

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Fundraising in the 21st century is becoming an increasingly important component of rural community colleges' (RCCs) overall funding strategies. Alumni represent a significant population of potential college supporters. The problem facing rural community colleges involves fiscal viability through developing innovative fundraising practices and identifying emerging sources of additional revenue. The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution. The significance of fundraising in RCCs is explored. Rationales, strategies, and key terms are identified from the literature. A review of the literature related to fundraising in RCCs provides context for the topic. A qualitative research design using a case study method was used to answer the research questions. The analysis of data is presented and recommendations for future research are discussed.

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Rural Community College Fundraising: A Multi-Site Case Study Exploring the
Characteristics and Motivations of Alumni Supporters

by
Jason S. Wood

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Jason S. Wood, Author

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RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUNDRAISING: A MULTI-SITE CASE STUDY EXPLORING THE CHARACTERISTICS AND MOTIVATIONS OF ALUMNI SUPPORTERS

Section 1: Focus and Significance

The economic crisis of the latter half of the 2000s continues to reshape the United States, particularly in rural America. Chesson and Rubin (2002) note that Rural Community Colleges (RCCs) are being thrown into economic, social, and political chaos. Poverty is already a major challenge that affects rural communities. Of the 250 poorest counties in America, 244 are rural (Mathis, 2003). RCCs continue to see surges in enrollments (Katsinas, 2010) while, at the same time, facing significant threats to their funding sources (Selingo, 2008; State Higher Education Executive Authors, 2008). Increased enrollments with diminished financial support also coincide with raised expectations from our nation's leaders as they call for community colleges to dramatically increase the number of community college graduates (www.whitehouse.gov/communitycollege, retrieved November 29, 2010). This combination creates a need for research related to generating alternative sources of revenue (i.e. grants, partnerships, fundraising, etc.) or building support (i.e. advocacy, stewardship, service, etc.) for RCCs, especially research that provides a rich description of characteristics and motivations of likely supporters.

The current economic uncertainty facing the United States is having a significant impact on all aspects of higher education. In particular, RCCs are facing significant economic challenges as they strive to cover their costs while experiencing diminished revenues from state budgets (Katsinas, 2010; Mathis, 2003; Pennington, Williams, & Karvonen, 2006; Selingo, 2008; State Higher Education Executive Authors, 2008).

Given the challenges RCCs face, it is important for RCC leaders to understand ways to increase and maximize revenues, including diversifying their funding streams and developing innovative support structures, in order to continue serving their vital role in higher education.

Even without the current economic uncertainty, traditional sources of funding (i.e. local taxes, state funding, or tuition) for RCCs are rarely enough to cover the operating costs needed to meet the multi-faceted missions (presented later) of community colleges including early college, vocational training, and adult education (Errett, 2003; Katsinas, 2010; Mathis, 2003). Thus, RCC leaders are increasingly expected to seek new and emerging revenue streams to supplement college budgets (Grover, 2009; Hebel & Selingo, 2001; Summers, 2006; Supiano, 2008; Van der Werf, 1999; Zeiss, 2003). Colleges can turn to fundraising to create new monies, but during an economic downturn, the efficacy of such tactics could be minimal (Hall, 2009a; Hall, 2009b; Masterson, 2009a).

This research examines one potential alternative source of funding—alumni—to provide better information to RCC leaders on how to increase non-traditional sources of funding. Specifically, this research describes alumni characteristics and motivations associated with philanthropy.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution.

Research Problem and Questions

There are four reasons why alumni characteristics and motivations related to fundraising potential in RCCs should be researched. First, with enrollment growths and expectations for additional graduates, alumni may be a rapidly growing group of college supporters in an ideal position to further the mission of the college. Second, the current economic unrest represents a threat to the financial health of RCCs (Fischer, 2007; Wootton, 2009). Third, community colleges have not traditionally established strong relationships with alumni (Errett, 2003). Fourth, RCC leaders must look to the future and recognize emerging funding opportunities that include efforts to engage alumni (McGee, 2003; Wenrich & Reid, 2003).

Recent economic trends are difficult to interpret or to predict, especially as related to the potential for philanthropic donations (Katsinas, 2010; Masterson, 2009b). The present decade is characterized by bleak economic forecasts (Kirsch, Braun, & Yamamoto, 2007; Masterson, 2009c) accompanied by rising demands for affordable higher educational options (Callan, 2002; State Higher Education Executive Authors, 2008). It is important for community college leaders to have a thorough understanding of alumni characteristics and motivations so that they can influence policy decisions, participate in advocacy discussions, plan initiatives, and influence fiscal forecasting. In order to understand fundraising opportunities, practitioners must have reliable data to use in making decisions. This study is designed to address the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution?

2. What factors motivate RCC alumni to consider contributing financial support to the institution?

Rationale

Identification of alumni characteristics and motivations related to philanthropic tendencies will provide data RCC practitioners can use to inform their planning and prioritization of fundraising strategies. With an understanding of alumni characteristics and motivations associated with the intention to give, RCC personnel will be in a position to influence policy and practice, at the regional and national levels, for the benefit of RCCs. Knowledge of the emerging trends and issues related to fundraising can also be a foundation for future academic research.

Significance

This study is significant for the following reasons: (a) the importance of RCCs diversifying their funding streams to remain viable during the current economic crisis and into the future; (b) the lack of fundraising research conducted on RCCs and their alumni; and (c) the need for rural communities to mitigate distinct challenges that they are facing.

Diversification of Funding Streams

Babitz (2003) states that colleges should position themselves now to take advantage of increased philanthropic tendencies. For RCCs, this means understanding a growing population of students and graduates who are drawing increasing attention at the national level. While the economic climate has experienced a dramatic decline and is significantly different today from the time of Babitz (2003), the importance of funding diversification has increased (Shieh, 2009). With over 900 RCCs in the United States serving 3.2 million students in 2007 (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007) and enrollments predicted

to continue to climb at a 9% rate (Katsinas & Friedel, 2010), traditional sources of funding, such as tuition, state support, and local taxes, may be unable to support such a substantial number of community colleges. Ryan (2003) notes that local and state governments have been faced with financial difficulties that dictate their disinvestment in public community colleges, usually in favor of funding being rerouted to K-12 or the university system. Governmental support of higher education has been decreasing over the past decade thereby increasing the importance of other sources of revenue (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2009). In spite of the decreased funding, the growing number of students attending community colleges represents a demographic of potential college supporters. This research examines characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni donors.

Lack of Research

The research conducted to date on fundraising at institutions of higher learning has primarily focused on four-year universities or on fundraising in general. Research on RCCs has been focused primarily in the Southern region of the United States and very few projects have emphasized fundraising. This section summarizes the gaps in the literature and provides an additional theoretical rationale for the importance of the proposed research.

National and Regional

This study makes an academic contribution by focusing on fundraising in RCCs. National studies have been conducted that look at the effectiveness of community college fundraising but have not necessarily been conducted in rural areas. Keener, Carrier, and Meaders (2002) concluded that community colleges who invest in fundraising generate

substantial external revenue. Anderson (2001) summarizes research that identified emerging issues and critical trends related to fundraising in all 1,755 two-year colleges in America. Based on his findings, there is a lack of research focused specifically on RCC alumni. These and other articles are presented in greater detail in the literature review.

Regional research studies related to community college fundraising also exist. Erret (2003) conducted a study on trends in philanthropic giving at Texas community colleges. A study was conducted in North Carolina that included fundraising trends and issues of a community college (Jackson & Glass, 2000). Again, the research conducted at the state level has not had a focus on RCCs, and it has been limited to southern states. Furthermore, research is not specifically focused on RCC alumni. These and other articles are presented in greater detail in the literature review.

The Rural Community College Alliance (RCCA) has undertaken several projects related to RCCs. According to their website (www.ruralccalliance.org), the RCCA strives to improve educational and economic conditions for their communities, provide a network for peer learning, and be a national voice for RCCs. The RCCA is managed by MDC, which originally stood for Manpower Development Corporation. The name has since been dropped, but the initials MDC have been kept. MDC focuses on assisting the most economically challenged and depressed communities with development initiatives. The RCCA MDC (2002) published a summary of efforts made over a seven-year period. This research, while related to the proposed project, is still regionally located in the south and was conducted during times of economic prosperity.

In summary, little of the community college fundraising literature has focused specifically on RCCs. The research that has focused on RCCs has been conducted almost

exclusively in the southern states, due to the fact that the Rural Community College Alliance is located in the south. Research at the national level has not directly addressed RCC fundraising. Finally, no studies were found that explicitly addressed RCC alumni. These factors suggest the need for this research study.

Fundraising in RCCs

Jackson & Glass (2000) noted that, while there is an abundance of research related to higher education, there is a lack of scholarly inquiry related to private fundraising in the community colleges. Brittingham & Pezzullo (1990) found that studies have not kept pace with growth in fundraising initiatives, indicating that many colleges have not relied on research as a basis for fundraising decisions. Babitz (2003) concluded that community college fundraising has only taken place within the last generation despite the fact that the United States has emerged as an international pioneer in philanthropy. Fundraising research at community colleges in general has been particularly limited. Research about fundraising in RCCs is scarce.

One existing piece of literature outlines several challenges that RCCs face when fundraising (Grover, 2009). These challenges include “a small population, limited corporate and foundation support, and reliance on the generosity of individuals” (p.10). Grover also notes that while RCCs face these challenges, some of them have found success even during difficult financial times. Two solutions are offered and are explored in this research. The first solution is based upon the importance of building strong relationships between potential donors and the college. The power of interpersonal relationships and networking in a small, rural locale underscores the focus of this research project. The second solution emphasizes the importance of developing missions

that are relevant to the local community. Once developed, connecting RCC missions with fundraising opportunities will strengthen the position of the RCC.

Distinct Challenges in Rural America

Rural communities face unique challenges compared to their urban and suburban counterparts. The issues for rural areas include out-migration, economic decline, and limited access to critical services including health care, transportation, and technology. Each of these challenges affects RCCs in distinct ways, but all affect the regional economic health.

The economic situation in rural communities is tenuous. In a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Carr and Kefalas (2009) outline the situation:

The most dramatic evidence of the rural meltdown has been the hollowing out – that is, losing the most talented young people at precisely the same time that changes in farming and industry have transformed the landscape for those who stay. This so-called rural “brain drain” isn’t a new phenomenon, but by the 21st century the shortage of young people has reached a tipping point, and its consequences are more severe now than ever before. Simply put, many small towns are mere years away from extinction, while others limp along in a weakened and disabled state. (p. A16)

In 1900, 80% of the population lived in rural America while the 21st century now sees only 20% of the population living in rural areas (Carter, Gartner, Haines, Olmstead, Sutch, & Wright, 2006). To compound the situation, Florida (2007) indicates that the most creative minds are leaving rural America in favor of professional and personal

opportunities that are perceived to be more abundant in urban areas. The continued migration from rural to urban areas is an indicator of the importance of examining RCC alumni.

Furthermore, as stated by Eddy & Murray (2007), “rural areas have been hard hit by economic downturns. Agriculture, mining, and small industries have all faced losses that ultimately affect these regions” (p. 104). Communities are struggling to adapt to a relatively sudden loss of revenue and gradual decline in population that sustained and preserved a rural milieu that has endured for multiple generations (Haines & Steckel, 2000). Miller & Kissinger (2007) note “rural community colleges are among the few social agencies that can be a conduit for state funding to rural areas” (p. 33). Other entities able to attract state and federal revenues include health care and social services.

Access to education is one of multiple variables that could help provide a solution to economic uncertainty. The RCCA took the position that “an educated, skilled workforce is essential to a healthy economy” (MDC, 2001) and outlined limiting characteristics shared by rural locales including:

- Dependency on a single industry;
- Major assets held by a few people, often times absentee owners who are not part of the community;
- Low levels of entrepreneurship or poor access to business development capital;
- Persistent underinvestment in education;
- Chronic underinvestment in infrastructure such as water, sewer, and telecommunications;
- Issues compounded by geographic remoteness and isolation;

- Race and class divisions;
- Narrow leadership base;
- Weakening tax base;
- Economy that does not require high skills;
- Local belief that the poor do not need a good education; and
- Historic trend of out-migration of the best talent.

These limiting issues, either unique to or more pronounced in rural locales, are exacerbated by the current economic turmoil. Higher education budgets, as a percentage of state general fund budgets, have decreased in 10 of the last 12 years nationwide (Errett, 2003), a trend that has continued (Kelderman, 2011). These conditions indicate that colleges that are successful in diversifying their funding streams may be able to continue to provide and expand quality services and instructional programs that benefit the local community despite unpredictable state sources of revenue.

As has been established, the economy is a major factor in the success or failures of rural communities (Fluharty & Scaggs, 2007). Financial distress in rural communities significantly impacts RCCs. Population decline and varying degrees of access to essential services, such as those listed above, exacerbate the lack of fiscal resources. This research project provides RCC leaders with information about a non-traditional funding source RCCs could adopt to improve their financial viability.

Definition of Key Terms

The following paragraphs provide definitions for the key terms in this study. The definitions include rural community college, alternative funding, fundraising, alumni, and community college foundation.

Rural Community College

Katsinas and Lacey (1996) initially authored a classification system for two-year colleges with the intention of creating a tool similar to the Carnegie system utilized by universities. They used three criteria in designing their classification scheme: (1) objective data from reliable and recognized sources, (2) results needed to be applicable and utilized rather than theory-based, and (3) the groupings had to be stable.

Since the development of the Katsinas-Lacey (1996) classification system, the identification tool for two-year colleges has been refined (Katsinas & Hardy, 2006) until, in 2005, the Carnegie Classification system included a new associate granting institutions classification—which includes community colleges. The Carnegie Classification system recognized three major categories within the community college classification: privately controlled, publically controlled, and special-use colleges. Within each of these classifications, institutions are subdivided into rural, suburban, and urban and then further subdivided by size (small, medium, and large).

Additional clarification is warranted because precisely defining the term rural is not straightforward. The Task Force on Rural Community Colleges defined a RCC as serving a population under 100,000 in a large geographic region (Vineyard, 1979). A more sophisticated definition of rural community college can be attained by looking to the California Postsecondary Education Commission which defines “rural” by utilizing the U.S. Census Bureau’s definition of “rural”. This definition includes all the following characteristics:

- Population density: under 1,000 people per square mile;

- Overall density under 500 people per square mile for surrounding census blocks;
- Fewer than 50,000 people overall.

Although these definitions are slightly different, the important point is that rural community colleges are those institutions in areas that have small populations in large geographic areas. For purposes of this research, a RCC is an institution that has a service district that meets the first two criteria of the U.S. Census Bureau's definition and serves fewer than 100,000 people in their service district.

Alternative Funding

Community colleges have historically received their operating funds exclusively from local or regional sources—primarily state revenue, local taxes, tuition, and fees (Jenkins & Glass, 1999). In the recent past, community colleges have begun to receive more revenues from alternative funding sources (Cohen & Brawer 2003; Zeiss, 2003). These alternative revenue streams are sources of funds that are not based on a college's established funding formula or generated through tuition and fees and could include fundraising. Cohen and Brawer (2003) outlined several additional strategies that generate alternative revenue including:

- Corporate ventures including retail sales, catering services, and facilities leasing;
- Selling custom designed training and instructional programs;
- Land reclamation;
- Leased land or facilities on long term and/or short term basis; and
- Philanthropy.

Despite relatively recent trends that indicate philanthropy is on the rise, community colleges still receive less than two percent of their income from charitable giving (Grover, 2009). Furthermore, less than two percent of charitable contributions donated to higher education go to community colleges (Lanning, 2008; Wagoner & Besikof, 2011). In other words, of the \$28 billion generated from donations, only \$500 million goes to community colleges (Lanning, 2008). This is due, in part, to the long established history of universities, which were founded as early as the 17th century, while community colleges were formed in the 19th century (Grover, 2009). Community colleges serve approximately 50% of the undergraduates in the United States yet only raise two cents of every dollar that is raised through philanthropic donations (Lanning, 2008). Simply based on the current percentages and sheer number of students served by community colleges, there is a potential to increase the amount of revenue received from fundraising. This research will focus on philanthropy as an alternative source of revenue and address the motivations and characteristics of alumni donors specifically.

Alumni

Alumni are defined as individuals who graduated from an institution (Baade & Sundberg, 1996; Clotfelter, 2003; Errett, 2003; Terry & Macy, 2007; Weerts & Ronca, 2007).

Fundraising

Fundraising is a process of soliciting financial contributions from various stakeholders who have some level of interest in the actions of the organization. Fundraising in community colleges usually takes one of the following forms: capital campaign, endowment campaign, or a major gift campaign (Grover, 2009; Smith, 1993;

Wise & Camper, 1985; Worth, 2002). Capital campaigns involve raising money in order to construct a building. Endowment campaigns raise funds that become permanent sources of revenue to support specific purposes within the organization. Gift campaigns typically “support new programs, activities, or provide furnishings and equipment” (Grover, 2009, p. 1). Fundraising efforts that are initiated to support multiple types of campaigns are known as comprehensive campaigns. The focus of this research is to understand the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni donors, regardless of the form of the fundraising.

Community College Foundation

A community college foundation is a non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status. “The history of foundations at community colleges has been much shorter than that of university foundations” (Jenkins & Glass, 1999, p. 595). The role of the foundation is to provide fundraising and promote charitable causes on behalf of the college it represents. Foundations are organized and governed by an independent board of directors. The members of the board are usually prominent community members with the capacity to contribute funds and/or provide additional contacts who can also make financial contributions. Establishing foundations is an increasingly common trend among community colleges which are trying to find new sources of revenue, especially from alumni (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

This research is specifically interested in the characteristics and motivations of alumni who are likely to donate funds in support of college initiatives.

Summary

In Japanese, the symbol for crisis is a combination of the characters for danger and opportunity. This research will provide a deeper understanding about fundraising in an ever-changing environment that may be dangerous but does hold opportunity. The purpose of this research project is to describe the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution. As characteristics and motivators are identified, RCCs and the communities they serve will be able to equip themselves with strategies to increase philanthropy and supplement revenue.

Section 2: Literature Review

This review of the literature serves three purposes. First, it provides background information needed to better understand the subject matter. Second, it emphasizes the significance of the research. Third, it informs the research design of the study. In order to provide background information, this review includes an outline of the search parameters used to locate relevant resources and a presentation of the relevant publications. As a result of the literature review, a rationale for using a descriptive case study as a research method will emerge.

Search Process

The databases used to locate articles appearing in this literature review included ERIC, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. Search terms included: Community College Foundations, Rural Community Colleges, Community College Fundraising, Community College Finance, Alternative Sources of Community College Revenue, Stakeholders in Community College Fundraising, Community College Fundraising Strategies, Innovative Funding Options for Community Colleges, Funding Higher Education, Alumni, and Philanthropy. The works cited sections of identified literature also aided in identifying additional resources.

Once the articles were obtained, a précis was developed to summarize each article. Each study was summarized, strengths and weaknesses identified, and trends articulated. A broad range of quantitative and qualitative research articles were examined with a specific focus on community colleges. A strong emphasis was placed on those articles that addressed specific rural issues; however, articles about fundraising strategies for community colleges and universities in general were also considered.

For purposes of the literature review, there will be a focus on articles and research related to the following four areas: (1) the importance of alternative sources of funding for community colleges; (2) fundraising strategies employed by community colleges; (3) tapping into alumni donors; and (4) the characteristics, traits, and patterns of alumni donors.

Importance of Alternative Sources of Funding

Alternative sources of funding for community colleges are becoming increasingly important as a “perfect storm” of demands has emerged for the 21st Century (Kirsch, Braun, & Yamamoto, 2007). Over the past decade, community colleges have experienced a decline in state and federal funding (Anderson, 2001; Bass, 2003; Callan, 2002; Fischer, 2007; Grover, 2009; Jenkin & Glass, 1999; Summers, 2006). While some increased revenues have occasionally been invested in community colleges, these investments lag woefully behind inflation and cost of living increases (Katsinas, Tollefson, & Reamey, 2008). The sagging economy coupled with increased enrollments has stressed community college budgets (Jones, Adams, & Reinke, 2009). While increased enrollments do bring additional revenue, tuition only accounts for an average of 20% of the funds needed to serve students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2010). In addition, state appropriations are often subject to budget cuts that coincide with available funding rather than enrollment trends. In fact, nearly 60% of states with funding formulas for community colleges did not fully fund the formula in 2007 (Katsinas, Tollefson, & Reamey, 2008). “As a result, higher education, a discretionary budget item in most states, has often been moved to the end of the state funding queue, resulting in state governments allocating a smaller share of their spending

towards higher education” (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008). As succinctly stated by Errett (2003):

Community colleges in the past have relied heavily upon state and local tax support to maintain and counterbalance their growing enrollment budgets. No longer can they continue in this manner. With tax cuts, unforeseen enrollment growths, rapidly changing needs in technology and an ongoing recession, a new ‘culture of development’ must be created (p. 1).

Community college leaders are faced also with the difficult task of discovering and tapping into alternative funding sources while still fulfilling their core missions (Zeiss, 2003). Furthermore, RCCs are constrained by a smaller population base (Katsinas, 1996; Pennington et al., 2006) and limited corporate support (Grover, 2009). RCCs typically are funded locally by a weaker economy that is subject to greater volatility (Katsinas, Tollefson, & Reamey, 2008).

To combat the funding shortfall, community college personnel have increasingly advocated for private funding as an alternative source of revenue (Rouche, Rouche, & Johnson, 2002). Babitz (2003) explained that private sector investment must increase if community colleges are to continue contributing to America’s competitive advantage. Fundraising is one form of private sector investment in community colleges. Research into fundraising may help reduce the effect of dwindling state support that RCCs often face. In 2007 nearly 70% of community college state directors reported that RCCs would face a greater fiscal strain than their suburban or urban counterparts (Selingo, 2008).

Keener, Carrier, and Meaders (2002) conducted a comprehensive study on resource development efforts of both community colleges and foundation offices. A 60 item survey was distributed to 1,100 community colleges, and personnel from 373 colleges responded. The survey questions were focused on college profile, grants office, and the college foundation. An initial analysis concluded that there was strong evidence that community colleges realized substantial financial benefit from external revenue sources directly attributed to fundraising initiatives. This can be seen in Table 2.1, as RCCs attract significant revenue from college foundations, but the median amount of these donations is significantly below that of suburban or urban community colleges.

Table 2.1

Externally Generated Revenue from Foundations by College Size and Location

	<u>Type of College</u>		
	Rural (n=137)	Suburban (n=95)	Urban (n=81)
Median	\$300,000	\$450,000	\$677,000
Average	\$719,039	\$842,560	\$1,633,954

Although the evidence in Table 2.1 suggests community colleges can generate significant amounts of money from alternative revenue sources, Strout (2006) noted that community colleges are not realizing their full potential because they are relatively new to fundraising, have not developed sophisticated fundraising strategies, and are only now starting to focus on establishing relationships with alumni. Given the “perfect storm” discussed earlier and the challenges RCCs face in raising funds, the survival of a RCC may be based on its ability to attract alternative revenue streams (Chesson & Rubin, 2002; Strout, 2006; Wootten, 2009).

Rooney (1999) noted that unlike some revenue sources, fundraising costs are typically economical because they cost significantly less than the money raised. This allows colleges to make an initial investment in fundraising with the strong probability that the investment will yield better returns than other forms of alternative revenue. In addition, the funds received from philanthropic donations can provide discretionary income that is unrestricted in how it is used (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008).

From an historical perspective, community colleges were originally funded primarily from local sources (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). In the 1970's, people nationwide participated in a movement of shifting local tax burdens to the state level (Klimes, 2008). This movement caused states to shoulder an increased burden for supporting community colleges. Between 1980 and the late 1990's, state appropriations for community colleges dropped approximately 20% nationwide (Klimes, 2008). In the early 2000's, a boom or bust economy left legislators to debate discretionary expenditures which crippled community colleges ability to predict future funding. At the same time discretionary expenditures were being prioritized, mandatory funding obligations (health care, K-12 education, corrections, and public safety) increased (Henry, 2000; Klimes, 2008).

