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**UNDERSTANDING THE MOTIVATIONS OF NONMONETARY YOUNG
ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT**

by

Olivia Rose Bowman

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education
at
Rowan University
May 1, 2020

Thesis Chair: MaryBeth Walpole, Ph.D.

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Dedications

I dedicate this thesis to my loving family, and partner Tim whose support has provided me strength through this program.

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First, I would like to thank my family, and friends for their support and efforts through my entire graduate degree. With the help of their support and constant motivations contributed greatly to my success in the program.

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Abstract

Olivia Rose Bowman
UNDERSTANDING THE MOTIVATIONS OF NONMONETARY YOUNG ALUMNI
ENGAGEMENT
2019-2020
MaryBeth Walpole, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Higher Education

Universities with influential young alumni connections typically have more productive and prosperous institutions (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). However, alumni who have graduated in the past 10 years are reportedly the least contacted alumni because of their lower response rates (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2014; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). This study focuses on the determination of motivations that encourage young alumni to engage in nonmonetary efforts with their Alma Mata Rowan University. In this study, young alumni were defined as Rowan Alumni who graduated since 2010 and have attended one or more events hosted by The Office of University Advancement. The data for this study was collected utilizing an online survey. The sample size who received the online survey was 400 young alumni. The responses of the survey were used to analyze trends on why these young alumni attended various events. The data showed similarities in demographics and due to the desire of socialization on alumni engaging in nonmonetary efforts.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Due to the rapid decrease in state and federal funding for higher education, public institutions have continued to utilize their alumni outlets to offset some of their losses from state funding (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Some alumni contribute, and some alumni do not contribute to their previous institutions. Those who do provide improve multiple areas of an institution. These areas include new buildings through monetary donations, access to numerous internships from connected alumni, student retention through mentorship, and other institutional improvements (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

The charitable gifts an institution receives from their young alumni is significant to the institution's continued success and growth (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Young graduates are typically the least connected alumni compared to older alumni due to their reported lower engagement rates, both monetary and nonmonetary (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2014; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). However, research has shown that alumni, who engage early, within the first ten years from their graduation, tend to escalate their engagement as they continue to grow professionally (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2014). Rowan University currently lacks a connection with its young alumni. There is minimal research on the relationship between Rowan University and their Young Alumni and how their involvement can be improved through volunteerism, mentorship, and other opportunities.

Statement of the Problem

The Division of University Advancement's mission is currently, "to build strong, lasting relationships with the University among alumni, donors, and other important constituents to encourage investment in and support of the University" (Rowan University Division of University Advancement, 2019). Although The Division of University Advancement's efforts to secure donations and volunteers have been successful, their attention to all alumni has been directed only towards those whom they deem successful. Those who are deemed successful include individuals who have high financial security. There is an apparent lack in their focus to include Rowan University alumni who are not as financial secure.

The mission of The Office of Alumni engagement states, "The mission of the Office of Alumni Engagement is to engage alumni, friends, and students through programs, opportunities, and services that stimulate a lifetime of interest, loyalty, and philanthropy in support of the mission of Rowan University" (Rowan University Division of University Advancement, 2019). Additionally, their efforts are acknowledged for creating events such as their "RISING: The campaign for Rowan University" (Rowan University Division of University Advancement, 2019). The Rising events reach out to all alumni and any individuals who support Rowan University. The events are also hosted in different demographic areas to reach as many supporters as possible. These areas include Princeton, NJ, Red Bank, NJ, Philadelphia, PA, New York, NY, and Mt. Laurel, NJ (Rowan University Division of University Advancement, 2019). However, their specific attention to young alumni has been lacking.

Significance of the Problem

Rowan University is noted as the sixth fastest-growing institution in America by the Chronicle of Higher Education's Almanac of Higher Education 2018-2019. With this growth in the student population, a necessity to uphold relationships with their growing alumni community is apparent. Rowan University Office of Alumni Engagement is currently in the beginning steps of creating a young alumni association titled G.O.L.D alumni. G.O.L.D is an abbreviation for graduates of the last decade. They chose this title not to exclude non-traditional graduates within the last decade. A non-traditional student is considered "a student who is older than the typical age of college students" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2019). Rowan University also offers Master's and Doctoral degrees, however at this time; the Office of Alumni Engagement does not explicitly reach out to those alumni who received a higher level of degree.

This study examines what Rowan University young alumni motivations are to engage with Rowan University. The results of this study may be beneficial in providing more information for the Office of Alumni Engagement to propose events, or engagement opportunities from the motivations of their young alumni. Additionally, results may also contribute to improving the connection alumni have with Rowan University. Creating a connection early upon graduation has shown to provide a lifelong connection with the alumni for years to come (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2014). Hopefully, the research results can contribute to starting that connection within the first ten years of graduating or improve its current efforts.

Methods and Procedure

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative study is to provide more research on what motivates young alumni engagement with Rowan University. According to Freeland, Spenner, and McCalmon (2013), young alumni are the least contacted group of alumni. However, they can provide charitable resources to the institution through volunteering, funding, and other active engagement opportunities.

Young alumni participating in this study are asked to declare their age, ethnicity, gender, degree earned, and geographic area of residence. Additionally, the participants are asked about ways to get involved if they were aware or if they have contributed. The goal is to understand better if they now are currently engaged with Rowan University and what improvements would the institution like to see to become more involved.

