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Efficiency Information and Participation in Charity Fundraising Events

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WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

# Efficiency Information and Participation in Charity Fundraising Events

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A Major Qualifying Project

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**Abstract**

Through two internet surveys and a field-experiment the present study investigated the beliefs and behavior of college students with regard to their participation in charity fundraising events. Participation in charity fundraising events is prevalent among college students and they appear to be primarily motivated by the benefitting cause and social aspect of the events. However, when students were given the opportunity to donate directly to a charity, their observed giving behavior was significantly reduced.

### **Efficiency Information and Participation in Charity Fundraising Events**

College students are sometimes portrayed as being unproductive members of society; however, in actuality, college students contribute substantial amounts of community service and charitable donations each year. The Corporation for National and Community Service reports that in 2010, 26.1% of college students engaged in some form of community service, generating over 312 million hours of service. In 2010, at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), the student body of approximately 3,300 undergraduates contributed 23,000 hours of community service. In the same year, WPI's fraternities and sororities raised \$60,000 in donations to charity. This does not include the thousands of dollars raised by WPI's non-Greek organizations (WPI Student Activities Department). The ability to sponsor and participate in charity fundraising events held on college campuses is a significant part of the ability of college students to generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in short periods of time. Local and national charities, as well as non-profit organizations receive vast benefits from the support of college students; however, college students are an understudied population in the existing giving literature. The present study seeks to determine the types of information that college students have about the charities they support, how important different types of information are to their decision to participate, and the impact of organizational efficiency information on their giving behavior.

During the 2011-2012 academic school year, charity fundraising events were prevalent on the WPI campus. For example, in the fall semester, WPI's chapter of Habitat for Humanity hosted Building Dreams in New Orleans, a dinner and show event that raised \$11,000 for the Lower Ninth Ward Village in New Orleans. In the spring semester, Hoops for the Hungry, a basketball tournament, raised \$1,997 and 88 pounds of food for Rachel's Table, an organization that distributes food to local soup kitchens in Worcester. Most recently, WPI's Colleges against Cancer hosted the annual Relay for Life all-night walk-a-thon, supporting the American Cancer Society. This event

raised \$71,115 and had 1,066 participants. That is almost one-third of the undergraduate student body. Despite the frequency with which these events occur at WPI and on college campuses in general, there is little to suggest that college students have information about the ways that their donations will be used, or if this use is efficient. Often, the sponsoring organization and event are emphasized more than the benefitting cause or charity in advertisements and communications. Sometimes, even while attending charity fundraising events, college student participants are unsure of the mission of the benefitting charity. While not knowing the mission of a charity may not impact the decision to participate and contribute to that charity, the present research was designed to determine the impact that discovering an unanticipated use of efforts and donations would have on future participation.

### **Charity Fundraising Events**

Charity fundraising events include a wide range of recreational activities. From dinners to triathlons, golf tournaments to silent auctions, there is generally an activity to accommodate any interest. The only feature that all charity fundraising events have in common is that they persuade participants to pay more to engage in activities than they typically would, because the participants know that the proceeds will go to charity. Hosting fundraising events is not particularly productive for charities because it consumes a lot of resources and staff hours in obtaining sponsors, reserving venues, recruiting participants, and other planning activities. However, the unproductive nature of charity fundraising events is significantly mitigated by the fact that if an event is sufficiently interesting, the participants do not need to know or care about the benefitting cause in order to want to contribute. This ability to attract participants that are indifferent to the benefitting cause significantly increases the potential donor pool, and if the event is well-organized, increases the likelihood that individuals will become repeat participants (Webber, 2004). Since it is in the nature of charity fundraising events to attract participants that are not interested in the cause, it is important

to determine if a lack of interest in the cause can be considered a lack of interest in how the fundraised money is spent. It is possible that while participants may not be concerned with whether the money they raise goes to the kidney foundation or the heart association, they may be concerned with whether the money actually goes to a good cause or is used in a way that is inefficient or inappropriate.

### **Motivations to Volunteer**

Charity fundraising events are a unique fundraising strategy in that they require donations of both time and money. Participants typically have to pay a registration fee, raise a certain amount of money, and then participate in the actual event. Just as there are different types of events to participate in, there are different reasons to volunteer and donate money. Clary and Snyder (1999) argue that different individuals can perform the same task for different reasons. After analyzing existing literature and developing their own volunteer functions inventory, they found that there are six factors that motivate individuals to volunteer: values, understanding, enhancement, career, social, and protective. Many of these factors suggest that individuals receive benefits from volunteering. If someone's motivation to volunteer is "understanding," it suggests that through volunteering that individual is able to learn a skill or trade. Volunteers that are motivated by enhancement and protective factors, feel better about themselves when they volunteer, and are able to forget their own troubles, respectively (Clary, & Snyder, 1999). Charity fundraising events can attract a wide range of participants not only because there are so many different kinds of events, but because these events can provide participants with many opportunities to fulfill many of the motivating factors at once. Charity fundraising events are social, because people that assist the cause invite their friends and members of their extended social network to participate. By partaking in the event, volunteers may experience enhancement and feel good about themselves because of what they have contributed both monetarily and physically. Charity fundraising events can last for hours providing those

volunteers looking to escape their own troubles with hours of freedom from their worries. These findings tie in with “warm-glow” giving and suggest that the benefitting cause may not be as important to some charity event participants (Andreoni, 1990). The present research seeks to determine if this is also the case for college students.

### **Motivations to Donate Money**

Similar to the different motivating factors to volunteer, there is a longstanding argument regarding the motivation to donate money. Some research suggests that individuals may engage in altruistic behaviors not only towards kin, but also to those with whom they interact because being altruistic towards others may reduce received hostility and increase one’s genetic fitness (Becker, 1976). This approach to research suggests that individuals may be motivated to engage in altruistic research because it benefits their own interest. Other research ties in with this in that it suggests that there may be purely altruistic, impurely altruistic, and egoistic giving (Andreoni, 1990). This means that some people donate money solely to benefit others, some donate money solely to benefit themselves, and others fall somewhere in-between in the impurely altruistic camp. Donors that are impurely altruistic experience utility not just from giving back to the community, but also just from the act of giving, this is referred to as “warm-glow” giving. These donors are essentially happy to donate to a cause, and it is unlikely that they will be particular about which cause or how the money is used once it has been given. These donors are just happy to have given of themselves.

Warm-glow may also have an impact on participation in charity fundraising events. For some participants, it is not enough to just donate to the cause, but they also receive some sort of benefit from running 26 miles, or climbing 1,200 stairs in the name of a cause. For these participants, information about the fundraising efficiency of a charity should not impact their desire to participate because they have already made their monetary and physical contribution and are not necessarily concerned with what happens to their contribution afterwards. However, not all



participants will experience this warm-glow. For many participants, agreeing to partake in an all-night walk-a-thon is to prove their commitment to, and support of the cause, not because they feel that by exerting themselves physically they will experience additional benefit. These are the participants that will likely be most severely impacted by information about fundraising efficiency because they will have committed both money and energy in ways that they regret if they discover that it did not specifically help their cause.

### **Appeal of Charity Fundraising Events**

In fact, some researchers feel that there are really two types of charity fundraising events: cause-centric and event-centric (Wharf Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). Cause-centric events are similar to Relay for Life. These are celebratory events that bring together people that are affected by, concerned, or interested in a particular cause. This sort of event is empowering in that participants are able to physically do something to combat an illness, like multiple sclerosis, or a circumstance, such as domestic abuse. These events also reduce the feelings of isolation that some illnesses and circumstances can induce in sufferers by raising awareness and providing information to participants. It is likely that the impact of efficiency information will be most prevalent in cause-centric events because the participants are most concerned with the cause and charity. If participants discover that the proceeds of a cause-centric event are not being used in intended ways, they may feel personally betrayed. I predict that this would have the most pronounced effect on whether participants continue to support and contribute to those charities.

Event-centric events are similar to the widely publicized Boston Marathon. While some of the proceeds go to charities, the general focus is on the marathon; not the benefitting charities. These events are very organized, timely, and competitive. Runners will want to participate regardless of where the proceeds are going (Wharf Higgins & Lauzon, 2003). In these sorts of events it is

unlikely that efficiency information will have an impact on participation, since charitable intent is not the primary reason for participation.

### **Importance of Information**

Past cross-cultural research on charitable giving suggests that there is an important relationship between education level and volunteering, as well as giving behavior (Adloff, 2009). Individuals that have achieved higher levels of education are more likely to volunteer and contribute more money to charity. Further, membership in a religious organization significantly increases volunteering and giving behaviors. Wealthy individuals that chose to start grant-giving foundations wanted control over how their money was used and 53% of those founders did not want to donate their money to independent charities because of that desire for control. This speaks directly against warm-glow giving, and suggests that individuals with a large amount of money at their disposal have a significant interest in how their money is used.

At WPI, campus organizations solicit students and faculty daily for donations to various causes. Often, college students donate to the organization with the most interesting solicitation technique, such as men wearing pink brassieres to raise money for breast cancer research, not necessarily the neediest cause. These flashy techniques draw the attention of passersby and encourage them to donate, some might say in reciprocity for the entertainment. Essentially, charity fundraising events are large-scale, very flashy, solicitation techniques that may lead participants to overlook how the money is being used because they are being entertained. The present research will determine whether college students are also interested in how the money they fundraise will be used.