The need for additional funds during uncertain times led many community colleges to seek stable funding by increasing tuition. Roughly 88% of state directors indicated tuition would continue to increase at least at the same pace as the federal Consumer Price Index while an additional 10% noted that tuition would remain flat (Katsinas, Tollefson, & Reamey, 2008). Community colleges have maintained an emphasis on being open-access institutions. This usually entails keeping tuition costs to a minimum. However, as state revenue continues to diminish, community colleges have

increased tuition to account for the lost funding. Initially, the tuition increases did not directly affect enrollments because prices were set well below student demand. “But the demand for education at many public higher education institutions is not perfectly inelastic, and therefore future tuition increase should have diminishing returns” (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008, p. 210).

In summary, the research on community college alternative sources of funding suggests that alternative sources of funding are vital to the financial success of community colleges. The economy over the past decade has been volatile and state funding of community colleges unpredictable while enrollments have increased. Community colleges have responded by increasing tuition and fees which has made the education they provide less affordable for students who have traditionally benefitted from lower costs of attendance (Kennamer, Katisnas, Hardy, & Roessler, 2010). Furthermore, the literature suggests that fundraising in particular is needed to supplement traditional revenue streams and that community colleges may not be highly effective at performing fundraising. The next section will review the strategies used by community colleges to raise money.

Identifying Fundraising Strategies

This section will address the four major fundraising strategies used by community colleges that emerged in a review of the literature. The four major strategies are: (1) combining institutional planning and resource development efforts; (2) providing strong presidential leadership to participate in fundraising; (3) staffing foundations with people, both employees and board members, who can advocate for the college and bring in donations; and (4) fostering relationships with people.

Integrated institutional planning and resource development efforts

In order to successfully implement a plan that includes philanthropy, community colleges must first institutionalize planning efforts by including fundraising as a central part of the college mission (Anderson, 2003; Carlsen, 2003; Glass & Jackson, 1998b). A growing number of resource development professionals concur that “having institutional priorities for development helps focus time and resources on the areas related to achieving the college mission” (Keener, Carrier, & Meaders, 2002, p. 14). To do this, fundraising efforts and strategies should be closely aligned with college mission, vision, and culture (Drucker, 1990). For example, the foundation director can be included in senior level administrative meetings that address college-wide issues, or the person responsible for marketing can attend foundation meetings. Additionally, the strategic plan must be flexible enough to quickly respond to unforeseen fundraising opportunities (Wenrich & Reid, 2003).

One strategy to institutionalize fundraising into the culture of the community college is to gain internal support. As noted by Grover (2009), “a fundraising frame of mind should permeate [the] college” (p. 77). In order to engage faculty and staff, an institution should strive to create an atmosphere that fosters and appreciates giving. To do this, Carlsen (2003) recommends that colleges celebrate employee contributions through such things as public displays of appreciation of faculty and staff who volunteer at fundraising events or make financial contributions. Carlsen (2003) notes that by creating a shared purpose, a sense of community, and a common goal, fundraising efforts can become part of day-to-day college life.

A prime example of combining operation and philanthropic planning and implementation efforts is presented by Haire and Dodson-Pennington (2002) in a case study of a small, rural community college in western North Carolina. Southwestern Community College generated over \$15 million in four years by engaging in a comprehensive fundraising initiative that was closely aligned with the college's mission and vision. Their study emphasizes the importance of four elements that contribute to collaborative institutional efforts: (1) supportive college culture, (2) long-term, meaningful partnerships, (3) solid resource development strategies, and (4) well-cultivated, creative project ideas (Haire & Dodson-Pennington, 2002). The proposed research will add to this qualitative study by providing a perspective from a similar RCC and examining alumni characteristics and motivation to give donations.

Providing strong presidential leadership for fundraising

The president of the college plays a key role in fundraising by forging a link between institutional and philanthropic planning. The president is the central person on a successful fundraising team (Cook & Lasher, 1996; Grover, 2009; Ryan, 2003; Wenrich & Reid, 2003). The presidential role includes leadership (Glass & Jackson, 1998a; McGee, 2003; Wenrich & Reid, 2003), supervising development staff (Glass & Jackson, 1998b), guiding the fundraising process (Wenrich & Reid, 2003), functioning as a liaison between the governing board and the foundation board (Cook & Lasher, 1996; McGee, 2003), and building relationships with community members (Carlsen, 2003; McGee, 2003).

To be successful at fundraising, it is incumbent on the president to understand the needs and rewards of the potential donor (Wenrich & Reid, 2003). For instance, one

basic fundraising strategy is to match the institution's need with the donor's interest (Errett, 2003; Grover, 2009; Prince & File, 2001). Therefore, the president, who likely understands the needs of the college, must learn about the factors that influence and motivate potential donors. The process by which the president aligns donors' psychological philanthropic tendencies with institutional needs is considered both an art and science associated with fundraising (Dunn, 1988). As a reference for presidents and other fund raisers, Prince and File (2001) label seven types of donors and the psychological tendencies behind their philanthropy. It is important that the president understand these different types of psychological tendencies for philanthropy. The seven types of donors are:

- Communitarians – desire to improve the community and thus improve their business prospects; they enjoy accolades; largest segment of donors at 23%.
- The devout – donations stem from religious beliefs; not motivated by accolades; not usually involved in policy discussions; about 20% come from this group.
- Investors – give with the intention of doing good and for personal tax benefits; charity and investments are handled in similar fashions; comprises 15% of the donors.
- Socialites – find giving enjoyable; fundraising projects are entertaining and a way to develop social networks and consequently have extensive connections; they are interested in knowing the results of their donations and appreciate accolades for the good they do; they comprise 11% of the donors.

- Repayers – simply want to give back; they were the direct beneficiaries of an opportunity that changed their fortunes; generally not interested in recognition; the charity chooses them instead of them choosing the charity; this group is 10% of the group.
- Altruists – not interested in accolades or recognition; giving is a moral imperative; they support causes that assist the elderly and the poor; they do appreciate interpersonal bonds with recipients; comprise 9% of the major donors.
- Dynasts – generational donors; giving is taught at a young age and a social obligation; they believe philanthropy is more effective than government programs; high expectations of the organizations that receive their money; make up 8% of the donors.

In summary, the president plays a key role in fundraising success. Understanding donors' reasons for contributing to the college helps the president link college mission and need with donors' interests. Ultimately, a successful fundraising process includes a president who builds strong relationships with internal and external constituents.

Staffing fundraising efforts

While the president plays a vital role in leading fundraising efforts, an adequately staffed foundation office enhances the likelihood of success. Foundations for community colleges are traditionally staffed by a director and a support person. The director oversees the day-to-day operations of the department, often coordinating fundraising efforts with other college departments for marketing, business, or public relations efforts (Grover, 2009; Jenkins & Glass, 1999; Keener, Carrier, & Meaders, 2002). The actual

job duties of foundation directors vary significantly from institution to institution, but the duties typically include four main responsibilities: (1) fundraiser, (2) catalyst, (3) manager, and (4) leader (Worth & Asp, 1994).

With respect to staffing of fundraising offices, universities tend to staff their resource development offices sufficiently by hiring people with specific areas of specialty (Worth, 2002). These specialties include alumni affairs, planned giving, marketing, foundation relations, or communications (Akin, 2005). In contrast, community colleges typically hire one or two people who handle all fundraising responsibilities (Bass, 2003; Grover, 2009; Keener et al., 2002). Akin (2005) notes that symbiotic relationships seem to exist between the size of the college, the number of staff dedicated to fundraising, and the amount of funds actually raised. Simply put, a larger college has more fundraising staff and raises more money. This means that, on average, it is easier for colleges with established fundraising operations to do well (Johnstone, 2001).

Some community colleges have contracted with fundraising professional who specialize in a particular type of fundraising. There are many benefits to using an external fundraising consultant. Grover (2009) notes that consultants offer an unbiased outside opinion, provide ongoing oversight that prevents wasteful detours, and can have specific expertise that pertains to the type of fundraising campaign that is needed to complete a specific goal. A consultant may not be needed if the college president, foundation director, or foundation board of directors have extensive fundraising experience (Grover, 2009).

Fundraising at a RCC is difficult, especially from a staffing perspective. Keener et al., (2002) conducted a national survey of community colleges and found that in

smaller colleges that tended to be rural, staffing is limited. The same study also found that in smaller colleges the employees responsible for fundraising were more likely to be assigned multiple responsibilities with less staff support. Thus, in contrast to universities that benefit from significant staffing, RCCs must do the same amount of work with fewer staff. To compensate for less specialization and fewer employees, Jackson and Glass (2000) recommend that smaller colleges with less staff maximize efficiencies by incorporating technology into management of fundraising activities.

Foundation board members are another key component to fundraising. Foundation board members have different obligations to the college than do trustees (Howe, 1991). Board members are selected rather than elected or appointed. Their selection is often based on their ability to contribute significant funds or solicit donations from others (Anderson, 2003; McGee, 2003). While trustees' primary responsibility is to govern the college (Legon, 1997), Grover (2009) notes that foundation board members' roles include: (a) making a substantial financial gift; (b) advocating for the college and the fundraising campaign; (c) overseeing the campaign and holding people accountable for progress and goal achievement; (d) asking friends and colleagues to make contributions to the college; and (e) providing a consistently positive attitude and loyalty to the institution.

Despite differing college roles, foundation board members and college trustees can establish a strong working relationship that ultimately benefits college governance and fundraising efforts. Legon (1997) noted that successful collaboration between trustees and board members requires a formal communication plan with five specific components: (1) formally appoint governing trustees to serve on the foundation board; (2)

establish a governing trustee development committee; (3) present the foundation board's annual report to the trustees; (4) deliver the foundation audit report and management letter to the trustees; and (5) establish a joint planning committee consisting of trustees and foundation board members. Establishing strategic models for effective partnerships by focusing on positive relationships between governing trustees and foundation board members can serve as a model for other relationship building efforts.

Developing relationships to benefit fundraising

Colleges have relied on positive relationships with community members to support the college (Duronio & Loessin, 1991; Hall, 2002). Successful financial support of the colleges is likely to occur after "friend raising" efforts have been successful (Babitz, 2003; Duronio & Loessin, 1991; MacArthur, 2000; Pokrass, 1989; Wise & Camper, 1985). Friend raising is nurturing the relationship between the prospective donor and the organization (Weinstein, 2009) by "building relationships, being friendly, making friends, creating an interest, inspiring trust, and being honest" (Tromble, 1998, p. 20). Furthermore, Tromble (1998) insisted that "friend raising comes first, then fundraising" (p. 20).

The two non-mutually exclusive, primary strategies to develop relationships between the college and the community (i.e., "friend raising") are (1) to create relationships that are based on a fair exchange of fees and services, or (2) to develop a sense of stewardship among community donors (Hall, 2002). RCCs have the opportunity to develop relationships with current students who are paying tuition in order to receive an education. As current students become alumni, the college's emphasis focuses on

developing the relationship into one of advocacy and stewardship, thus providing the college with an opportunity to solicit funds from donors.

Tapping Into Alumni Donors

This section focuses on the previous research conducted on alumni donors and presents a framework of important characteristics of potential donors. Specifically, this section will cover the following: (a) strategies to solicit funds from alumni, (b) determinants and characteristics of alumni donors, and (c) exploration of RCC alumni.

Strategies to solicit funds from alumni

Alumni donations have consistently been the largest donor category for higher education, but primarily for universities (Grover, 2009; Milliron, de los Santos, & Browning, 2003). Colleges and universities use a variety of strategies to raise funds from alumni. Some of the techniques include special events, phone campaigns, direct mailings, and charity dinners. This list is not exhaustive and new strategies continue to emerge, such as efforts made with social media. Of equal or greater import than the actual technique used to fund raise are the relationship-building strategies underlying specific fundraising techniques. As noted by Klein (2001): “the purpose of fundraising...is to build relationships—or more simply put, instead of raising money, the purpose of fundraising is to raise donors” (p. 13).

As previously mentioned, “friend-raising” is key to many colleges’ fundraising success (Grover, 2009; Hall, 2002; Mercatoris, 2006). This is especially true for community colleges which have historically strived to create strategic relationships with key community members and the local public in general (Duronio & Loessin; Errett, 2003; Grover, 2009; Hall, 2002; Mercatoris, 2006; Worth, 2002). Community colleges

that are effective in fundraising “are those that satisfy, preferably delight, the key stakeholders they serve, which include students, faculty, staff, and the community” (Wharton, 1997, p.15). Building positive relationships with alumni through strategic planning is the foundation of successful fundraising campaigns (Glass & Jackson, 1998a; Hall, 2002). The literature points to the importance of developing strong relationships between the college and its graduates (before they leave the institution) as the most important factor of success (Babitz, 2003; Errett, 2003; Glass & Jackson, 1998a; Grover, 2009; Hall, 2002; MacArthur, 2000; Wise & Camper, 1985). This underscores how essential it is for colleges to understand the characteristics of alumni donors and their motivation for giving. Furthermore, it points to a qualitative research method that can provide a rich description of alumni characteristics and motivations that chronicle alumni satisfaction, engagement, and delight – measurements difficult to quantify with statistical measurements.

Characteristics of alumni donors

There is a substantial body of research examining general fundraising trends related to *university* alumni (e.g., see Baade & Sundberg, 1996; Bristol, 1990; Clotfelter, 2003; Connolly & Blanchette, 1986; Ficano & Cunningham, 2001; Gunsalus, 2005; Harrison, Mitchell, & Peterson, 1995; Melchiori, 1988; Taylor & Martin, 1995; Terry & Macy, 2007; Weerts & Ronca, 2007). There are also several articles on alumni contributions to fundraising efforts at community colleges (e.g., see Adams, Keener, & McGee, 1994; Craft & Guy, 2002; Duffy, 1980; Errett, 2003; Essex & Ansbach, 1993; Glass & Jackson, 1998a; Glass & Jackson, 1998b; Hall, 2002; Jackson & Glass, 2000; Jenkins & Glass, 1999; Keener, Carrier, & Meaders, 2002; Phillippe & Eblinger, 1998;

Transue, 2002; van der Werf, 1999). Although these two rich research streams exist, there is no research examining RCC alumni giving that focuses on characteristics and motivations. Examining the research related to university and community college alumni fundraising efforts provides insight that can be adapted to the RCC setting.

Several studies have been conducted on variables that may determine alumni potential or likeliness to give (Baade & Sundberg; Belfield & Beney, 2000; Errett, 2003; Shadoian, 1989; Taylor & Martin, 1995; Terry & Macy, 2007; Young & Fischer, 1996). Taylor and Martin (1995) investigated demographic, attitudinal, involvement, and philanthropic characteristics of alumni donors and non-donors. In addition to these four variables, a fifth determinant of alumni giving has been linked to institutional factors (Errett, 2003; Keener, et al., 2002; Mercatoris, 2006; Miller, 1997). This section will examine institutional, demographic, attitudinal, philanthropic, and involvement variables that contribute to fundraising success.

Institutional variables

Institutional variables include factors related to institutional capacity for fundraising. Determinants in the institutional category include the size of the college, available funding, and staffing in the development office. Due to the differences between institution type, size, and location, institutional variables are significant contributors that limit or facilitate fundraising success.

Similar to the adage, “it takes money to make money,” studies have found that fundraising success is closely related to the size of the college (Keener et al., 2002; Duronio & Loessin, 1990; Pickett, 1977). The size of the college is also usually related to the number of fundraising staff and the amount spent on fundraising (Baade &

Sundberg, 1996; Leslie & Ramey, 1988; Keener et al., 2002). Staffing and budgets are closely related to increased amounts of funds raised (Gatewood, 1994; Glass & Jackson, 1998; Gunsalus, 2005; Harrison et al., 1995; Hunter, 1987; Miller, 1997; Young & Fischer, 1996). While not necessarily related to the size of the college, the amount of funds in a college's endowment has been an indicator of future fundraising success in some studies (Ficano & Cunningham, 2001; Pals, 2001; Terry & Macy, 2007) but not in others (Harrison, Mitchell, & Peterson, 1995).

Demographic variables

While institutional variables and their influence on donations to the college have been studied, most research emphasizes the importance of demographic variables, especially as it relates to alumni donors (Mercatoris, 2006). Studies that evaluate demographic variables of alumni are often searching for indicators that allow colleges to profile people likely to donate.

Similar to institutional variables that rely on available institutional funding, an individual's income level functions as an indicator of future donations (Baade & Sundberg, 1996; Belfield & Beney, 2000; Clotfelter, 2003; Lindal & Winship, 1992; Taylor & Martin, 1995; Weerts & Ronca, 2007; Wunnava & Lauze, 2001). Oglesby (1991) determined that as earnings increased the percentage of donors went up as well as the amount of money gifted. Alumni who received scholarships or grants also tended to be more likely to donate (Beeler, 1982; Dugan et al., 2003; House, 1987). Conversely, alumni with higher debts were less likely to contribute financially on a voluntary basis (Terry & Macy, 2007). In fact, it is possible that rising tuition has led to higher debt

levels among students which could in turn have a negative effect on their future giving tendencies.

While financial status has been the single most researched demographic variable in explaining alumni giving, other characteristics have emerged as well. Research suggests donors tend to be middle-aged or older (Belfield & Beney, 2000; Clotfelter, 2003; Monks, 2003; Terry & Macy, 2007; Thomas & Smart, 2005; Wunnava & Lauze, 2001), religious (Bielefeld, Rooney, & Steinberg, 2005; Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; Brooks, 2003; Brown & Ferris, 2007; Showers, Showers, Beggs, & Cox, 2011; Tiehen, 2001; Van Slyke & Brooks, 2005), and politically conservative (Brooks, 2006; Showers, Showers, Beggs, & Cox, 2011). It has not been conclusively determined whether gender is a determinant of giving as several studies concluded that males have a higher probability of donating (Haddad, 1986; House, 1987; Melchiori, 1988; Oglesby, 1991; Terry & Macy, 2007; Wunnava & Lauze, 2001) while other studies indicate either no correlation or that females are more likely to give money (Belfield & Beney, 2000, Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1989; Grill, 1998).

Attitudinal variables

Attitudinal characteristics consider donors' opinions, satisfaction, and perceptions related to the college. The experiences students have on campus can influence their perceptions of the college, thus affecting potential philanthropy. In addition, this the concepts introduced in this section of the literature review will strongly influence the case study design of this research project.

Positive emotional attachment is an attitudinal characteristic that has been linked to increased philanthropic tendencies and can occur in many ways (Beeler, 1982; Caboni,

2003; Clotfelter, 2003; Gardner, 1975; Monks, 2003; Shadoian, 1989; Weerts & Ronca, 2007). Donors are more likely than non-donors to recommend that students attend their college (Gardner, 1975; McKinney, 1978; Shadoian, 1989; Terry & Macy, 2007). In particular, donors are more likely than non-donors to have been satisfied with their educational experience (Caboni, 2003; Clotfelter, 2003; Miracle, 1977; Shadoian, 1989; Oglesby, 1991). Likewise, alumni are more inclined to donate to a college that they perceive satisfactorily prepared them for their first job after graduation (Beeler, 1982; Gardner, 1975). Several studies have concluded that donors who perceive a need for financial support were more likely to donate more frequently as well as contribute larger amounts (Caboni, 2003; Ficano & Cunningham, 2001; House, 1987; Miracle, 1977; Taylor & Martin, 1995; Terry & Macy, 2007; Weerts & Ronca, 2007). Finally, alumni who volunteer at the college are more likely to have a positive perception of the college and are more likely to donate (Clotfelter, 2003; Taylor & Martin, 1995; Wunnava & Lauze, 2001).

Philanthropic Variables

Philanthropic variables refer to alumni's charitable tendencies in general. Not a lot of research has been conducted in this area. If alumni support other charitable causes, they are more likely to contribute to their alma mater (Miracle, 1977; House, 1987; Oglesby, 1991; Taylor & Martin, 1995). Okunade & Beri (1997) noted that alumni are more likely to donate if they know other college donors or if their donation will be matched by matching contributions from another source. In support of this finding, Terry & Macy (2007) found that alumni donors prefer to support a college that other people are willing to support as well.

Involvement Variables

Students are involved with their campuses to varying degrees and in vastly unique ways. Involvement variables attempt to identify factors related to students' interactions with the college that may influence philanthropy. Numerous studies have demonstrated a correlation between involvement and donating (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; Dugan et al., 2003; Fygetakis, 1992; Leslie & Ramey, 1988; Hall, 2002; Mercatoris, 2006; Miller, 1997; Oglesby, 1991; Shadoian, 1989; Werts & Ronca, 2007). Involvement with the college can occur both while individuals are still taking classes and later after individuals have graduated.

Mercatoris (2006) found that donors and non-donors had significantly different experiences as students with developing positive relationships with faculty, staff, and students while on campus. Mercatoris also noted that promoting active faculty and staff involvement in the lives of students affects philanthropic decision making, which are similar findings to other studies (e.g., see Hall, 2002). Furthermore, future donors are more likely to have had better interactions with college personnel through mentoring programs (Clotfelter, 2003), frequent contact with faculty and staff (Monks, 2003), and lower faculty-to-student classroom ratios (Cunningham & Cochi-Ficano, 2001). Multiple studies all concluded that student participation in extracurricular or co-curricular activities is an important involvement variable that increases the chances of the college receiving donations (Gardner, 1975; Miracle, 1977; Shadoian, 1989; Oglesby, 1991; Dugan, 2003; Hall, 2002; Monks, 2003; Mercatoris, 2006; Weerts & Ronca, 2007).

Connections are established between the students and the college while the students are on campus. There are opportunities to strengthen the relationship between

the college and its alumni. Establishing the relationship between alumni interactions and the college increases the likelihood of donations from those individuals (Grill, 1988; Haddad, 1986; Hall, 2002; Leslie & Ramey, 1988; Miracle, 1977; Pokrass, 1989; Shadoian, 1989; Taylor & Martin, 1995; Werts & Ronca, 2007). Significant alumni involvement with the college includes reading alumni publications (Grill, 1988; McKinney, 1978; Miracle, 1977; Shadoian, 1989; Taylor & Martin, 1995), interactions with special-interest groups (Taylor & Martin, 1995), number of campus visits after graduation (Shadoian, 1989), remaining in contact with faculty (Shadoian, 1989), and involvement with the college as an alumnus/a (Errett, 2003; Grill, 1988; Haddad, 1986; Miracle, 1977; Taylor & Martin, 1995). As explained by Pokrass (1989), “if a college communicates regularly with its alumni, treats them with respect, and provides the necessary encouragement and support when they become involved, the institution’s alumni association is assured of loyal volunteers whose priority for service remains with their alma mater” (p. 200). Furthermore, Weerts & Ronca (2007) concluded that the alumni who give the most are not necessarily the best students, but rather, they have developed a strong connection with the college through many years of involvement. Terry & Macy (2007) discovered that alumni who live closer to the college after graduation are more likely to give to the college and suggests that this is due to the increased opportunities to be involved in college activities. Pastorella (2003) recommends that community colleges engage their alumni as “mentors, ambassadors, donors, board members, and as an invaluable resource [to the] student body” (p. 75).

Unique Characteristics of RCC Alumni

Although the research previously reviewed in this section suggests many determinants of alumni giving, these studies were largely conducted by examining university alumni (and a few studies examining community college alumni). RCC alumni often differ significantly from university alumni and even from community college alumni who are not from rural institutions in ways that might impact the generalizability of previous studies to the RCC environment.

With respect to student and alumni demographics, universities and community colleges differ significantly. “On average, community college students are older, poorer, more likely to be part time and working, and more likely to be the first member of their family in college than students at four-year universities” (Mellow & Heelan, 2008, p. XV). Community college students tend to have different goals from most university students, including transferring to a university to pursue additional education (Freeman, Conley, & Brooks, 2006). Those who do transfer to a university and later graduate from the university are more likely to recognize the university as their alma mater rather than the community college (Catanzaro & Miller, 1994; Grover, 2009). Earning potential is also significantly greater for university graduates (www.educationplanner.org). Furthermore, community colleges have not existed as long as universities. Therefore, community college alumni are not nearly as well established in the academic community as their university counterparts (Pokrass, 1989). Community colleges, as opposed to universities, are not as adept at keeping track of alumni due to low staffing levels and less sophisticated technologies (Grover, 2009; Melchiori, 1988).