Research Questions

This study will ask a variety of questions to young alumni about their awareness of alumni engagement opportunities with Rowan University. This analysis will provide new knowledge about what motivate young alumni to engage in activities with Rowan University. Below is a list of the research questions:

1. What motivates young alumni to engage with Rowan University in nonmonetary efforts?
2. Which demographic group of young alumni is the most likely to engage?

Hypotheses

The study will be conducted by asking survey questions using a platform that will be emailed to different young alumni. The hypothesis of the study is that young alumni from Rowan University do not engage in non monetary activities due to being unaware of how they can participate. It is also believed that young alumni are unaware of their engagement opportunities because they are the least contacted group of alumni due to their lower engagement rates (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2014; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Assumptions and Limitations

Multiple limitations and assumptions influence the study. The study will be conducted in a quantitative approach using an online survey. The quantitative approach will shape and arrange the data collected. Within this study, there are limitations. These limitations include collecting a large enough sample size so that the data is not biased. Additional limitations are the reliability of the research can be affected by the nonrandom sample being surveyed (McMillan, 2016). Due to their previous efforts showing an engaged alumni, the responses will not be unbiased (McMillan, 2016).

The study assumes that the alumni participants contacted will answer all survey questions and truthfully to the best of their ability. The study focuses on all participants are alumni that have graduated in the past 10 years from Rowan University. Additionally, the study assumes that the participants are not engaged with Rowan University through engagement activities.

Operational Definitions

The definitions listed below will be used throughout this study when detailing alumni engagement, alumnus, and engagement opportunities.

1. Alumna - “a girl or woman who has attended or has graduated from a particular school, college, or university” (Merriam-Webster, 2019)
2. Young Alumni - “a person who has graduated from or has attended an institution within the past five to ten years from their alma mater” (Freeland, Spenner, McCalmon, 2014; McDearmon, 2012).
3. Alma Mater - “a school, college, or university which one has attended or from which one has graduated” Merriam-Webster, 2019)
4. Non-traditional - " a student who is older than the typical age of college students" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2019)
5. Alumni Engagement - “an alumni association who proposes activities after an individual receives their degree.” (Volin, 2016 p. 9)
6. Nonmonetary engagement- "is a collection of behaviors; this includes, event attendance, volunteerism, or communications involvement." (Volin, 2016 p. 10)
7. Monetary engagement - “is a monetary donation to the institution from an alumnus/a” (Volin, 2016 p. 9)
8. Student Involvement - “is behaviors that demonstrate a level of involvement as an undergraduate student above and beyond attendance and satisfactory completion of courses.” (Volin, 2016 p. 8)

Organization of Chapters

Chapter I: Introduction to the significance of the program, the purpose of the study, listed research questions, assumptions/limitations, study definitions, and hypotheses for young alumni engagement

Chapter II: A literature review on alumni engagement, and conceptual framework on categories within engagement

Chapter III: Methodology of the context of the study, research questions, quantitative approach and design, data collection strategy, population and sample

Chapter IV: Findings within the young alumni sample are exposed, using text, tables, and other detailed information

Chapter V: Summary, discussion, conclusion, and recommendations in regards to the study's findings on alumni engagement

Summary

Rowan University's institutional growth by the Chronicle of Higher Education's Almanac of Higher Education (2018-2019) has proven to be beneficial to the institution. However, a lack of direct communication to young alumni who have graduated in the past 5 to 10 years is apparent (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2014; McDearmon, 2012). Research focused on Rowan University and young alumni engagement is needed. This study intends to improve communication, and understand the specifics of individuals who not currently contacted.

As stated above, the Division of University Advancement is attempting their best efforts to create an alumni engagement experience that benefits all alumni. However, young alumni need a different pathway of communication. The intent of this study is to give a broad idea of what that pathway is and who is interested in being engaged with Rowan University.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The population of students earning college degrees is steadily growing. Completing a degree can contribute to many opportunities in one's life. Degree completion can create a feeling of accomplishment for one's self, acknowledgment from those who supported the process, potential to earn a better salary, and earn an additional support team within an institution from the alumni population. Alumni support benefits all, even those who do not participate. Either way alumni, both active and inactive alumni, have one commonality; they graduated from the same organization (McDearmon, 2013).

There are alumni who continually contribute to their alma mater while others do not. Alumni who engage provide donations to multiple areas for their institution, which include financial funding; volunteering their efforts through mentoring, internships, and career placement; and advocating to refer new students (Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). These contributions produce possibilities for the college or university that state funding cannot always provide (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Graduates of a postsecondary institution are assigned the title, alumni, which convey that they have earned a degree from that institution (McDearmon, 2013). The definition of alumni engagement can be described differently among institutions and can

also have different titles including alumni connections and alumni associations (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). The purpose of the term is typically used to explain the investment alumni have towards their institution's (Volin, 2016). These investments can include donating, mentoring campus organizations, referring students, or attending university or college events (Volin, 2016). The investment from an alumnus is a necessity for the growth of colleges or universities.

Alumni can invest their engagement in various ways at their colleges and universities. Alumni are typically introduced to possible engagements through an alumni association. The investments advertised vary in value based on the needs from the college or university. The investments can also vary between the institutions' alumni engagement association and the needs they prioritize (Volin, 2016). However, when an alumnus contributes to any form of engagement, the institution benefits.

