

RUNNING HEAD: Beyond giving

**Beyond giving:**

**Political advocacy and volunteer behaviors of college alumni**

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**Abstract:**

Colleges and universities have paid an enormous level of attention to one domain of alumni: Giving! In view of the cuts of state spending in higher education and the shrinking ability of parents and family to pay college, such emphasis is understandable. However, this emphasis has blinded scholars and practitioners to understating the non-monetary support roles played by college alumni. Drawing on data from a research extensive university, this study employs a sequential mixed method design (focus groups and confirmatory factor analysis) to demonstrate that non-monetary support behaviors are best understood through the distinct, but interrelated domains of political advocacy and volunteerism. Political advocacy behaviors include contacting legislators, the governor's office, local politicians and serving on a political action team, while volunteer behaviors include mentoring new alumni, recruiting students, and participating in special events. The study breaks ground for future research on alumni support for higher education, including strategies to recruit alumni volunteers and advocates.

College and university alumni play important roles in supporting higher education. This support is most visible in the area of charitable giving. In 2006, U.S. colleges and universities raised an estimated \$28-billion in private gifts, and a significant amount of these dollars came from alumni (Strout, 2007). However, alumni play broader roles in supporting colleges and universities beyond writing a check. For example, alumni who help secure taxpayer support for their alma mater have become key players in the state lobbying process (Koral, 1998). In addition, through college advisory boards, prominent alumni lend their experiences and expertise to help higher education leaders formulate strategic directions for their institutions (Weerts, 1998). In other cases, veteran alums may serve as mentors to young alumni who are moving to a new town and/or establishing their careers and job prospects. Still, other alumni volunteers may serve recruiters and booster club leaders that raise the profile of the institution in their region. Providing internships and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students is another manifestation of alumni support. When taken together, the multiplicity of alumni support roles is critical in the increasingly competitive marketplace of higher education (Cabrera, Weerts & Zulick, 2005; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Despite the growing importance of non-monetary alumni service roles, research on alumni support has been one-dimensional, dominated by the drive to cultivate charitable giving for ones' alma mater (Burke, 1988; Caboni & Proper, 2008). Thus, a key problem is that no foundational studies have been conducted to help scholars conceptualize the different roles alumni play in supporting their alma mater beyond giving. While prior studies have shed light on factors distinguishing between alumni volunteers and non-volunteers (see Weerts & Ronca, 2008), they have left unanswered questions about whether volunteer roles might be distinguished from one another, and whether alumni may gravitate to some volunteer role types over others.

To make these important connections, the question of whether alumni support follows several dimensions needs to be addressed.

### **Purpose of this study**

The purpose of this paper is to document the different dimensions underscoring non-monetary forms of alumni support beyond charitable giving. It is our hypothesis, grounded on the literature and data from focus groups, that alumni support is multifaceted and comprised of at least two dimensions beyond charitable giving: political advocacy and voluntarism. By exploring multiple dimensions of alumni support, our study helps practitioners understand the extent to which non-monetary support roles can be viewed as distinct or interrelated. As such, advancement professionals may consider new strategies to engage and recruit future alumni volunteers and political advocates. Substantiating the construct validity of alumni support also serves a second purpose: laying down the foundation whereby models can be advanced for explaining determinants of alumni engagement with their alma mater.

### **Literature review**

We draw on literature from the fields of political science, sociology, and social psychology to inform our hypothesis that non-monetary support for one's alma mater is multidimensional. Our review of literature discusses various behaviors and motivator associated with political advocacy and volunteer roles, and informs our thinking about how alumni adopt such roles in support of their alma mater. We begin our review with a discussion about political advocacy behavior followed by a review of volunteer behaviors.

*Political advocacy*

Political participation is comprised of multiple behaviors including voting, contacting officials at the federal or local level, giving campaign money, conducting campaign volunteer work, protesting or demonstrating, signing a petition, or persuading family or friends to vote on an issue (Miller 2008, Brady, Verba & Scholzman, 1995). Whether an individual participates in the political process depends on a number of factors including past political experiences, capacity (ability) to participate, rewards, and proximity to networks that mobilize their participation.

A wealth of literature suggests that one's likelihood of becoming politically relates to family background and formative political experiences as a youth (e.g., Hanks, Eckland, 1978; Milbrath & Goel, 1977; Otto, 1976; Verba, Scholzman & Brady, 1995; Glanville, 1999). A recent study conducted by Kelly (2006) found that parents' voting behaviors were strongly correlated to youth civic behaviors including likelihood of voting and political volunteering. In short, parents are critical to shaping the civic behaviors of their children.