Given the significant differences between RCC alumni and university alumni, it is important to consider the characteristics of RCC alumni that may be related to donating as these characteristics may be different from characteristics of university alumni.

RCCs have their own unique characteristics which make them different from universities and from suburban/urban community colleges. For example, RCCs tend to have fewer students (Hardy & Kastsinas, 2007; Kastsinas & Lacey, 1996), a smaller service-district population base (Grover, 2009; Haines & Steckel, 2000; Making a Difference in Communities, 2002), higher poverty rates (Jensen, McLaughlin, & Slack, 2003), limited corporate support (Garza & Eller, 1998; Grover, 2009), underdeveloped technology (Kastsinas & Moeck, 2002; Pennington, Williams, & Karvonen, 2006), and vast geographical distances to overcome (Making a Difference in Communities, 2002; Pennington, Williams, & Karvonen, 2006) relative to universities and suburban/urban community colleges. These characteristics are likely to cause RCC alumni to donate less relative to their university peers.

RCCs have several characteristics that are similar to universities but distinct from suburban and/or urban community colleges. Katsinas (2007) notes that over 61% of RCCs offer inter-collegiate athletic programs while 25% of suburban community colleges and only 14% of urban community colleges provide sports. In addition, over 90% of the community colleges that offer on-campus housing were RCCs (Katsinas, 2007). Chickering (1969) noted that residing on campus enhanced student development and growth. Astin (1993) discovered that residential students were generally more satisfied and tended to have higher persistence rates than those who live off campus. The fact that

RCCs provide access to athletics and on-campus housing may be an indicator of potential alumni donations to the RCC.

Despite the identified differences that may result in lower alumni donations, RCCs do have several fundraising advantages. As compared to universities, RCCs are able to more quickly react to training needs of local businesses and industry (Garza & Eller, 1998; Grover, 2009). Furthermore, students are more likely to be from the college service district (despite the distances) and, therefore, have a stronger interest in supporting the local college. Finally, in small, rural towns students and faculty are more likely to be in similar social circles (e.g., students and faculty may be neighbors or relatives) causing informal social interactions that may increase the likelihood of becoming a donor because of a stronger attachment to the individuals at the college.

The differences between RCCs and universities and between RCCs and other community colleges suggest that research examining the characteristics of alumni donors at RCCs is important. It is possible that RCC alumni may be sufficiently different from university or other community colleges that the results observed in prior literature may not apply in the RCC setting.

Possible characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni

The proposed research is qualitative and will be a case study. The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution. This section will identify possible characteristics and motivations that may impact alumni giving. The two categories that will be reviewed in this section are: (1) characteristics and motivations from prior research on universities and/or suburban/urban community colleges that are likely

important to alumni in the RCC setting and (2) characteristics and motivations that have not been considered by prior studies of universities and/or suburban/urban community colleges that may be important in the RCC setting. A discussion of each factor is included.

Prior Research Indicators

A number of attitudinal characteristics help determine alumni donors. This dissertation will address four attitudinal factors: (1) emotional attachment with the college; (2) satisfaction with educational experience; (3) satisfaction with preparation for first job; and (4) perceived need for financial support. These components of the research were assessed through semi-structured interviews and then reported on in a descriptive manner. Furthermore, these four categories are directly related to the research questions as they address the characteristics of alumni donors. The first two categories deal directly with the RCC student population that was a focus of this study. The third category is specific to a community college function – prepare graduates for immediate employment. The fourth category is also related to community college students and their need for financial support.

There are two involvement characteristics that will be addressed with this research. The first factor is measuring students' participation in college-sponsored events (concerts, athletic competitions, ceremonies, new student orientation, etc). The second determinate is assessing students' involvement with college-sponsored activities (i.e., student government, department clubs, academic organizations, athletics, honor societies, etc.). These components are likely to be indicators of future donations because of the numerous studies that have been conducted on involvement characteristics (e.g., see

Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; Dugan et al., 2003; Fygetakis, 1992; Hall, 2002; Leslie & Ramey, 1988; Mercatoris, 2006; Monks, 2003; Oglesby, 1991; Shadoian, 1989; Werts & Ronca, 2007).

Factors Not Previously Considered

Many community college students look to transfer to universities. This study proposes to include students' perceptions regarding their satisfaction with preparation for transfer to a university. This indicator is significantly different from any other research on giving trends and will be a unique contribution to the field.

RCC students are more likely to be from the local community (Katsinas, 2007), thus increasing the probability that they knew someone at the college prior to enrollment at the college. This factor has not been studied in previous research projects yet is likely to be an indicator of potential fundraising success at RCCs. Since RCCs provide a higher percentage of on-campus housing than their urban/suburban counterparts, it is also anticipated that this gives RCCs an advantage in fundraising.

RCCs typically provide services to large geographic areas (Katsinas & Lacey, 1996; Pennington et al., 2006) and are often the only higher education option available locally (Katsinas, 2007). A larger percentage of community college graduates remain in the locale of their alma mater than university alumni. It is possible that the vast geographic distances of the RCC service area may inhibit an increased rate and/or amount of donations. However, as the only local option for higher education, RCCs may stand to benefit from people's philanthropic tendencies.

Summary of Literature Review

A review of the literature revealed the importance of alternative sources of funding, especially during the unpredictable economic times of the early part of the 21st century. Furthermore, it became evident that fundraising at RCCs has the potential to become a significant and critical source of revenue that supports the institutional mission and vision of each organization.

Successful fundraising depends on the strategies employed to generate revenue. Numerous fundraising strategies employed by college foundations were identified by the literature. However, the majority of the research was conducted under vastly different economic conditions and at different types of academic institutions (e.g., universities or non-rural community colleges). Common trends that are key components of ideal approaches to fundraising include integrating the mission of the institution with fundraising initiatives, strong leadership that supports philanthropy, sufficient staffing with the requisite expertise and training, and developing relationships to benefit fundraising.

Once an institution has fundraising strategies in place to be successful, it is important for the institution to tap alumni donors. Techniques for soliciting funds from alumni are varied and diverse; however, “friend raising” emerged as a common theme of successful interactions with alumni. The existing literature produced several characteristics that distinguish donors from non-donors. The literature review also identified the importance of establishing a new line of research that examines characteristics of university and/or suburban/urban community college fundraising

success that are likely to also be successful in RCCs. Finally, the literature suggests that there may be unique RCC factors that may encourage alumni to donate.

Alumni from universities and community colleges have similarities and differences. This research focused on providing a rich description of the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni that are likely to support the college through financial donations. An emphasis on alumni attributes and intentions will be a significant contribution to the literature.

Section 3: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution. This study is a case study designed to gain a deeper understanding of RCC alumni and their attributes and perceptions related to supporting their institution. This section outlines the case study methodology used to conduct the research and details the plan that was implemented for human subject protection.

Research Method

This section presents the framework for the research methodology of a case study by first examining the design justification. The second component of this section will follow Yin's (2009) recommendation for components of case study research designs which include: a study's questions, the unit of analysis, the criteria for interpreting the findings, and efforts to maximize data quality and integrity. Finally, this section outlines the limitations of case study research and strategies to mitigate inherent weaknesses. Several experts on case study design have been consulted including Bassey (1999), Merriam (2002), Stake (1995) and Yin (2009).

Design Justification

A qualitative research is "a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words from participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner" (Creswell, 2005, p. 39). According to Creswell (2005), qualitative researchers need to recognize that it is important to listen to the views of research participants, ask general questions and gather data in a natural

setting, and that the research plays a role in advocating for the improvement of people's situation.

This dissertation focuses on the following components of qualitative research:

1. The Participant Perspective – the researcher is the data gathering instrument (Merriam, 2002) and interprets participants' realities. This research provides a description of two specific cases and a human instrument for data collection in order to be immediately responsive and adaptive.
2. Complexity and Wholeness – analysis of qualitative research relies on themes that emerge from the data cataloging process. The analysis is universal and provides great depth into the topic being researched.
3. Richly Descriptive – Words are used extensively to provide a description of the context, participants, activities, and perspectives (Merriam, 2002).
4. Reflection – “allows the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal deep connections between the writer and his or her subject” (Hatch, 2002, p. 10).

A case study design is appropriate when the purpose of the research is to conduct a detailed exploration of a case based on extensive data collection (Creswell, 2005).

Stake (1988) defines a case study as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 21). This research includes two RCCs and a sub-group of their alumni. The study will focus on describing the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution. Yin (2009) notes that case studies are important if the research questions require an extensive description of some social phenomena. The results of this research

are provided as detailed findings in Section 4. Furthermore, if the research questions do not require controls of behavioral conditions and focus on contemporary events, a case study is appropriate (Yin, 2009). It is important to note that in this research project, the researcher did not control for behavioral conditions as the topic focuses primarily on a contemporary event. Erickson (1986) notes that qualitative case study researchers are interpreters in the field who record objectively what is happening, examine meaning, and substantiate what is revealed.

Identification of the Research Questions

The following two research questions guided this project:

1. What are the characteristics of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution?
2. What factors motivate RCC alumni to consider contributing financial support to the institution?

Unit of Analysis

The two community colleges included in this study will be referred to as College One and College Two. Both colleges agreed that the researcher may refer to their institutions by name in the study with the understanding the anonymity of the participants will be protected to the extent possible. However, after conducting the interviews, it became apparent it would be necessary to maintain the institutional anonymity as many of the participants are currently employed at their respective alma maters and stories about colleagues were included. College One and College Two were selected for two reasons. First, both colleges meet all definitions of RCCs established previously and include:

- Population density: under 1,000 people per square mile;
- Overall density under 500 people per square mile for surrounding census blocks;
- Fewer than 100,000 people in the college service district.

Second, the researcher is familiar with both colleges. This adds an element of convenience, shared knowledge about the institutions, and a familiarity with the issues facing the people who will be interviewed. Yin (2009) indicates having a firm grasp of the issues being studied is essential for the researcher to be successful in conducting case study research.

The main units of analysis in this study are the alumni of College One and College Two. A non-random, purposeful sample was examined. A purposeful sample is a “qualitative sampling procedure in which researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2005, p.596). The researcher asked the respective college foundation directors to provide a list of people who meet the following criteria: (1) graduated from their colleges, (2) participated in at least one college-related event in the past calendar year, and (3) currently reside in their respective college service districts. Both foundation directors, after being briefed on the purpose of this research, confirmed that everyone invited to participate in this research had donated financially to their respective community colleges. The foundation directors were not willing to include any details related to the amount or frequency of the donations. Interestingly enough, fifteen of the sixteen participants also resided in their respective college service districts prior to enrollment suggesting an added element unique to RCCs. Graduates who have participated in a college-sponsored event in the past year and reside in the college service district are more likely to be aware of issues

related to the college compared to non-graduates, or even graduates, who have not attended college activities and reside outside of the service district.

Each college provided a list of individuals who met the criteria. College One provided a list of 24 individuals that met the guidelines. The contact information was included and the researcher emailed each participant an invitation to participate. Twelve people responded to the invitations, 10 agreed to be interviewed, and 8 people were available for in-person interviews. All eight individuals completed the entire interview. All interviews lasted between 23 and 42 minutes. Interviews were conducted on the respective college campuses in a private room.

College Two chose to withhold individual contact information, citing internal protocol, and e-mailed the participants on behalf of the researcher. Roughly 80 invitations were sent, 19 people responded, 13 agreed to be interviewed, and eight people were available for in-person interviews. All eight individuals completed the entire interview. All interviews lasted between 18 to 39 minutes. Interviews were conducted on the college campus in a private room.

Criteria for Analysis

The research happened in two stages. First, the researcher reviewed documents related to the alumni association, fundraising activities at the college, and reports on the colleges' efforts to engage alumni. This provided the researcher with a better understanding of the college in general and specific fundraising efforts. The second component of the research included semi-structured interviews with selected alumni. The framework of questions is included as Appendix A and the questions were approved through Oregon State University's Institutional Review Board process.

Document Review

Merriam (2002) notes that documents should be used if the following two questions can be answered in the affirmative: (1) Does the document contain information or insights relevant to the research question? And (2) Can the document be acquired in a reasonably practical and systematic way? To answer the first question, documents from several sources were reviewed as part of this study. Sources of documents included the college, the foundation, and the alumni association. Documents that are considered public records were included. Public records include minutes from meetings, strategic plans, financial audits, budget documents, web pages, and marketing materials used by the college, the alumni association, or the foundation. The documents were readily available to the researcher, and the review was conducted in a practical and systematic way. Each document was read once for understanding and flow. The researcher re-read the documents and categorized themes using highlighters. The themes were selected from the literature review and are included as Appendix B. The coding process informed the dialog as the researcher had a firm grasp of issues related to alumni development at each of the colleges.

Interviews

The researcher conducted sixteen interviews. The researcher followed Taylor and Bogdan's (1984) suggestions for items that should be included upfront. The interviewee was presented with the purpose of the research both verbally and in writing. Identity protection was detailed verbally and in writing. The participants were informed about the process for checking the transcripts of their interviews to ensure accuracy of their message. The member checking process occurred after the interviews were completed

and the transcripts compiled – all sixteen participants were provided copies of the transcripts and all sixteen confirmed their content as accurate representations of their experiences, thoughts, and opinions. Changes to the transcripts were tracked; however, the recommended changes were minimal and did not affect intent. One participant requested that all colloquialism be removed from the verbatim transcripts, or that the complete transcripts not be disclosed publically. Participants were informed during the recruitment phase that the interviews would be recorded for transcription purposes. Transcripts meet Oregon State Institutional Review Board Standards by being stored for a minimum of three years in a locked file cabinet.

The semi-structured interview questions will follow Merriam's (2002) recommendations by using hypothetical, ideal position, and interpretive questions. The framework of questions are included in Appendix A. While the researcher left open the possibility for follow up interviews to clarify the participants' intent or address newly discovered issues, no follow up interviews were deemed necessary.

The data analysis process included examining, categorizing, and tabulating the transcripts (Yin, 2007). The data was coded and sorted into categories. Coding is defined as "a qualitative research process in which the researcher makes sense out of text data, divides it into text or image segments, labels the segments, examines codes for overlap or redundancy, and collapses these codes into themes" (Creswell, 2005, p. 589). By identifying themes through the coding process, the research is richer (Creswell, 2005).

Trustworthiness

In order to ensure reliable results, this section outlines strategies that were used to improve the authenticity of the information gathered. The three components of this

section that are designed to ensure the findings are trustworthy are credibility, generalizability, and dependability.

Credibility

This research utilized multiple sources of evidence. Data sources include document reviews and interviews from numerous people and at two distinct locations. After the data was collected, a consistent process of examination and categorization took place. The researcher used member checking to ensure the data was credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking occurred as transcripts of the interviews were initially reviewed by the person who was interviewed. The interviewee was asked to make clarifications or corrections related to their intent. The transcripts were coded based on themes that emerged from the literature, document review, and the interviews themselves. Finally, research participants had the opportunity to review the researcher's summary of their particular contribution. Participant reviews increase the validity of the research findings (Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2009). In this project, all sixteen participants confirmed the intent of their interviews with only minor revisions to correct for grammar.

Generalizability

Generalizability deals with the issue of determining whether the findings can be applied beyond the case being studied (Yin, 2009). To improve the ability to generalize the study to a broader audience, Merriam (2002) recommends two strategies that were incorporated into this study. First, the findings should provide enough description of the case so that others can determine how their own situation is similar. The results of this research are a description of the characteristics and motivations that influence alumni to

contribute financially to the college. The findings and implications are presented in Section 5.

The second strategy to ensure generalizability is to make sure the case that is being studied is a typical subject rather than a unique situation. College One is located in a small town with a population of roughly 5,500 people. The college enrolls over 2,100 students with 64% taking classes full-time. Approximately 58% of the students are women. College One has several athletic programs including basketball (Men's and Women's), volleyball (Women only), wrestling (Men only), and rodeo (Men's and Women's). The college also provides on-campus housing.

College Two is located in a larger community with a population of roughly 50,000 people. Nearly 4,500 students are enrolled at College Two with 54% of the students attending on a part-time basis. Women comprise 57% of the student body. College Two fields athletic teams in basketball (Men's and Women's), volleyball (Women only), and rodeo (Men's and Women's). On-campus housing accommodations are available to students at College Two.

College One and College Two are both public community colleges located in rural locations. College One and College Two both have comparable academic programming as most RCCs including opportunities in transfer, vocational-technical, developmental, adult, community, and continuing education areas. Both colleges also function as cultural and recreational hubs for local residents, which is typical for most colleges in rural areas.

Dependability

If a case study is dependable, another researcher following the same protocol should arrive at the same conclusions from a consistency perspective (Merriam, 2002; Yin, 2009). This does not imply that if the study is replicated the conclusions will be the same. As such, the goal of dependability is to minimize the errors and biases in a study (Yin, 2009). Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest that the aim of the qualitative researcher should be dependability or consistency. This means that the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2002).

Triangulation improves dependability and is defined as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection” (Creswell, 2005, p. 600). By gathering data from multiple sources (i.e. interviews of alumni, examining minutes from college meetings, and reading strategic plans as well as numerous participants and multiple sites), the researcher will be able to triangulate findings as patterns and categories emerge. To further strengthen the findings in this research project, the researcher included two separate colleges. This allowed for comparisons between the interviews at both sites and analysis of similar documents from distinct sources.

Wolcott (1990) recommends several strategies to improve dependability including accurately recording data, including all data in the final report, and seeking feedback. To accurately record all data, high-quality digital recordings were made of all interviews. Furthermore, the researcher used two separate recording devices to guard against technical difficulties. The interviews were transcribed word-for-word and, as explained, were presented to the interviewees for member checking to ensure accuracy. In the final

report, extensive direct quotes were incorporated, with appropriate pseudonyms to protect the identity of individual participants. By presenting extensive quotes directly from the participants, the dependability is increased. Following the interviews, the researcher cross-checked findings with summaries presented in the literature review.

Limitations to Case Study Research

While there are strengths to case study research, there are also shortcomings. Case studies provide understanding of complex issues, provide a basis for the application of ideas, and provide a contextual analysis of a specific situation. This section addresses the weaknesses associated with case study research.

The greatest concern regarding case studies is the perceived lack of rigor which is typically a symptom of the investigator not following the prescribed systematic procedures (Yin, 2009). The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to addressing the concern regarding rigor by establishing the research protocol based on best practices outlined in the literature. Other critics argue that case studies are limited to only being an exploratory tool with little ability to generalize the results (Yin, 2009). While case studies are not inherently applicable to other populations, they are generalizable to theoretical propositions (Creswell, 2005). The proposed research in particular is designed to gather knowledge from one case that includes two sites and explore the meaning of the findings. Finally, case studies can have a tendency to take too long and produce large amounts of information that is compiled in an unreadable document (Yin, 2009). Again, the purpose of this chapter is to establish the research protocol and outline a process for analysis and reporting of the data so that the results are readable and understandable.

In order to minimize limitations associated with author bias, this section addresses those issues. Brown (1996) notes that it is important to be aware of one's "biases, blind spots, and cognitive limitations" (p. 20). One of the possible blind spots is that the researcher has very little experience with fundraising, and this research is an opportunity to expand knowledge in this area. In order to compensate for a lack of fundraising experience, the researcher worked with a chief development officer to review the proposed interview questions. Another potential blind spot is the author's experience as a college student. Whereas this research involves interviews with community college graduates, the author attended a major university. As established in the literature review, there are commonalities between university and community college alumni. The author, when conducting the interviews, must be focused on discovering the interviewees' views and perspectives and not confusing those with his own experiences. Furthermore, the researcher has worked for various RCCs in positions that interact frequently with students and their lived experiences. This professional experience provides an appropriate understanding of the interviewees' perspectives.

Despite the potential shortcomings of a case study, the purpose of the proposed research project and related questions would not be well-served by other methodologies. An experimental design is more appropriate to establish a potential cause and effect relationship between independent and dependent variables (Creswell, 2005). In addition, an experimental design separates the phenomenon from its context (Yin, 2009). However, an experimental design may not be appropriate in this situation because relatively little is known about the current attitudes and demographics of alumni at RCCs. Ultimately, this research is seeking to describe in-depth the characteristics and

motivations of RCC alumni. A case study is an ideal methodology to respond to the research questions with a rich description of contextual conditions (Yin, 2009). A rich description was obtained through the analysis by including data from interviewing people and examining pertinent documents.

Ensuring Human Subject Protection

The researcher has already obtained Internal Review Board (IRB) certification and formal IRB approval from Oregon State University since human subjects will participate in interviews. The risks to participants' welfare were minimal and no participants expressed discomfort. Two participants did express hesitancy to sharing specific information that involved potentially illegal behavior, but ultimately indicated consent to participate and for all information shared to be used in the final report. Several strategies were implemented to mitigate risks to participants including a thorough introductory letter, implied consent acceptance document, and proper assurances of anonymity.

Summary

A multi-site case study was employed to interview 16 alumni – eight from each institution. The research protocol was adhered to including everything approved by OSU's IRB. Participants were asked a series of pre-approved questions as well as related follow-up questions. Interviewees completed a member-checking process to verify the intent and integrity of their interviews.

Trustworthiness was established by ensuring credibility, generalizability, and dependability. Demonstrating credibility included using multiple sites and numerous participants. The findings of the research are generalizable to RCCs as the two sites used

are considered traditional RCCs. Strategies to ensure dependability included accurately recording and transcribing the interviews and utilizing extensive direct quotes from the participants.

Finally, qualitative case studies do have potential shortcomings. Some critics of qualitative research argue that large amounts of data and long periods of time can contribute to invalid results. This was not the case in this study as the researcher ensured the data was properly coded and examined extensively, both in a timely manner. If another researcher follows the same protocol, the results will be consistent with the findings presented later in this paper.

Section 4: Results

The findings of the research are presented in this chapter. The characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni are detailed and analyzed.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution.

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution?
2. What factors motivate RCC alumni to consider contributing financial support to the institution?

Participant Demographics

The researcher asked the respective college foundation directors to identify people who met the following criteria: (1) graduated from their colleges, (2) participated in at least one college-related event in the past calendar year, and (3) currently reside in their respective college service districts. Each college provided a list of individuals who met the criteria.

College One provided a list of twenty-four individuals that met the guidelines. The contact information was included, and the researcher emailed each participant an invitation to participate. There were twelve people who responded to the invitations, ten agreed to be interviewed, and eight individuals were available for in-person interviews. All eight participants completed the entire interview. All interviews lasted between twenty-four and forty-one minutes. Most interviews lasted between thirty and thirty-five minutes. Interviews were conducted on the college campus in a private room.

College Two chose to withhold individual contact information and e-mailed the participants on behalf of the researcher. Roughly eighty invitations were sent, nineteen people responded, thirteen agreed to be interviewed, and eight individuals were available for in-person interviews. All eight individuals completed the entire interview. All interviews lasted between eighteen and forty-two minutes with most interviews lasting between thirty and thirty-five minutes. Interviews were conducted on the college campus in a private room.

There were an equal number of men and women participants. Alumni graduated between 1959 and 2005. Fifteen of the sixteen participants lived in their college's service district prior to enrollment at the college. Throughout the remainder of this dissertation, the participants from College One will be referred to as RCCA-1 through RCCA-8 and the participants from College Two will be referred to as RCCA-9 through RCCA-16.

Coding Process

Data analysis is a systematic search for understanding (Hatch, 2002). After the interviews were completed, the researcher proceeded with a systematic approach to coding the transcripts, which were checked by the participants for accuracy and clarification. The researcher read over 150 pages of transcripts two times for understanding and context. During the third reading, the researcher marked content related to the first research question. During the fourth reading, the researcher marked content related to the second research question. During the fifth reading, the researcher identified preliminary themes (Creswell, 2005) using the participants' words (Hatch, 2002) as codes. During the sixth reading, the themes were checked for accuracy and each interview was cross-referenced with the other interviews.