Information can have different effects on behavior, especially when different parties have different amounts of information. This is called information asymmetry. Past research suggests that in situations in which sellers in a market have more information than buyers, buyers may have difficulty discerning between bads and goods as sellers price bads and goods similarly (Akerlof,

1970). Each time that a buyer purchases a bad that has been misrepresented as a good, it endangers the market. Individuals become suspicious and no longer wish to risk buying a bad and move to other markets. In the typical market place sellers can combat buyer suspicion by issuing warranties, having refund policies and money-back guarantees. For the non-profit sector these devices cannot be used to alleviate the concerns of donors. Once a charity is publicized for inefficient or inappropriate use of funds, it may take a considerable amount of time for it to regain donor trust. While charities cannot offer a money-back guarantee or a refund, by making their efficiency information, mission, and program spending information readily accessible to potential donors they may increase donations and donor support. The present study considers the impact that an unanticipated use of fundraised monies will have on the future participation and sponsoring behavior of college students.

Other research suggests that information may have a negative impact on donations. After Hurricane Katrina some research was conducted on the impact that information about the devastation had on charitable giving (Eckel, C., Grossman, P.J., & Milano, A., 2007). These experimenters used samples from two different universities, one close to the devastation and one more remote, to answer this question. The researchers conducted the experiment in economics classes and manipulated whether or not the participants received information about the destruction in Louisiana caused by Hurricane Katrina. The participants were then asked to make hypothetical giving decisions. Participants that received information about the impact of Hurricane Katrina were less likely to make donations, especially if they were asked to make the decision 8-months after Hurricane Katrina's landfall, as opposed to 15-months later. This suggests that there can be an overload of information, especially if the information is negative. The researchers did a content analysis of the media coverage in both areas in which they had conducted the study and found that the coverage closest to New Orleans was much more negative and geared towards socially

unacceptable behaviors, than the coverage further away in which the focus was on more acceptable behaviors. Although these experimenters found a negative effect of information on giving, the present experiment predicts that providing organizational efficiency information to potential donors will increase donations, due to an additional survey conducted by these researchers.

In an additional survey, these researchers found that individuals that thought the government was operating efficiently were less likely to give to charity, while those that thought the private charities were efficient were more likely to donate to private charities (Eckel, Grossman, & Milano, 2007). Though it was not their main research question, these experimenters found that the belief that a private charity was efficient resulted in increased giving. The present research will determine if this effect can be replicated experimentally. While this experiment looked solely at giving decisions, inferences can be made with regard to how participation in charity fundraising events would be affected because previous research has shown that volunteering and donating are complementary activities (Apinunmahakul, Barham, & Devlin, 2009).

### **Present Research**

The present research will add to the existing literature by investigating the following questions with regard to the highly contributory, yet understudied population of college students: Why are college students participating in charity fundraising events, what do college students know about the charities for which they fundraise, is it important for college students to know that the money they have fundraised will be used effectively and efficiently, what do event sponsors know about their participants, are college students a special class of givers, or are charity fundraising events on campus resulting in unusually generous giving behavior?

## Method

### Survey Research

The first phase of the present research was intended to determine the types of information that charity fundraising event participants and sponsors considered about the charities they supported. To do this charity fundraising event participants and sponsors were asked to participate in brief online surveys.

#### Charity Fundraising Event Participant Survey

**Participants.** All current students (undergraduate and graduate), approximately 5,300 individuals, received an email solicitation asking them to complete a brief online survey if they had recently participated in a charity fundraising event. A total of 122 students (40 male, 80 female, 2 unreported) responded, indicating a response rate of approximately 02%. Responses from six students were removed because they also completed the event sponsors survey, and responses from one other participant were removed due to missing data. All survey participants were given the opportunity to go to a separate webpage hosted by SurveyMonkey and inaccessible to the researcher, where they could enter personal information in order to be entered into a raffle for a \$50.00 Amazon.com gift certificate. All participants provided informed consent.

**Design and Materials.** The online survey consisted of eight questions designed to assess the motivations that students had for participating in charity fundraising events, the kinds of information that they had about the benefitting charity, and the impact that unanticipated information would have on future participation (Appendix A). For example, students were asked to answer the following question on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1-*Not at all*, 7-*Very much so*), “How important was the benefitting cause or organization to your decision to participate in this particular charity fundraising event?” Demographic information such as age and ethnicity were also collected for use in analyses.

## Charity Fundraising Event Sponsor Survey

**Participants.** The presidents of approximately 200 campus organizations received an email solicitation asking them to participate in a brief online survey if their organization had recently sponsored a charity fundraising event. A total of 15 presidents completed the online survey on behalf of their organization (2 Club Sport, 3 Societal Awareness and Community Service, 1 Cultural, 8 Greek, and 1 Governance). All participants provided informed consent and participated voluntarily.

**Design and Materials.** The online survey consisted of ten questions designed to assess the types of motivations that the event sponsors had about the benefitting charity before sponsoring the charity fundraising event, and what the event sponsors believe event participants know and consider when deciding whether or not to participate in a particular charity fundraising event (Appendix B). Many of the questions on the event hosts survey paralleled those asked in the event participants survey to enable comparative analysis. For example, event hosts were asked to answer the following question on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1-*Not at all*, 7-*Very much so*), “How important do you think the benefitting cause or organization (if different from the sponsoring organization) was to a participant's decision to attend and participate in your event?” Information about the sponsoring organization, such as organization type (e.g. fraternity, community service, governance, etc.) was also collected.

**General Survey Procedure.** The target audience (either event participants or event sponsors) received an email solicitation asking for their participation in a brief online survey regarding charity fundraising events. Those that agreed to participate provided informed consent by following the link to the study and clicking “Next.” Survey participants then read a brief description of the survey subject matter and were asked to answer questions with regard to the last charity fundraising event they had either participated in or sponsored as they completed the

questions. Survey participants then provided demographic or organizational information, respectively.

### **Field-Experiment**

The second phase of the present research sought to experimentally determine whether college students consider organizational efficiency, the percentage of each donation that goes directly to the cause, when making giving decisions.

*Participants.* A total of 40 students (25 male, 15 female) were recruited from the campus center to participate in the present experiment. The average age of participants was 20.6 years. All participants were compensated up to \$10.00 US for their time. All participants provided informed consent.

*Design and Materials.* The present experiment had a single binary variable (No organizational efficiency information (NOE), Organizational efficiency information (OE)).

*Survey.* To justify providing participants with a \$10.00 endowment, participants were asked to complete a brief survey regarding campus facilities (Appendix C). Questions covered the campus in general, the library, and the campus center. For example, participants were asked to respond to the following question on a 5-point Likert-type scale, “Do you think there are enough quiet spaces for study [in the library]?” Participants were led to believe that this concluded the study.

*Letter manipulation.* Each participant was randomly assigned to a condition, either No organizational efficiency information (NOE) or organizational efficiency information (OE) using the Research Randomizer (Urbaniak & Plous, 2011). All participants received a brief letter with their compensation that informed them of an opportunity to donate a portion of the \$10.00 they received for participating in the survey to the American Red Cross, (Appendix D). Participants in the NOE condition received letters that only contained the solicitation for the American Red Cross. Participants in the OE condition received letters that contained additional information on the

organizational efficiency of the American Red Cross; specifically the phrase, “An average of 91 cents of every dollar the Red Cross raises is invested in humanitarian services and programs” (American Red Cross).

*Additional materials.* In addition to their compensation each participant received an envelope that was pre-addressed to the American Red Cross, as well as a small sheet of paper explaining where information about the results of the study could be found at the conclusion of data collection and analysis. Debriefing information could be found at the following web page: <https://sites.google.com/site/cfestp12/> (Appendix E).

*Procedure.* Adapted from Small, Lowenstein, and Slovic (2007), this field-experiment procedure adds realism to the experiment that not be observed in the lab. This setup replicates the situation in which potential donors have an unlimited amount time in which they may decide whether or not contribute to charity, whereas in a lab setting participants must immediately decide whether not to give or they may miss their opportunity.

To begin the experiment, the experimenter approached solitary students in the campus center by saying, “Hi, my name is Satia Miller and I am conducting research on campus facilities. Would you like to participate in a brief survey in exchange for \$10.00?” If the student consented to participate the experimenter then provided them with a brief survey discussing their use of campus facilities and a pen, if necessary. The experimenter then moved out of sight of the participant’s survey and returned after the student signaled their completion. After collecting the survey, participants were given an envelope containing: (1) \$5 bill, (5) \$1 bills, (1) short letter, (1) pre-addressed envelope, and (1) informational card. The experimenter then left the immediate vicinity of the student. The letter that participants received explained that if the participant would like to donate to the American Red Cross they were to place their donation in the pre-addressed envelope,



seal the envelope, and place the envelope in the locked collection box at the Campus Center Information Desk.

## **Results**

### **Surveys.**

The charity fundraising event participant survey was conducted to investigate what charity fundraising event participants considered their primary motivation for participating in their most recent charity fundraising event, the types of information that charity fundraising event participants had about the benefitting charity at their time of participation, and how important knowing that the funds raised would be used effectively and efficiently was to their future participation. The charity fundraising event sponsor survey was similarly conducted to investigate primary motivations for sponsoring a charity fundraising event and to determine the importance of the fundraised monies being used effectively and efficiently to support the cause. However, the event sponsor survey also looked at the beliefs event sponsors had about the types of information that were important to a potential participant's decision to participate in their event.