School experiences also influence whether youth will become politically involved later in life. Specifically, a variety of studies have shown that participating in high school government is positively associated with political participation in adulthood (Hanks, Eckland, 1978; Otto, 1976; Verba, Scholzman & Brady, 1995; Glanville, 1999). Overall, studies suggest that formative civic experiences for young people are enduring, and ultimately lead to politically active citizens who vote at high rates, and are ready to protest and/or lead other citizens to take a stand on issues (Fendrich, 1993; McAdam, 1988).

The aforementioned studies suggest that one's inclination for political advocacy are formed early in life. These early experiences, when coupled with passionate political interests,

may be a strong predictor of adult political behavior. Overall, it is known that individuals who develop political interests surrounding specific issues are likely to become activists or work on campaigns in the long term (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). For example, black college students' participation in the civil rights movement in the south during the 1950s and 1960s predicted their political interest and activism 10 to 25 years later (Fendrich, 1993). Similarly, white civil rights participants remained distinguishable from nonparticipants in their political and civic behavior twenty five years later (DeMartini, 1983). In short, formidable political experiences early in one's life may shape political behaviors over a lifetime.

Thus far we have discussed factors associated with developing ones inclination to be politically active. But equally important is one's capacity to participate in political activities. Capacity to participate relates to the availability of one's time, resources, and skills (Brady et al, 1995). For example, as people age, they increase their ability to become politically active since older adults have more free time, disposable income (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady, 1995), political knowledge, and political skills (Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Capacity also relates to race and social stratification. For example, Miller (2008) cites research that Caucasians and men are more likely to be politically active (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993, Verba & Nie, 1972) because they have financial advantages over non-Caucasians and females (Verba et al, 1995). These predictors of political participation are grounded in socio-economic models (see Miller, 2008), and suggest that powerful political advocates are most like to be wealthy, older Caucasian males.

Rational choice theory is one conventional perspective often used to explain political activity. According to Downs (1957), rational choice suggests that self interested actors weigh costs and benefits before deciding to become politically active (as cited in Miller 2008, p. 3).

For example, individuals must feel that their time expended (costs) will help achieve something worthwhile (benefits). Rewards may be tangible or intangible and may consist of personal or public benefits such as getting a law passed (Clark & Wilson, 1961).

### *Volunteerism*

Volunteer behaviors are similar, yet distinct from political behavior. Penner (2002) defines volunteerism as long-term, non-obligatory, planned pro-social behaviors that benefit strangers and usually occur in an organizational setting. Past studies have conceptualized volunteerism as acts of charitable service to religious organizations, schools or other educational institutions, labor unions and trade organizations, senior citizen groups, and other national or local organizations (see Wilson & Musick, 1997, Weerts & Ronca, 2008) Volunteerism is often linked to religiosity since faith-based organizations provide many formal mechanisms by which to volunteer (Penner, 2002).

Clary & Snyder (1999) offer a functional approach to volunteer motivation which differs somewhat from political advocacy. The authors suggest that, among other things, volunteer service satisfies the need to learn more about the world, grow and develop psychologically, strengthen social relationships, and develop contacts to enhance professional opportunities.

Like studies on political activism, past research on volunteering points to early life experiences in shaping adult volunteer behaviors. Studies show that many volunteers have parents who are civically engaged, acted as role models for engagement, and participated in volunteer activities with their children (Dunham & Bengston, 1992; Zaff, Moore, Papillo & Williams; 2003). Closely related to parental background is socio-economic status. Past studies show that those who volunteer in adulthood are likely to come from a higher socio-economic

background and have had previous community service and volunteering experience (Youniss, McLelland, Su & Yates, 1999).

The literature also acknowledges that important cultural dimensions may predict the likelihood of adopting civic behaviors (Ladewig & Thomas, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Serow & Dreyden, 1990). Specifically, some societies may promote individualistic values whereas others may emphasize collective values—values which most clearly align with civic behaviors. How an individual is socialized influences how one views his or her role in contributing to society (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These cultural issues may also be rooted in faith systems that promote service activity in the community. Studies, for example, have shown that participation in religious activity is associated with greater likelihood of participating in community service (Serow & Dreyden, 1990).