Characteristics of Alumni

The demographics of alumni who donate through volunteerism, monetary donations, student recruitment, networking, or political advocacy tend to be similar behaviors (Stephenson & Yerger, 2014; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). The demographics differences include gender, age, race/ethnicity, and involvement with undergraduate experience (McDearmon, 2013; Stephenson & Yerger, 2014). Alumni who were involved in campus organizations such as Greek life, athletics, or student government associations, are typically more engaged as alumni (McDearmon, 2013; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Young Alumni

Alumni who donated within the first five years of degree completion continued to give as they aged. Young graduates are typically the least contacted alumni due to their lower engagement rates, both monetary and nonmonetary (Freeland, Spenner, McCalmon, 2014; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). However, research has shown that connecting with young alumni early from their degree completion contributes to increased donations as they continue through life (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2014). Individuals in their early twenties and individuals sixty-five or older are the two age ranges who engage in alumni support the least (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004 as cited in Weerts & Ronca 2008). Networking and communicating with young alumni as early as possible is an essential action for institutions to conduct.

Seasoned Alumni

A seasoned alumnus is an alumnus who has multiple years in the workforce and a higher chronological age (Stephenson & Yerger, 2013; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Alumni who are seasoned in their lives donate more frequently than young alumni (Stephenson & Yerger, 2013; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Alumni who range between 35-44 years of age are those who volunteer more frequently with their previous institutions (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Alumni who have children under the age of 18 have higher rates of volunteerism at their alma mater (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010). However, alumni who do not have children volunteer at lower rates (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010).

Gender

The gender of an alumnus typically is associated with whether they would engage at their alma mater or not (Borden, Shaker & Kienker, 2013; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Women alumni collectively donate at more significant rates than male alumni in volunteerism, financial donations, student recruitment, networking, and political advocacy (Borden, Shaker & Kienker, 2013; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Women's engagement is higher than men's in all demographic areas, including age ranges, and salaries (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). It would be beneficial for institutions to reach out to their female alumni for engagement opportunities.

Race/Ethnicity

An additional area of demographic difference in alumni engagement is a person's race and ethnicity (Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Alumni who are not Caucasian engage the most (Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Volin (2016) specifically detailed that Asian/Pacific Islander alumni were the least engaged. A limitation could have occurred due to a majority of Volin's sample size identifying as Caucasian (2016). The institution that was surveyed may also lack in diversified campus organizations (Volin, 2016). It would be imperative for the alumni engagement office to conduct research that clarified which racial or ethnic groups are engaging at higher rates (Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Faculty and Staff Alumni

Employees of institutions are typically separated into two groups. The two positions are faculty and staff employees. Although it is a small portion, some employees possess a connection to the institution they are working for, from previously attending the institution, which would grant those employees alumni status, or some employees also have a close relative who is an alumnus (Borden, Shaker & Kienker, 2013). There is a strong correlation between faculty and staff employees who donate to their alma mater (Borden, Shaker & Kienker, 2013). Although alumni engagement from faculty and staff was shown to be a small amount, understanding that the connection exists can show that the campus engagement office should network within their organization to promote engagement (Borden, Shaker & Kienker, 2013).

Financial Funding

It was reported in 2007 that U.S. colleges and universities received an estimated \$29 billion in private donations for the institution and around 28% of the \$29 billion donation was contributed from their alumni (McDearmon, 2013; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). An alumnus donating monetary funding towards their alma mater is a form of alumni engagement (Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2009; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Alumni can financially donate to an institution in various ways, which includes lower dollar amount donations or more significant dollar amount donations (Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Both forms can result in scholarships, growth of campus curriculums, or stadium acknowledgments (Volin, 2016). All types benefit the institution and their efforts towards

establishing a more advanced environment (Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Volin (2016) describes that these investments create institutionalized advancement through a growing endowment; these endowments advance the production of specific benefits for current and upcoming students. The endowments include hiring faculty, funding research opportunities, increasing scholarships, and reducing tuition increases (Volin, 2016). All endowments provided create a more advanced institution. Financial donations should be a high priority for alumni connection centers to collect from alumni to continue the growth of an institution.

Volunteerism

Alumni can engage through avenues that do not include financial donations. Volunteering is a noted form of engaging and can be implemented in all aspects of an institution (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Volunteerism is when an individual creates positive social connections, which are not forced, for long periods of time that benefit strangers (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010). The motivation behind volunteering is also suggested by Weerts, Cabrera, and Sanford (2010) as evolving knowledge of self, continuing education about different aspects of life, improving communication skills with others, and networking with individuals to potentially enhance future careers. Alumni can also engage in support by providing their educational and experiential knowledge to improve matters the institution's board of trustees handles (Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Weerts and Ronca (2008) surveyed 1,441 alumni to understand why alumni donors volunteer. They concluded the two clear variables associated with volunteers are their gender and their residency (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). The residency of alumni was a significant factor due to most volunteerism occurring on campus and alumni who live within close distance to school have more opportunities to attend (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). As stated prior, outreach towards specific gender has shown higher volunteer rates (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Both variables are significant towards connecting alumni with volunteer opportunities and understanding who will commit.