Reasons for Participation. Thirty-nine percent of event participant survey respondents reported that their primary motivation for participating in their last charity fundraising event was a personal connection to the cause or benefitting organization, while 37% reported that their primary motivation for participating was a social connection: "their friends were going and it sounded like fun." Nine percent of respondents reported that their primary motivation for participation was an interest in the specific event, while 15.7% reported that they had another motivation, such as a mandatory community service requirement. A Mann-Whitney U nonparametric test was conducted on the responses to this survey to determine if there was evidence of significant difference between the frequencies of certain responses. The results suggests that there is no evidence of a significant difference between the frequency of respondents participating in a charity fundraising event due to

either a personal or social connection (Mann-Whitney,  $p=0.83$ ). However, there was highly significant evidence of a difference between the frequency of those respondents that reported a personal or social connection as their primary motivation for participating, and those that reported an event or other connection for participating. Respondents appear to be more likely to participate for a personal or social connection, than for an event or other connection (Mann-Whitney,  $p < 0.005$ ), (Figure 1). Though we had an unexpectedly high survey response from female students, 66%, we found no evidence of a significant difference between the frequencies of reported primary motivations by gender, (Mann-Whitney,  $p=0.18$ ).

Eighty-six percent of event sponsor survey respondents reported an organizational connection, such as being affiliated with the cause, as their primary motivation for sponsoring a charity fundraising event, while the remaining 15% reported a social connection, such as recruitment purposes, as their primary motivation. There was no other reported motivation for sponsoring a charity fundraising event. We found evidence of a significant difference between the frequencies of each reported primary motivation for sponsoring an event. The results suggest that there is highly significant evidence of a difference in the likelihood of reporting an organizational connection rather than a social connection as the primary motivation, (Mann-Whitney,  $p = 0.01$ ) (Figure 2). This suggests that the organizations sponsoring these event are more concerned with contributing to the benefitting organization than they are with using charity fundraising events for the purpose of recruitment or improving their image on campus.

Beyond indicating their primary motivation, event participant survey respondents were also asked to rate the importance of the benefitting organization and sponsoring organization to their decision to participate in a charity fundraising event. A one-sample t-test was conducted to determine if there was evidence of a significant difference between the observed average responses to these questions and the middle response option, four. We found highly significant evidence that

the mean of the responses to the question regarding the importance of the benefitting organization ( $Mean = 5.26, SD = 1.54$ ) was different than that of the neutral response option,  $t(113) = 8.76, p < 0.01$ . We also found evidence that mean response to the question regarding the importance of the sponsoring organization ( $Mean = 5.01, SD = 1.94$ ) was different than the neutral response option,  $t(114) = 5.58, p < 0.01$ . Both observed means were greater than four, suggesting that the benefitting and sponsoring organizations were important to the respondents' decision to participate in a charity fundraising event, (Figures 3 and 4). Further, when respondents indicating a personal or social connection as their primary motivation for participation were compared, we found significant evidence of a difference between the importance of the benefitting organization and the importance of the sponsoring organization. Specifically, those respondents that reported a personal connection as their primary motivation rated the benefitting organization as more important than those that reported a social connection, (Mann-Whitney,  $p = 0.02$ , Figure 5), and those respondents that reported a social connection as their primary motivation rated the sponsoring organization as more important than those that reported a personal connection (Mann-Whitney,  $p = 0.01$ , Figure 6). These results suggest consistency within the responses regarding primary motivation to participate in charity fundraising events.

Event sponsor survey respondents were asked to rate how important they thought the benefitting organization and sponsoring organizations were to a potential participant's decision to participate in their charity fundraising event. We found no significant evidence of a difference between the distribution of event sponsor responses to the question regarding the importance of the benefitting organization to a participant's decision to participate and the event participant's actual responses, (Mann-Whitney,  $p = 0.90$ ) (Figure 7) or between the distribution of event sponsor and event participant responses to the question regarding the importance of a sponsoring organization to the decision to participate (Mann-Whitney,  $p = 0.78$ ) (Figure 8).

Importance of Information. Event participants were asked to indicate whether or not they knew how the money fundraised by the charity fundraising event in which they were participating would be used at the time of their participation. Fifty-three percent of participants indicated that they knew how the money fundraised used would be at the time of their participation. A binomial test was conducted to determine if there was evidence that this distribution differed significantly from that anticipated by chance. The results suggest that there was no evidence of a difference between this distribution and what would be anticipated by chance (Binomial,  $p = 1.00$ ). There was highly significant evidence that the mean of the event participant responses to the question regarding the importance of knowing how the money would be used differed from the neutral response option ( $Mean = 5.02$ ,  $SD = 1.66$ ),  $t(114) = 6.57$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The observed mean was greater than four suggesting that knowing how the fundraised money was going to be used was important to event participant survey respondents. However, this contradicts the evidence that half of the participants did not have this information. This suggests that it may be more important for event participants to believe that the money they have contributed will go to a cause, than to actually know what that specific cause may be. There was no evidence of a significant difference in how important knowing the use of fundraised monies was to event participant survey respondents and how important event sponsors thought this information was to their participants (Mann-Whitney,  $p = 0.67$ ), (Figure 9).

Event participant survey respondents were asked to indicate the importance of a charity's organizational efficiency to their decision to participate in a charity fundraising event. There was significant evidence that the mean of responses to the question regarding the importance of organizational efficiency to a participant's decision to participate in a charity fundraising event was different than the neutral middle response option ( $Mean = 6.12$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ),  $t(114) = 19.82$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The observed mean response was greater than the neutral response option, indicating that this

information was important to participants. There was also evidence that the event sponsors underestimated how important the organizational efficiency of the benefitting charity was to their participants (Mann-Whitney,  $p < 0.01$ ), (Figure 10). This suggests that event sponsors may not be providing participants with organizational efficiency information because they do not realize that it is important to their participants. Providing this information to participants may increase repeat participation and transparency between the event sponsors and event participants.

Charity fundraising event participants and event sponsors were asked to indicate the impact that an unanticipated use of funds would have on their future participation and sponsorship, respectively. All survey respondents were free to interpret the term “unanticipated.” However, this question was pretested prior to the dissemination of the full survey, and of the 10 pretesting respondents, nine indicated that when they considered an unanticipated use it was negative, fraudulent, or inefficient. The tenth respondent indicated knowledge that money from charity fundraising events often goes to administrative purposes though this is not often advertised.

We found significant evidence that the observed mean of event participant survey responses to this question differed from that of the neutral response option ( $Mean = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ),  $p < 0.01$ . This suggests that future participation in charity fundraising events would be impacted by the discovery of an unanticipated use of the funds raised (Figure 11). We also found significant evidence that the event sponsor responses to this question differed from that of the neutral response option ( $Mean = 5.07$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ),  $t(14) = 2.36$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ). This similarly suggests that the discovery of an unanticipated use of funds may impact the future sponsoring behavior of event sponsors (Figure 12). However, the comments provided by survey respondents suggests that this impact of this information may affect event participants and sponsors in different ways. The sponsors’ comments tended to focus on continuing to support the cause but trying to find ways of ensuring that the proceeds were used appropriately in the future. For example, one sponsor commented, “I

would definitely look into why the money didn't go where we thought it would and see if there was a way to change it." However, the participant responses differed in that they indicated an inclination to abandon the cause. For instance, one event participant commented, "If it was being used mainly to fund the administration of the organization, I probably wouldn't be as motivated to donate."

We found evidence of a similar effect when we considered the responses of event participants that reported a personal connection versus a social connection as their primary motivation to participate in a charity fundraising event. Specifically, we found evidence that future participation behavior of those individuals reporting a personal connection as their primary motivation for participating was less impacted than that of those reporting a social connection, (Mann-Whitney,  $p = 0.01$ ), (Figure 13). This suggests that those people that are participating in the event due to a personal connection to the cause may be more motivated to continue supporting the cause and seek ways to improve efficiency than those that are only participating for social and entertainment purposes.

### **Field-Experiment.**

The field-experiment was conducted to determine if organizational efficiency information can affect giving decisions. A Mann-Whitney  $U$  test was conducted on the results of the experiment to test the hypothesis that providing organizational efficiency information to potential donors will have an impact on their giving decisions. The results of the test showed no significant evidence of a difference between the giving decisions of participants in the no organizational efficiency information condition and the organizational efficiency information condition,  $p = 0.17$ . This result suggests that organizational efficiency information does not have an impact on the giving decisions of donors. However, it is worth noting that only two of the forty participants chose to give a donation of any amount, regardless of condition (Figure 14). This suggests that although college

students seem very willing to give of their time and money to charity fundraising events, they may not be as responsive to direct-mail solicitations for monetary donations.

### **Discussion**

The present study investigated the motivations that college students have for participating in charity fundraising events, the types of information that they consider when deciding to participate in a charity fundraising event, and whether college students are a special class of givers that is understudied or if there is something about charity fundraising events that results in the observed giving. By surveying recent charity fundraising event participants and sponsors, as well as conducting a field-experiment, we attempted to answer these questions and make inferences about the giving behavior of college students.