The categories that emerged were analyzed to see if they were supported by the data. The researcher began to make general findings. The four general areas that emerged from the research process are: 1) Attitudinal Factors of Alumni; 2) Engagement with the College; 3) Demographic Indicators of Alumni who Support the Institution; and, 4) Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni.

Seven categories were developed under the theme Attitudinal Factors of Alumni with four areas related to alumni experience as students including: a) transfer preparation; b) job preparation; c) satisfaction with experience; and d) emotional attachment with the college. Three areas were also identified in this category that dealt with alumni experiences after graduation including: a) perceived need for financial support; b) recommended college to others; and c) advocacy for college initiatives.

Eight categories were developed under the theme Engagement with the College, six related to the experiences as students, which include: a) experience with faculty/staff while a student; b) college-related travel opportunities; c) involved with out-of-class activities that are college-sponsored; d) involved with out-of-class activities that are college-related; e) housing while a student; and, f) use of auxiliary support services. Two areas of engagement by alumni emerged including: a) involvement as alumni with college events and/or college activities; and, b) maintain contact with faculty/staff after graduation.

Five categories were developed under the theme Demographic Indicators of Alumni who Support the Institution include: a) from the local community; b) remain in the local community; c) return to the local community; d) degrees earned beyond the associate degree; and, e) received financial support.

Four categories were developed under the theme Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni included: a) desire to fill an institutional need; b) re-payers who had a great experience; c) re-payers who received a scholarship; and, d) desire to make a difference.

Theme One: Attitudinal Factors of Alumni

This section reports findings related to both the first and second research questions which are: (1) What are the characteristics of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution? (2) What factors motivate RCC alumni to consider contributing financial support to the institution? The general theme of this section is supported by the seven sub-categories and the associated findings which are detailed accordingly:

a) Transfer Preparation

Fourteen of the sixteen participants transferred to a four year university to pursue a baccalaureate degree. All fourteen interviewees who transferred noted exceptional academic preparation for the curriculum at the four year university. One participant noted that “the rigor that I had here...in smaller class sizes with teachers who knew your name and knew when you were gone, there were just so many more expectations here”. (RCCA-10). The same respondent went on to say that “my studies here completely prepared me for transfer to the University”. RCCA-2, referring to his experience at the community college, said “evidently something soaked in somewhere. I was offered something that soaked in, and I was able to utilize it”. RCCA-2 attributes his success in business to what he learned in college.

Most of the participants described similar factors of smaller class sizes and instructors that knew their students personally as factors that positively influenced their

transfer experience. RCCA-4 referenced several surveys that indicated the community college transfer students were out-performing native university students because “it’s the individual attention...I mean you are not being taught by teachers’ assistants. You’re not one of 500 in a class”. Furthermore, RCCA-4 noted that this was of particular importance to people from rural areas and accustomed to smaller populations saying, “I think that makes a big difference, especially if you’re from smaller areas”.

RCCA-9 indicated that being in the community colleges’ courses prior to attending larger lectures at a university prepared her to be successful by instilling basic academic habits so that she was not intimidated. RCCA-14 echoed those sentiments saying, “It prepared me in the sense that you start learning the language of college language, like you walk in and teachers start talking about the syllabi. You had absolutely no idea what that was”. She continued, “so you learned the ropes, study habits, study skills, kind of that culture, sort of an academic culture. It didn’t completely prepare you because here they take care of you better, and at the university you’re just another person”. RCCA-3 echoed similar observations indicating that “College One is what focused me on academics...I don’t think that I would have been able to go directly to [a university] without going through College One first”. RCCA-3 even attributed his choice to attend graduate school to the inspiration he received at a community college saying, “I probably never would have ever considered graduate school immediately out of college had it not been for the encouragement I got, even as a freshman and sophomore”.

RCCA-1 indicated that the entire transfer experience was exceptional – all of the credits were accepted by the university and he felt prepared for the rigor of upper level

undergraduate courses. RCCA-1 said, “I transitioned just seamlessly into the next level of classes”. He noted that the time at a RCC allowed him to “kind of move in that direction [transfer to a university] and you get the bugs worked out while you’re at the smaller school and you’re matured enough I think by the time you move on to the four year school that you’re ready”. RCCA-3 earned a doctorate degree from a major land-grant research university while RCCA-6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, and 15 all earned master’s degrees from various land-grant research universities. Furthermore, RCCA-1, 2, 5, 12, 13, and 16 all completed bachelor’s degrees from two different land-grant research universities. The fact that these universities have selective admissions standards and associated expectations for academic rigor highlights the quality of education these people received while at a community college.

One person said that while they were prepared exceptionally well for the university courses, they realized after transfer that they could have gotten even more out of their time at the community college, which led to an increased appreciation for their associate degree (RCCA-7). Another participant said there was a “culture shock” associated with the transfer experience because her college took such good care of her as a student and a person (RCCA-14). RCCA-13 graduated from a community college and “just didn’t think I was really ready to make that big leap, so I stayed here and worked for a while and then quickly realized that I needed to get a bachelor’s”. When she did make the transition from a community college to a university, she “didn’t really notice that much difference between the two”.

Another person attended a university prior to his community college experience, but “didn’t succeed very well” (RCCA-12). After a successful experience at the

community college including earning merit scholarships and formal recognition of exemplary academic performance, the student transferred back to a university and graduated without further setbacks. RCCA-4 also attended a university prior to going to a RCC and the experience was so bad that she never returned to a university despite graduating from a RCC with honors.

One person noted that her RCC preparation exceeded that of other community college graduates (RCCA-15). She attended a university in another state and “was far and above more educated than other students in similar programs” because “they didn’t have the opportunity to take half of the courses in the major area” as her community college offered. RCCA-15 continued noting that she “really was not impressed” with the university because she was not able to “form personal bonds with any person, either a student or a faculty member”. RCCA-4 RCCA-10 indicated that “my studies completely prepared me to go to the university”. RCCA-3 summed up the general sentiment regarding the RCC’s ability to prepare students for transfer saying, “I thought it was excellent”. RCCA-15 concluded that, “I had that ah-ha moment that, wow, I really got an excellent education at College Two”.

b) Preparation for Job

Two of the sixteen participants (RCCA-4 and RCCA-8) went directly to the workforce after their time at a community college and never pursued a degree beyond the associate’s level. Both reported a high level of satisfaction with the preparation they received at the community college for their careers. Furthermore, several of the interviewees who went on to study at a university reported that their experience at a RCC was still highly relevant to their jobs.

RCCA-4 started out a university but had an extremely negative experience. She returned to college many years later as a non-traditional student. RCCA-4 said of returning to a community college that she “left bawling”. This was due to her self-perception which included thoughts that “I was too old...too stupid...didn’t know how to study”. Before she ever enrolled, she had decided to go back to her low-wage job, except she could not return to that position because she had already trained her replacement so, “I decided I’d just do one semester and go find work”. Ultimately, RCCA-4 graduated with honors and is now working at the college. She says she “was well prepared. When I started [college], I didn’t know how to turn a computer on. Now everybody [at work] asks me how do you do this? I learned it all through here”.

RCCA-8 did not transfer to a university. Instead, “I went to work in an oil field for a summer job and ended up getting hired. They were paying [well] and it was a good job. I was there for five or six years, and then decided to go back to our ranch and do that”. RCCA-8 felt college prepared him “well” for work even though “what I ended up doing had nothing to do with what I was studying in college”. College helped him mature and understand the value of his work.

Even though RCCA-2 went on and earned a bachelor’s degree, he credits his RCC for teaching him much of what was needed to be successful from a career standpoint. He said, “I felt prepared when I did go into business. I mean, I ran a successful business for close to fifty years”. RCCA-2’s business ventures were all conducted within the service district of the community college.

RCCA-13 graduated from a community college and then went to work. After being laid off nearly five years later, she returned to complete a bachelor’s degree at a

university. Speaking about the preparation she received at the community college, RCCA-13 said, “I think it prepared me well”. Her associate’s degree is in journalism, and she later completed a bachelor’s degree in management. Coupled together, the education serves her well in RCCA-13’s current employment with the college in the public information and marketing office.

RCCA-1 went directly from his RCC to a university. He believes that his two years at the community college better prepared him for his career than the two years he spent at the university saying the first two years prepared him “more than the second two years did”. RCCA-1 indicated that the community college did “a lot of things that were really side-by-side with what I do today in my job”. He emphasized the formal learning inside the classroom and the relevance to his current profession in the newspaper by noting that he “had opportunities where [he] leant [his] hand in helping the [student newspaper]”. As for the soft skills that are necessary to be successful in many professions, RCCA-1 felt “communications” was the most important skill learned at the community college level. “I remember graduating from high school, if I had to speak in front of anybody I was just a turtle and crawled into a shell”, said RCCA-1. When referring to a series of speech, English, and communication courses, RCCA-1 said he learned “to get up in front of the class” and “to work in the public eye and be in front of the public eye” which helped him “to overcome my fears for dealing with folks out in the community”.

RCCA-3 was invited to participate on the speech and debate team as a student. He subsequently completed a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, and doctorate in the same field so that he could return to his community college alma mater as a forensics

coach. There were numerous skills and attributes learned while a community college student that significantly influence his professional approach to coaching those same programs. RCCA-3 said:

My philosophy is very much tied to what happened to me as a student back then. First of all, I think the first thing that happened was that, when I came, the program was very open access. Anyone could join the team. Anyone could be a part. I was an example of that...the notion was that you didn't have to audition. You didn't have to try out for the team. You didn't have to be a star to be on the team, and that's very much the way that I run the program now.

The open access nature of the program fits perfectly with the community college mission to remain open to the general public. In addition to open-access, RCCA-3 learned to value excellence. He continues to emphasize being competitive as the director of the program. RCCA-3 reported:

The other thing is that, even though we're open-ended, we're very, very competitive – highly competitive, and I know I learned that [as a student]...success early on...we have continued that. If you go to any program around, and you ask about College One, they know what our debate team does. We've been in the top ten nationally for more years than I can count.

RCCA-3 summarized what he learned as a student and how he applies it to his program today by saying, "I think that competition and yet, educational focus, is very much a part of who I am because of the program that I went through".

RCCA-6 went to a community college knowing that he wanted to go into education and become a teacher. His desire to pursue a degree in education was

strengthened by a professor who “you could just tell the guy loved his classes” (RCCA-6). One of the talents of this professor that was most evident was the fact that “he made our classes interesting and all that” (RCCA-6), which impressed RCCA-6. Furthermore, RCCA-6 appreciated being able to “meet with him after class, at times go down to his office just to chew the fat, as they say, but I really enjoyed him” (RCCA-6). These skills and attributes, learned as a community college student, have impacted and influenced RCCA-6 in his role as a teacher.

Similarly, RCCA-7 also became a teacher and learned, through observation of community college faculty, some interesting lessons that have stayed with him. RCCA-7 remembered one instructor who was rather monotonous in his delivery of lectures. RCCA-7 reported how he and a friend would pass the time in this particular class saying:

We would count the number of times [the professor] would cross his legs. You know how college kids are. You count the number of times he'd cross his legs. I can remember that for some reason. Now, as a teacher, I'm like, 'That would make me mad'! That would really irk me if some kid was sitting there counting how many times I said a word or something stupid like that. At the time, that's how we made it through. Some of the lectures were like “duh”.

RCCA-7 learned, at the community college, to “actively involve” students and get them “to use a higher level of thinking”. He appreciated a botany instructor who “would go out and walk and find different types of leaves” for laboratory classes. RCCA-7 remembered an instructor who gave him a “C” on a paper, but followed it up and challenged and inspired him to do better. RCCA-7 later earned an “A” in the class and

the professor “was kind of shocked that I did this work. He was kind of surprised by what I brought forward”.

RCCA-10 feels that she learned a lot about diversity by virtue of being in a community college classroom. In her previous experiences as a high school student, you “generally don’t experience too much racial diversity”. Her roommate was African-American and provided her an opportunity to learn about someone from a different ethnic background as well as from a different part of the country. RCCA-10 also experienced a diverse range of student ages while at the community college saying:

I think probably the biggest one was being 18 and walking into a classroom and seeing somebody that was either one of my mom or dad’s friends or somebody that was older than they were and going, “Okay. Wait, they’re my classmate. They’re a fellow student.” That was a big part of the diversity that I learned when I was a student at College Two.

RCCA-10 said it was this initial exposure to diversity as a community college student that led to new opportunities for relationships with people that has helped her professionally. RCCA-10 became a college professor after studying at a community college, transferring to a university, and completing a master’s degree. To this point, RCCA-10 said:

More importantly I guess I just now go into every job and I realize that sometimes it’s the people, like the secretaries or the janitors, that maybe don’t necessarily come right off as, “I have the big degree,” and that type of stuff, that are the ones that are the movers and the shakers and can get so much done and they know the ins and outs of everything...Because I was exposed to all of that diversity and

knowing that somebody who's 60 has great intelligence and wonderful ideas and can be a really fantastic person in a group made me realize that there's other people in jobs that can do more than the person who has the highest ranking title. Now I go into jobs and I look for those people and become friends with them right away, because then I feel like it'll be easier—my job will be easier. I think it made me realize that you don't just have to go for the one that looks like they're going to be the straight A student. There's a lot going for people who don't fit the traditional mold and I think that's what it taught.

Speaking specifically about being prepared for her career as a community college professor, RCCA-10 feels like she:

...learn[ed] how to be in a classroom with students of all different learning abilities and all different ages, where they're at, they're struggling with technology or they don't understand or they're coming back to school so they're really nervous or anxious...having to learn how to be in a classroom with all that [as a student]...I think prepared me for being a teacher.

When asked how well he felt his experience at College Two prepared him for his first job, RCCA-12 responded, "very well". He noted that his community college experience in a hands-on agriculture program "helped him tremendously" and "was another reason for actually getting a job" with the United States Department of Agriculture. In addition to what he learned in the classroom, RCCA-12 noted that he also gained "the confidences that I needed...the experience that I gained definitely helped me be what I am today".

RCCA-14 also felt like her experience as a community college student prepared her “big time” for her career as a community college professor. She reports that while she does not “necessarily mimic” her instructors, she did “glean things that I’ve learned from my instructors that made an impact on me, and I try to share that with my students”. When asked for an example, she talked about an instructor who created a high level of comfort in the classroom with his demeanor, saying:

Well, for example, there’s one professor who’s fairly casual, not totally casual, but fairly casual in his lecture style. So he would lecture, but he would sit down maybe on the desk or walk to the other side of the room and then start a discussion. So it wasn’t this formal outline kind of a lecture, and I’ve kind of adopted that. I like to have an outline for a second because I like the organization of an outline, but then I’ll stop, and then we’ll kind of meander and ramble just a little bit and get people thinking and wake them up again. Then we’ll go back. So I’ve adopted that because I really appreciated that comfort that he presented because it was not so formal, so you didn’t have to worry.

RCCA-14 also experienced several travel opportunities as a student, which will be detailed later, and has incorporated trips into her own classroom. After starting the Geology Club, which is an extension of her academic program, she took the students to a national park area known for its geological formations so that the students could enhance their study of geology. She feels that the professors who arranged the travel opportunities for her as a student functioned as mentors. Now RCCA-14 uses the travel opportunities to “spend my time as a mentor to these students”. There is a limit to the amount of time RCCA-14 can spend traveling and mentoring, so she also makes sure her

students are aware of other student clubs and organizations that may be of benefit to the students. She will often “try to keep the students involved in other organizations...so I’ll encourage them to go, and I’ll take them with me, and we’ll go to a meeting or something”.

RCCA-15 reported that graduating from College Two was impressive to local employers and gave her an advantage in several searches she has been in locally as a job applicant. She said:

A couple employers that I interviewed with moving back here were just impressed with the degree from College Two College. The impression I got was that they were pretty familiar with people in the community who work here and seemed very impressed. Of course, as a naïve, young girl, I never saw that, but coming back then as a college graduate, it was like, oh, yeah, people really put a lot of emphasis on an education from here.

As a student, RCCA-15 had a positive experience with faculty who provided her with mentoring, guidance, and motivation – all of which has been detailed. Those experiences prepared her for a career as an educator because, in her own words:

I am an instructor, so I work with students who are wanting to better their education by preparing for and taking the GED test. My job on a daily basis is not necessarily teaching. It’s being a friend, a counselor, a nurse, sometimes a principal, the whole gamut of issues we’ve seen. We have students who come to us who are referred by direct court, probation and parole, homeless shelters, Department of Human Services. We have worked very closely with those entities, so it’s almost like a social worker would be doing case management in a

social service agency. Not only do we do that, we try to teach fractions and comma usage. It's very rewarding because I can see the benefits of my daily job instantly. Even years later we have graduates who come back and still check in and touch base and it's extremely rewarding.

c) Satisfaction with Experience

All sixteen alumni expressed a high level of satisfaction with their overall experience as a student at a RCC. "I loved my experience" (RCCA-11). Other participants expressed similar sentiments saying "it was wonderful" (RCCA-16); "interesting and worthwhile" (RCCA-12); "I appreciate the opportunity to come here" (RCCA-9); "great overall" (RCCA-4); "I really got an excellent education" (RCCA-15); "My overall experience at College Two was really good. It was a lot of fun" (RCCA-13); "It was a pretty wonderful experience" (RCCA-1); and, "it was fun" (RCCA-5).

Several participants appreciated the small class sizes and people who know their names. One participant explained that "some of these thoughts in my head matter to people" (RCCA-15). This participant attributed that to faculty who knew her inside and outside of the classroom and took the time to discuss academic content. Another alumni detailed an experience where a faculty member complimented an academic skill and suggested the student participate in a higher level course. This actually ended up being the start of multiple college degrees and a career in the field (RCCA-3). Another participant noted that not only did faculty know the names of their students, they insisted on interacting on a personal basis. The personal interaction was reinforced for this student when he went to class for the first time and recounted the experience of asking the professor what the students should call him. The professor answered that students

should interact on a first name basis. This went a long way to mitigate the fear of being a non-traditional student returning to college after many years (RCCA-4). RCCA-16 praised a particular faculty member saying “she was very wonderful, very warm, and supportive...I was amazed the things about my personal life that she knew”.

Two participants attended a university prior to enrolling at a RCC. Neither person reported a positive experience at the university. RCCA-4 never attended a four-year institution again despite graduating with honors from her RCC. RCCA-12 said his university experience “wasn’t the best” and later credited his RCC with his successful transfer and subsequent completion of a bachelor degree. RCCA-14 noted that “university life definitely was different” because “here they take better care of you and at the university you’re just another person”. Another participant noted they received more academic assistance at the RCC versus the university (RCCA-9). RCCA-3 felt that the college atmosphere as a student was supportive and encouraging. Later, as he was looking for a job, he remembered the value of a positive environment and wanted to return to work in that same type of atmosphere. He also stated that “I came back...because I liked the feel of the place. I liked the philosophy behind it”. RCCA-15 “did not like sitting in class with 200 other students” and “felt no personal bonds with any person, either a student or a faculty member” while at the university. Finally, RCCA-14 noted that the experience at an RCC was “totally worth it”.

d) Emotional Attachment with the College

RCCA-16 said, “I love College Two”. Among all participants, similar statements demonstrated the strong emotional attachment with their alma mater. RCCA-9 said, “I appreciate the preparation that I had here and I’m glad that I got to come here”. RCCA-

14 noted that “I was invited to a big family”. RCCA-2 attributes many of his successes to “experiences at College One”. RCCA-15 “feels completely blessed to be an employee here”.

Perhaps there is no better indicator of emotional attachment with the college than the phenomena discovered in this research that may be unique to RCCs. Nine of the sixteen people interviewed chose to seek employment at their alma mater. When asked about this, respondents had several perspectives on why this occurs. RCCA-4 stated, “To go from student to employee is not what I ever thought I’d want to be, but I cannot think of any other job I’d want. I love it here! I like helping the students. I like the people I work with...the faculty, the staff. It’s awesome!” RCCA-14 indicated it was never the intention to seek employment at the college, but when the economy was poor, “it was nice to come back...I really enjoyed it”. The initial experience as an adjunct having recently completed graduate school led to an interest in a full-time position that was available shortly thereafter. RCCA-3 viewed the chance to return to work at his alma mater as an opportunity to work with a mentor who was a positive influence on him as a student.

RCCA-16 recounted an experience as an employee that mirrored her experience as a student. Circumstances outside of work were unfortunate and led to some dire times. The other employees rallied and anonymously contributed financially to a fund that helped her. This experience reinforced the camaraderie among faculty and staff that is often extended to students when people know about each other on a personal level. RCCA-16 said this experience inspires similar action stating, “I try and do nice things for them. It’s like I do extra things I don’t have to do”.

Another participant, RCCA-14, discussed the transition from student to employee as a natural progression stating, “I’m back home, now let’s get started”. The natural transition was due primarily to the faculty involving her as an undergraduate in working with the content outside of the classroom as well as working with other students under the supervision of the faculty. This participant noted that the mentoring from faculty while she was a student strongly influenced her actions in the classroom. The ideas gleaned as a student that were mimicked later as a faculty member included casual lecture/discussion style, involving students in undergraduate research, making academic presentations outside of the classroom, and encouraging students to submit papers for publication.

RCCA-11 detailed the positive experiences she has had with a particular demographic of students that otherwise would not have been possible. Her interaction with Native American men “really opened my eyes as to their struggles, the level of poverty, the level of substance abuse” that is experienced. Her years of service to this population has led to RCCA-11 conducting research on instructional and curricular initiatives that can make a positive impact. The research conducted to date has caused RCCA-11 to consider pursuing a doctorate degree. The combined experience of serving an at-risk population and conducting research to make a difference for those students has been a rewarding part of RCCA-11’s professional career and personal life.

RCCA-8 is so strongly attached to the college that he wishes his children would attend the college. He reported, “I really thought my oldest son was going to be there, but he’s not. He ended up going north to play baseball. I wish College One had a baseball team”. Even though his oldest son did not attend RCCA-8’s alma mater, there is

hope the youngest son will still make the decision to enroll locally. “I still have one boy in high school that may go there. I always thought it was going to be probably where they would end up here as well. They may still” (RCCA-8). With regards to his desire for his sons to attend College One, RCCA-8 gives credit to the college saying, “I have respect for the school. It’s something, I think, that is an asset to the area, to the county. It’s a well-run institution. It turns out good students and everything else, so I think it’s well worth the effort to put something into it to do what we can to support it”.

While the student experience is important, the experiences related to attitudinal factors of alumni post-graduation are also interesting.

a) Perceived Need for Financial Support

As will be detailed later, all 16 alumni interviewed received some sort of financial assistance as a student. The fact that they were the recipients of financial support has influenced their understanding of the financial needs of other community college students. Several participants noted that they attended a RCC because of financial considerations. RCCA-11 stated that her parents did not want to pay the higher tuition at a university or out-of-state school. RCCA-10 said “that financially it was a really good idea” to attend a RCC “because I was going to get paid money to go to school instead of going into debt” – due primarily to the numerous scholarships that she was going to receive. RCCA-9 noted that it “was a big issue to have the school paid for...I just didn’t think there were any other options for me” without the funding. Similarly, RCCA-3 attended a RCC because it was something affordable. Since alumni of RCCs understand the need for financial assistance from personal experience, they remain aware of current students’ need for financial support.

RCCA-15 has served on the college scholarship committee which is responsible for awarding scholarships. As for understanding the financial need of students, RCCA-15 noted that some years they would receive seventy applications for each scholarship. She knows there are always more needs than resources. Of the money and time that she donates, RCCA-15 says “it can make all the difference in the world to someone”.

RCCA-16 frequently interacts with current students who are up against difficult financial situations. In her current role, RCCA-16 is in a position to understand the various campus services that may benefit students and refer them to the appropriate place. RCCA-14 recognizes that many community college students have difficult financial situations. There are times when she will generously buy a book or two for a student because the student simply cannot afford to purchase the required materials for class.