Political Advocacy

Alumni can also be engaged through political advocacy. Political advocacy efforts include donating campaign money, volunteering for campaigns for running officials, voting, and other efforts (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Weerts, Cabrera, and Sanford (2010) conclude that advocating for the political influence of one's alma mater is an important role for alumni to engage in because it secures government support and advances (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). An alumni engagement office would benefit greatly by connecting to alumni who politically advocate for their alma mater (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Networking

The direct line of communication between an institution and its alumni is crucial for continued engagement. Most institutions rely on different tools to communicate what is currently happening at the institution and to connect alumni with students or with other alumni. Volin (2016) explains alumni engagement offices tend to communicate through

emails, published data, alumni connection websites, and advertising at events. Institutions have also established personal alumni engagement social media tools such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other sites.

Facebook is used for 85% of contact communication between students who are attending a four-year institution (Volin, 2016). Institutions are attempting to connect their undergraduate population with their social media sites early to have an existing bond when they graduate. Creating clear points of communication and marketing opportunities enhance alumni engagement and student connections (Volin, 2016).

Student Recruiting

Alumni who volunteer their time to recruit new students for a college or university increase enrollment rates at their previous institutions (Fogg, 2008; McDearmon, 2013; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2009). Institutions connect alumni to new student recruits through different admission events. These events include orientation fairs, casual meetings, and admission recruiting fairs (Fogg, 2008). Fogg (2008) concluded that the best investment an institution can make is adding alumni to the admission process.

Fogg (2008) quoted Andrew Morris, an associate director of admissions, from the State University of New York at Binghamton. Morris believes that any expenses used to contact volunteer alumni are worthwhile. He describes alumni as acting as a "force multiplier" because they are involved in many different roles (Fogg, 2008, pg. 3). These roles tend to include outreach programs to prospective students, guides at orientation, and detail their professional experiences at recruiting events (Fogg, 2008). Due to alumni

involvement implemented in the past 15 years, the State University of New York at Binghamton had an increase of enrollment from 19,000 to 26,000 (Fogg, 2008). Hiring alumni to recruit is an expense, but the return on investment is clear.

Student Involvement

Alumni who were more involved in both academics and campus organizations during their undergraduate experience are more likely to partake in alumni engagement activities (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Student involvement is when a student is a member of a campus organization. Student organizations include orientation leader, student government, or campus Greek life (Volin, 2016). Students who were collegiate athletes at their Alma mater are involved (Volin, 2016). Finally, those who earn academic honors upon degree completion or entry are involved students (Volin, 2016). During Volin's (2016) research, he found a 31% increase in alumni engagement from alumni who were involved. Institutional undergraduate organizational involvement creates a clear bond for alumni engagement (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Alumni offices must utilize the connection from undergraduate involvement to improve alumni engagement.

Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory concludes that relationships create mutual exchanges, between one individual of the relationship with the other (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The described exchanges can be unbalanced when one part of the relationship is receiving more benefits than the other. Both individuals who partake in the transaction must find a balance within the exchange. The balance can be positive if they follow the

set of rules and norms that have been defined within the organization that created the relationship (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

There is a list of set rules and norms to engage in a positive social exchange. The first rule is the reciprocity rule. Within the reciprocity rule, there are three different types of transfers. Those exchanges include “(1) reciprocity as a moral norm, (2) reciprocity as a transactional pattern of interdependent exchanges, (3) reciprocity as a folk belief” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005 pg. 876). The first rule of reciprocity as a moral norm is explained as individuals conducting an exchanged as they are expected (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). This is when individuals' beliefs are standard, and both parties trust the other to provide behavior in a way that benefits both because it is the right thing to do. The second rule, reciprocity, as a transactional pattern, is an interdependent exchange when one individual of the exchange acts accordingly to the initial action of the other (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). These only benefits both parties when they are functioning in two directions, such as when one individual gives and the other individual takes. The third rule, reciprocity, as a folk belief, is when individuals behave in ways that are culturally the expectation of the transaction (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). An example would be both participants bring something to each other that they both currently provide themselves, but both are in agreement that the exchange is equal (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The social exchange theory and the set of rules the theory presents can relate to the engagement from an institution to an alumnus because both parties partake in activities that affected the other (Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). If the alumnus feels what they were provided during their undergraduate experience was positive and

beneficial, they could be more inclined to give back to their previous institution in a positive manner (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Student Involvement Theory

The student involvement theory is when students during their undergraduate years are involved both academically and physically in campus events (Astin, 1999). This involvement can lead to students having more enjoyable experiences (Astin, 1999). Astin (1999) continues to show that students who study intensively, join campus events, and communicate with fellow students and faculty members are very involved students. In contrast, an uninvolved student is one who studies infrequently, is not involved with campus events, and does not communicate with fellow students and faculty members (Astin, 1999).

The student involvement theory details the different ways students can be successfully involved in their post-secondary education life (Astin, 1999). The first is when students live on campus; they have shown to be more successful in involving in all aspects of campus life (Astin, 1999). The second positive act of involvement would be when students partake in honors programs available at their institution (Astin, 1999). The third is athletic involvement; students who are involved in recreational and collegiate sports have reported increased positive experiences during undergrad (Astin, 1999). The fourth positive act of involvement is within academics, this depends on the students' commitment to studying the extended amount of hours, the interest they have in their courses, and if they are attending their classes or not (Astin, 1999). The fourth positive

act of involvement is a student to faculty communication. Students who feel comfortable speaking with faculty are more likely to have more positive experiences within their courses (Astin, 1999).