The results of our survey suggest that WPI students are primarily participating in charity fundraising events because they are in some way attached to the benefitting cause, or because charity fundraising events provide students with entertainment and a social activity that is looked upon favorably not only by the WPI community, but by society as a whole. The dedication that students have to these causes ties in with past research that suggests that individuals that have achieved higher levels of education are more likely to give to charities (Adloff, 2009). The behavior that has been observed in older giving populations may begin at the college level, or even earlier, as students learn about and become interested in various causes to which they will be able to contribute later on. Future researchers might want to look at the age at which one's interest in supporting charities develops and could determine if community service requirements during high school are leading to the vast interest in supporting charities. Moreover, even the students that are primarily participating in charity fundraising events for social reasons are contributing positively to the community and are helping to change the stereotypes about college students. As the widespread, positive, contributions of college students become more publicly known, the image of the "irresponsible, binge-drinking"

college student may change to one that is more admirable in the public eye. This might encourage less risk-seeking behavior as impressionable adolescents discover that not all college students are engaging in dangerous activities in order to have fun.

The survey results also suggest that while knowing how fundraised money will be used and that this use is effective and efficient is important to participants, it may actually be that the belief that funds will be used effectively is more important. Though participants indicated on the survey that knowing how funds will be used was important, many did not actually have this information about the last charity in which they supported through a charity fundraising event. As long as the belief that the funds will be used to support a cause effectively remains intact, it appears that students will continue to participate. However, the discovery that fundraised monies were used in an unanticipated way would be a contradiction to this belief and it is indicated by survey responses that this information would result in a significant impact on the likelihood that a participant will continue to support the charity in question. This was not true of event sponsors that appear to be very dedicated to their causes in that upon discovering that funds were used in an unanticipated way, event sponsors were more likely to continue supporting the cause and work with the charity to ensure that funds in the future were used more efficiently. While in general, event sponsors were very knowledgeable about what was important to their participants, event sponsors did underestimate the importance of organizational efficiency to their participants. Charity fundraising event sponsors may want to make this information more available to students to encourage participation. Future research might want to investigate actual cases in which charities may have misused proceeds and the process by which they are able to regain the trust of their supporters.

Recently, the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs submitted a proposal that would force charities receiving over \$250,000 annually to allow donors to indicate the specific program to which they would like to their contributions to be used (National Council of Nonprofits). While



past research suggests that donors want control over how their money is used (Adloff, 2009) and according to our surveys organizational efficiency information is important to participants, this sort of legislation may actually result in a less efficient use of funds. While our survey respondents indicated that efficiency information was very important to their decision to participate in charity fundraising events, only a slight majority actually had this information about the charity they had been supporting. This suggests that while knowing that the money will be used effectively is important to participants, allowing them to actually designate funds to specific programs may not be as effective because they do not have all of the information. Charity fundraising events are inefficient and require significant costs to produce, of which the average event participant may not be aware. The proposal was later dropped partially because donors do not have all of information that they would need to efficiently allocate funds to different programs (Perry, 2011).

While some individuals may receive utility from the simple act of giving, regardless of the recipient, it appears that some donors may only receive utility when they know that they have given to a good cause, regardless of what cause that may be (Andreoni, 1990). The results of our field-experiment were inconclusive because we observed so few non-zero donations. This suggests that while college students may be willing to donate their time and money to a charity fundraising event, they may not be as willing to part with their money alone. Future research may want to replicate our experiment with a larger sample to see if organizational efficiency information can impact the magnitude of giving.

In conclusion, college students are a highly contributory yet understudied giving population. Their participation and sponsorship of charity fundraising events results in substantial donations of money and service each year, and it appears that they are participating in these events not only because they are fun, but also because they are interested in helping others. However, their participation appears to be dependent on the belief that they have done a good deed and contributed

positively. The discovery of unanticipated fund uses can alienate these potential donors, especially those without a personal connection to the cause, and may result in less giving and a decrease in the effectiveness of charity fundraising events on college campuses.

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### Figure Captions

Figure 1. Reported primary motivation for participation in charity fundraising event by event participant survey respondents.

Figure 2. Reported primary motivation for participation in charity fundraising event by event sponsor survey respondents

Figure 3. Reported importance of benefitting organization to participation in charity fundraising event by event participant survey respondents.

Figure 4. Reported importance of sponsoring organization to participation in charity fundraising event by event participant survey respondents.

Figure 5. Average reported importance of benefitting organization to participation in charity fundraising event by primary motivation.

Figure 6. Average reported importance of sponsoring organization to participation in charity fundraising event by primary motivation.

Figure 7. Reported importance of benefitting organization to participation in charity fundraising event by event participants and event sponsors.

Figure 8. Reported importance of sponsoring organization to participation in charity fundraising event by event participants and event sponsors.

Figure 9. Reported importance of knowing how funds will be used by event participants and event sponsors.

Figure 10. Reported importance of recipient charity's organizational efficiency by event participants and sponsors.

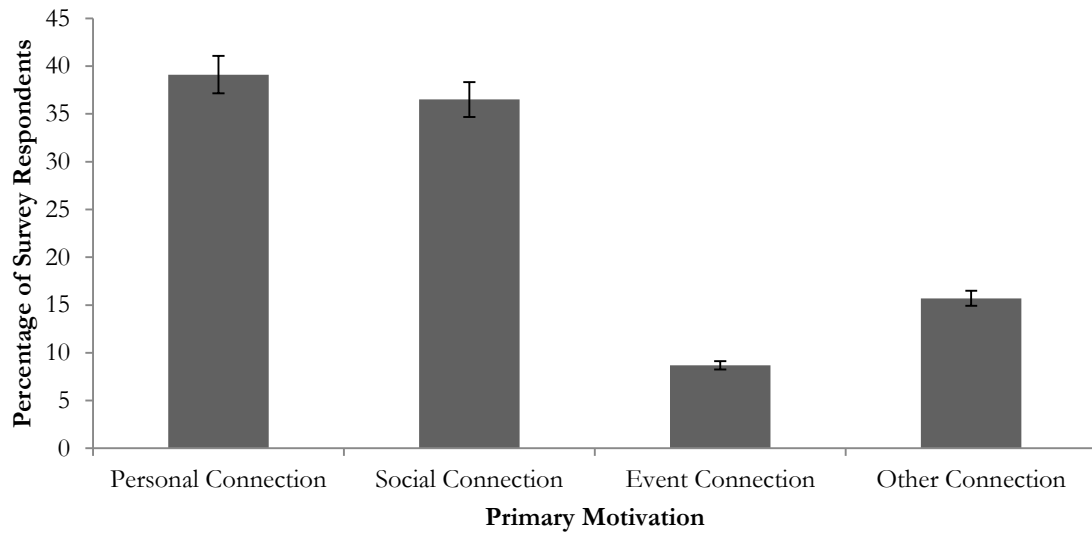
Figure 11. Reported impact of discovery of an unanticipated use of funds by event participants.

Figure 12. Reported impact of discovery of an unanticipated use of funds by event sponsors.

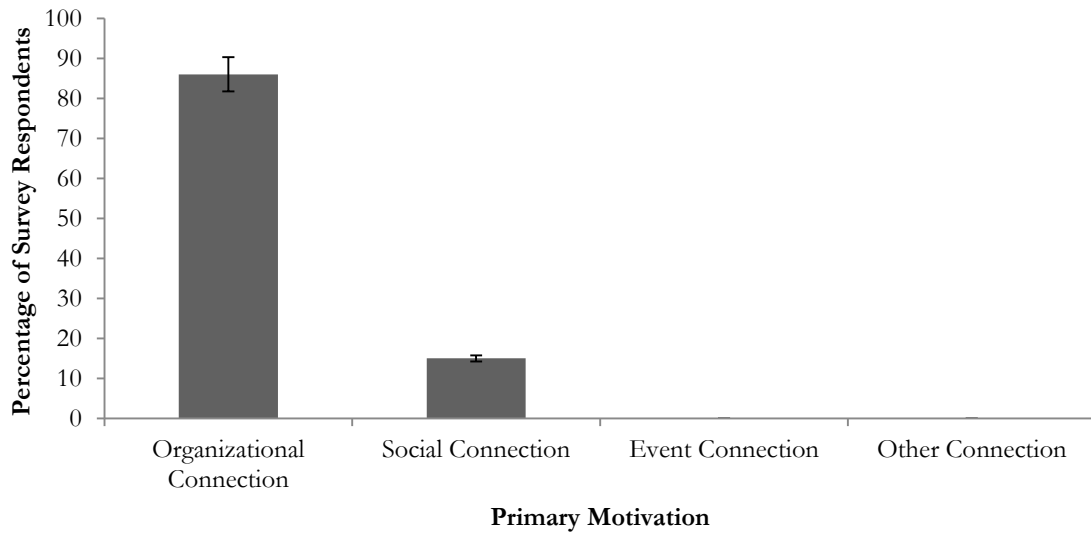
Figure 13. Reported impact of discovery of an unanticipated use of funds by event participants' primary motivation.

Figure 14. Observed donation amounts by information condition.