RCCA-1 has seen firsthand the impact of his donations because the college has arranged opportunities for him to meet with the students who have received scholarships from his donations. He said:

They're grateful and it's just as exciting for us, for our family, as it is for the [students] I believe and just a neat experience. It's fun to be able to help further somebody's education and help them along the way.

b) Recommend College to Others

Although it was not a specific question asked during the interviews, several participants noted that they would recommend that other potential students attend their RCC. RCCA-11 stated she “highly recommends” students attend her college because “the atmosphere has always been great here...it's still a very positive place”. RCCA-11 interacts with potential students on a regular basis. Her recommendation is founded on

the positive experience she had while in college and the subsequent opportunities afforded to her.

RCCA-12's experience at an RCC was so overwhelmingly positive that he "would certainly recommend" his RCC to potential students, especially those in the area who are graduating from high school. He further stated that even if you are from the local area, the opportunity to reside in college housing on-campus is a positive experience that offers independence and support.

RCCA-7 strongly encourages high school students to consider the local RCC. He uses the financial incentives of local scholarship opportunities combined with state programs designed to keep high school graduates at in-state colleges. The financial incentives are "a sweet little deal", according to RCCA-7. But the monetary benefits of staying local are only part of the reason he recommends the local RCC. "You can get a really good two-year education. It doesn't matter where you go from there, because that base is set, that foundation", said RCCA-7. Similarly, RCCA- 5 also encourages local kids to stay local "because I think they really get a lot for their money". Finally, RCCA-6 interacts regularly with high school students and suggests they try out the local RCC because "you are not going to lose an arm and leg financially".

c) Advocacy for College Initiatives

Several of the participants actively promote college initiatives or advocate for specific opportunities. RCCA-14 speaks to local service organizations about college initiatives. She is also very involved with numerous associations related to her position at the college. In this capacity, she is able to "promote the good that's being done" at the college. Several alumni are involved with community organizations in which they are

able to represent college needs, either formally or informally. For example, RCCA-2 has been involved with local service organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, school boards, the hospital board, and the state legislature. The positive experience at his RCC has provided plenty of opportunities for RCCA-2 to influence others to either attend or support the college.

RCCA-7 is currently the president of the alumni association. In that capacity, he is involved in advocacy for college initiatives with other alumni. He frequently organizes meetings with alumni and also brings ideas forward that focus on outreach to the community. RCCA-7 feels that the most powerful opportunity to carry forward the college's message is by handing out scholarships. "I think what's been kind of cool is that this alumni association has the ability to hand out scholarships" (RCCA-7). He is comfortable asking people to donate time but feels "a little uncomfortable" asking people to contribute money.

RCCA-12 has been the president of the alumni association in the past. As the president of the alumni association, there were plenty of opportunities to advocate for the college. At graduation ceremonies, the alumni president would share information with graduates in an effort to welcome them to the association. RCCA-12 also served as chair of the committee that recruited and selected individuals to the foundation board of directors, which required an awareness of the college and advocacy for college initiatives.

RCCA-15 has served on the alumni board for many years. While she enjoyed serving the college in this capacity because she could talk with others about the success of the college, she had to give it up noting, "I left when my term was up because I'm a mom, I'm a wife, I'm a worker, and I was working on my master's degree, and I just

couldn't do everything I was involved in". RCCA-15 does "hope to get back in touch with the alumni board down the road". She realizes that her role on the board allowed her "the opportunity to talk to others" and that "it was fun". She said there was an age gap between her and the older board members. This allowed the chance to "discuss with them their impressions of College Two when they were a student compared to mine decades later, the interwoven themes...it was fun to hear about their experiences and mine and how different they were, but how similar they were". These interactions and the chance to represent the college have led RCCA-15 to "feel like a viable member of this community, and it means so much to me because it is my life. This is where I spend most of my time and it's the work I do, but I am so thankful".

RCCA-11 works diligently to help make people in the community aware of services at the college that may meet a need. She feels that while many folks are aware of the college, they do not necessarily understand that the breadth of college's services may actually provide them with something of interest or value. RCCA-11 noted an example in efforts to provide literacy education to adult populations. A local non-profit group was able to benefit by referring people to the college Adult Basic Education program so that the student could get services beyond what the non-profit could provide.

RCCA-10 works to bridge the community with the college. In her role as a liaison, she "thinks that everybody benefits that way". Since RCCA-10 is a faculty member at the college, she also uses the curriculum as a platform for civic engagement. Services are provided to the broader student body as well as community members who may be interested in improving their skills. In her discipline, she is incorporating service learning into the curriculum to establish the idea of "having students give back while

they're here on campus". The service learning program is providing current students with a change to engage with other college students as well as interact with community members.

While RCCA-6 is "not on the foundation boards that go out for the drives", he provides advocacy for fundraising initiatives by exercising his influence on close friends. He characterizes these efforts as an "ambassadorship" effort. Furthermore, he states that "recruiter might be too strong of a word but you just tell people it's a good place. I think when they hear that from a number of people they feel comfortable". As a teacher in the local schools who interacts with seniors, RCCA-6 is able to "bring up maybe some experiences that you went through that you can use as an example". The personal experience extends to advocacy because RCCA-6 "talk[s] to kids and tell[s] them, 'Hey, I got a good education (in my hometown)".

RCCA-1 and RCCA-8 were very engaged in a fundraising campaign that focused on communicating the advantages of donating financially to the local RCC. RCCA-8 allowed that "it is very time-consuming, and it took a lot of work to get it going". The college fundraising initiative was also competing with a separate city initiative and two major private campaigns. The process required that RCCA-8 donate significant amounts of time to go door-to-door and make phone calls to individuals. RCCA-1 "signed my name to a lot of letters that go out to alumni". The nature of the project necessitated advocacy for the college project by promoting past successes and the potential rewards of making an investment in a RCC. One of the strategies that was successful involved matching a potential donor with a specific need at the college. RCCA-8 realized that people were more likely to donate when they could identify a specific purpose for their

funds. RCCA-1 said that people had to be asked “two or three times before people actually sign on the dotted line”. Donors also appreciated the state pool that matched their donations.

There were two major difficulties with the fundraising project. First, the lack of strong presidential leadership caused potential donors to be skeptical about contributing large sums of money. Speaking of the past twenty years, there has been a history of very short presidential tenures. RCCA-8 said, “There [are] issues with certain groups and stuff. Maybe other colleges are finding out the same way, but it just seems like that longevity of presidents is pretty short these days. I think the community sees that, and I think that’s one thing that there is some skepticism. ‘How long is this guy going to be here?’ There’s not that continuity that a lot of the older people with more money like to see.” RCCA-7 noted similar difficulties related to quick presidential transitions saying, “That, to me, is very important. If you don’t have that stability, I don’t know how an alumni association would ever have that personal contact that’s always there, a stable contact”.

While presidential instability may seem like a negative to some, RCCA-6 noted that stability in the faculty ranks has been positive. RCCA-6 said:

The teachers [at my college] were there. It wasn’t one of those things where they were there and they were working on their doctorate and heading to bigger and better pastures. I think [my college] was one of those situations where these teachers were here because they like that small atmosphere. They liked the community that they were in. I always thought that was a real strength, the stability they had in their faculty.

Furthermore, and a major difference between the two sites in this study, is that College One does have an administrator that multiple participants recognized as a stable presence. A vice-president at the college for over thirty years, this person has responsibility for the foundation, legislative process, community relations, and the alumni association. While not the president of the college, this vice-president is from the local community and considered to be a major driver behind the fundraising success the college has experienced. RCCA-7 said, “There has been a stability there with [a particular administrator] and his office. That, to me, is very important”. RCCA-6 had similar thoughts noting that “he is a tremendous individual. He keeps us very well informed as to what's going on at the college”. RCCA-5 stated, “Of course, [a specific administrator] is just a wonderful guy. I mean, he’s been the heart and soul of this whole—basically, kind of was really involved in getting it up and running. He’s just, in my terms, present. He’s there to help you with whatever you need. You definitely feel his support there all the time. It’s kind of a special feeling, I guess, that they do that for you”. RCCA-2 respects [a particular administrator’s] contributions as a leader and community presence.

The second difficulty in conducting a major fundraising campaign was that other local organizations also were engaged simultaneously in extensive fundraising initiatives. Among other projects, the community was trying to build a recreation center and the library was looking to expand. RCCA-8 said, “There were about three or four big projects going where everybody was out on this fundraising binge. I have to say, the first couple of meetings we had, and I just thought, ‘man, there’s just too much competition out there”.

RCCA-3 currently teaches at his alma mater. The responsibility to oversee the curriculum and student activities affords him the opportunity to develop college advocates within the program. His approach to advocacy begins with appreciation. He has established a group of students called “The Persuaders”. These students “when we get the thing about this is what’s been donated, they will write letters of thanks to those particular donors thanking them for the contributions that they’ve made to the program”. After the students express gratitude for support, they strive to publically recognize peoples’ support as well as demonstrate what the support means to students. This is accomplished in an annual banquet “in which we honor all of the students, and at that banquet, we invite supporters of the program” (RCCA-3). Invitees include people who donate time to judge at the local competitions, parents of the students, and those who make financial contributions. The banquet is a forum to promote the college and the success of the students. It has grown to a function that includes live entertainment with over 100 people regularly in attendance. The community gets to hear directly from the students “because [the students] are the ones getting the [support] and I think it’s a lot more important for those folks to hear from a student than it is to hear from me or the other coaches year after year” (RCCA-3).

While The Persuaders and the annual banquet are examples of successful advocacy initiatives, there have been attempts to reach out to the community that have not been sustainable. Most notably, RCCA-3 attempted to organize a reunion of graduates, “but it was just so hard to put together” that it did not work out as intended. They also tried to bring all of the former international students to campus during a

summer event, but that proved to be too large of an undertaking as well. “I think those kind of things are very useful. They’re just hard to put together” (RCCA-3).

The results of these efforts to engage the students as appreciative advocates with community members and program supporters are impressive. RCCA-3 reports that “we get a lot of scholarship money so that we can maintain a broad-based program”. There was one non-traditional student enrolled in an evening section of a course that was so impressed “she gave a chunk of money to the foundation. We could never touch the principal, but the interest was always for forensics use. And so, to this day, we still have that pool of money that we use every year” (RCCA-3).

RCCA-9 also advocates for her program in the community by working hard to prepare her nursing students to be exceptional at what they do. She said, “I care about the success of the students that I teach, and I value my career. I want the people that we prepare to go out and do an excellent job at what they do so that it can reflect well of the career as a whole in terms of nursing”. RCCA-9 expanded on this theme as it relates to college and program advocacy by saying, “I feel that I should give them my best in order for that to happen, give my best efforts and everything to see that both the college is represented well in terms of the nursing department and the level of preparation that is achieved”.

RCCA-10 incorporated advocacy for a college bond campaign into her interactions with her neighbors. She went door-to-door to discuss the community benefits of passing the bond. As a result of her efforts, several neighbors were convinced to put pro-bond signs in their yards. RCCA-10 also serves on local community boards and uses those forums to benefit the college. One example is illustrated in the

partnerships formed between the city and the college to provide additional recreational activities for the local youth and senior populations.

RCCA-13 also works at the college in the marketing department. One of her responsibilities is to publish an alumni magazine. A major focus of the publication is to advocate for college initiatives and communicate successes to the community. She said, “You know what we’re looking for are interesting stories, interesting contributions that [alumni] have made to their communities or something interesting that they do”.

Summary

With regards to Attitudinal Factors, this section detailed the findings related to both the first and second research questions which are: (1) What are the characteristics of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution? (2) What factors motivate RCC alumni to consider contributing financial support to the institution? There were four sub-categories of this section that related to the experiences participants had when they were students at a RCC including: a) transfer preparation; b) job preparation; c) satisfaction with experience; and d) emotional attachment with the college. Three areas were also identified in this category that dealt with alumni experiences after graduation including: a) perceived need for financial support; b) recommend college to others; and c) advocacy for college initiatives.

Theme Two: Engagement with the College

This section is dedicated to describing the engagement with the college while RCC alumni were on campus as students as well as their current interactions with institutional initiatives. Eight categories were developed under the theme Engagement with the College, six related to the experiences as students, which include: a) experience

with faculty/staff while a student; b) college-related travel opportunities; c) involved with out-of-class activities that are college-sponsored; d) involved with out-of-class activities that are college-related; e) housing while a student; and, f) use of auxiliary support services. Two areas of engagement by alumni emerged including: a) involvement as alumni with college events and/or college activities, and b) maintain contact with faculty/staff after graduation.

a) Experience with Faculty/Staff while a Student

All sixteen participants had positive recollections of faculty members. The experiences with instructors varied from time spent together outside of class on non-school related topics, out-of-the-classroom initiatives that are curricular related, and efforts to engage the students in the classroom.

RCCA-15 was appreciative of faculty who spent time with her outside of class to help her build confidence. She noted:

I connected with a few instructors here on campus. Without them being willing to meet with me during their office hours in private to express my sense of direction, I don't know if I would have continued on here or if I would have become the person I am now. There were days I was very scared that I might've chosen a different path. Here those personal connections really are what secured my success.

RCCA-15 continued by noting that her relationships with faculty members extended beyond the mandatory advising or required office hours saying,

Even though my psych instructor became my advisor and I worked closely with him, I had other instructors here on this campus, they knew my name. They were

interested in my thoughts, my papers, not only in class, but stuff outside of class, things that I could relate in-class material to outside and that's in my opinion very different than the experience I had at high school...It feels not only like you're an adult now, but very freeing that, oh, this is how the real world actually works, people sit and have a conversation about things. That for me was very empowering.

RCCA-4 felt "I could always talk to [instructors] about anything. If I needed help, they were there to help me". RCCA-14 echoed similar sentiments acknowledging that instructors "were always there for you whether it was a personal need...outside of class". RCCA-14 discussed a time when she became interested in a serious relationship that began having a negative impact on her academic performance. Her instructor pulled her aside and had a conversation about appropriate relationships that help people be successful rather than negative relationships that lead to destructive results. RCCA-9 indicated that a faculty member who encouraged her and gave her self-confidence made the first semester at college positive despite being very nervous. RCCA-6 recognized that one of his instructors "just really made an effort to see as many students as he possibly could" in an effort to help students be successful with college needs outside of the classroom.

Out-of-the-class initiatives to engage the students with the curriculum were appreciated by several interviewees. RCCA-14 discussed opportunities to help her professors with their research and publications stating, "They would have me help them with their research projects and give me credit for it and kind of walk me through those stages of inquiry and learning and how to be a great person and how to work with other

people and introduced me to other people” in the field. Another form of out-of-the-class activities to engage the students with the curriculum as reported by interviewees was the willingness of professors to help when students were struggling to understand the subject matter. RCCA-1 noted that when he needed “help from a teacher after hours, there was always availability and the teachers were great about if you’re struggling with this or that or you need some extra help...[their] door was always open”. RCCA-7 recalled an experience when his professor attended a curricular-related performance. RCCA-7 had struggled and struggled with the application, but in a public venue and during a formal event, the performance was excellent. RCCA-7 recalls noticing the instructor in the audience full of admiration and pride. Finally, RCCA-1 was invited to participate in a post-graduation research sabbatical with one of the college faculty members. It was “such a great experience” because we were able to “work one-on-one together” on an area of interest for both the student and the professor.

Several of the participants discussed efforts professors made inside of the classroom to engage the students. RCCA-6 said, “You could just tell the guy loved his class...he made our classes interesting”. RCCA-2 indicated that an instructor took a special interest in his inability to speak in front of groups by providing opportunities to improve. RCCA-2 says this skill development was instrumental in his career in the business field and as a community member. RCCA-8 summed it up saying, “We were pretty lucky to have some of the teachers that we did”. RCCA-1 recognized an English instructor who “made class fun everyday...you kind of looked forward to going to classes. It wasn’t your traditional English. It was fun to learn in a positive way where everybody was looking forward to the experience”. RCCA-5 had an art instructor who

“opened [his] eyes about how to look at things”. This caused RCCA-5 to spend more time on that class than any other course he took in college, and it ended up being one of the most rewarding experiences of his college life. RCCA-7 did indicate that there were certain classes that were “boring” and spoke of efforts he made to pass the time in the course. He and a friend would count the number of times the instructor would cross his legs while lecturing from a stool in front of the class. While they found the lecture format tedious, the instructor was still able to inspire the student to put forth maximum effort in projects by challenging the students. RCCA-9 was hired by an instructor to be a laboratory assistant. Being a lab assistant afforded her the opportunity to engage with the instructor and better understand what was happening in the class. Overall, RCCA-7 indicated that there were classes that were boring but “you don’t remember those” because “you remember [the classes] that you’re actively involved and you happen to use a higher level of thinking”. RCCA-15 summed up the role faculty play saying, “The connections I had with instructors was very meaningful to me, helped me find who I was as a student, and then later helped me determine who I was as a person and a worker, employee and just overall life”.

Participants reported mixed opinions about their experiences with non-faculty college employees. The positive interactions centered on employees who went out of their way to help the students with their needs. RCCA-6 noted that the college was small and intimate enough that students and custodians got to know each other. Three participants, RCCA-5, RCCA-8, and RCCA-13, all had significant interactions with the college president as students. Other staff that were frequently mentioned, either positively or negatively, were student services personnel, advisors, and financial aid staff.

RCCA-5 interacted with the college president as a family friend often going hunting with him, which speaks to the small town atmosphere enjoyed by RCCs. Similarly, RCCA-8 discussed his interactions with the college president as the president would help the student's family with their cattle ranching operations. RCCA-13 interacted with the college president due to her responsibilities in a student organization. The interaction consisted of weekly discussions about the happenings of the college. RCCA-13 reported that this was an important part of her degree and subsequent professional opportunities. The opportunity for students to interact with the college president, whether it is on a personal level or as a result of college activities, provides a memorable and valuable experience.

Some participants were pleased with their non-faculty interactions, especially with advisors. RCCA-11 mentioned an advisor who was particularly good and other alumni reported similar experiences with advisors (RCCA-1; RCCA-2; RCCA-3; RCCA-4; RCCA-12; RCCA-13; and RCCA-15). Participants indicated that advisors helped to ensure courses transferred, class schedules were convenient, and to provide general support and encouragement.

Interviewees had mixed experiences with financial aid personnel. One participant was denied financial aid after poor academic performance. While recognizing responsibility for the poor academic performance that caused the college to place RCCA-15 on probation, she wished the financial aid office would have been more proactive in communicating the responsibilities and repercussions of not doing well. Even after visiting in person with several financial aid employees, RCCA-15 indicated that nobody appeared to be on the same page because they offered differing explanations and varied

stories about the process. RCCA-15 detailed the situation saying, “[It] was very confusing and frustrating and I held a lot of anger that they were prohibiting me from the path I thought I was on. I know it was me, but I just could not ask, as an 18-year-old, the right questions to understand what I needed to do, and that was very frustrating”.

Another RCC alumni was frustrated that she was not informed about Pell grants until after her first semester and was not awarded grant funds until her second academic year. She said, “Being an older student, you don’t know what to ask” (RCCA-4). RCCA-14 was very appreciative of the financial aid employees despite not having any direct interaction with them.

Another student, non-traditional, was asked by a staff member to leave new student orientation because it was for students, not parents (RCCA-4). While this was a negative experience, it did ultimately play a role in the student deciding to join a student organization specifically for non-traditional students. RCCA-6 summed up similar experiences with RCC faculty/staff by saying, “If you ran into any difficulties, it was small enough to where there was someone who could help you, talk to”.

b) College-Related Travel Opportunities

The majority of the interviewees, nine of the sixteen, participated in college-related travel opportunities. Trips were for clubs, sports, or curricular initiatives. Everyone who participated in college-related travel indicated it was a highly positive experience that helped forge strong relationships with other students, bond with college faculty and/or staff, or gain a stronger understanding of the curriculum.

RCCA-3 participated in trips for an official college team, the forensics team. He remembers winning his first trophy during competition. This led to a tremendous amount

of confidence in his abilities and increased his interest in the field, which ultimately became the subject of graduate degrees and subsequently the focus of his career. The second trip did not yield a trophy; in fact, it led to a humiliating defeat. RCCA-3 and his debate partner were moved up a level in competition due to a lack of participants. Needless to say, they “were horrible”. Regardless of the outcome, RCCA-3 remembers the trips, the competition, and the long van rides for the opportunity to interact with friends and compete in something he enjoyed.

RCCA-14 had a similar experience as RCCA-3, except that it was as a volunteer for the college museum. She made a significant discovery of important specimens, and a faculty member encouraged her to write up her findings. As it turns out, the paper was accepted for presentation at a national conference, and RCCA-14 flew to Seattle for a dinosaur conference. “It was scary as an undergrad, but it was a great experience in working with the public and your peers and defending yourself...not that you are always successful, but at least you learn how to do that. So that also built up confidence and public speaking skills and that kind of stuff”.

RCCA-5 participated in a college-sponsored ski trip. He stated, “As far as the things that I really enjoyed, one of them was for two years we went to [a ski resort] over the Christmas break...with the college group and skied over there. That was a really good time. Actually, that’s where I really made some really good friendships”.

RCCA-6 played on the college basketball team as well as the college golf team and frequently traveled for games. He did live at home instead of in on-campus college housing, so he indicated that outside of sports, he was not able to participate in many of the college activities on campus. Regardless, the basketball-related travel helped to

cement strong relationships with teammates and coaches. Interestingly enough, RCCA-6 regrets not taking the opportunity to travel with other students for club skiing trips or forays into Yellowstone National Park. He noted that “you could sure see the other students enjoy” those trips.

RCCA-1 and RCCA-7 traveled for college band obligations. RCCA-1 said the music opportunities provided a cultural perspective, both from the music itself and the trips to out-of-state locations. He fondly remembers traveling to jazz festivals in the state as well as out-of-state saying “the culture that brought was pretty neat”. RCCA-7 recalls a particular trip when he performed exceptionally well. He had repeatedly underperformed a particular solo. Finally, while on a trip, he “played it perfectly”. His band director was impressed, and the memory of having impressed his mentor is one that is still valued by RCCA-7.

RCCA-9 participated in summer trips to work with inner-city youth in Chicago. These trips were organized through a college club and coordinated with a local religious organization. Several college students participated in the trips and strong relationships developed among the students. RCCA-9 also developed a strong friendship with the group advisor. The relationship was cemented due to the opportunity to travel and provide service to people in need. In fact, RCCA-9 and the club advisor just recently met up again to reminisce about their trips together. In addition to developing strong relationships with peers and mentors, the club trips created an awareness of the needs outside of the local community as the students engaged in service initiatives.

The travel and service opportunities presented to RCCA-9 while as a student created such an impact that she is now in a position to provide similar opportunities to

college students. RCCA-9 currently organizes international outreach experiences related to the college curriculum. Students have an opportunity to travel to a developing nation and provide service to other people including health care and hygiene education. Many of the students who travel had never been outside of the United States. The applied learning experiences also contextualize the skills discussed in the classroom and textbooks by providing a meaningful opportunity to use the theories while benefitting others. After offering a couple of successful international travel opportunities, the word has spread to other students and now there are more people interested in traveling than spots available.

RCCA-10 made a clear distinction between competing at the high school level and while in college. She said, “In high school, sports are so competitive and you have rivals. When you get to college, it’s about forming friendships and networking”. The relationship with the coaches and teammates “was kind of like a family away from the family that I had always known”. RCCA-10 continued saying, “I still talk to all of these people, so it’s very much like this other support system that happened that I wasn’t expecting to happen”. She not only enjoyed the camaraderie of her teammates, but also appreciated getting to know the members of the opposing teams. She particularly remembered going to national competitions and “hanging out” with the people from the other teams from their state. RCCA-10 noted that there were additional benefits beyond the strong bonds formed with teammates and coaches. She indicated that this was an introduction into cultural and racial diversity as you worked with peers from other areas of the country. They also traveled to different states and experienced a variety of foods and music, not to mention the “big city” experience. Finally, RCCA-10 indicated that

being on a team required additional discipline as she learned to complete academic assignments with the additional burden of travel and practice commitments. Overall, RCCA-10 summarized the benefits of college-sponsored travel as follows:

I just felt that I was more prepared because I had learned time management. I had learned how to get along with a lot of different people. I had different experiences, like more life experiences than a lot of the other students that I went to school with, so I think that opportunity was great.