The student involvement theory has five postulates. The first postulate refers to how much a student contributes to their academics and physical campus activities (Astin, 1999). An example could be the amount of effort a student promotes through a presentation in class. The second postulate is that depending on the individual student, and the amount of involvement varies between students; however, student involvement continues to take place (Astin, 1999). The third postulate is that the amount of involvement has both quantitative and qualitative measures within the students' involvement (Astin, 1999). An example could be if a student joins a student organization and runs for a leadership position, or if a student rarely shows up for the meetings. The fourth postulate is how much a student is retaining from what they are involved in, whether it is educationally or personal development (Astin, 1999). The fifth postulate is whether the policies implemented are educationally involving the student within the course or the organization (Astin, 1999).

Research has shown numerous times that alumni who were more engaged during undergraduate in both academics and campus organizations are more likely to engage in alumni association activities (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). If institutions continue to promote Astin's (1999) student development theory, of undergraduate student involvement, they will produce positive students who will then grow into positive alumni. Student involvement theory will inform this study if their undergraduate experience has affected their drive to engage as alumni.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, alumni engagement is a significant portion of support for postsecondary institutions to continue to grow in positive ways, avoiding the issue of decreased state funding (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Research has shown that alumni engage through donating monetary funds, political advocacy, mentoring, networking, and recruiting student (Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). The characteristics of alumni who do engage can vary based on race/ethnicity, gender, faculty alumni connection, whether they are young or seasoned alumni (Volin, 2016; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2009; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Rowan University's growth is positive; within this positivity, the alumni engagement office continues to try to promote opportunities for engagement (Rowan Today, 2018). I focus my research on the populations who do engage within Rowan's alumni community and how that can improve their current engagement outreach with knowledge on who is promoting positive alumni support.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand what motivates young alumni of Rowan University to engage with their previous institution in nonmonetary efforts. This study intends to explore to why young alumni return to their alma mater and participate in a single or various events. The research data will come from collecting information through responses from an online survey sent to young alumni. In addition, this study explores which specific demographic groups engage the most frequently and what level of degree they earned from Rowan University.

Research Questions

1. What motivates young alumni to engage with Rowan University in nonmonetary efforts?
2. Which demographic group of young alumni is the most likely to engage?

Quantitative Design

Research conducted in education is typically quantitative (McMillan, 2016). This study will be a descriptive quantitative study. Descriptive studies explore “what or how much of something exists” (McMillan, 2016 pg. 206). This thesis is investigating what motivates young alumni to engage in nonmonetary efforts with Rowan University. The influence is young alumni who do engage (McMillan, 2016). The survey studies a controlled variable which is a population of young alumni who do engage, then surveying

them to understand the reasoning on their influences to be active with Rowan University alumni events (McMillan, 2016).

Data Collection

Rowan University's alumni population is reported as 89,000 and growing (RowanAlumni, 2019). The quantitative research was conducted through collecting data from young alumni. The Office of Alumni Engagement provided me with email information from the database IModules for 400 young alumni who have interacted with events within the first five to ten years after graduating from Rowan University. When alumni attend Rowan University alumni events, they are requested to update their contact information. Having the most up to date contact information will hopefully improve the response rates from the young alumni.

The participants surveyed must have graduated from Rowan University within the past five to ten years. The young alumni surveyed are a nonrandom sample (McMillan, 2016). They were selected based on their previous efforts of engagement at Rowan University through nonmonetary efforts. The survey include multiple choice questions (Appendix), and concluded with an open ended question. A trial online test was conducted on five young alumni from Rowan University. The trial subjects were asked to detail any issues that occurred during the survey. After the trial, issues reported were amended to ensure the survey experience going forward was organized and clear experience.

Procedures of Gathering Data

The collection of data was conducted through an online survey using Rowan University Software, Qualtrics. Qualtrics is described as the official surveying tool of Rowan University (Survey, 2019). Distributing an online survey is an effective way to collect data from young alumni because it can reach distant alumni, and creates an easy format to answer questions (McMillan, 2016). The email included a statement, indicating the survey's purpose and to explain the survey is anonymous. Due to the disadvantages of lower answer rates, I intended to email a larger sample size, with the intention on receiving a minimum of 30% response rate (McMillan, 2016). The responses were used to answer my research questions.

Research Site

The study took place at Rowan University in the academic year of 2019-2020. Rowan University is a larger public institution in Glassboro, New Jersey. Rowan University is a four-year, large, research institution (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017). The student population was reported in fall 2017, as 18,484 students (The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017). The results from the quantitative study of Rowan University's young alumni engagement should expose data for the institution to begin to understand what those motivations are. In addition, this study should understand which specific groups of young alumni are engaging and what experiences they have engaged in.

Population and Sample

Due to the institutional growth at Rowan University, their alumni population is increasing at rapid rates. The participants of this study are not chosen at random, they are purposeful sampling (McMillan, 2016). Purposeful sample occurs when a sample of interest has a common characteristic (McMillan, 2016). The common characteristic of this sample of interest is they have participated in alumni engagement events within graduating from Rowan University in the past 10 years (McMillan, 2016). The specific participants have shown a motivation to engage with events. The intent for the study is to survey a minimum of 400 young alumni by contacting them through email and asking them to complete an online survey.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation of the research stemmed from the literature review. The literature review went over how young alumni are the least contacted to engage with an institution. The literature also explained if young alumni connected with engagement opportunities earlier on they will continue to engage for years to come. The research lacked data on how to motivate the young alumni population to engage.