**Figure 1. Reported Primary Motivation for Participation in Charity Fundraising Event**

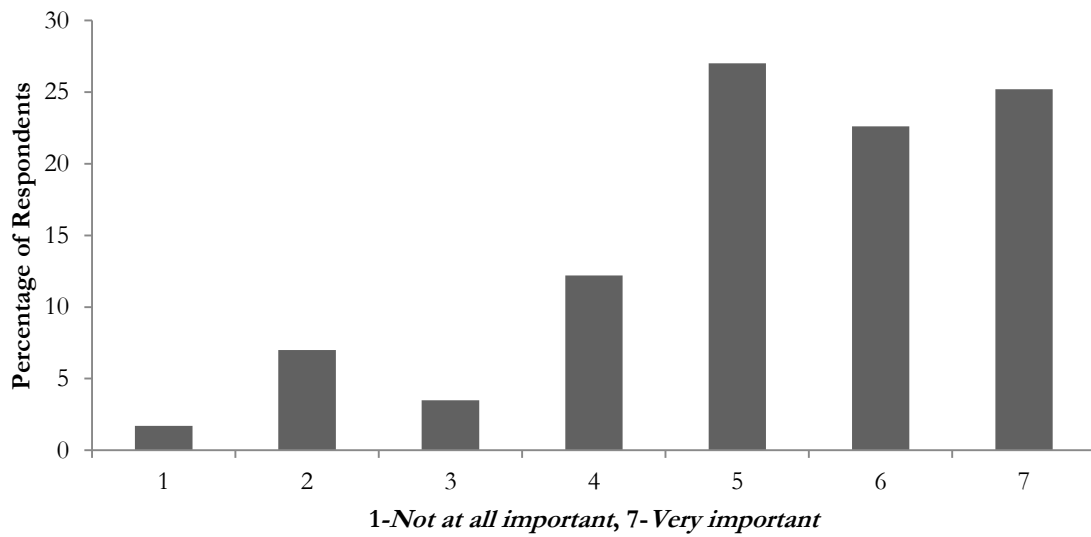


**Figure 2. Reported Primary Motivation for Sponsoring a Charity Fundraising Event**

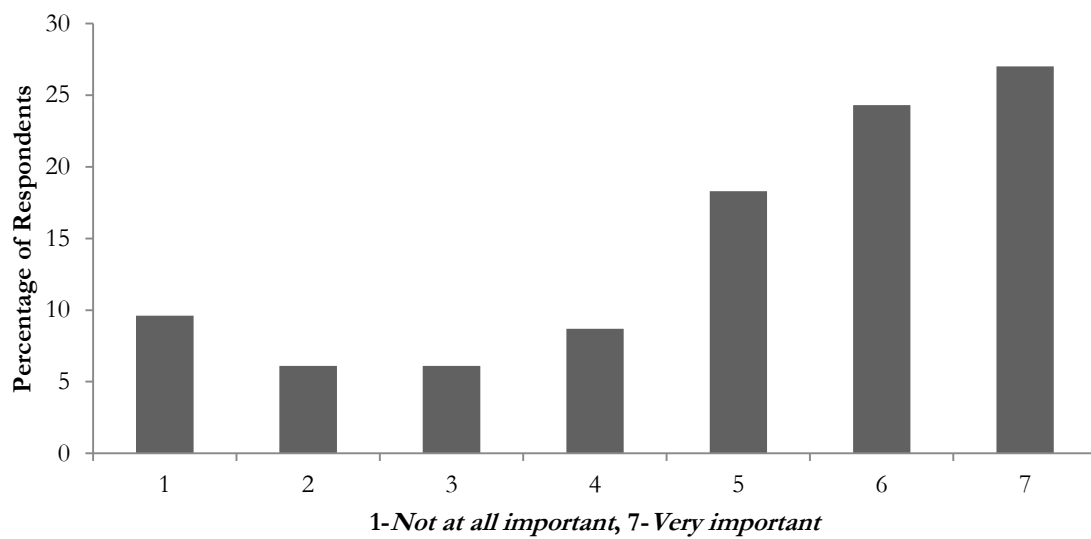




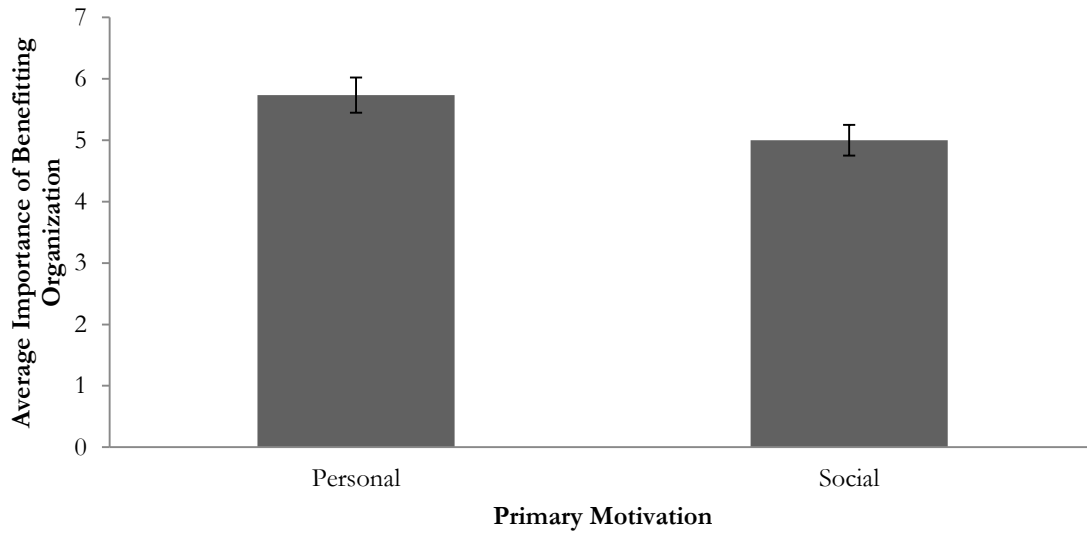
**Figure 3. Reported Importance of Benefitting Organization to Participation in Charity Fundraising Event**



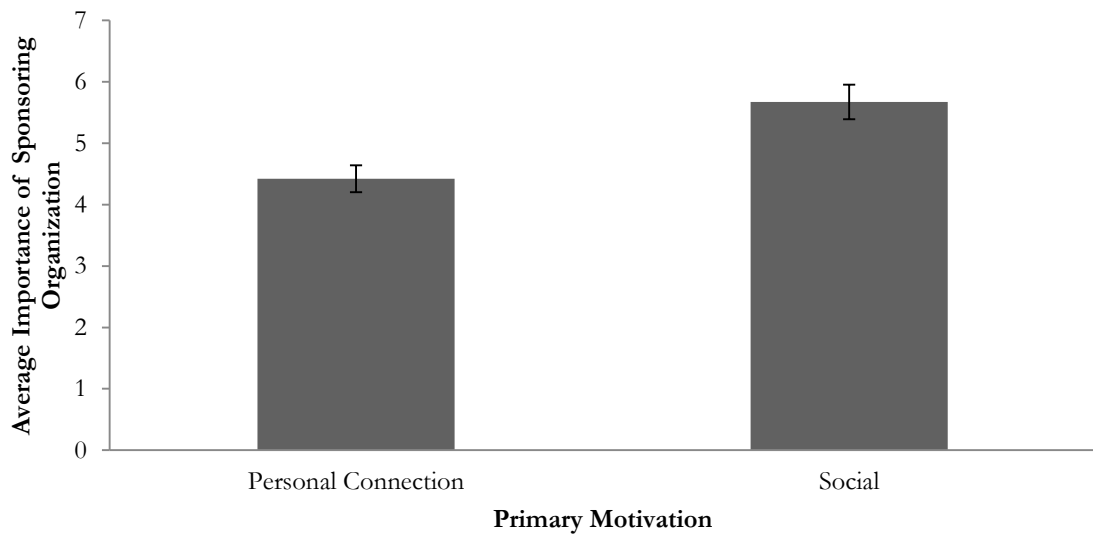
**Figure 4. Reported Importance of Sponsoring Organization to Participation in Charity Fundraising Event**



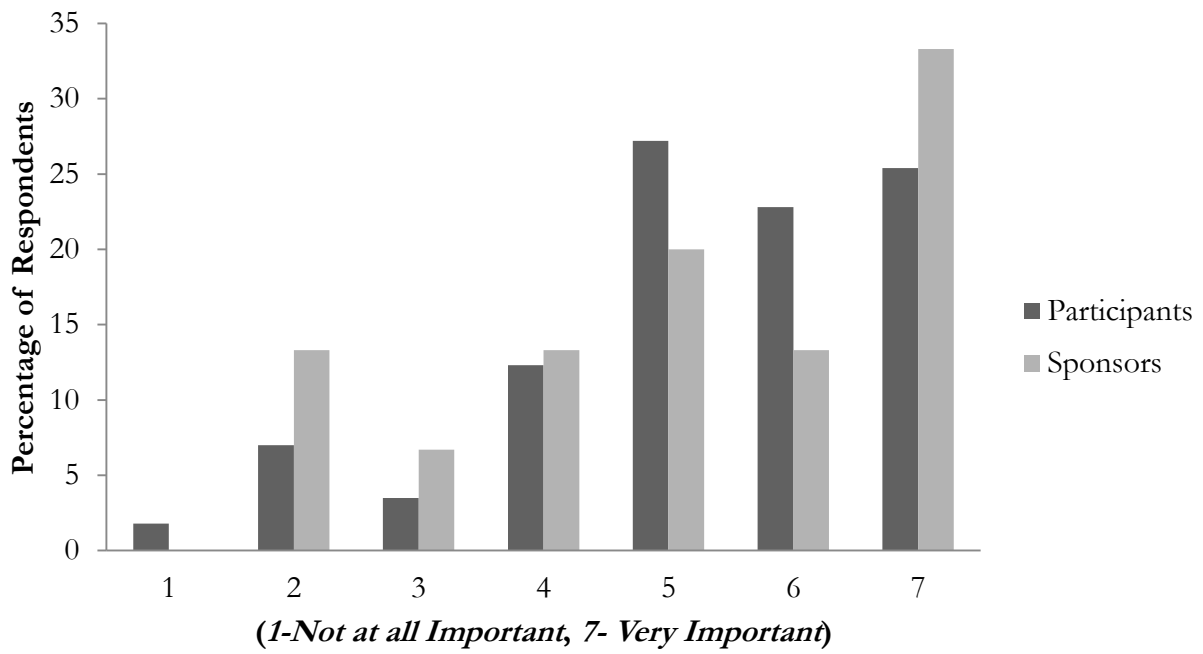
**Figure 5. Reported Importance of the Benefitting Organization to Participation in Charity Fundraising Event**