Some of the interview participants considered informal trips with friends to be related to their time in college (RCCA-5; RCCA-7; and RCCA-12). They associated hunting trips, rodeos, skiing, and heading to the city as a chance to get away for a weekend and enjoy time together. They reported that these informal excursions strengthened friendships with other students. The trips also served as a time to get away from college stress.

c) Involved with Out-of-Class Activities that are College-Sponsored

Several of the participants were involved in college-sponsored activities. These activities included intercollegiate athletic programs, undergraduate research, competitive speech events, student clubs, theatrical performances, and music concerts. This section will not include information related to travel opportunities since that section has already been presented. As will be detailed later in this study, participation in college-sponsored activities had a significant influence on the students as all of them have been involved in the same activities after graduation. This section also discusses the two participants who did not participate in college-sponsored out-of-class activities.

RCCA-1, RCCA-5, RCCA-6, RCCA-8, RCCA-10, RCCA-15, and RCCA-16 appreciated the intramural activities that were sponsored by the college. RCCA-1 participated in “a lot of intramural sports” which he enjoyed because of the opportunity meet people and have a good time with them. RCCA-5 participated exclusively in intramural basketball and racquetball rather than being involved in a variety of activities because he enjoyed basketball and racquetball. RCCA-6 was on the college basketball team but also got involved in intramural golf. RCCA-8 got involved with intramurals because he enjoyed sports. He remembers playing basketball and softball. RCCA-8 noted that he played high school sports locally and was able to play intramurals sports with and/or against several of the high school athletes that he competed with and/or against prior to enrolling at the college. RCCA-8 indicated that being involved in the college intramurals also made him more aware of other college activities as well as being invited to the informal, non-college events. RCCA-10 played in a number of intramural athletic competitions. He indicated that it was fun to play against other students, but RCCA-10 also enjoyed the chance to compete against faculty and staff. “We played against a lot of the faculty teams, so you got to know your instructors or see them outside of the classroom”. RCCA-16 was the only non-traditional student to play intramural sports. She reported that even though there was not a lot of time for work, school, and family, intramural athletics provided a great opportunity to exercise and meet new people. RCCA-16, as a current college employee, still enjoys participating in intramurals because she can interact with peers, meet students, and exercise.

RCCA-15 was a cheerleader for the college athletic events and experienced a minor setback when the college suspended the cheerleading program. RCCA-15

indicated there was “simply too much drama and other issues”, so the college did not continue cheerleading. While it was disappointing to see the group disbanded, RCCA-15 found a way to get involved with student government.

RCCA-1 was involved in the college choir and performed on campus and in the community on several occasions. RCCA-7 was also a member of the college choir. He also joined the college band. RCCA-7 has “a few lifelong friends” from the choir and the band, and many of them still keep in touch.

RCCA-3 and RCCA-10 both competed on the college debate and forensics teams. RCCA-3 came to college to study math, but was invited to participate on the college speech and debate team. He accepted the invitation and enjoyed the associations with other students as well as the chance to compete with other colleges. RCCA-3 was also involved with the theatre program and performed as an actor on several occasions. Both of these activities became lifelong interests – RCCA-3 now teaches speech and debate and would like to see the theatre program revived at the college. RCCA-10 noted that being involved with the debate and forensics team helped her as a student. A major component of debate and forensics is learning how to read and research. As a recent high school graduate, being mentored by advisors and other students in college-level reading and introductory research skills gave RCCA-10 a major academic advantage in the classroom. RCCA-10 noticed an interesting phenomena and reported that “because we were involved in speech and debate, faculty members knew who we were, but they regarded us highly and they held us to a different academic standard than other students...but we didn’t slide or slack or anything like that. Instead, we had to do almost twice as much”.

RCCA-4 and RCCA-14 were both very involved with student clubs for non-traditional students. RCCA-14 said non-traditional students “all had the same problems. We had families, we had jobs, we had school, and financial difficulties”. RCCA-4 was president of the Adult Student Club while RCCA-14 was a participant in the non-traditional student activities. As a college-sanctioned organization, the Adult Student Club frequently coordinated activities and involved non-traditional students and supported their needs. One of the more memorable events for RCCA-4 was when the Adult Student Club sponsored a turkey bowling event. The club officers organized the event and used it as a fundraiser. Other students were able to throw frozen turkeys as bowling pins in order to win prizes. RCCA-4 reported that the event was successful in raising money as well as enjoyable for her and other students. The Adult Student Club also coordinated support for non-traditional students like child care, study groups, and family dances. RCCA-4 said the college encouraged the club to do the activities that would support non-traditional students. The college provided a lot of freedom for the student officers to determine which types of activities would be most beneficial, which was welcomed by the club officers. RCCA-14 indicated that the college also provided a space for the non-traditional student organization. The space was used to store textbooks that could be checked out by students, study space, and a place to interact with other students experiencing similar issues. RCCA-14 appreciated the college supporting the non-traditional student organization because the club would provide access to textbooks and host activities. “It was kind of scary to be here by myself. I didn’t have home support. It was just me and the kids. So having that group of people really cushioned me

that first year really, really well". The successes RCCA-14 experienced during her first year were a springboard to other activities like Phi Beta Kappa and student government.

RCCA-9 and RCCA-14 were members of the college chapter of the honor society, Phi Beta Kappa. RCCA-9 was not sure if she served as an officer in the organization or not, but did note that because of her role in the organization, RCCA-9 was able to travel out-of-state for conventions and seminars. RCCA-14 felt that Phi Beta Kappa was "a confidence builder" because membership was largely based on academic performance.

RCCA-9 was also in a religious-based club that was college-sponsored. By virtue of participating in this group, she was able to make several trips with other students and advisors. These trips made a significant impact on RCCA-9 as a student, and she has now incorporated the same concepts into her classroom as a faculty member. Furthermore, RCCA-9 still maintains frequent contact with students and advisors that she met as a student in the club.

RCCA-12 was not on the official college rodeo team or the agriculture judging team, but spent a great deal of time outside of class with both rodeo and agriculture judging. RCCA-12 was good friends with the other students who participated in rodeo and agriculture judging, so it was just a natural chance to be with friends and be engaged in activities he enjoyed. RCCA-12 reported learning many of the skills he has used throughout a career in agriculture. RCCA-12 also developed strong friendships that still endure. Furthermore, RCCA-12 earned a scholarship related to agriculture that was due to being involved with these activities.

RCCA-13 was involved with the production of the college newspaper. Her fondest memory was of the weekly interviews she conducted with the college president. “My weekly chats with the president of the college...I really liked those”, said RCCA-13. She remembers conversations with her advisor who warned her that the president was dictating his agenda to her. RCCA-13 says, “I knew. I mean [the president of the college] knew how to work things to the advantage of the school”.

RCCA-14 interacted with her professors outside of the classroom as they jointly conducted undergraduate research projects related to the curriculum. Similar to the RCC-3 and RCCA-10 and their experiences with the forensics and debate team, RCCA-14 learned academic skills through conducting research that helped her be successful in other courses. RCCA-14 specifically mentioned that the undergraduate research taught skills in academic inquiry and college-level learning. Not only were academic skills developed, but RCCA-14 mentioned that through her interactions with other students and her mentors, she learned how to work with other people from difference backgrounds. Above all, the undergraduate research initiatives “tore down those barriers between the professor and the student. It was more of colleagues that one was learning from the other”.

RCCA-2 and RCCA-11 did not report participating in college-sponsored out-of-class activities. RCCA-2 simply could not remember if he did participate or not since he went to college in the late 1950s. RCCA-11, who is an only child, described herself as “private” and “not a big joiner”. She lived on campus her first semester but said:

It was a little hard for me to transition to the dorm environment. I didn't take to it as much as some people might. I mean, I didn't hate it, and I still have friends

that I see from time to time that I knew in the dorms. But I'm kind of a private person. That was probably my issue more than anything.

d) Involved with Out-of-Class Activities that are College-Related

Several of the participants indicated they participated in activities that were related to "being in college". These activities included informal trips for recreational purposes, social interactions, working to make ends meet, and fulfilling family responsibilities. Regardless of the type of activity, the alumni who mentioned being involved with college-related endeavors reported that their involvement in these activities had a positive impact on their college experience.

RCCA-11 spent time living on campus and later moved off campus so that she could engage in different kinds of social interactions. She reported that "it wasn't cool to be involved in campus activities as opposed to maybe doing other things not related to school". RCCA-11 put these activities into perspective by describing them as "the nature of the beast" of college in the 1970s.

Similar to RCCA-11, both RCCA-6 and RCCA-5 reported being involved with social events that were part of going to college but not official college activities. The legal drinking age at the time was nineteen years old, so some of the activities included passing the time at a favorite bar. While RCCA-11 indicated her participation in non-sanctioned college activities increased when she moved off campus, RCCA-6 said that was not the case in his experience. Living on campus made it much easier to coordinate the location and times for informal gatherings. RCCA-5 said the "partying" was probably comparable to today's standards for college kids, but some of the legal issues may be different because the drinking age has been raised to twenty-one.

While most of the participants indicated that being involved in informal social gatherings did not negatively influence their academic performance, one participant indicated that he learned a valuable lesson as the result of discipline that occurred after one particular event. He faced disciplinary actions from the college that resulted in losing his ability to live on campus. The experience caused him to vow to do better in class and work through the issues. He had to find a place to live, and there was not very much available that he could afford. He was able to successfully complete the semester and earned the right to return to on-campus housing. Interestingly enough, the student did not want to tell his parents about the situation only to find out later that they had already been informed. It just so happened that the dean responsible for handing student discipline was a friend of the family. This student learned an important lesson about being accountable for his actions and being responsible to rectify the issues.

One of the college experiences that stood out for RCCA-7 was related to waiting on campus for his carpool. The students who lived off campus would always meet in the same place – a large room at the entryway of the student union building. Many students would gather there for lunches, studying, and hanging out. RCCA-7 stated “that was a good meeting place”.

e) Housing while a Student

Participants’ experiences in housing varied substantially. Most interviewees lived on campus in college housing for at least part of their time in college. Many students found apartments off campus. A few people lived at home with their parents. A couple of participants owned their own home.

Those students who lived on-campus reported positive opportunities to interact with other students and be involved in on-campus events and activities, which has been addressed previously. When asked about his experience in the college residence halls, RCCA-1 said it was positive because it was an opportunity “to meet people and especially to kind of branch out away from your local friends and your local buddies that you’ve known forever and meet new folks...I still have friends today from people I met from other cities that lived [in the dorms]...those were great experiences”. RCCA-4 was a non-traditional student who lived in on-campus housing with her child. She appreciated being in apartment-style housing, especially because the college made efforts to have activities in housing for non-traditional students and their families including large group barbeques each semester and weekly activities in the afternoons for children. RCCA-5 said that being in on-campus housing “you’re much more connected with other students and the activities that are going on”. He continued saying that the time spent together “going to the cafeteria to eat” and “seeing each other all the time...kind of makes you feel connected”. RCCA-8 was from the local community prior to enrollment but still chose to live on campus. He reported that it was important to move out, even if it cost more money, to establish some independence. RCCA-8 did get to room with a long-time friend from high school, and it was a lot of fun to be together in their own living quarters. RCCA-12 lived on campus the entire time, and he considered himself fortunate to be a resident assistant. The job provided room and board in exchange for hours worked, so it was a positive financial arrangement at the time. RCCA-12 noted that two of the friendships developed in the dorms are life-long friends because of their shared experiences in on-campus housing.

RCCA-10 was also from the local community prior to enrollment at the RCC, but felt like it was a mistake to live at home. After her first semester, she moved into the college dorms and “then it became like a college experience even though I was in the town that I had grown up in...I was thankful that I’d moved into the dorms because it gave me such a better experience”. RCCA-10 noted that the better experience included getting to know other students as well as spending more time working with her professors and getting help from them, when needed. She also appreciated the increased independence from parents, which was one of the major distinctions between high school when her parents were constantly monitoring performance and behavior. RCCA-10 also became more familiar with campus in general saying, “Just being able to work around campus, you get to know different buildings and see different faculty members that have the same routine, and you just know so much more about the college than when you’re off the campus”. RCCA-11 also lived on-campus as well as off-campus. RCCA-11 lived roughly 50 miles outside of town prior to starting college, so commuting was not an option. The transition to dorm life was difficult since she is an only child, very private, and more focused on studies than developing a social life. For RCCA-11, there was not as significant of a difference between the experiences living on campus versus being off campus. She did say that living off campus provided an opportunity to have a part-time job away from school and create some separation between her studies and having a more private life. Rather than being a “joiner” (clubs and teams), RCCA-11 indicated she was serious about academics.

RCCA-6, RCCA-7, and RCCA-9 all chose to live at home while going to college. For RCCA-6, this served two purposes. First, it allowed him to help with the family

ranching operation. Second, he was able to save the money that would have otherwise been spent on room and board. While it was necessary to live at home, RCCA-6 wishes he had an opportunity to live on campus. He feels like he missed out on developing strong friendships by participating in social activities including dances, casino nights, and drinking (the legal drinking age was 19 at the time) at a local bar. Even though RCCA-6 did not live on campus, he was able to participate in college-sponsored athletic events, which did offset some of the social activities that he felt he missed out on by living off campus. RCCA-7 also lived at home for his entire college experience. Similar to RCCA-6, RCCA-7 indicated financial reasons were the major consideration for living at home. He did make every effort to be engaged with other students, despite not living on campus, by joining several college clubs and participating in various activities. RCCA-9 noted that living at home was for financial reasons but did not feel she missed out on anything.

f) Use of auxiliary services

Auxiliary services include the library, tutoring, advising, computer laboratories, and other support functions. The most common auxiliary service used by the participants was the library with fifteen of the sixteen people indicating they used the library and that it contributed to their success.

Fifteen of the sixteen participants identified the library as a key auxiliary service that contributed to their success. RCCA-2 indicated that the library had not yet been constructed during his time on campus. The applicable uses of the library varied, however, from student to student. RCCA-1 noted that “sadly, I probably could have spent more time in the library”, which indicates a recognition of the learning support that

is found in the library. RCCA-3 used the library for research, and because of his area of interest, spent an extensive amount of time in the library. He said, "I do remember spending a lot of time in the library and then checking stuff out". RCCA-14 also used the library for research saying, "I used the library a lot for research". RCCA-4 used the library to complete papers, study in a quiet place, and meet with her advisor. She said, "The library was great when I needed to do my papers and stuff. It was always quiet, and I always found what I wanted". RCCA-5 similarly noted, "I used the library to study in quite a bit". RCCA-7 also studied in the library but, in addition, used the area as a waiting space. He said, "It was a study place. There were a few days that I carpooled. Waiting for my carpool rider, I'd go into the library and read some books or some of the things, look at the newspapers, a lot of things like that". RCCA-6 indicated the library was a prime location for studying between classes rather than studying in public places or returning home. He said:

I went to the library to study some. Boy, in those days, it was just a small, little, tiny building, I mean by today's standard. It was I mean for a college library quite small and not a lot of volumes of material and that, but it was there. Once again, because of the time that I would have maybe between classes or after my class and into practice, I could go there and do some studying.

RCCA-8 indicated the computer in the library was "the only computer on the whole campus" and that the computer "was seriously bigger than this room". He would use the library mostly for access to the computer but also for "research and stuff". RCCA-13 went to the library to use "the typewriter in the library quite often. I think it was 25 cents an hour to use the typewriter". RCCA-11 said she used the library frequently, especially

the interlibrary loan, because “that was kind of in the day before internet”. She appreciated the librarians who helped with the interlibrary loan process because “they were always so on top of things”. RCCA-16 echoed praise of the librarians saying “the librarians were always very helpful”. The interlibrary loan helped with completing assignments and doing research papers. RCCA-12 studied frequently in the library because the “facilities were I roomed weren’t all the best for studying”. RCCA-15 provided the most comprehensive summary of library services saying:

I spent lot of time in the library. That was before the internet and technology. Highly impressed with the help I received at the library. I remember feeling like I lived there one semester, and I got very comfortable with the computer search system, which before it always intimidated me. The faculty there were very easy to talk to and ask questions and really kind of held your hand and walked you through it.

Interestingly enough, none of the interviewees reported using tutoring services. Only RCCA-15 mentioned the use of peer study groups as an option to meet any tutoring needs saying:

I didn’t use the tutoring center much. We had a peer tutoring group I think, and I think the math lab, but I never used the math lab. The tutoring, that type of stuff was just a group of us in the classroom. We’d get together and study together. So we had study groups, but they weren’t anything formal.

Similarly to the scarce use of tutoring, few participants used college advising resources. RCCA-10 reported that advising was beneficial to her saying, “Our advisors were basically our instructors, so I did use that, and they got me through here in two

years, and I was prepared to go down to the [university], so that really helped”. RCCA-11’s experience with advising was similar, and she said, “I had good advisers too. I think that the experience at this college is you do get to know people. They get to know you. They remember you. They know what your goals are. They’ll help you meet those goals”. RCCA-13 noted that her advisor “was a good advisor. I didn’t have any problems with graduation or any difficulties in getting anything like that. The classes that I took that would work for that Bachelor’s in Business Management transferred”. In addition, RCCA-13’s advisor notified her of a scholarship opportunity, and “it was a journalism scholarship that they had, and she [my advisor] knew about and so she put my name in and I got it”.

Other interviewees expressed very basic use of advisors to register for classes. RCCA-4 said, “I just met with her [advisor] while I was signing up for new classes”. RCCA-7 actually had a negative experience with an advisor who had him register for a schedule of courses that did not meet the requirements for his program, which set him back when he tried to transfer. The solution was fairly simple as RCCA-7 said, “I recollect that the only issue was that I needed a class in, I think, [United States] History or American History or something. Other than that, it was fine. I took that that first year of my junior year, so it wasn’t a big deal”.

Two themes related to engagement with the college as alumni emerged as significant.

Involvement with College Events and/or Activities

All sixteen interviewees reported being involved with college events and/or activities. Each person reported that they were involved with activities that they

experienced as a student. Furthermore, all of the alumni indicated that their current participation with the college only increased over time.

Several participants indicated they attend high-profile college events like athletic competitions, theatrical performances, or musical concerts. RCCA-1 attends athletic events “whenever I’m in town”, and RCCA-2 attends several sporting activities each year. RCCA-11 and RCCA-12 attend the annual basketball game to hand out chili with other alumni to current students. Alumni at both institutions reported buying small foam basketballs with the college colors. They toss the balls into the crowd during home games. RCCA-9 has an affinity for the theatre and appreciates being able to attend the college plays. RCCA-16 has gone to college plays and her young son actually got to play Tiny Tim in one of the productions. RCCA-16 also regularly attends the concerts. RCCA-4 indicates that college events, including athletics, music, and theatre, offer an opportunity to bring an aging, handicapped dependent to an engaging activity. RCCA-10 notes that being able to attend various events and participate in college life helps her “feel very connected to the college”. RCCA-13 frequently attends athletics, theatrical, and musical events in order to support the students, faculty, and staff that are performing. RCCA-12 outlined the alumni association’s efforts to meet and greet new students as they host a donut-day which coincides with the first day of class each semester.

One of the colleges publishes an annual alumni magazine that highlights college happenings and focuses on student successes. RCCA-13 has a professional responsibility and to publish the alumni magazine and enjoys the opportunity to gather stories because it allows her to hear about the many successes of the college while also meeting new people. The latest publication featured a college alum who is bicycling the entire

perimeter of the United States. Other alumni, like RCCA-12, are involved in finding folks to feature in the magazine and reports that many alumni are eager to read the publication when it is first printed. Even the sections of the alumni publication are designed to engage students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members. The “Looking Back” section is an opportunity for former students to reminisce about their experiences as a student. One of the alumni from the earliest graduating classes writes a column that is always included. Another section of the publication announces all of the alumni who get married, have children, retire, received a promotion, or are celebrating milestone anniversaries. There is a section that makes mention of alumni who pass away. The publication includes a section called “Around Campus” that has stories about major college initiatives as well as blurbs about student and faculty successes.

As a former non-traditional student, RCCA-4 continues to play cards with current and past students alike. These students that play in the card games are almost always non-traditional students. The activity provides a time for people to share their accomplishments as well as discuss the difficulties of going to college.

RCCA-2, RCCA-5, RCCA-6, RCCA-7, and RCCA-12 currently serve on the alumni board, which requires semi-annual business meetings. The alumni board meetings are focused on communicating college happenings and plan for events and activities to reach out to students. The alumni organization sponsors an annual picnic and barbeque for students. At this event, the alumni association also distributes information of interest to students. The information given to students is primarily related to ways in which the alumni association can meet students’ needs. The alumni association hosts events to raise scholarship funds for students. The funds raised allow the association to

award four scholarships each year. RCCA-7 noted that these scholarships “make an impact for students” and also provide “a sense of engagement and satisfaction” for members of the alumni association. Board members are also required to regularly attend events for alumni, students, and the community. Whenever possible, RCCA-5, RCCA-6, and RCCA-7 indicated that the alumni association attempts to have a table or a booth with information regarding their organization, the college, and ways to be involved.

a) Maintain Contact with Faculty/Staff and Alumni

All participants reported that they had at least some contact with students, faculty, and/or staff that they met as students.

RCCA-1 maintains contact with a college professor he met prior to enrolling at the college, and he subsequently took several classes with the instructor. RCCA-1 serves on a local cultural arts advisory board of directors with his former college instructor. In their capacity as board members, they continue their relationship with frequent professional interactions. After over 20 years of teacher-student and peer-to-peer interactions related to art, RCCA-1 reported that “there is a tie that we have from years gone by now that we still work together on community art events and things like that”.

RCCA-3 and RCCA-14 both actually married college classmates. RCCA-3 met a mate while interacting for a class project. The relationship blossomed as they studied together and traveled for college competitions. They ended up transferring to the same university and were married shortly after they both graduated. RCCA-14 married another student while they were both going college, which caused some financial difficulties. Ultimately, their joint commitment to graduating was stronger than the fiscal struggles, and they both completed their degrees.

RCCA-2 did not marry a college classmate, but he did “meet a lot of good people, made some very close friends, and still have those very close friends”. One of his best friends was someone he met at college. In fact, his friend became such a good friend that he ended up being RCCA-2’s best man. Likewise, RCCA-2 was the best man at his friend’s wedding. They have remained in very close contact over the years as best friends. They both recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversaries together. While some of RCCA-2’s friends are starting to pass away, he has fond memories of the days in college with those people and the friendships that were forged during classes and activities. RCCA-2 said, “I made some good, close friends because it was a small school”.

RCCA-3 interacts with the professors he had as a student because RCCA-3 has returned to the college as a faculty member. He acknowledges that the professors always emphasized student-faculty interactions. By being the recipient of mentoring that focused on engaging students, RCCA-3 has also implemented strategies to stay in touch with his students. This has led to several situations where his former students have become college professors as well. Similarly, RCCA-10 has noticed that several of her students are now teaching at the high school level. They maintain frequent contact, which also serves as a student recruitment mechanism for the college.

RCCA-4 is currently employed by her alma mater and frequently has opportunities to interact with her former instructors as well as other college staff. RCCA-4 reported that the current interactions with former instructors as evolved to a professional peer relationship, which she appreciates. RCCA-10 was impressed that her former instructors remembered who she was years later. Not only did they remember her

as a student, but they could remember the projects and assignments she completed as a student. This so impressed RCCA-10 that she has strived to care about her students at the same level by remembering their names, taking an interest in their success as students, and getting to know them outside of the classroom.

Summary

This section discussed the ways students and alumni engage with the college. There were eight categories included in the Engagement with the College section, six related to the experiences as students, which include: a) experience with faculty/staff while a student; b) college-related travel opportunities; c) involved with out-of-class activities that are college-sponsored; d) involved with out-of-class activities that are college-related; e) housing while a student; and, f) use of auxiliary support services. Two areas of engagement by alumni emerged including: a) involvement as alumni with college events and/or college activities; and, b) maintain contact with faculty/staff after graduation.