The descriptive quantitative research conducted in this thesis used an online survey of what motivates this specific group of young alumni to engage. The ten survey questions have answer options organized into likert scales and multiple choice options (McMillan, 2016). A scale is “a progressive series of gradations of something” (McMillan, 2016 p. 184). The first six questions have their responses in multiple choice form. The first question is, “what is your age?” The second question is, “What is your

ethnicity?” The third question is, “What is your gender?” The fourth question is “Which college did you graduate from?” The fifth question is “What type of degree did you earn from Rowan University?” The sixth question is, “How many alumni events did you attend this year?” Survey questions seven and eight are to be answered in a likert scale. The responses participants will be able to choose from gradations from “strongly agree to strongly disagree” (McMillan, 2016). The final survey question is open ended for a response from the participants. This section allows for clear responses and hopes to create additional understanding to what motivates young alumni.

The survey (Appendix) is based on a young alumni research survey conducted by Danielle Davis (2019). Danielle approved the use of the survey for this study. The variables I believed would occur the most is young alumni, who are women, and were involved during their undergraduate degree, are engaged the most frequently. Literature has shown women alumni overall engage at higher rates than male alumni in volunteerism, financial donations, student recruitment, networking, or political advocacy (Borden, Shaker & Kienker, 2013; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Also, alumni who were more involved in both academics and campus organizations during undergrad are more likely to engage (McDearmon, 2013; Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). However, this literature cannot be held true to all young alumni who have engaged because their reasoning can vary as well as their genders and undergraduate experience.

Ethics

Rowan University's Institutional Review Board mission

“is to protect individuals who participate in research; ensuring compliance with all pertinent federal and state laws and regulations; fostering the ethical conduct of human subjects' research; and providing education and other services to the University's researchers regarding regulatory requirements and best practices” (Institutional Review Board, 2019).

The survey was approved by the Institutional Review Board. The survey was distributed to the young alumni after IRB approval. Young alumni were made aware that the data collected from this survey was used for a thesis for Master's in Higher Education. Participation in the young alumni research survey is voluntary. An informed consent process began each survey. This ensured that participants understood the study and what their involvement entailed (McMillan, 2016).

Analysis

The analysis of the thesis is descriptive. It is considered descriptive because it is searching for what motivates young alumni to volunteer or engage at Rowan University alumni events. The Qualtrics survey is a brief eleven question survey to collect data on the motivations for young alumni to engage (Appendix). A survey is being used due to its efficient way to obtain data in regards to my research questions (McMillan, 2016). Through this survey I will be able to collect data on young alumni's age, gender, demographics, participation rates and additional emotions of engaging. Using frequency

distribution I organized the data into clear charts to further understand the common themes of motivations.

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this research study is to understand what motivates young alumni to engage in nonmonetary efforts for Rowan University. A quantitative study was used to collect and analyze data to determine trends of motivation. Within the survey the young alumni were questioned on their demographics, and motivations to partake in Rowan University alumni events. The data analyzed from the survey will show commonalities between Rowan young alumni.

Preliminary Findings

Utilizing the online survey tool Qualtrics, 400 young alumni were surveyed online in regard to their motivations behind engaging in nonmonetary efforts towards Rowan University. The survey utilized closed-ended response, likert scale questions, and open ended questions towards their feelings on alumni involvement (McMillian, 2016). The survey collected data in regard to the demographics of the young alumni including their age, race, and gender. Questions continued to detail which specific college within Rowan University the alumni graduate from, and which level of degree they earned. The questions continued to ask their satisfaction of their Rowan University experience, and their Rowan alumni experience. The final questions ask what motivations caused the alumni to engage in alumni activities.

Research Questions

1. What motivates young alumni to engage with Rowan University in nonmonetary efforts?
2. Which demographic group of young alumni is the most likely to engage?

Profile of the Sample

Participates surveyed in this study are alumni of Rowan University who graduated in the past 10 years and have been active in events hosted by Rowan's Office of Alumni Engagement. The 400 participants who were surveyed were chosen from their attendance of an event. The online survey was distributed through email on Tuesday March 7, 2020 with the data collection ending on March 17, 2020. The survey included closed ended questions, likert scale questions, and two opportunities to make comments. From the 400 surveys that were emailed, a total of 28 responses were collected. This is a 7% response rate.

Quantitative Survey

The first survey question asked the age of participates. The age was skewed towards a younger demographic 20-25 (35.72%), 26-30 (39.29%), while the older aged participants included five individuals aged 31-34 (17.86%), and two individuals aged 35 and up (7.14 %).

Table 1

What is your age? (N=28)

Age	<i>f</i>	%
20-25	10	35.72
26-30	11	39.29
31-34	5	17.86
35 and up	2	7.14

The second question asked of the young alumni was in regard to their race. The survey responses show that a majority of the young alumni classified their race as White (85.71%). The remaining four individuals classified themselves as Black or African American (7.14%) or Latino/x or Hispanic (7.14%). The information is shown in the Table 2.

Table 2

What is your race? (N=28)

Race	<i>f</i>	%
Asian		
Black or African American	2	7.14
American Indian or Native American		
Latino/x or Hispanic	2	7.14
White	24	85.71
Native Island or Pacific Islander		

The final demographic question was in regard to the young alumni's gender. The survey was split evenly between Female alumni (50.00%) and Male alumni (50.00%).

The information is shown in the Table 3.