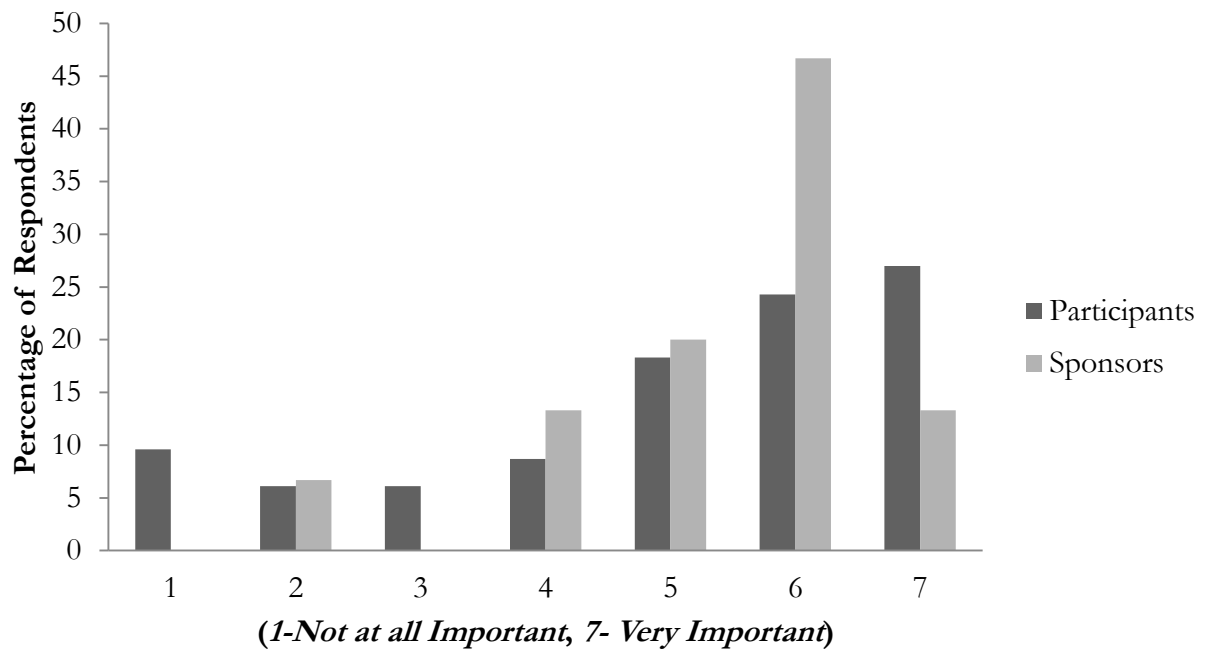
**Figure 6. Reported Importance of the Sponsoring Organization to Participation in Charity Fundraising Event**



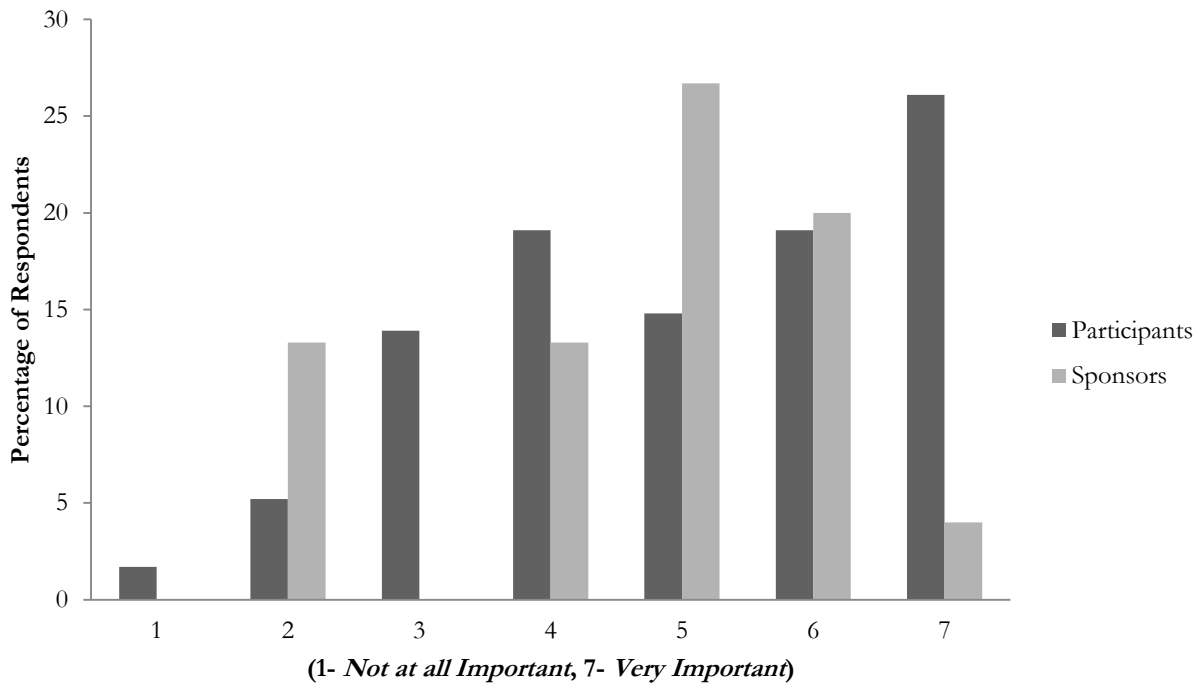
**Figure 7. Importance of the Benefitting Organization to Participation in Charity Fundraising Events**