Theme Three: Demographic Indicators of Alumni who Support the Institution

There are five sub-categories of demographic indicators of alumni who support the institution. The first three categories may very well be unique to RCCs and are detailed below. The other two categories have been included in other research studies and proved to be significant components of the experience of the people included in this study.

a) From the Local Community

Only one participant, RCCA-12, did not live in the local community prior to enrolling at a RCC. For the other people in the study, being from the local community

was a significant factor in deciding to attend the college. RCCA-1 participated in several “early programs” hosted by the RCC while he was still in high school. These programs provided an orientation to the college in general as well as allowing future students a chance to discover areas of potential academic interest. RCCA-1 indicated he submitted some original artwork and a college professor provided a positive critique. This experience caused the future student to “look forward to working with him and [it] was just a pretty wonderful experience”. The opportunity to interact with a college employee in an on-going basis probably would not have been available in any other arrangement. RCCA-3 participated in college-sponsored math competitions as well as theatre while still in high school. Since RCCA-3 was so involved with the college while still in high school, he enjoyed a high level of knowledge and comfort with the college campus and its services.

RCCA-2 was from the local community, which made a significant difference in his ability to complete college and continue on to a university. He would schedule college classes so that he could be done with classes by noon. This allowed RCCA-2 to work two jobs that he had prior to enrollment. RCCA-2 was able to earn and save enough money while at the community college to pay for his university education.

Despite having two older siblings attend a university immediately after graduating from high school, RCCA-1 noted that “I wasn’t ready for that move when I graduated from high school and thought that starting at [the local community college] would be a great start and a great place to start and had a wonderful art program...I was pretty excited about jumping in”. Similarly, RCCA-13 “I always knew I was going to come to

College Two. There wasn't anything that influenced or made a decision. That was something that I knew I was going to do".

RCCA-8 was also from the local community. "I didn't really know what I wanted to do, and so I felt that was probably the best. I wasn't ready to go to a four-year college because, like I said, I just didn't know where I wanted to go to. I thought that a junior college would be the best fit". Even though he was from the local community, the college still made efforts to recruit RCCA-8 to enroll saying, "...Through guidance counselors...the college always kind of reached out to the smaller [high] schools around this area. I felt that there was already a connection there".

While RCCA-8 felt that the local college had a solid reputation and that the college worked hard to attract local students to attend the college, RCCA-10 felt there was "a negative stigma out of the high school" attached to attending a community college. She said, "I do know a lot of my friends made fun of me in high school because I was just staying at College Two". However, many of the same students that teased her for staying local at a community college returned to attend college with her after failing at the university. RCCA-1 noted that "I know in my day a number of my friends graduated from high school and wanted to 'get out of Dodge' but when I was leaving [my home town] as a graduate two years later, they were on their way back to [our home town] starting over". RCCA-10 indicated that she viewed the college positively saying, "I always regarded College Two as the 'Harvard on the Hill' and had gone to the [athletic] games when I was younger and it just had this prestige to me, so I didn't buy into the negative stereotypes".

During her senior year in high school, RCCA-15 had no intention of attending the local community college. She was exploring out-of-state universities when she received a scholarship offer from the local RCC and decided to stay and attend College Two.

b) Remain in the Local Community

Several of the interviewees remained in the local community after graduation. The decision to remain in the community was driven by employment, family, or finances. Regardless of the underlying reason for staying in the community, all participants who did remain in the community reported being satisfied with their decision. RCCA-4, RCCA-8, and RCCA-12 went to work immediately after graduation. RCCA-13 and RCCA-16 enrolled at university extension programs that allowed them to complete bachelor degrees without leaving their community college service district.

RCCA-4 was a non-traditional student. She was originally committed to staying local because of her marriage. While that relationship no longer binds her to the area, RCCA-4 is responsible for dependent care of a parent. Providing care for her parent requires that RCCA-4 remain in the local community. Regardless of whether or not RCCA-4 feels obligated to stay local, she is grateful to have studied at the college and to be currently employed at the college.

RCCA-8 enjoyed college but decided not to continue at a university for financial reasons. As RCCA-8 was contemplating transfer, he was offered a job in the booming oil industry that was too lucrative to pass up. After a half-dozen years or so, he decided to go back to ranching. RCCA-8 feels like college certainly served an important role in his development and preparation for work. As a lifelong resident of the college service district, RCCA-8 feels a strong connection to everything in the area including the college.

Despite not being from the local college service district prior to enrolling at the college, RCCA-12 has remained in the community after graduation for his entire career. RCCA-12 attributes the desire to remain in the community to the positive experience he had as a student and the friendships he made with people who also remained in the area.

RCCA-13 and RCCA-16 both graduated from the local community college and remained in the area to complete bachelor degrees. The four-year degrees were possible due to a university extension program as well as online opportunities. Both RCCA-13 and RCCA-16 considered themselves fortunate to have found employment at the college and are content to remain in the local community.

c) Return to the Local Community.

Most of the participants left the community after graduation in order to continue their education.

RCCA-1 left to complete a bachelor's degree and returned to work in the family business. His degree was part of RCCA-1's plan as he said, "I was kind of grooming myself I guess to take over and be what I am today as a general manager". RCCA-2 also finished a bachelor's degree, but returned to start his own business. Their situations are similar and they both report being motivated to return to the area and be involved with the college.

RCCA-3 completed a graduate degree and felt fortunate to be able to return to the college as a professor at the college. He now coaches students in academic competitions and enjoys a great deal of success as the teams are nationally ranked on a consistent basis. RCCA-3 has maintained an open-access approach to participation on the team – anyone who wants to compete, can. While open access is not normally a recipe for

competing at the highest levels, RCCA-3 has found a way to make it work. He believes it is important for the local community to realize that “just because you are a small rural college, does not mean that you can’t compete with the big boys”.

RCCA-9 never intended to return to the college service district. She left to work on a bachelor’s degree, completed a graduate program, and started a career and family overseas. After her spouse died tragically, RCCA-9 realized there was strength in being close to family and friends. RCCA-9 said, “Now I see that being back at [her alma mater] is like a gift to me because it gave me the stability that I needed”. Ultimately, RCCA-9 is “glad that I have a chance to be a part of something that built a foundation in me. Now I get to work at a different level. It is a blessing”.

RCCA-10 said the economy played a major role in her decision to pursue a master’s degree. She is grateful to have completed a graduate degree as RCCA-10 is also a current faculty member at her alma mater. In fact, she attributes the desire to return to work at her former college to the great experience she had as a student. RCCA-10 recognizes that some high school students negatively stereotype the local community college and are simply looking to leave as soon as they graduate from high school. She wants to change their negative stereotype and feels a great deal of pride in what education can be in a small rural college. RCCA-10 actively works “to bridge the community and the college because I think everybody benefits that way”. In order to be a positive influence on people who may consider enrolling at the college, RCCA-10 works closely with her current students to “give back” to the community to “do things in a positive light”.

RCCA-11 also focuses on the positive experiences she has had at the college because she “has had a real positive experience through the many decades up here...it’s been good”. RCCA-11 returned to the community and eventually found employment at the college. Since she started working at the college, she has been actively engaged in promoting college successes to the community because “most people in the community probably don’t know who we are and what we do”.

RCCA-14 was a non-traditional student working a minimum-wage job in the same community as her future RCC. She finally realized that it would not be possible to raise a family on the wages she was earning. In order to improve her circumstances, RCCA-14 quit her job and enrolled in college. While the initial process was difficult and cumbersome, RCCA-14 began meeting people almost immediately. She felt like she “was being taken care of here”. RCCA-14 also reported being the recipient of excellent mentoring from several instructors. “They kept track of you. So if you were sliding in class, they told you about it, and they held you responsible”. Accountability was coupled with caring behavior as well. RCCA-14 indicated that “if you had a need for something, they were always there for you whether it was a personal need or an academic need”. It was this strong example of caring and camaraderie that helped RCCA-14 to develop a strong sense of extended family with the greater college community. It was that sense of family that led to a desire to return to the community after RCCA-14 completed graduate school, despite only finding part-time employment. RCCA-14 reported that the transition from student to employee was enjoyable because her mentors now interacted with her as a peer, which was empowering and exciting.

College Two currently emphasizes students who desire to remain in the local community. In their feature magazine, which is distributed to every household in the service district, College Two has highlighted a current student who has the expressed goal of remaining local. The current student, an elementary education major, is quoted as saying, "I would love to get hired right here in [town] and give back to my hometown and community".

In addition to featuring a student who is interested in remaining in the local community, College Two also drew significant attention to a recently hired employee who returned to the area. When asked what it is like to return to the area after career stops in another state, she said, "Just great! It is wonderful to be back home, and I am thrilled with the opportunity for this fabulous institution". Again, this suggests that College Two is purposeful in recruiting employees who have strong connections to the area.

d) Degrees Beyond the Associate Degree

Thirteen of the sixteen participants transferred to a university within a year of graduating from a community college. RCCA-13 graduated from a community college, went to work for several years, and then enrolled at a university. Two participants (RCCA-4 and RCCA-8) went directly to work and have not enrolled at a university.

While fourteen participants have graduated with bachelor's degree, eight of those people have continued on to pursue graduate degrees. Amazingly enough, all of those who pursued graduate degrees have completed their advanced courses of study.

RCCA-3 attributes his pursuit of a graduate degree with the faculty and staff at his community college. He stated:

I felt that the people here were so encouraging and so positive that, it made it—it allowed me to blossom as a person and as an intellectual and those kind of things...those people got me on to some choices that I would have never made. I would have never gone to [a university] and done theatre up there because I would have figured that it was beyond me. But because [a faculty advisor] said, “Yes, you can do that,” I did that...I just felt like I was encouraged to do things beyond where I was. I never had any intention of going on to do graduate work, but I had all of these people who kept pushing me and saying, “That’s what you should be doing. You should not be just a high school teacher. You should go into education at the higher level.” And so I did, and I think that that came a lot—there was some at [a university] that did have that—it was mostly the people here that kept pushing me, even after I left here.

RCCA-14 had two faculty advisors who encouraged her to participate in undergraduate research. By being involved in research projects as a freshman and sophomore at a community college, RCCA-14 she felt “the barrier was torn down” that exists between “high school and college” and the community college and university.

e) Received Financial Support

Fifteen of the sixteen alumni interviewed received some sort of financial assistance as a student. The types of financial assistance were varied and included financial aid in the form of Pell grants, student loans, scholarships, and informal assistance related to specific needs. RCCA-1 received “four or five scholarships when I went here and I didn’t have to pay a lot of money. A lot of the schooling was paid for”. RCCA-3 remembers the numerous scholarships he received and said:

I had a number of scholarships from [my high school]. I had a math scholarship, those kind of things. Then, I did get speech and debate scholarships my sophomore year, and I think I might have had a theatre scholarship, as well—so from a variety of things. My folks were members of the Eagles and Elks, and I got some money from those, as well.

RCCA-4 remembered receiving a scholarship her first year, but it was the financial aid in the form of a Pell grant that she appreciated most. RCCA-4 said, “My next year between Pell Grant and the scholarships, I didn’t have to borrow anything. It paid for my housing and everything”. Similarly RCCA-7 received enough scholarships “that paid for most of it”, especially since he lived at home and did not have to provide for room and board. RCCA-14 received numerous scholarships, which was fortunate because she “had to rely on scholarships quite a bit” in order to stay in college.

RCCA-5 benefitted from scholarships and a tuition waiver. Because his father was serving on the Board of Trustees, RCCA-5 did not have to pay tuition and received cash for his other scholarships. Similarly, RCCA-10 had enough scholarships to cover tuition, room, board, and books. She received the presidential scholarship as well as a scholarship for speech and debate. RCCA-10 said she was grateful because “I basically got a check each semester that paid for all the books and living expenses and that type of stuff”.

RCCA-11 said she received “just little scholarships”. RCCA-6 received a “miniscule scholarship” but was able to take advantage of an opportunity available to him because he was on the basketball team. RCCA-6’s basketball coach had a book loan

system that RCCA-6 described saying, “then coach used to keep textbooks on his wall. He had a shelf of textbooks. We could go in there and find one of the used books”.

RCCA-12 transferred to a community college from the university and had to pay using “all cash or loan money”. Due to academic issues, he was unable to receive scholarships in his first semester. In order to help pay for school during his second semester, he did what he could saying:

I got lucky the end of my second semester, my sophomore year, they ended up the first dorm on campus...I was lucky to become a dorm proctor or whatever we called them back in those days. I got free room and board for doing that. It was all good.

Finally, during his third semester, RCCA-12 received an academic scholarship for being an outstanding student in the agriculture program. He said, “That was kind of neat”.

RCCA-15 started college with a scholarship but reported the following:

I found myself exerting my independence, and I was not the student I had thought I was my first semester of college, and I lost my scholarship and was on academic probation and spent a lot of my time partying.

RCCA-15 worked on improving her academic performance and was able to earn back some scholarships.

Several alumni reported being identified for scholarships by individual faculty members who recognized their interest and/or abilities in certain academic disciplines.

RCCA-3 said, “It was always the faculty members that I associate in getting those scholarships with”. RCCA-13 thought she would never receive or qualify for scholarships:

I didn't even think about being able to qualify for a scholarship. I wasn't like a super brain and I wasn't poor. I was middle class. I never even thought about scholarships, so never even bothered to look into them or anything like that.

RCCA-13 said her academic advisor applied for a scholarship on her behalf during her sophomore year. The scholarship was large enough that "I actually made a little bit of money by going to school" (RCCA-13). A faculty member approached RCCA-16 with two scholarship opportunities. RCCA-16 recalled the situation:

One of my instructors came to be on [the scholarship committee] and he's like, "I have two. No one has applied for these." He says, "I know you're putting yourself through college. You have good grades. You're a good student. Would you be interested?" "Yes." I called up my best friend, "Hey, let's fill these forms out. I got one for you." Both of us got the scholarships.

RCCA-8 did not receive any scholarships and did not apply for financial aid. Instead, he reported that "I just went...I graduated, then I worked a year and then I saved up money to go to school".

Summary

This section reviewed the factors related to the Demographic Indicators of Alumni who Support the Institution. This section was divided into five categories including: a) from the local community; b) remain in the local community; c) return to the local community; d) degrees earned beyond the associate degree; and, e) received financial support.

Theme Four: Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni

This section discusses the results of the interviews that relate to Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni. Four categories were developed under the theme Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni including: a) desire to fill an institutional need; b) re-payers who had a great experience; c) re-payers who received a scholarship; and d) desire to make a difference. Many of the RCCA indicated characteristics and/or motivations that meet the requirements of multiple categories.

a) Desire to Fill an Institutional/Community Need

RCCA-1 realizes there are students with significant needs. The fact that there are students in need influences him as he is “sure that my giving levels will go up” to meet the increasing needs of students. RCCA-2 describes his motivation to give and fill an institutional need saying, “I just want to do it [donate financially]. What I have put together in my lifetime working...I don’t know that I need all of it, and maybe somebody else can use part of it and put it to good use”. RCCA-2 has established an endowment that annually awards scholarships for five students who attend full-time, which certainly goes a long way to meet an institutional need.

Nearly all of the participants contribute money to scholarships because they view scholarships as one of the largest institutional needs. RCCA-14 has a desire to make a significant donation that hinges on the institutional need for additional funding. She recognizes that students are the primary beneficiaries of scholarships, services, and programs that are funded from private donations. RCCA- 7 said that the most impactful way to positively contribute to student success is to provide funding for scholarships. The influence on non-traditional students is even greater as RCCA-7 noted that “I know a

lot of people struggle to get that money put together, even at the community college level, because it's still expensive. It's money that they need, and they're working a full time job and raising a family".

RCCA-1 knew there were institutional needs while a student but was not in a position to support other students financially. However, immediately after graduation and upon his first opportunity for full-time employment, RCCA-1 began monthly contributions to his alma mater. The amount of the monthly donations has increased three-fold while RCCA-1 has also started giving larger amounts on an annual basis as well as participating in sponsoring specific events.

RCCA-5, RCCA-8, and RCCA-12 are interested in supporting the college because it fills an important need for the community. RCCA-12 thinks that "it's [the college] a tremendous asset to [the city]". RCCA-5 stated that the college "is just a really important part of the county. It drives a lot financially. It brings a lot to the county with jobs and the functions that they have. The cultural events they bring to the area are really good. The county, without the college, would be a really bland place. It adds a lot to the whole area". RCCA-8 concurred noting that the college is an asset to the area, and "it's well worth the effort to put into it to do what we can to support it". RCCA-5 continues to actively support the college, both financially and with his time, because of the role the college plays in the local community.

RCCA-8 serves on the Real Estate and Investment Committee for the college foundation. His professional experiences in real estate and banking are an ideal match for the needs of the committee. Since investment services would require financial

remuneration in other circumstances, the college benefits fiscally from RCCA-8's service.

Several of the alumni target specific funds for their donations. Targeted giving allows the money to go to areas of need. RCCA-1 indicated that he targets athletics and arts because "I think probably if I can just strengthen those" it will make a difference. RCCA-4 donates her money to non-traditional scholarships and feels that the funds make a significant difference for students in a situation similar to her own. RCCA-7 notes that the alumni association will frequently work with donors to identify areas of interest to the donor so that their financial contributions will impact an area of interest.

RCCA-10 notices that her financial donations benefit the college in a myriad of ways. She contributes to funding that goes towards new buildings including dorms and classrooms. RCCA-10 also invests in technology for students. She feels like the financial donations are "very, very little," but that it still goes towards the best investments on campus: students. Another aspect of RCCA-10's efforts to invest in the college can be seen in her representation of the college in the community. Speaking of a particular bond initiative, RCCA-10 organized a grass roots campaign in her neighborhood. She personally reached out to every household in the neighborhood and was able to inform others about the community benefits if the college bond campaign was successful. RCCA-10 helped convince several people to put up yard signs supporting the bond. The campaign was successful, and RCCA-10 felt like her commitment of time and resources were part of the reason the bond passed. RCCA-10 also serves on community boards and represents the college informally. She feels like this has benefitted the

college in terms of closer partnerships with the city, K-12 school districts, and other organizations that may use college services.

b) Re-payers who had a Great Experience

RCCA-1 noted that he had a “fortunate situation” in that he was the recipient of several scholarships that allowed him to have “a great experience. It was fun. I wouldn’t continue to support it as much today if I didn’t think it was such a great experience in the first place and what a great college it continues to be”. RCCA-2 acknowledged that his giving financially to the college is influenced because he had a good experience as a student at the college. He said, “I like to give back what I think I received from going to school here and living in this community and going to this community college. I owe them something back. That’s why [I] do it”. RCCA-6 echoed similar sentiments saying, “It’s just that I had a good time at [college] and I’d like to repay it a little bit. I guess that’s the bottom line”. RCCA-13 also appreciates the education she received and the experience she had as a student. She says, “The school had not only given me a great education, a great experience, but now they are providing me with a very good job”. RCCA-13 feels it is important to repay that generosity by contributing her time and financial resources to benefit the current students at the college.

As mentioned previously, many alumni target their donations to specific areas of the college. While targeted donations are used to meet areas of need, alumni also indicated that they identified specific areas of the college that provided them with great experiences as students. RCCA-1 targets his donations to athletics and the arts programs. He has an personal interest in athletics and frequently “attends volleyball, soccer, basketball, [and] wrestling matches whenever I’m in town and have the opportunity”. He

enjoyed attending those activities as a student and continues to be involved by watching athletic events. He also donates to the art program because that was his major. RCCA-3 targets his donations and contributions to specific areas of interest but also strongly considers areas of need for the college. He noted that the college lost a theatre program to budget cuts and could also strengthen the technical training programming on campus. At this point, RCCA-3 would like to “be a part” of bringing back the theatre program and strengthening the technical areas of the college but sees several limitations, including cost. RCCA-12 directs some of his contributions to the activities on campus, largely due to his positive experiences while as a student.

RCCA-2 actively seeks alumni who have had a positive experience at the college. He encourages those who “think you had a good experience here to show some thanks and give back to your college”. RCCA-6 views his role as a graduate to be an “ambassador for the college”. He looks for opportunities to speak to local high school students and recounts his positive experiences at the college, both academically and socially.

RCCA-10 had “such a great experience that I wanted to repay the experience that I had to future students so that they would have a good experience as well”. She responded to a follow-up question regarding how her student experience currently influences her current actions by saying, “I try very, very hard to be involved in the leadership aspect of faculty. I stay very involved in students’ lives so that we can try to make [the college] better and try to make that same connection. Then I do try to give back financially to the alumni association or to other things that are going on around campus”.

In contrast to many of the other participants, RCCA-9 understood the theory of giving back to repay a positive experience but was not motivated to be philanthropic for those reasons. When asked what motivated her to give back to the college, RCCA-9 stated, “In theory, I know the right answer is that I should want to give back because I was prepared and had a good experience here. I don’t have a strong conviction about that. Right or wrong, I don’t know. I appreciate the preparation that I had here, and I’m glad that I got to come here. I haven’t felt like I needed to do something as a result of that”. RCCA-9 felt her philanthropy was felt by going above and beyond to positively impact students, which will be detailed in the section related to making a difference.

RCCA-14 articulated the desire to contribute more than just time by regularly giving larger sums of money because she received a substantial amount of financial support. The desire to repay for the generosity of others as well as the great experience she had is currently compromised by the need to pay off student loans from graduate school.

c) Socialites who Enjoy Giving and Entertaining

RCCA-1 enjoys participating in the annual alumni golf tournament. Playing in the golf tournament has also included sponsoring various components of the events as well. For example, RCCA-1 donates a golf club, which goes into a raffle that raises money for the college foundation.

RCCA-3 noted that the alumni association does an excellent job of keeping people involved and informed. RCCA-5, RCCA-6, and RCCA-7 noted that the alumni association communicates with its members by hosting luncheons. The alumni association members are usually served a nice meal while they receive updates on current

events at the college. The luncheons also serve as a time for alumni to meet and plan events for current students. The alumni association typically plans events to engage current students with former students. They specifically target college activities like athletic events or new student orientations. The alumni association will use these opportunities to interact with students, provide students with information about the college, and sponsor meals to feed students. Additionally, RCCA-7 noted that the alumni association uses new student orientation as a forum to interact with the parents of new students so that the parents are informed about the college.

Both RCCA-5 and RCCA-6 mentioned that these luncheon meetings usually include tours of campus. During the tours of campus, which are usually related to new construction or emerging academic programs, the college takes the opportunity to introduce alumni to current college faculty and staff. RCCA-6 indicated that the tours and introductions help him to know what is available on campus for potential students as well as services available to the community at large. He said the tours allow us to get “our eyes and ears to see and witness these things so that we’ll go home...and spread the news”.

After the formal luncheon meeting, the alumni association hosts a cocktail hour for people to spend time interacting. RCCA-5 indicated that a lot of people that are involved with the college, administration, faculty, staff, and board members attend the event to show their appreciation for your involvement and support. “It’s kind of a special feeling that they do that for you”.

RCCA-6 is motivated to be involved with the alumni association because of a close friendship with a member of the executive board for the alumni association. His

friend passed away several years ago, and the opportunity to honor her memory and her commitment to the college continues to keep RCCA-6 involved with others who work on her behalf.

RCCA-12 “like[s] to be involved. I like to volunteer in a lot of different organizations and with a lot of different kinds of activities”. There has always been a social component to RCCA-12’s philanthropy. Whether it was time or resources, he mentioned that as he raised children, he “stay[s] involved in the kinds of activities that they needed to be involved in”. In terms of service and/or donations to the college, RCCA-12 continues to enjoy the associations with peers and students.

RCCA-13 supports college events by participating as a spectator. “I think basically I’m there to try and support the students and the other members of the college community...watching their work and what they’ve worked hard to accomplish”, RCCA-13 said. She attends the events with family members and uses it as a social retreat. She feels that the students and staff have worked hard to put on a performance and deserve the social privilege of having an audience.