Like the literature on determinants of political behavior, studies on volunteerism single out an important relationship between youth experiences and volunteerism as an adult. For example, one study showed that participating in 4-H and other organizations during youth predicts membership and leadership in community organizations well into adulthood (Ladewig & Thomas, 1987). Another study found that positive relationships with peers as early as middle school predicted civic behaviors, although the long-term effects of such relationships are unknown (Wentzel & McNamara, 1999).

Further along in the educational pathway, Astin, Sax and Avalos (1999) found that individuals who volunteered frequently in high school were more than twice as likely to devote at least some time to volunteer/community service work nine years later. This study mirrors other research suggesting that volunteering in high school predicts a greater likelihood of volunteerism in young adulthood (Glanville, 1999; Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams, 2003).

Past literature also sheds light on the impact of college on later life volunteer behavior. For example, Astin et al (1999) found that spending six or more hours engaged in volunteer work in college nearly doubled the chances that the individual would be involved in volunteer work years after college. Another study showed levels of college completion to be associated with various volunteer behaviors. Specifically, this study found that those who complete some college have 3.4 more instances of volunteering per year compared to those who did not attend college. Furthermore, college graduates completed 4.9 more annual volunteer instances compared to those with no college experience (Brown & Ferris, 2007). Finally, there is evidence that these experiences and outcomes hold among racial and ethnic groups. A separate analysis showed that participating in community service during college is a strong predictor for volunteer behavior after college, regardless of race (Vogelgesang, 2004).

The literature on volunteerism suggests that such behavior may also be linked to quality of personal experiences with an organization for which he or she volunteers, or self interests in affiliating with such an organization. Specifically, people choose to volunteer for an organization do so based on the reputation and experiences with that organization. The more satisfied one is with an organization, the more likely he is to volunteer on its behalf (Grube & Piliavin 2000). In addition, volunteerism may be linked by self interest motives to enhance one's career, establish professional contacts, and improve self esteem (Mowen & Sujan, 2005).

Like the literature on political engagement, studies on volunteerism show that likelihood of participation relates to capacity and demographic characteristics. National statistics for example, show that women volunteer at a higher rate than men across age groups, education levels, and other major characteristics (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004). And wives who

volunteer have the effect of pulling their husbands into volunteer activity (Rotolo & Wilson, 2006).

Finally, age and life cycle have important implications for volunteerism. Among the different age groups, persons age 35 to 44 are most likely to volunteer. On the other hand, volunteer rates were lowest among persons in their early twenties (20.0 percent) and those age 65 and over (24.6 percent). In addition, parents with children under age 18 are more likely to volunteer than persons without children of that age. People who are employed volunteer at a higher rate than those who were unemployed or not in the labor force, and whites volunteer more than Blacks and Asians (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004).

As we close this section, we acknowledge that volunteer and political behavior have some distinctions but are also deeply interrelated. A wealth of literature has documented the close association between voluntary associations and political involvement, which may blur distinctions between the two behaviors (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Olsen, 1982; Verba & Nie, 1972; Sallach, Babchuk & Booth, 1972). It may be for this reason that studies have typically lumped these behaviors together as one construct without distinguishing between the two.

Guided by this past literature, we suggest that political and volunteer behavior are on different branches of the same tree, and share a common root system. The roots of civic behavior are formed early in one's social development. In their study of civic development among adolescents, Reinders & Youniss (2006) found that youth who directly interacted with people in need increased self-awareness and helping behavior, which later led to increased likelihood of volunteering, service, and political advocacy. Simply put, those inclined to become involved with both volunteering and political activities have a common level of social

consciousness that may develop at a young age. But for various reasons, individuals may choose to express their civic values through different venues (i.e., political or volunteer venues).

### **Volunteer and political behavior on behalf of one's alma mater**

Our review of literature informs our understanding about alumni political advocacy and volunteer support for higher education in several ways. First, past research would suggest that alumni may develop patterns related to service and/or political advocacy even prior to attending college. In other words, the venues in which they may support their alma mater (i.e., political advocacy and/or volunteerism) may be shaped by their family background, youth/school experiences and activities, peer relationships, and culture or values of origin (collectivist values, faith-based, etc).

