student involvement on a university campus, and my continuing involvement in the alumni association of my undergraduate institution may have lead me to place too much emphasis on this component of the research both during the data collection process, as well as the analysis and discussion phases.

Lastly, this study represents a snap shot of the relationships between students and the University in the context of development and alumni relations. As was stated, these relationships, and the means with which we define them, are constantly evolving, which may lead to components of this research becoming irrelevant in the near future.

Suggestions for Future Research

The exploratory nature of this study lends itself well to forging new directions for future research. More research is undoubtedly needed on the relationship node perspective before it can be properly assimilated into the relationship management literature as a way of dealing with fractured relationships. The concept of giving time and volunteering as a means of philanthropy must also be explored more thoroughly. Lastly, additional research is needed on how these aforementioned relationship and philanthropic dynamics will impact and expand the role of development and alumni relations in higher education.

The relationship node perspective of understanding the relationship between students and their University, and how that relationships shifts when the student graduates generates many possibilities for future research. University administrators would surely be interested in understanding ways that these nodes form and also how they dissolve, how they can be managed, and what determines the strength of given relationship nodes. This study demonstrated that the four variables of relationship management can be used to understand micro-relationships between these nodes, and also that exchange relationships play an important role in these connections. Research on the applicability of other communications theories to these node structures would be enlightening. Research focused on alumni, and not just the student perspective of alumni, would assist in the understanding of how relationship nodes evolve after graduation. Lastly, are there additional relationship contexts where the relationship node perspective could be applied?

That students conceptualize volunteerism as a channel of philanthropy was one of the most interesting conclusions of this study. However, the development infrastructure of the case University was still very much focused on financial contributions, of which the institution is clearly in need of in order to carry out and expand its mission. Currently, the University is operating under the assumption that giving time is a phase in the cultivation process, and will eventually lead to a relationship between the University and the alumna/us that will yield financial contributions. In order to form a clearer understanding of the umbrella concept of philanthropy, this assumption must be tested and research must determine how closely related these two dimensions of philanthropy are. Is there a correlation between the giving of time and the giving of money? Will students who were active volunteers during their time in college become more inclined to give monetarily in the future? The area of activism theory in public relations offers an interesting venue for additional research in this area. Can (and should) the definition of philanthropy be expanded to include activists as they are defined in the communication management literature?

Research on relationship nodes and on volunteerism as philanthropy could be used to inform studies on the evolving role of alumni relations and development in the university community. Currently, these departments see themselves as both the mouth and ears of the University in relation to alumni, managing two way communications between these groups. Research in the aforementioned areas would assist in managing the communication between the University and the alumni, but also clarify the role of the alumni relations and development departments in managing the communication and relationship between the student population and the institution.

This case study showed that relationship management theory can be used to better understand the managed communication between a university and its alumni publics. The principle finding of this research, that students' relationships with their university are composed of a number of smaller relationships, led to the formulation of a new model of relationship nodes. This conceptualization opens new paths for research, and adds an interesting new facet to the relationship management perspective of public relations. The reconceptualization of philanthropy to include the giving of time is also an important finding that has implications for non-profit theory and management. Although the findings are not scientifically generalizeable, the practical implications of the study have been put forward in the hope that this research can make a positive and useful contribution to the development and alumni relations body of knowledge. It is my hope that professionals can use the results of this research to craft more effective ways of aligning the values of the University with those of its students, past and present, thus creating a more valuable and meaningful relationship for all parties.

Appendix A

Student Protocol

1) As a student thus far, how are you enjoying your time here at University?

2) Please tell me about your student involvement with the University.

3) Tell me about your favorite aspect of student life here at the University. Tell me about your least favorite.

4) To what extent do you feel that the University is attentive to the voices and needs of the students?

5) To what extent do you think you have been treated fairly as a student by the University?

6) What benefits are you receiving from the University?

7) How does the University communicate with you?

8) How do you want the University to communicate with you after you graduate? To what extent will social media be involved?

9) What interaction have you had with alumni of the University?

10) Briefly, what are some of your plans for life after graduation from the University?

11) What will you do to stay involved with the University after you graduate?

12) How familiar are you with official alumni activities sponsored by the University, such as the Alumni Association?

13) How important is it for alumni of the University to be involved with the University?

14) How would you define "giving back to your university as alumni"?