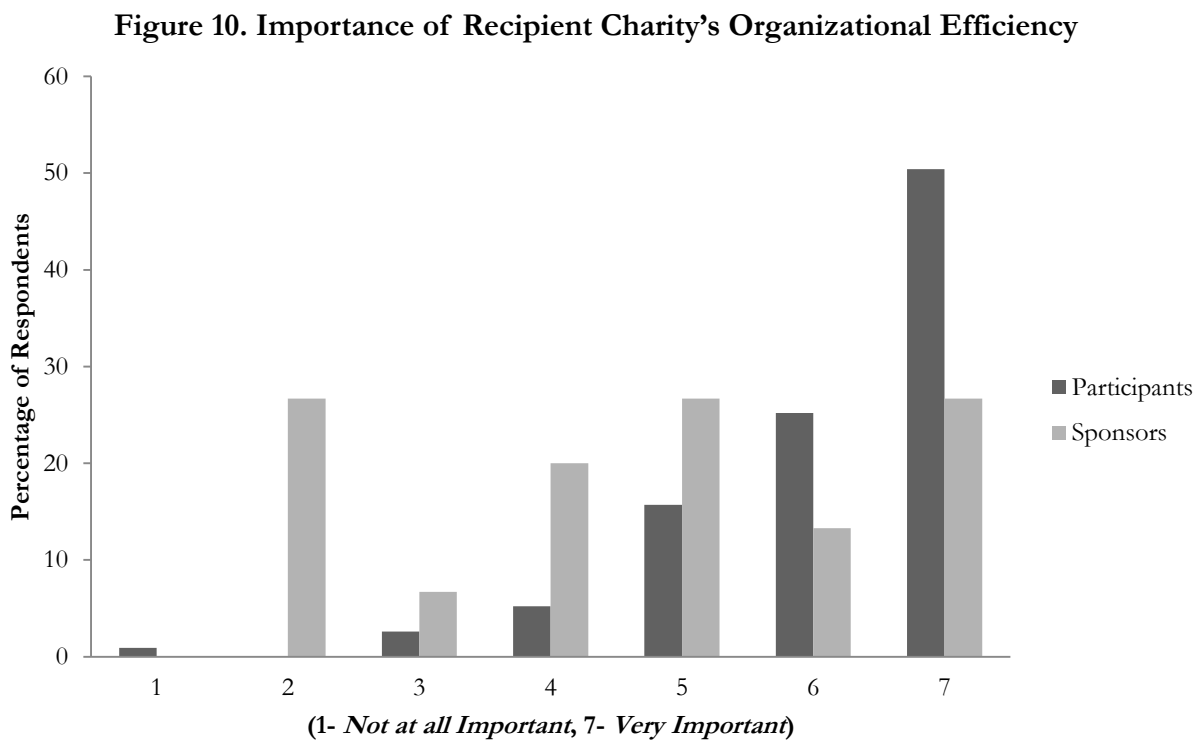


**Figure 8. Importance of the Sponsoring Organization to Participation in Charity Fundraising Events**



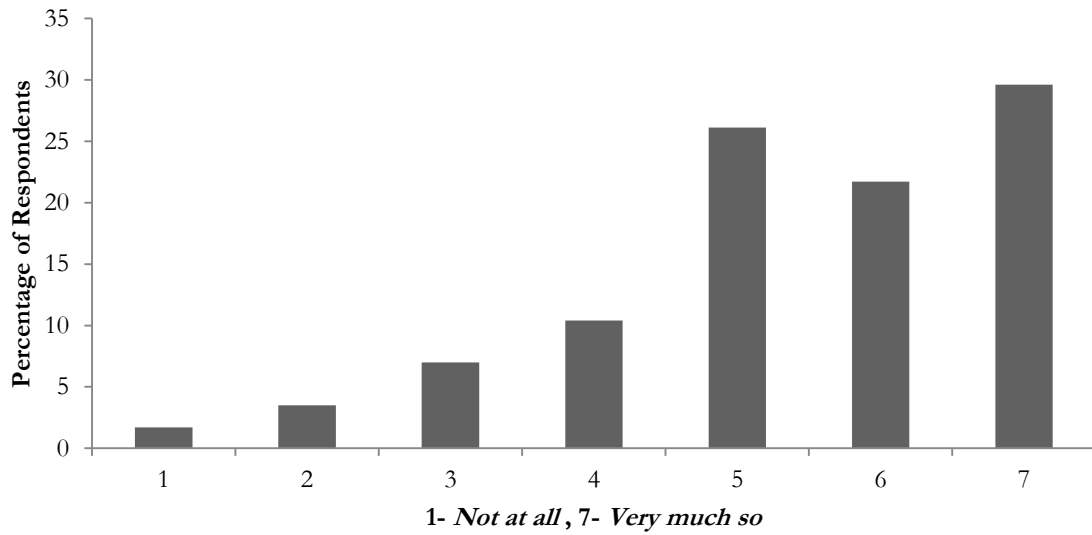
**Figure 9. Reported Importance of Knowing How Funds will be Used**



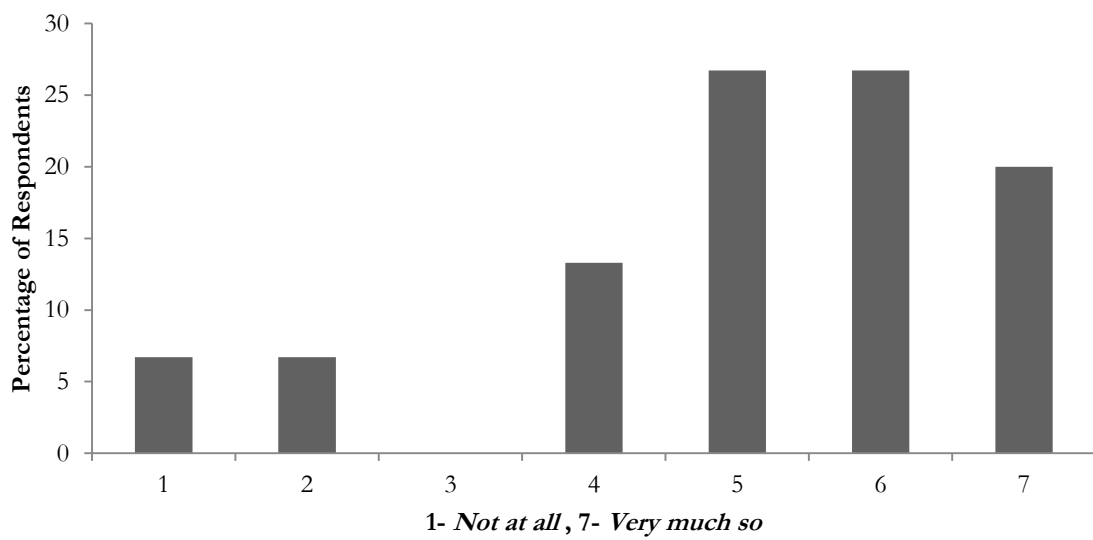




**Figure 11. Reported Impact of Unanticipated Use of Funds on Future Participation**



**Figure 12. Reported Impact of Unanticipated Use of Funds on Future Participation**



**Figure 13. Impact of Unanticipated Use of Funds on Future Participation**

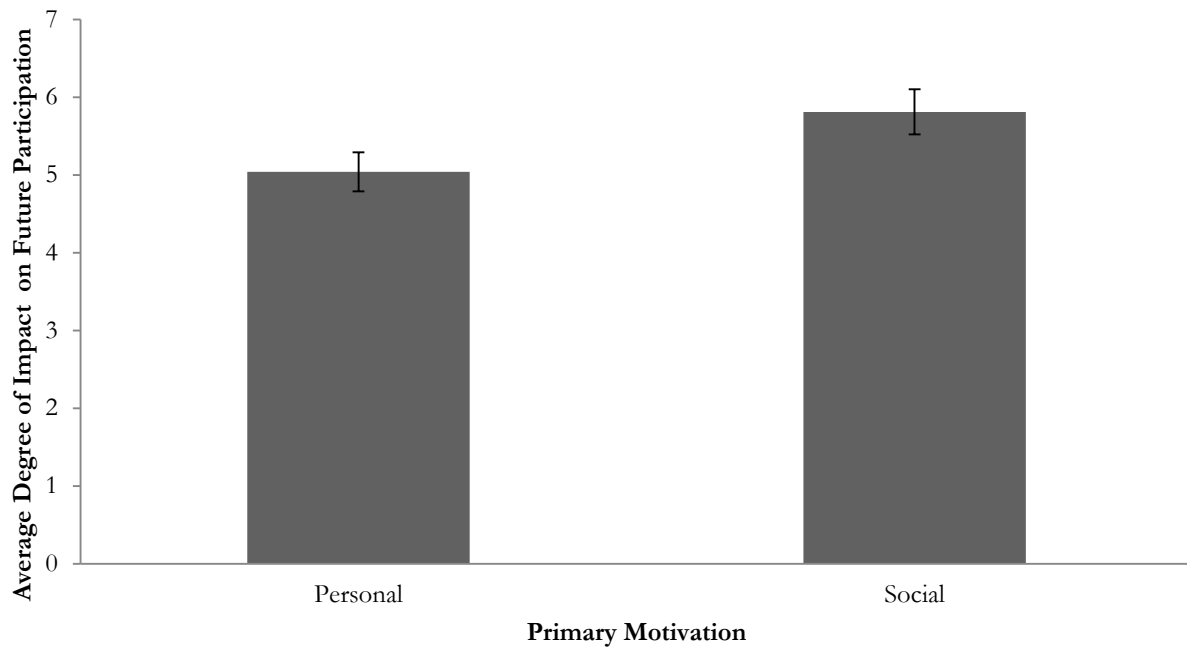
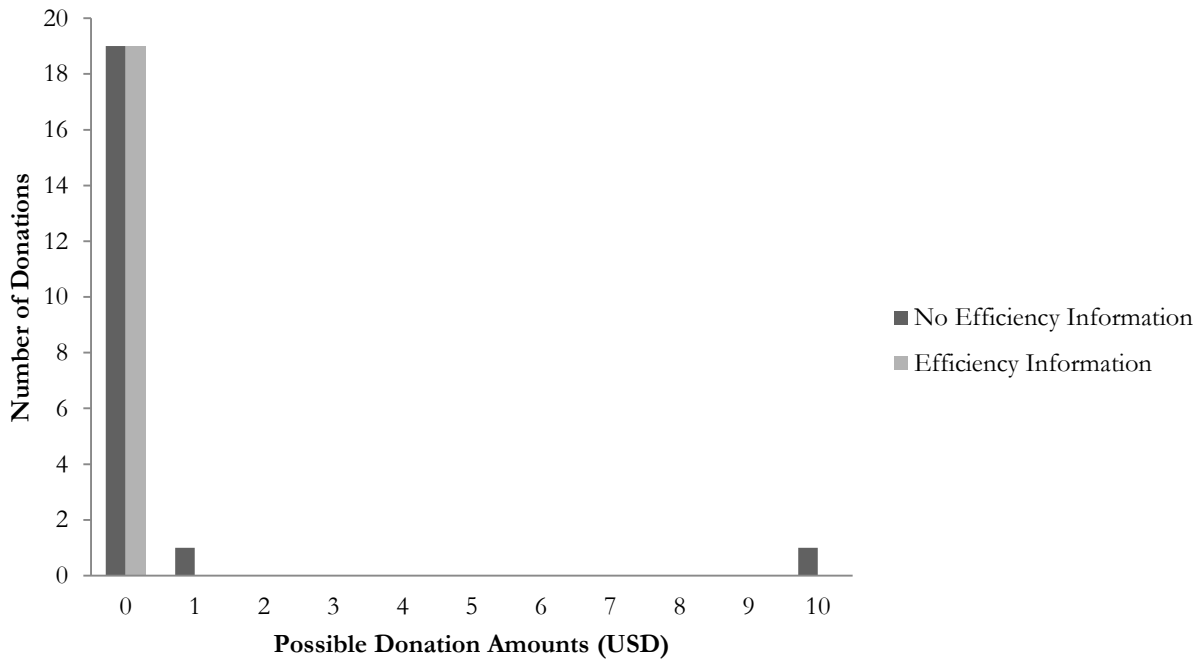


Figure 14. Donation Amounts



## Appendix A

## Charity Fundraising Event Participant Survey

**Charity Fundraising Events-Participants****Welcome**

The present study is interested in determining what types of information student participants in charity fundraising events have about the charities these events support and how this information may impact participation in future events on-campus. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability as someone that has **recently participated in a charity fundraising event** . You will not be asked to provide any identifiable information and your responses will be kept confidential.