In addition, those alumni who support their alma mater through volunteer service and political advocacy are likely to possess some shared attributes. For example, recent research on alumni supporters, broadly defined as political advocates and volunteers, showed that these individuals are most likely to be women who live in the home state of their alma mater, are active in a number of non-profit organizations, and were significantly engaged in academic activities while in college. In addition, such alums were likely to hold multiple degrees from their alma mater and hold the belief that alumni have a responsibility to volunteer at the institution (Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

In sum, our literature review supports the notion that political and volunteer behaviors and motivations are deeply interrelated, yet may be distinct. For this reason, we suggest that alumni service to ones alma mater is also multidimensional along these lines. In the next

sections, we introduce our methodology for testing whether alumni support can be understood beyond a single construct.

### **Methodology**

Many scholars including Eisner (1981), Firestone (1987), and Howe (1988) point out the virtues of using a variety of methods—both quantitative and qualitative—to gain an understanding about various phenomenon. These scholars argue that the diversity of approaches allows one to better know and understand different things about the world (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Recognizing the legitimacy of using multiple approaches, the methods of this study are founded on the sequential mixed method design as defined by Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998). The sequential mixed methods approach involves employing both quantitative and qualitative in two distinct phases of a study: a qualitative phase and then a quantitative phase, or vice versa. One purpose of the sequential method is to use the results from the first method to inform the second (Greene, Caracelli & Graham 1989).

Guided by this methodological approach, we aim to develop a construct validity approach for alumni support using data from undergraduate alumni of a large doctoral/research extensive university (Carnegie Foundation, 2000). This institution is referred to as Research Extensive University (REU) for the remainder of this article. The population of interest is the 169,773 undergraduate alumni from that institution between the ages of 30 and 70 residing within the United States. Our investigation was conducted in two phases. In phase one, we used qualitative methods (focus groups) to help identify and categorize non-monetary support behaviors of REU alumni. In phase two, we employed quantitative analysis to validate constructs identified through our analyses of findings from focus groups.

*Phase I: Qualitative investigation*

During the summer of 2003, Chamberlain Research Consultants, Inc. (CRC) conducted a series of focus groups with REU alumni with three clear objectives: 1) to understand alumni perceptions of REU, 2) to identify the variety of ways in which they support the university, and 3) to solicit advice about how to best rally alumni support for the university. Participants in the focus groups were recruited from REU alumni association records of graduates who were strong supporters of the institution via charitable giving and service activities. These lists included active members of the REU alumni association, members of college and departmental advisory boards, and volunteers from various service clubs and advocacy groups. A total of 7 focus groups were conducted with REU alumni in 3 distinct regions in the home state of REU.

Findings from the focus groups shed light on the complex variety of ways that alumni support the university, and illustrate how such behaviors fall into the broad categories of political advocacy, volunteerism, or both. Some alumni supporters indicated that their primary way to support the institution was through political action. For example, one alumnus reported that he was a captain for a senatorial district for the REU political action network—a formal group of political advocates who lobby for legislative and gubernatorial support on behalf of the university. Others indicated that they had written letters to their legislator or local officials on behalf of REU. Another alumnus indicated that his political participation was less formal. This alumnus was a personal friend of his local legislator whom he regularly discussed policy issues on behalf of the university.

Other REU alumni reported being engaged in a number of volunteer activities that were non-political. Many of these activities were specific to the school/college or department from

which the alumnus earned a degree. For example, one participant, a graduate of the French department, explained that she volunteered to host a French Independence Day party each year to connect alumni with students. Many others indicated that they served in formal roles as members of the dean's or chair's advisory council—forums that provide alumni a platform to share their perspectives on curriculum and other issues. This practice was especially common among those alumni affiliated with the professional schools (e.g., pharmacy, medical, law).

It is important to note that many of these volunteer experiences were not tied exclusively to support academic units, but more broadly for campus programs or non-profit organizations representing university interests. For example, some participants serve as alumni representatives for the REU student union while others are board members for various athletic booster clubs. Still, others served as officers in local or national chapter of the REU alumni association, or on committees directed by the REU Foundation. Roles in these organizations vary significantly. Some alumni assumed significant leadership positions as chairs of the board for the alumni association or as officers in their local alumni club. Still, others carried out the work of the organization. For example, these alums reported helping organize a golf outing fundraiser or fun run to support their particular program.

An important finding from the focus groups is that alumni are involved in various volunteer behaviors not typically captured by formal alumni organizations and alumni surveys. For example, many alumni reported that they have a personal interest in recruiting students to attend REU. In addition, some reported serving as mentors to young alumni in their area (e.g., assist with career networking opportunities), or to current students attending the university. One alumnus reported that his special interest was taking historically underrepresented students to visit the campus, with the goal of helping these individuals see colleges as a realistic part of their

future. Again, these experiences were often less structured, and thus, institutional leaders may or may not be aware of the degree to which alumni are involved with these activities.