Table 3

What is your gender? (N=28)

Gender	<i>f</i>	%
Female	14	50.00
Transgender Female		
Male	14	50.00
Transgender Male		
Non-binary		
Gender non-conforming		
Gender Fluid		

The fourth question of the survey asked Rowan alumni to select the college they graduated from. Alumni were allowed to select more than one college if they received a degree from multiple colleges within Rowan University. The selected responses were distributed to almost every college within Rowan University. Rowan’s College of Humanities & Social Sciences (21.43%) had the highest response. The alumni selection of Rowan’s Rohrer College of Business (17.86%) and College of Education (17.86%) were close in percentages. The information is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Which college did you graduate from? (N=28)

College	<i>f</i>	%
Rohrer College of Business	5	17.86
College of Communication & Creative Arts	4	14.29
College of Education	5	17.86
Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering	3	10.71
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	6	21.43
College of Performing Arts	1	3.57
College of Science & Mathematics	4	14.29
School of Earth & Environment		
School of Health Professions	1	3.57

The fifth question young alumni were asked was in regard to the degree level they earned at Rowan University. Some alumni earned both their Bachelor's and their Master's at Rowan University. However, the highest response was a Bachelor's degree (89.29%). The information is provided in the Table 5.

Table 5

What type of degree did you earn from Rowan University? (N=28)

Degree Level	<i>f</i>	%
Bachelor's	25	89.29
Master's	7	25.00
Doctoral		

The sixth question young alumni were asked was in regard to how many alumni events they attended this year. The highest response of attendance received by young alumni was one event (71.43 %) Although the sample size population emailed was due to their attendance at an alumni event five alumni did not select how many events they attended. The information is provided in Table 6.

Table 6

How many alumni events did you attend this year? (N=28)

Events	<i>f</i>	%
1	20	71.43
2	2	7.14
3	1	3.57
4		
5+		

The seventh question the young alumni were asked was their satisfaction in regard to their Rowan institutional experience. A majority of the alumni answered that they were “moderately satisfied” (57.14%). The remaining responses showed that alumni were “extremely satisfied”, “slightly satisfied”, and “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.” The information is provided in Table 7.

Table 7

How satisfied are you with your overall Rowan institutional experience? (N=28)

	<i>f</i>	%
Extremely satisfied	7	25.00
Moderately satisfied	16	57.14
Slightly satisfied	2	7.14
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	3	10.71
Slightly dissatisfied		
Moderately dissatisfied		
Extremely dissatisfied		

The eighth question young alumni were asked was their satisfaction of their Rowan alumni experience. The highest response was, “moderately satisfied.” (32.14%) The rest of the alumni responded with “extremely satisfied,” “slightly satisfied,” and “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.” One alumni did respond that they are, “moderately dissatisfied.” The information is provided in Table 8.

Table 8

How satisfied are you with your overall Rowan alumni experience? (N=28)

	<i>f</i>	%
Extremely satisfied	4	14.29
Moderately satisfied	9	32.14
Slightly satisfied	6	21.43
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	8	28.57
Slightly dissatisfied		
Moderately dissatisfied	1	3.57
Extremely dissatisfied		

The final close-ended question asked alumni if a person or specific event motivated them to attend or volunteer at an event. A majority of the alumni selected, “no.” (53.57%). The alumni who selected, “yes” were asked to provide an example. Some alumni gave an explanation which stated, “Requests from individuals from the College of Engineering to attend specific events,” or “attended an event after being invited.”

Table 9

Did a person or specific event motivate you to attend, or volunteer at an event? (N=28)

	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	13	46.43
No	15	53.57

The final open-ended question asked the alumni what motivated them to attend or volunteer. The responses varied but a common theme was alumni returned because they were influenced by another alumni. For example, two different alumni stated, “That a friend of mine was already planning on going to the NYC alumni event and we are close to NYC” or “My fellow alumni”.

Table 10

What motivated you to attend or volunteer? (N=28)

	<i>f</i>	%
Responses	17	60.71%
N/A	11	39.29%

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary of the Study

This quantitative research study was implemented to understand the motivations of non-monetary alumni participation at Rowan University. The data was collected utilizing an online survey emailed to 400 Rowan University alumni who attended and participated in events hosted by The Office of Alumni Engagement. Based on the 400 emailed alumni, 28 responded to the survey. The responses included demographic questions, Rowan University satisfactory questions, and open-ended questions were used to examine common trends of the motivations of the alumni. This research was conducted to better understand motivations' behind alumni participation and how the motivations can be used to improve attendance.

Discussion of the Findings

Research question 1. What motivates young alumni to engage with Rowan University in nonmonetary efforts?

The last question of the survey asked young alumni, "What motivated you to attend or volunteer?" A study conducted by Weerts, Cabrera and Sanford (2010) described that motivation behind alumni volunteering at their alma mater is because the alumni can evolve their knowledge of self, continue education, improve their communication skills with others, and network with fellow alumni. Of the 28 young alumni who answered, 17 (60.71%) young alumni gave a written response. The common

theme from the responses is that young alumni are looking for social interaction with fellow Rowan University alumnus. Young alumni attend events for networking, and friendship. Young alumni responses included, “Connecting with alumni and building my network,” and “Interested in gaining more connections.”

Research question 2. Which demographic group of young alumni is the most likely to engage?