At the conclusion of this survey, if you would like to be entered into a sweepstakes for a \$50.00 Amazon Giftcard, you will be redirected to a separate page where identifiable information will be collected for the purposes of selecting and notifying the sweepstakes prize winner. This information will be collected by SurveyMonkey and will remain separate from survey responses. Thank you very much for your participation.

## Charity Fundraising Events-Participants

### Charity Fundraising Event: Participant Questions

While answering the following questions, please think about the last time you participated in a charity fundraising event.

#### 1. Which of the following was your primary motivation for participating in this event?

- Personal Connection (e.g. personal interest in the cause or benefiting organization)
- Social Connection (e.g. many of your friends were going to participate; it sounded like fun)
- Event Connection (e.g. you happen to like this type of event, running marathons, etc.)
- Other Factors (e.g. you needed community service hours)

If other, please specify

#### 2. Have you participated in an event similar to this event in the past?

- Yes
- No

Comment

#### 3. How important was the benefitting cause or organization to your decision to participate in this particular charity fundraising event?

Not at all important Very important

Importance of benefitting organization

#### 4. How important was the sponsoring organization (e.g. club, group, fraternity) to your decision to participate in this particular charity fundraising event?

Not at all important Very important

Importance of sponsoring organization

#### 5. While you were participating in the charity fundraising event, did you know how the money raised by the event was going to be used by the recipient charity?

- Yes
- No

## Charity Fundraising Events-Participants

**6. With regard to the previous question, how important was this information to you?[Q5]**

Not at all important Very important

Importance of fund usage information

**7. How important to you is knowing that money raised by this event will be used effectively to support the cause?**

Not at all important Very important

Importance of funds being used effectively

**8. Would discovering that the proceeds of the event were used in a way that you did not anticipate impact your decision to participate in similar events in the future?**

Not at all Very much so

Impact on future participation

Comment (How so?)

## Charity Fundraising Events-Participants

### Participant Information

This information is completely confidential and will not be associated with your identity.

**9. Did you complete a survey similar to this one as a host?**

- Yes  
 No

**10. What is your gender?**

- Male  
 Female

**11. What is your age?**

Age

**12. What is your ethnic background?**

- Caucasian/White  
 African American/Black  
 Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian  
 Latino/Hispanic  
 Biracial/Mixed Race  
 Other

**13. Do you have a religious affiliation?**

- Yes  
 No



## Appendix B

## Charity Fundraising Event Sponsor Survey

**Charity Fundraising Events-Hosts****Welcome**

The present study is interested in determining what types of information student organizations have about the charities they support and how this information may impact the way in which charity fundraising events are hosted on-campus. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability as a **representative of an organization that has recently hosted a charity fundraising event**. You will not be asked to provide any identifiable information about yourself or your organization and all survey responses will be kept confidential. Thank you very much for your participation.



## Charity Fundraising Events-Hosts

**5. What do you know about the charity that your fundraising efforts supported? Check all that apply.**

- Mission
- Organizational efficiency (amount of each dollar raised that goes to support cause)
- Other

If other, please specify

**6. In general, do you think that participants knew how the money raised by this event was going to be used by the recipient charity?**

- Yes
- No

**7. How important is it to your participants to know how the money they contribute will be used by the recipient charity?**

Not at all important Very important

Importance of knowing usage

**8. How important is it to your participants that they know the recipient charity's organizational efficiency?**

Not at all important Very important

Importance of fund usage information

**9. How important to you is knowing that money raised by this event will be used effectively to support the cause?**

Not at all important Very important

Importance of funds being used effectively

**10. If you discovered that the money you fundraised was going to be used in a way that you did not anticipate, would this affect your future hosting behavior?**

Not at all Very much so

Impact on future participation

Comment (How so?)

## Charity Fundraising Events-Hosts

### Host Information

This information is completely confidential and will not be associated with your identity.

**11. Did you complete a survey similar to this one as a charity fundraising event participant?**

Yes

No

**12. You are completing this survey on behalf of what type of organization?**

**13. Is your organization a chapter/faction of the charity that your event supported?**

Yes

No

## Appendix C

## Campus Facilities Survey

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Responses are confidential and you will not be asked to provide any identifiable information.

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**Gordon Library**

1. Which of the library's resources do you use most often?
  - a. Online databases
  - b. Electronic books
  - c. General collection books
  - d. Project database

Why?

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2. Do you think there are enough areas for individual study?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

3. Do you think there are enough quiet spaces for study?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

4. How long on average do you wait to use library resources (laptops, desktop computers, cubicles)?
  - a. Less than 5 minutes
  - b. 5 minutes
  - c. 15 minutes
  - d. 30 minutes

- e. 60 minutes
- f. More than 60 minutes

5. When looking for a physical book, do you usually:
- a. Ask the reference librarian
  - b. Look up the call number and find it yourself
  - c. Request it through the Inter-library Loan Service
  - d. I have never needed a physical book from the library

6. Do you think WPI needs to construct additional tech suites for student use?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

7. Do you think the lighting in the library is sufficient?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

**Campus in General**

8. Do you think that there are enough water fountains on campus?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

9. Are there enough Women’s Restrooms on campus?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

10. If you have a cellphone, are there any buildings on campus that you feel receive insufficient cellphone coverage?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, which ones?

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11. When the construction on the new Sports and Recreation Center has been completed, what do you think should be done with Alumni Gym?

- a. Convert it to classrooms
- b. Leave it as is
- c. Convert it to a parking garage
- d. Convert it to a residence hall

Other (please specify)

---

---

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12. Do you think there is enough on campus housing available to undergraduate students?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

13. Do you think WPI should construct additional undergraduate housing?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

If you feel that WPI should construct additional undergraduate housing, please describe the type of housing you would prefer (e.g. suites, doubles, themed houses)

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14. Do you think there is enough housing for graduate students?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

### **Campus Center**

15. How do you feel about the Dunkin' Donuts hours of operation?

- a. They should shorten their hours
- b. They should extend their hours
- c. Indifferent

16. How often do you eat in the Campus Center Food Court?

- a. A few times a month
- b. Once a week
- c. A few times a week
- d. Everyday

17. When eating in the Campus Center Food Court, where are you the most likely to order from?

- a. Quiznos Subs
- b. Coyote Jack's
- c. Chef's Table



## d. Gompei's Pizza

18. Do you think there should be an additional eatery on campus?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

19. Do you think there are enough meeting spaces available to clubs?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

20. Do you think there are enough table sitting locations in the Campus Center?

|            |   |   |   |              |
|------------|---|---|---|--------------|
| Not at all |   |   |   | Very much so |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5            |

### Demographic Information

21. What is your age?

---

22. What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female

Appendix D

Solicitation Letter- No Organizational Efficiency Information

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this survey. You may donate a portion of your compensation to the American Red Cross. Your donation will serve where the need is greatest.

If you would like to make a donation please place the desired amount in the provided envelope and deposit the envelope in the American Red Cross Donations box at your earliest convenience. The box is located at the information desk of the Campus Center.

Thank you.

## Appendix D

## Solicitation Letter- Organizational Efficiency Information

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this survey. You may donate a portion of your compensation to the American Red Cross. Your donation will serve where the need is greatest. **“An average of 91 cents of every dollar the Red Cross raises is invested in humanitarian services and programs”** (American Red Cross).

If you would like to make a donation please place the desired amount in the provided envelope and deposit the envelope in the American Red Cross Donations box at your earliest convenience. The box is located at the information desk of the Campus Center.

Thank you.

## Appendix E

# Efficiency Information and Participation in Charity Fundraising Events

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[Sitemap](#)

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## Welcome Participants!

Dear Participants,

Thank you for participating in my study and visiting this website. Recently, you were approached in the Campus Center and asked to complete a brief survey regarding Campus Facilities in exchange for \$10 USD. In actuality, my MQP was not investigating opinions on Campus Facilities, instead it looked at giving behavior in college students in the presence of charity organizational efficiency information. A charity's organizational efficiency is the percentage of each dollar raised that goes directly towards the intended cause.

In this experiment there were two experimental treatments:  
Treatment 1- No efficiency information and Treatment 2- Efficiency information.

Participants receiving Treatment 1 received a brief letter explaining an opportunity to donate a portion of the \$10 they had received to the American Red Cross.

Participants receiving Treatment 2 received a similar letter, but they also received the organizational efficiency of the American Red Cross, 91%.

My results then focused on the giving behavior of participants in each condition.

If you are interested in the results of my MQP please see the WPI Gordon Library's section on MQP and IQP Project Reports this summer. Thanks again!

Sincerely,  
Satia Miller  
s.a.miller@wpi.edu (effective through 2012)  
satia.miller@gmail.com