Finally, we close this section by acknowledging the important point that categories of alumni support are not mutually exclusive. That is, some alumni participating in the focus groups were likely to be involved in both political behaviors and volunteer behaviors. In fact, REU gives an annual “sparkplug” award that recognizes those alumni who are active in a full range of alumni support activities (political and volunteer). Overall, the results of the focus group study provide evidence that alumni support categories are distinctive in some ways, but highly interrelated.

#### *Phase 2: Quantitative design*

The findings from the focus groups were used to design a multi-purpose survey aimed to understand factors associated with alumni giving and volunteer support for REU. In designing this survey, we developed constructs representing various behaviors that focus group participants told us were representative of how they support the university. The alumni survey was sent to 2,400 REU alumni between the ages of 30 and 70. Names and addresses were provided by the REU alumni association and represent a cross-section of respondents who appeared on rosters of various REU volunteer/political advocacy groups or had no service affiliation with the university. Of the 2,400 alumni surveyed, 1,441 responded (60% response rate). The data for this study were limited to include only 514 alumni who reported having engaged in service-

oriented behaviors on behalf of REU. Table 1 describes the 8 behaviors associated to each type of alumni involvement<sup>1</sup>.

<b>Table 1: Dimensions of alumni support and corresponding behaviors</b>		
Construct	Specific behavior	Percentage of alumni engaged in the behavior
Political Advocacy	Contacting legislator on behalf of REU	28.0
	Contacting Governor’s office on behalf of REU	20.5
	Contacting local officials (e.g., mayor) on behalf of REU.	16.5
	Serving on a REU political action team (i.e., designated group contact public officials on behalf of REU issues or legislation)	14.7
Volunteerism	Hosting or volunteering for REU foundation events	10.4
	Participating in REU special events (fun run volunteer, etc.).	31.4
	Recruiting potential students to attend REU	40.8
	Mentoring new alumni (e.g., career volunteer, provide networking opportunities).	18.1

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Examining the findings from table 1 yields several interesting observations. First, alumni are engaged in a range of behaviors on behalf of their alma mater, and such behaviors seem to vary within each of the two dimensions examined in this study. In the political domain, alumni seem to be most likely to engage in advocacy behaviors with state-level officials, and these behaviors may be independent of formal programs to facilitate this behavior. We make this observation because many more alumni reported contacting state officials than serving as

<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked to indicate the level of involvement in each behavior ranging from 0 (not at all) to 4 (very involved). Answers to all these items were bipolar skewed. Consequently, we collapsed the answers into two categories to signify whether or not the alumni engaged in the behavior under consideration (1, yes, 0 otherwise).

members of the REU political action network. Considering this finding, the good news for alumni associations is that there may be more alumni engaged in these behaviors than is known (happening outside of formal political action networks). However, a question remains about whether the messages from political advocates outside this network are in line with those promoted by the institution. Those outside the formal network would not receive the same level or quality of information about the institution's state relations plans. Thus, leaders may ask the question: Where are these out-of-network alumni getting their information, and is it consistent with the strategic priorities of the institution? Addressing questions such as this are important for institutional leaders as they consider how their alumni are representing the institution in the political domain.

Similarly, we note some important findings related to the construct of volunteerism. Overwhelming, alumni reported recruiting potential students as a key behavior representing their volunteer efforts. Since REU is a large decentralized institution, one might suggest that these efforts are particular to certain program areas (e.g., particularly graduates of professional programs). However, it is also likely that alumni play important roles in representing the university more broadly to a large cadre of students who apply for undergraduate admission. Again, alumni associations and admissions offices would likely welcome the news that graduates are acting as ambassadors in recruiting new students to the university. But these administrators may also inquire about the degree to which these graduates are helping the institution attract students they desire to meet strategic goals. For example, to what extent are REU alumni helping their alma mater attract a diverse body of students as articulated in its plans for diversity?