The first three questions of the survey asked young alumni questions in regard to their demographics. The first question young alumni were asked to select their age range. Research has shown that young alumni who participate in events hosted by their alma mater within the first five years after graduating enhance their probability of attending more events (Freeland, Spenner, & McCalmon, 2014). The highest age range of the survey population was 26-30 which 39.29% was. The following question asked young alumni to identify their race. Research conducted shown that White alumni engage the least (Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Of the 28 young alumni who responded to the survey, 24 of the alumni identified as White which is 85.71% of the survey population. The final demographic question asked young alumni to identify what their gender is. It is reported that women alumni engage as active alumni in higher rates than male alumni in attendance to events, networking, monetary donations, student recruitment, and political advocacy (Borden, Shaker & Kienker, 2013; Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Of the 28 young alumni who responded, exactly 14 young alumni identified as female, and 14 young alumni identified as male. This is an even response from female 50% and male 50%.

Conclusion

The results of this study provided information on the trend of involvement of young alumni of Rowan University. The first result is the motivations for young alumni engage at events hosted by The Office of Alumni Engagement to have social interactions with fellow alumni. The interactions include networking, reconnecting with alumni, and making new connections with different alumni. Due to social interactions being the leading contributor of alumni participation events that encourage socializing behavior could improve their attendance rates.

The second result is in regards to the age, race, and gender of young alumni. The demographic results were not consistent with research that was conducted prior to this study. Young alumni whose age ranges from 26-30 were most likely to participate in non-monetary engagement opportunities. Research has shown alumni whose age ranges from 35-44 volunteer at the highest rate (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). However, this study only received two responses from young alumni that selected the age 35 and up. The race reported by young alumni in this study was highly indicated as White. Young alumni that selected White were 85.71% of the population. This is not consisted with research that showed White alumni engage at lower rates (Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). However, research did indicate that institutions may lack diversity, and should conduct research that provides data on their racial groups who are participating (Volin, 2016; Weerts & Ronca, 2008). The gender response of young alumni in this study was female 50% and male 50%. Research prior to this study has shown that women alumni engage more than men alumni (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010; Weerts & Ronca, 2008).

Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings of this study of the researcher, the following recommendations are stated for The Office of Alumni Engagement.

1. The Office of Alumni Engagement should implement events that encourage socializing behavior.
2. The Office of Alumni Engagement should implement events that are geared towards the age range of 26-30.
3. The Office of Alumni Engagement should continue to equally reach out and encourage engagement to young alumni of all genders.
4. The Office of Alumni Engagement should implement events that reach out to a more diverse young alumni population.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the conclusions of the study, the following recommendations for future research are as followed.

1. A study should be conducted of alumni who have graduated beyond the past 10 years and to research if they began their involvement within the 10 years of their graduation.
2. A study should be conducted with a larger response population to see if their results are similar to this sample size.
3. A study could be conducted in a qualitative format to see if the responses of young alumni motivations differ or stay the same.

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Appendix

Survey Instrument

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Motivations of Young Alumni Engagement. You are included in this survey because you have attended or volunteered at an event hosted by the Office of Alumni Engagement, and have graduated in the past 10 years. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be 400.

The survey may take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey. We expect the study to last from January 21, 2020 through June 30, 2020.

The purpose of this research study is to understand what motivates young alumni to engage in nonmonetary efforts for Rowan University.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand Rowan's young alumni motivations to participate in Rowan alumni events.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can contact me at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Please complete the checkbox below.

To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older. Place a check box here

Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey

NOTE TO RESEARCHER: you can make your online survey to appear when participants click both check boxes.

1) What is your age?

20-25 (1)

26-30 (2)

31-35 (3)

35 and up (4)

2) What is your race?

Asian (1)

Version #1

Version Date: 1/31/2020

- Black or African American (2)
- American Indian or Native American (3)
- Latino/x or Hispanic (4)
- White (5)
- Native Island or Pacific Islander (6)

3) What is your gender?

- Female (1)
- Transgender Female (2)
- Male (3)
- Transgender Male (4)
- Non-binary (5)
- Gender non-conforming (6)
- Gender Fluid (7)

4) Which college did you graduate from?

- Rohrer College of Business (1)
- College of Communication & Creative Arts (2)
- College of Education (3)
- Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering (4)
- College of Humanities & Social Sciences (5)
- College of Performing Arts (6)
- College of Science & Mathematics (7)
- School of Earth & Environment (8)
- School of Health Professions (9)

5) What type of degree did you earn from Rowan University?

- Bachelor's (1)
- Master's (2)
- Doctoral (3)

6) How many alumni events did you attend this year?

- 1(1)
- 2(2)
- 3(3)
- 4(4)
- 5+(5)

7) How satisfied are you with your overall Rowan institutional experience?

- Extremely satisfied (1)
- Moderately satisfied (2)

- Slightly satisfied (3)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4)
- Slightly dissatisfied (5)
- Moderately dissatisfied (6)
- Extremely dissatisfied (7)

8) How satisfied are you with your overall Rowan Alumni experience?

- Extremely satisfied (1)
- Moderately satisfied (2)
- Slightly satisfied (3)
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (4)
- Slightly dissatisfied (5)
- Moderately dissatisfied (6)
- Extremely dissatisfied (7)

9) Did a person or specific event motivate you to attend, or volunteer at an event?

- Yes (1)
 - No (2)
- If yes, please explain.

10) What motivated you to attend or volunteer?