15) What does the University get out of the relationship between the University and alumni?

16) What do alumni get out of their relationship with the University?

17) As a student, to what extent are you affected by the alumni of the University?

18) What is the obligation of the University to the alumni?

19) What is the obligation of the alumni to the University?

Appendix B

Professional Protocol

1) What does your job entail?

2) What kind of relationship should current students have with the University? Does your unit play a role in that?

3) What channels are used by your department to communicate with students? To what extent is social media used?

4) To what extent can the relationship between the University and the alumni be cultivated during their time as students?

5) What factors do you think influence the behavior of alumni towards the University?

6) In what ways do alumni give back to the University? What are the benefits for the University of alumni involvement?

7) What are the benefits, for alumni, of being involved with the University after graduation?

8) What interaction do recent alumni have with current students at the University?

9) How do you think the students of this university view the alumni?

10) How do you increase student involvement with your unit?

11) To what extent do you feel that the University is attentive to the voices and needs of the alumni?

12) What is the obligation of the alumni to the University? Is that obligation being met?

13) What is the obligation of the University to the alumni? Is that obligation being met?

Appendix C

Protocol Questions Corresponding to Research Questions

RQ1. How is the relationship between the University and students cultivated?

From Students

1) Please tell me about your student involvement with the University.
2) As a student thus far, how are you enjoying your time here at the University?
3) How does the University communicate with you?

From University Representatives

1) To what extent can the relationship between the University and the alumni be cultivated during their time as students?
2) How do you increase student involvement with your unit?

RQ2. To what extent do the relationship outcomes of control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, and trust exist in the relationship between students and the University?

From Students

1) Tell me about your favorite aspect of student life here at the University? Tell me about your least favorite?
2) To what extent do you feel that the University is attentive to the voices and needs of the students?
3) To what extent do you think you have been treated fairly as a student by the University?
4) How do you want the University to communicate with you after you graduate? To what extent will social media be involved?

From University Representatives

1) What channels are used by your department to communicate with students? To what extent is social media used?
2) What factors do you think influence the behavior of alumni towards the University?
3) To what extent do you feel that the University is attentive to the voices and needs of the alumni?

RQ3. What expectations and perceived benefits characterize the relationship between students and the University?

From Students

1) What benefits are you receiving from the University?
2) Briefly, what are some of your plans for life after graduation from the University?
3) How familiar are you with official alumni activities sponsored by the University, such as the Alumni Association?
4) What does the University get out of the relationship between the University and alumni?

5) What do alumni get out of their relationship with the University?
6) What is the obligation of the University to the alumni?

From University Representatives
1) In what ways do alumni give back to the University? What are the benefits for the University of alumni involvement?
2) What are the benefits, for alumni, of being involved with the University after graduation?
3) What is the obligation of the alumni to the University? Is that obligation being met?
4) What is the obligation of the University to the alumni? Is that obligation being met?

RQ4. How does the relationship between the University and the students inform the relationship between the University and recent graduates?

From Students
1) What will you do to stay involved with the University after you graduate?
2) What interaction have you had with alumni of the University?
3) As a student, to what extent are you affected by the alumni of the University?
4) How important is it for alumni of the University to be involved with the University?
5) How would you define “giving back to your University as alumni”?

From University Representatives
1) How do you think the students of this University view the alumni?
3) What kind of relationship should current students have with the University? Does your unit play a role in that?
3) What interaction do recent alumni have with current students at the University?

Appendix D

The following is a scanned copy of the first page of the approval document from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Maryland, indicating that this study has been cleared by that Board.

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

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October 21, 2009

MEMORANDUM

Application Approval Notification

To: Dr. Linda Aldoory
Ryan E. Merkel
Communication

From: Joseph M. Smith, MA, CIM MS

IRB Manager

University of Maryland, College Park

Re: **IRB Application Number:** 09-0640

Project Title: "Managing a University's Relationship with student and young alumni publics, a case study"

Approval Date: October 21, 2009

Expiration Date: October 21, 2012

Type of Application: Initial

Type of Research: Exempt

Type of Review for Application: Exempt

The University of Maryland, College Park Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved your IRB application. The research was approved in accordance with the University IRB policies and procedures and 45 CFR 46, the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects. Please include the above-cited IRB application number in any future

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