In addition, our findings show that many alumni volunteers are engaged in special events related to supporting campus programs (via fun runs, golf outings, etc.). These programs are

important to keeping alumni active in the life of the campus and provide broad opportunities for alumni to stay connected with the university. More exclusive opportunities for involvement relate to volunteer activities on behalf of the REU alumni association (e.g., hosting or volunteering for REU alumni events). We expected that far fewer alumni would report these behaviors since such opportunities are typically reserved for alumni who are, or have the potential to be, major donors for the university. The volunteer construct reported in this paper shows that the large majority of alumni who are volunteers play a variety of other roles not directly related to university advancement efforts. These important roles must be acknowledged.

### *Quantitative analysis*

We relied on Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the hypothesis that alumni support underscores the two latent factors identified in our focus groups. We choose CFA over exploratory factor analysis for two reasons. To begin with, it allows the researcher to formulate and tests hypothesis about the nature and composition of the latent factors comprising alumni support. Second, it allows the researcher to test alternative conceptualizations of alumni support. (see Byrne, 2006; Hom & Griffeth, 1991). In view of the dichotomous nature of the 8 alumni behaviors under consideration, we used EQS version 6.1 procedures for computing polychorial correlations among categorical variables (Bentler, 2005). This new version of EQS overcomes the restriction of requiring large sample sizes in conducting CFA analysis with categorical data (Bentler, 2005; Byrne, 2006). We estimated all statistics using the Maximun Likelihood (ML) procedure followed by Robust methodologies. According to Bentler (2005), the ML Robust approach produces accurate approximations of standard errors and goodness of fit statistics even when departures of the assumption multivariate normality assumption takes place when

examining categorical variables<sup>2</sup>. Prior to the analyses, we screened the data in search of cases contributing to violations to the assumption of multivariate kurtosis. We found no outliers.

For the assessment of confirmatory factor models, we relied on four robust measures of fit: the Satorra-Bentler Maximum Likelihood estimate of chi-square ( $S-B\chi^2$ ), the  $S-B\chi^2/df$  ratio, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The CFI assess the extent to which the model provides a reasonable fit to the data in relation to a model assuming independence among the variables. CFI values close to 0.95 signify a good fit. The RMSEA indexes the extent to which the model reproduces the correlation matrix. Values ranging from 0 to .05 are considered good fit, while values ranging from .08 to .10 represent a poor or mediocre fit (Byrne, 2006). We also examined changes in  $S-B\chi^2$  and CFI to judge the extent alternative models of alumni support were tenable. These tests were based on the corrected Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square test ( $S-B\chi^2$ ) procedures as explained in Byrne (2006). We also estimated the reliability of the latent factors using the Coefficient- $H$  (Hancock & Mueller, 2001) which takes into account the loadings comprising each factor.

## Findings

In testing for alternative conceptualization of alumni support, we fixed the variance of the construct to one. This method allowed us to freely estimate the extent to which each alumni behavior had large and significant loadings with the corresponding construct (Kline, 2005). The first model tested the conventional perspective that alumni support underlines one single factor (i.e., political advocacy and volunteerism as a single construct). The second model addresses our

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<sup>2</sup> We verified our EQS-based CFA analyses using PRELIS procedures for handling categorical variables contained in LISREL version 8.8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006). LISREL estimates closely resembled EQS findings.

hypotheses: *alumni support is comprised by two domains; namely, political advocacy and volunteerism*. In this model, we set the correlation among the two latent factors underscoring alumni support to be freely estimated. Support for our conceptualization of alumni involvement should come from two sources: the fit of the model and whether this model provides a better representation of the data vis-à-vis the mono latent model. Table 2 summarizes the results of our examination of these two alternative conceptualizations of alumni support on behalf of their alma mater.

**Table 2. Goodness of fit indices for alternative models of Alumni Support**

Model	Robust measures of goodness of fit							Changes in robust measures of fit			
	ML $\chi^2$	S-B $\chi^2$	df	S-B $\chi^2$ / df	CFI	RMSEA	CI <sub>90</sub>	$\Delta$ S-B $\chi^2$	p-value	$\Delta$ df	$\Delta$ CFI
1. One construct	715.20	69.47	20	3.46	.948	.07	(.05,.09)	-	-	-	-
2. Two interdependent constructs	287.33	23.25	19	1.24	.996	.02	(0, .05)	28.90	< .05	1	.048
3. Two constructs reduced	114.45	8.25	13	0.63	1.000	0	(0,.03)	19.09	<.05	6	.004

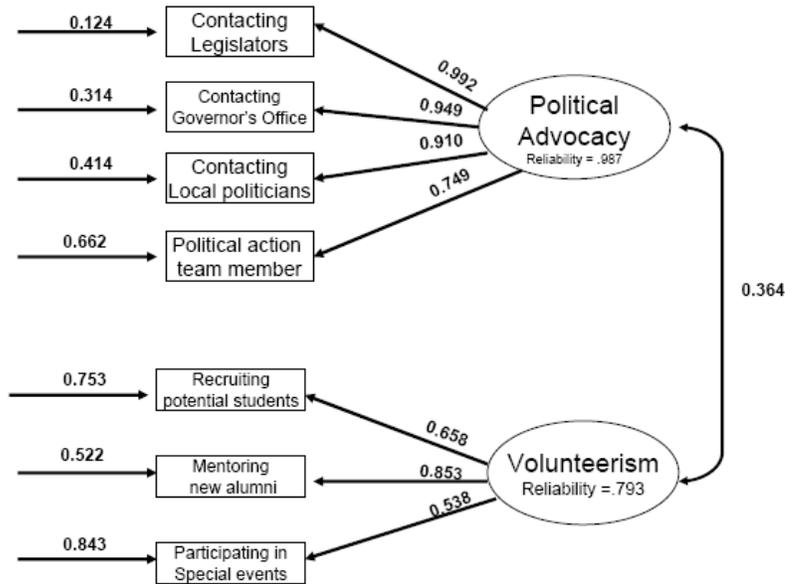
The first model tested the hypothesis that alumni support is defined by one single construct comprised of 8 behaviors. We found little support for this mono latent approach to alumni engagement (see Table 2). While the model has a CFI value close to 0.95, the model has a Sattorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square in relation to its degrees of freedom (S-B $\chi^2$  / df = 3.5) ratio above 3.0. The RMSEA for the model is .07, or two decimal points above the threshold. Moreover, the RMSEA range of values under a 90% confidence interval (CI<sub>90</sub>) falls within the mediocre fit range (.05, .09).

The second model tested the hypothesis that alumni support follows two latent factors, each represented by 4 unique behaviors. All goodness of fit statistics lends support for this model. The model has a Sattorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square in relation to its degrees of freedom value well below the 3.0 threshold ( $S-B\chi^2 / df = 1.24$ ). The model yielded a CFI index of .996, a value well above the threshold of 0.95. Likewise, the RMSEA value was .02, well below the 0.05 threshold and with a 90 percent confidence interval falling within the acceptable range of goodness of fit-value (0, .05). Moreover, next to the one-factor model, the two factor model factor model fits the data better as well as shown by a significant decline in the Sattorra-Bentler scaled Chi-Square test ( $\Delta S-B\chi^2 = 28.9, p < 0.05$ ) and an increase of 5 decimal points in the CFI index.

A close examination of the measurement properties for each item revealed that all but one of the alumni behaviors could be regarded as clear manifestations of the constructs they sought to measure. Volunteering to host special events for the REU Foundation, however, displayed a loading below the recommended .50 threshold (see Kline, 2005); about 80% percent of the variance in this alumni behavior could not be explained by the construct it sought to represent.

Accordingly, we dropped this behavior as an indicator of volunteerism and tested a reduced CFA. The revised two factor model factor model fits the data better than the original model as appraised by the significant change in  $\chi^2$  ( $\Delta S-B\chi^2 = 19.09, p < 0.05$ ). All measures of goodness of fit for this model are adequate, if not excellent:  $S-B\chi^2 / df = 0.63 = 0.66$ , CFI=1.0 and RMSEA=0.0. The measurement and structural results are displayed in figure 1.

**Figure 1: Dimensions of Alumni Support: Structural and Measurement Model**



The results from the confirmatory factor analysis support our hypothesis that alumni support is multidimensional. Specifically, alumni support underscores two distinct latent factors: political advocacy and volunteerism. These two dimensions alumni support are also positively and moderately associated ( $\phi=0.36$ ). Alumni who are politically advocating on behalf of their institutions are also likely to serve as volunteers.

The two dimensions of alumni support are well defined by their corresponding behaviors as well. The reliability of the construct political advocacy is .987, while that of volunteerism is .793. In other words, the amount of error in measuring each of these constructs is rather small. Moreover, all corresponding alumni behaviors significantly load in the corresponding construct. The loadings are well above .50 indicating that most of their variance is explained by the factor they seek to measure. Political advocacy seems to be better defined by three behaviors:

contacting legislators, governor's office and local politicians. Most of their unexplained variance is rather trivial. Voluntarism seems to be captured the most by mentoring new alumni. This item has a high loading of .853.

## **Discussion**

Findings from our mixed method analysis provide important perspectives on both a practical and a theoretical level. First, we note that the most important measures of volunteerism in our model-- recruiting students, mentoring alumni and participating in special events—are typically the most informal and least high profile set of activities performed by alumni supporters. Unlike serving on a board, acting as a club officer, or hosting REU foundation events, these volunteer activities may happen largely under the radar of university leaders. This finding has important implications for alumni relations professionals. Universities can easily keep track of their boards, officers, and volunteers in leadership roles, and provide training for these alumni as they take on these roles. Yet, alumni affairs officers may not be aware of the vast group of alumni engaged in mentoring, student recruiting, and other activities that are often less structured, and may take place independent of institutional guidance. Because our research shows that alumni volunteer support is best understood through these distinct behaviors, it would be wise for alumni relations professionals to investigate the practices that alumni employ in recruiting students and mentoring new graduates, and whether these practices reflect the values and strategic initiatives of the campus. We suggest that alumni mentoring programs or student recruiting programs that currently exist on many campuses become more formalized and expanded to reach out to those alums to may be involved with such efforts.

Second, we make a similar recommendation when considering political advocacy behaviors of alumni on behalf of their alma mater. A surprising number of alumni reported being active in lobbying on behalf of REU outside of the formal network designed to promote these activities. Again, it would be prudent for alumni association officers to investigate whether there is alignment between state relations messages articulated by the institution and those of alumni. It is logical to suggest that alumni are getting their lobbying talking points from various newsletters outlining initiatives that require state funding or new policies. Thus, we support the notion that alumni communications strategies are vitally important and must be carefully designed to articulate the values and priorities of the institution at the state level.

Our research has a third important contribution. Both the qualitative and quantitative elements of this study reject the conception that non-monetary alumni support can be understood through just a single domain. Instead, our study supports the notion that alumni support for ones alma mater is complex and that graduates engage in at least two distinct, but interrelated support roles: political advocacy and voluntarism. Prior to this study, it could not be substantiated that alumni service roles were multidimensional. For this reason, alumni relations professionals have historically categorized supportive alumni as either “donors” and/or “volunteers.” Our research suggests that a third category, “political advocates” must be added and treated as a distinct, but interrelated support role. Overall, our work broadens understandings about alumni support and challenges past assumptions about alumni service as being one-dimensional.

Fourth, few tools exist today to help alumni relations professionals identify alumni who are most likely to engage in service activities on behalf of their alma mater. As such, decisions about who to recruit for service opportunities rely on blunt assumptions about who to enlist as generic “volunteers.” Our work suggests that, with more research, these assumptions can be

reconstructed based on what matters most in predicting whether an alumnus would be more inclined to serve in political venues or volunteer venues. Relying on these new sets of assumptions, alumni officers could eventually match unique service opportunities (political and volunteer) with those graduates most likely to serve in these roles.

Before these practical steps are made, many important research questions must be addressed. First and foremost, what are the attributes of alumni who may be inclined to take on political advocacy roles, volunteer roles, or assume both roles? What experiences did these alumni have prior to college (parental background, youth experiences, high school preparation) in college (student engagement, academic preparation) and after college (employment status, marital status, household income, occupational choice) that may explain their propensity to serve in one or more of these capacities?

With these important questions in mind, our study provides the foundation for a research agenda on attributes of alumni who are likely to engage in volunteer and political advocacy on behalf of their alma mater. Because our work has made a difference in defining those items that are the best measures of the dependent variable of non-monetary alumni support, future studies could employ these variables as reliable measures of ways in which alumni are involved in supporting their alma mater. Again, this work could help practitioners and scholars create more sophisticated instruments to profile alumni most likely to participate in these unique support behaviors.

We conclude by acknowledging that our study has limits in that it relies on data from a single institution. We suggest that our items tested in this analysis be expanded to include a dataset representing multiple institutions with a diverse set of missions. For example, one may argue that volunteer behaviors among alumni who are graduates of community colleges may

vary from those who graduate from large research institutions. Similarly, graduates of public universities may report more active involvement in various domains as compared to their colleagues who graduated from private liberal arts colleges (especially in the political advocacy category). In short, we suggest that our measures are most generalizable to major public research universities from which the data from our study was drawn, and thus is most applied to this unique sector of higher education.

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