RCCA-14 is motivated, at least in part, by the social aspect of giving. She describes herself as “a very dynamic person and I like being involved in everything...I like the people”. Her passion for people and student success has led to several initiatives that unite students and provide opportunities for them to be successful. One such program that was founded by RCCA-14 is a student club related to an academic discipline. RCCA-14 noted that the club has provided academic support to students, opportunities for regional travel for supplemental learning experiences, and involvement in professional organizations that will be influential in their professional careers.

RCCA-15 is a self-described “social person” or a “people person” who likes interacting with others. Furthermore, she says “if there is an event and I’m available, I get involved”. She has served on the alumni board and enjoys the committee work, both because of the actual accomplishments of the group as well as the chance to interact with peers. She noted that the committee work was fun because she got to interact and talk with a variety of people. RCCA-15 noted that she was significantly younger than nearly all of the other members on the alumni foundation board. The social interactions that took place because of their committee work led the alumni to engage in conversations and reminiscing about their experiences as students. It was eye-opening for RCCA-15 to realize the college has been a great place for several generations of students, especially the similarities in the friendships and social engagement opportunities.

The work that is of most interest to RCCA-15 is awarding scholarships. RCCA-15 recounts a unique experience related to service on the scholarship committee. She happened to be the chair of the committee and read all of the scholarship applications. One of the award winners had a very unique name that stuck in her mind. There were a series of serendipitous events that led to a strong friendship. RCCA-15 ended up recognizing the scholarship recipient’s name in the community which resulted in the development of a business partnership that led to a very close friendship. RCCA-15 reported that the development of this relationship is “really neat...but you find that in close knit rural communities”.

d) Desire to Make a Difference

RCCA-1 said, “I’ve benefited from scholarships, and I’d like to be able to help other kids get through a junior college experience the same way”. RCCA-7 said that

providing funds for scholarships is “just fantastic! I think that, to me, is rewarding; these people are trying to improve themselves in some way and that we have some sort of impact with them”. RCCA-8 said it is rewarding to know that the scholarship recipient is probably going to be a “kid that may not actually even be there without it”.

RCCA-9 provided a powerful example of the impact alumni can have if they are committed to making a difference. She had a positive experience while a student, but indicated that she did not necessarily feel motivated to make financial contributions based solely on those positive experiences. Instead, RCCA-9 reported that her motivation is because “I care about the success of the students...I want the people that we prepare to go out and do an excellent job at what they do so that it can reflect well...I feel that I could give them my best in order for that to happen”. In order to ensure students are successful, RCCA-9 goes above and beyond to bring the curriculum to life for the students while making a difference in the lives of others. She has organized trips for current students to developing countries. During the trips, the students perform service work related to the curriculum. RCCA-9 reports that “this additional learning experience for the students is atypical. You wouldn’t have to have that in a normal course of your studies”. She has assessed these trips, and the results have been positive on several levels. First, many of the students have never been outside of the country before. The opportunity to have a global experience expands the students’ perspectives by exposing them to what life is like in a developing nation. By the students own confession, the global experience “was just radically life altering”.

RCCA-11 is inspired to support the college because she is “your basic bleeding heart do-gooder. Helping people motivates me. I really like it if I see that I can break

through some of the layers of armor...to see somebody make some kind of a gain”.

Being motivated to make a difference has caused RCCA-11 to engage in a number of initiatives to support the college with her time, influence, and resources. Efforts include volunteering to speak at businesses and service organizations in the community, serve on the alumni association, participating on the scholarship committee, serving food to current students at college events as a representative of the alumni association, and financially sponsoring awards and/or gifts for athletic and community events.

RCCA-10 is making efforts to instill a mindset of giving back in the current student body. She has incorporated a service learning component into the curriculum. Every class that she teaches has an activity or assignment that guides current students through the process of recognizing a need in the community, designing a project that will address that need, and implementing the plan so that others benefit from the student’s efforts. RCCA-10 feels that this is an example of “doing a really good job of having students give back while they’re on campus”. She also reports that teaching students to give back is gaining support from other faculty and staff as well, which she believes will ultimately benefit the college and the students to a greater degree in the future.

Several participants noted that they enjoy the small tokens of appreciation that come from college representatives. RCCA-4 appreciates the card she receives that thanks her for her monetary contribution. To RCCA-4, the card is a simple form of “just being friendly” that does not necessarily affect whether a donation is made, but the acknowledgement is appreciated. RCCA-10 appreciates the handwritten notes she receives from the president of the college. RCCA-10 reports that several of the vice-presidents and deans also actively thank employees with a simple e-mail or phone call.

She notes that it is nice to “just get a nice little thank you note”. RCCA-11 receives a token “pat on the back”, but noted that is the extent of the acknowledgement she receives. RCCA-13 donates financially to the college and receives a letter expressing appreciation, but it is not her primary motivator. RCCA-15 says that an informal “pat on the back” is extremely rewarding.

RCCA-16 was the only participant to report that her efforts went largely unknown. She strives to make anonymous contributions, which may be the reason her time and monetary contributions are not informally or formally recognized. When asked about the reasons for her anonymous contributions, RCCA-16 said, “I just like the students and I want them to do well. I like to help people blossom and do well”. Her motivations did not include a reference to formal acknowledgement, but do stem from a personal experience when she was the recipient of anonymous philanthropy. RCCA-16 was struggling through a personal crisis and her peers at the college took up a collection and ended up providing her with a substantial amount of money, and the timing of the gift was crucial because of her children’s needs. As a result of this anonymous gift, RCCA-16 believes it is important for her to make a difference for others and to do so anonymously as well.

RCCA-9 is “not really sure if I like formal acknowledgement – it’s certainly not my desire”. Instead of formal recognition, RCCA-9 would like others to “acknowledge that what is happening is of value and that the more that it’s communicated, the more it can happen”. RCCA-11 echoed these sentiments regarding formal acknowledgement. She indicated that it is more important to see the students be successful from start to end. She recounted the story of a student who started in the Adult Basic Education program as

a homeless parent with drug addictions. After losing her children to the state, she was able to rely on the college and the people there for support as she earned a GED, held down a steady job, regained custody of her children, and enrolled in college level programming.

RCCA-1, RCCA-2, RCCA-3, RCCA-4, RCCA-7, and RCCA-8 have been able to actually meet several of the beneficiaries of their donations. The college has hosted scholarship events including evening receptions and luncheons that bring the recipients of the scholarship monies together with the donors who provided the fund. RCCA-7 said the meetings are “really good” because you get to see your money “is not a handout, but a hand up”. RCCA-1 noted, when he met one of the recipients of his funds, that it was “exciting” and a “neat experience”. RCCA-1 summed up the interaction with the scholarship recipient saying, “It’s fun to be able to help further somebody’s education and help them along the way”. RCCA-2, who has established an endowment that provides annual funding for five full-time students, indicated that:

just visiting with them [scholarship recipients] during the luncheon...we were excited to meet those that are receiving the scholarship from our endowment, and I would like to think that they were thankful that they were getting the help and we were able to meet the people that did make it possible for them.

RCCA-8 said the scholarship banquets are “a really cool deal for both the students and the donors”. These events usually include a significant amount of emotions including gratitude and friendship.

RCCA-4 attended scholarship receptions with the donors as a student who received designated funds. She now participates as a donor and gets to interact with the

students who receive her contributions. Since she was a non-traditional student, she continues to donate to a non-traditional student scholarship fund. RCCA-4 notes that her contributions “give somebody a chance to go that may not have enough money...just helps them out”.

Many of the interviewees are actively involved in finding other people who will donate money to the college. RCCA-1 reports that he is:

Always out communicating with friends and folks trying to get them to join on with us and support this or that event. Anytime they can help out with a monetary donation or increasing their annual givings...we surely encourage folks to join in and help.

Furthermore, RCCA-1 indicated that RCCs have a particular opportunity to recruit and “invite alumni that are in the area” because that “would be a pretty good way to maybe bolster” fundraising and support for the college. He sees this as a prime opportunity to “target them [alumni living in the area] by maybe having experiences on campus with current students and just talking about the curriculum and new things that they have to offer”.

RCCA-2 encourages others to support the college. Similarly, he targets alumni in the area. RCCA-2 tries to discover if the person had a positive experience as a student at the college and then appeals to the importance of being able to make a difference. He reports that “it is a great feeling to help somebody else out”, and the funds “support scholarships and buy all kinds of computers...it’s a source of funding that is not provided anywhere else, and it’s important”. The message of making a difference underscores the importance of making a difference by supporting the college through an investment.

While some of the alumni reported interacting with graduates who have remained in the local community, RCCA-10 has made efforts to target those alumni who have moved beyond the college's service district. The alumni who worked with those in the local community have reported significant and frequent successful efforts to gain support. RCCA-10 has not been able to successfully solicit donations from friends who are no longer living close to the college. RCCA-10 has used social media to stay in touch with other alumni despite physical distances. Current students that tap into the social media connections created by RCCA-10 have indicated to her that they appreciate the connections to past graduates because it lets the current students know there are college graduates everywhere that are successful. RCCA-10 reports that she is "starting to understand the importance of alumni to the success of an institution".

RCCA-8 views his role to identify donors and also to solicit donations. He works actively with college employees on major capital campaigns. One such campaign was supported by the state through a matching fund pledge. The legislature set aside funds to match contributions donors made to the college. RCCA-8 reported that with state support via matching funds, "the campaign just took off" because "that [state matching funds] made it so easy". RCCA-8 was involved with asking for people to make donations between \$1,000 and \$20,000, and the capital campaign goal of \$10 million was reached relatively quickly despite heavy competition from two or three other philanthropic initiatives of other local organizations that coincided with the college's drive. He indicated that they made the regular attempts to solicit donations, like phone calls and mailers, and decided to do something more personal. Everyone on the alumni association identified ten individuals and made personal contacts with each person. Armed with the

same college information packets that normally would have been included in a mailer, the individual members of the alumni association reported a strong response to their personable approach, which was consistent with their interactions with the alumni association before and after graduation.

RCCA-7 is not comfortable asking other people to make financial contributions to the college but is actively involved in encouraging others to spend their time to make a difference. His strategy is to get other folks to have a positive experience making a difference for others. When people “feel like [they] are making a difference or that [they] are involved...then [others] just want to be around. That’s kind of the whole idea”.

RCCA-15 was recently awarded a state-wide recognition. At a state conference, RCCA-15 was presented with an Award of Excellence for work with Adult Basic Education students. Her desire to make a difference was recognized to “honor an individual who has made significant contributions to the advancement of adult education at the state and local levels” (College Two, Press Release, Fall, 2011). By choosing to feature this award to college employees, students, and the community, College Two is actively promoting people who make a difference.

Summary

This section discussed the results of the interviews that relate to Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni. Four categories were developed under the theme Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni included: a) desire to fill an institutional need; b) re-payers who had a great experience; c) re-payers who received a scholarship; and d) desire to make a difference.

Summary

The findings of the research were presented in this chapter. The characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni as related to the research questions were addressed. This chapter presented the characteristics of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution. This chapter also detailed the factors that motivate RCC alumni to consider contributing financial support to the institution. The detailed descriptions, from both the interviews and various college documents, meet the purpose of this research as previously stated.

This chapter also contained a description of the participant demographics. Most notably, the participants graduated from their colleges, participated in at least one college-related event in the past year, and currently reside in their respective college service districts. The gender was equally split among the sixteen interviewees. The alumni graduated between 1959 and 2005. Interestingly enough, fifteen of the sixteen participants lived in their college's service district prior to enrollment at the college.

This chapter also reviewed the systemic coding process employed by the researcher. The categories that emerged were analyzed and subsequently supported by the data. The general findings that emerged from the research process were: 1) Attitudinal Factors of Alumni; 2) Engagement with the College; 3) Demographic Indicators of Alumni who Support the Institution; and, 4) Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni.

Seven categories were developed under the theme Attitudinal Factors of Alumni with four areas related to alumni experience as students including: a) transfer preparation; b) job preparation; c) satisfaction with experience; and d) emotional attachment with the

college. Three areas were also identified in this category that dealt with alumni experiences after graduation including: a) perceived need for financial support; b) recommend college to others; and c) advocacy for college initiatives.

Eight categories were developed under the theme Engagement with the College, six related to the experiences as students, which include: a) experience with faculty/staff while a student; b) college-related travel opportunities; c) involved with out-of-class activities that are college-sponsored; d) involved with out-of-class activities that are college-related; e) housing while a student; and f) use of auxiliary support services. Two areas of engagement by alumni emerged including: a) involvement as alumni with college events and/or college activities; and, b) maintain contact with faculty/staff after graduation.

Five categories were developed under the theme Demographic Indicators of Alumni who Support the Institution including: a) from the local community; b) remain in the local community; c) return to the local community; d) degrees earned beyond the associate degree; and, e) received financial support.

Four categories were developed under the theme Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni including: a) desire to fill an institutional need; b) re-payers who had a great experience; c) re-payers who received a scholarship; and, d) desire to make a difference.

Section 5: Discussion and Conclusions

The final section of this paper will include a discussion of the study and the findings. Conclusions drawn from the results in Section 4 will be covered in detail. Finally, this section will present the implications of the findings and provide recommendations for future research.

Purpose

This study investigates the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution. Very little research has been completed on community college alumni and their giving habits. Through completion of this study, advancement officers at the nearly 1,200 community colleges in the United States will have a better understanding of this population, what drew them into community colleges, and what may affect their tendency to give back to the college as they proceed through their own professional careers. The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to make monetary donations to the institution.

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution?
2. What factors motivate RCC alumni to consider contributing financial support to the institution?

Summary of the Research

RCCs are a significant component of the higher education landscape.

Overview of the Problem

Historically, little effort has been made until recently to build alumni networks and organizations in community colleges. Through a converging of influences, including the advent of instant communications technologies and recessions in each of the past two decades, community colleges have been actively reaching out to alumni as prospective donors. As a result, it is becoming more common for RCCs to seek new and emerging sources of revenue to supplement their operating budgets and funds for scholarships or auxiliary services (Errett, 2003; Katsinas, 2010; Mathis, 2003). Complicating the fiscal issues RCCs face is the un-improving national and global economy. Given the economic climate and the need for additional revenue streams, RCC leaders are faced with seeking new and emerging sources of funding (Grover, 2009; Hebel & Selingo, 2001; Summers, 2006; Supiano, 2008; Van der Werf, 1999; Zeiss, 2003).

Furthermore, in the current economic climate, both federal and state governments are calling for a renewed focus on immediate job-producing career programs (Obama, 2012). Additionally, the pricing of higher education is becoming increasingly costly for economically disadvantaged students. As a result, students are assuming greater debt in order to complete the baccalaureate degree. These environmental considerations indicate that the current decade is one where community college graduates are more likely to be terminal graduates. Therefore, it is an ideal time to prioritize the community college graduate as a prospective donor. This research project presents the characteristics and motivations of RCC alumni who are likely to contribute financial support to the institution.

Review of Methodology

This investigation was completed utilizing a qualitative case study methodology. Creswell (2005) defines qualitative research as “an inquiry or process of understanding a social or human problem based on a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants” (p. 15). The researcher used two RCCs to gather the data. The data for this study included interview transcripts, archival data from each college’s foundation office and administrative offices, as well as data collected through spending time on campus and visiting informally with college employees and alumni. Each of the areas of data were analyzed individually, and then compared with the analysis of other sets in order to construct associations between people, experiences, and college history. As a result, the interview material could be corroborated with dates, events, and descriptions provided by other people and written sources.

The researcher obtained Institutional Review Board approval prior to conducting the interviews (Appendix A). All participants received instructions related to informed consent, which included the purpose of the study, outlined the procedures, and provided the rights of the participants. All interviewees signed the informed consent forms and indicated their willingness to participate in the research (Appendix B).

Sampling and Participation Selection

The researcher interviewed 16 individuals from two different RCCs. The selection process was non-random and purposeful and included three criteria including: (1) graduated from their colleges, (2) participated in at least one college-related event in the past calendar year, and (3) currently reside in their respective college service districts. Graduates who have participated in a college-sponsored event in the past year and reside

in the college service district are more likely to be aware of issues related to the college compared to non-graduates, or even graduates, who have not attended college activities and reside outside of the service district. A breakdown of participants' demographics is presented in Appendix D.

Data Collection

Data was primarily collected using a semi-structured interview process. Prior to conducting the interview, the researcher presented questions to the doctoral committee. Members of the committee provided feedback on the questions, which was incorporated into the final interview protocol (Appendix C). When interviewees referred to college-specific documents, the researcher procured those documents and included them in the analysis.

The researcher also conducted several mock interviews to prepare for the actual interviews. RCC alumni of the researcher's current place of employment participated in mock interviews and provided feedback related to the types of questions used and their overall experience. The researcher made several modifications to improve the interview protocol, but the changes did not substantively change or alter the intent of what the Institutional Review Board approved.

All interviews were digitally recorded for audio-only. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and participants were provided a copy of the transcripts to verify their intent, member-checking, and the accuracy of the information provided. Thirteen participants indicated no changes were necessary. Two participants provided minor feedback primarily correcting grammar or editing informal terminology. One participant made three additional comments to clarify the intent of his message. Three participants

requested that references to other people not be included in and public document, which is part of the agreement. Four participants indicated they were uncomfortable with the researcher disclosing information related to possible illegal activities that were mentioned in the interviews. It was agreed that their pseudonym would not be used in any public papers in relationship to the accounts of their activities. Furthermore, the researcher determined that only a cursory mention of the topics would be sufficient.

Data Analysis Procedures

After transcribing the interviews and receiving verification from all 16 participants, the researcher systematically coded the transcripts. The coding process included multiple readings of all transcripts. The researcher identified and marked related topics and assigned text segments as descriptors. The coded segments were then grouped into related categories as part of a hierarchy. Finally, as categories emerged, the researcher identified core themes related to the original research questions. The themes are detailed in Section 4. The next step in this section is to compare the themes to the literature.

Themes Compared to Literature Review

There were four major themes that emerged from the data analysis. The four themes that emerged in this study are: 1) Attitudinal Factors of Alumni; 2) Engagement with the College; 3) Demographic Indicators of Alumni who Support the Institution; and, 4) Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni. These four themes have strong connections to the review of the literature. The sections of the literature review included: (a) the importance of alternative sources of funding for community colleges; (b) fundraising strategies employed by community colleges; (c) tapping into alumni donors; and (d) the

characteristics, traits, and patterns of alumni donors. This section will discuss the links between this research and the literature review.

The first theme that emerged from this research, Attitudinal Factors of Alumni, is related to several components of the literature review. Attitudinal characteristics are related to alumnus' opinions, satisfaction, and perceptions of the college. Consistent with the literature review, this study found several sub-categories that contributed to strong emotional attachment to the college. Sub-categories included positive emotional attachment to the college, likely to recommend others attend the college, satisfaction with job and/or transfer preparation, and perceived need for financial assistance.

First, positive emotional attachment with the college has been linked to increased philanthropy (Beeler, 1982; Caboni, 2003; Clotfelter, 2003; Gardner, 1975; Monks, 2003; Shadoian, 1989; Weerts & Ronca, 2007). All sixteen participants in this study reported positive emotional attachment with the college. Second, RCC alumni in this study were likely to recommend that others attend the college, which is consistent with other research findings (Gardner, 1975; McKinney, 1978; Shadoian, 1989; Terry & Macy, 2007). Third, participants in this study reported satisfaction with the preparation for their careers, which is consistent with the findings in other studies (Beeler, 182; Gardner, 1975). Fourth, all alumni interviewed for this study had received financial assistance while attending their community college. They understood the need for students to receive financial assistance, which led to donations after graduation. The perceived need for financial assistance has been a consistent finding in numerous other research studies (Caboni, 2003; Ficano & Cunningham, 2001; House, 1987; Miracle, 1977; Taylor & Martin, 1995; Terry & Macy, 2007; Weerts & Ronca, 2007).

The second theme, Engagement with the College, is applicable for students while they are in college as well as alumni after they graduate. Numerous studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between student interactions with the college and subsequent financial contributions after graduation (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; Dugan et al., 2003; Fygetakis, 1992; Leslie & Ramey, 1988; Hall, 2002; Mercatoris, 2006; Miller, 1997; Oglesby, 1991; Shadoian, 1989; Werts & Ronca, 2007).

Students who had a positive experience with faculty and/or staff felt more engaged with the college, which is similar to multiple research studies (Hall, 2002; Mercatoris, 2006; Wharton, 1997). Several participants in this research described the benefits of a low faculty-to-student ratio as contributory to their success because of the opportunity to interact with the instructors. A low faculty-to-student ratio has been documented to have a positive correlation with fundraising in other studies (Cunningham & Cochi-Ficano, 2001). In this study, students who participated in travel related to their experiences in college were more engaged with the college. This phenomenon had not been previously documented, and constitutes a significant contribution to the existing literature.

Providing opportunities for alumni to interact with the college was a significant characteristic described by the interviewees in this study as well as being a factor in other publications (Grill, 1988; Haddad, 1986; Hall, 2002; Leslie & Ramey, 1988; Miracle, 1977; Pokrass, 1989; Shadoian, 1989; Taylor & Martin, 1995; Werts & Ronca, 2007). Alumni in this study reported engaging with the college by attending events and activities, just like other research initiatives (Errett, 2003; Grill, 1988; Haddad, 1986; Miracle, 1977; Taylor & Martin, 1995).

The third theme, Demographic Indicators of Alumni who Support the Institution, also had similarities and differences when compared with the literature review. Previous research conducted by Terry & Macy (2007) discovered that alumni who live closer to the college after graduation are more likely to give to the college. All sixteen participants in the study currently live in the college service district. In fact, fifteen of the sixteen participants lived in the service district prior to enrollment, which suggests there are opportunities for RCCs to focus on initiatives to interact with people before they enroll, while they are students, and after they graduate.

The fourth theme, Philanthropic Tendencies of Alumni, had similar comparisons with the literature review. The interviews with RCCA indicated that the participants in this research project can be grouped in four of the seven categories of philanthropy according to Prince and File (2001). RCCA alumni are most similar to the four categories of communitarians, socialites, re-payers, and altruists. None of the participants demonstrated characteristics related to donors who are devout, investors, or dynasts. It should be noted that all participants demonstrated several philanthropic tendencies that span multiple categories.

Communitarians are defined as having a desire to improve the community as well as their own business prospects (Prince & File, 2001). RCCA-5, RCCA-8, and RCCA-12 support the college because it fills an important need for the community. RCCA-12 thinks that “it’s [the college] a tremendous asset to [the city]”. RCCA-5 stated that:

[The college] is just a really important part of the county. It drives a lot financially. It brings a lot to the county with jobs and the functions that they

have. The cultural events they bring to the area are really good. The county, without the college, would be a really bland place. It adds a lot to the whole area. RCCA-8 concurred noting that the college is an asset to the area, and “it’s well worth the effort to put into it to do what we can to support it”. RCCA-5 continues to actively support the college, both financially and with his time, because of the role the college plays in the local community.

Socialites are described as people who enjoy giving as the process usually involves opportunities to attend entertaining events that include social networking. This group of givers appreciates knowing the results of their donations as well as receiving accolades for the good work they do (Prince & File, 2001). Several participants noted the social benefits of being involved with fundraising. They mentioned the invitations to play in golf tournaments, attending exclusive luncheons, access to announcements about college initiatives, behind-the-scene tours of campus construction projects, attending college events which the donor supports, and getting to know other people with similar interests. RCCA-15 is a self-described “social person” or a “people person” who likes interacting with others. Furthermore, she says “if there is an event and I’m available, I get involved”. RCCA-6 is motivated to be involved with the alumni association because of a close friendship with a member of the executive board for the alumni association. His friend passed away several years ago, and the opportunity to honor her memory and her commitment to the college continues to keep RCCA-6 involved with others who work on her behalf.

The repayers simply want to give back for the opportunity afforded them that changed their fortune. They are not interested in recognition and usually the charity

chooses them based on life experiences (Prince & File, 2001). RCCA-1 noted that he had a “fortunate situation” in that he was the recipient of several scholarships that allowed him to have “a great experience. It was fun. I wouldn’t continue to support it as much today if I didn’t think it was such a great experience in the first place and what a great college it continues to be”. RCCA-2 acknowledged that his financial contributions to the college are influenced by the positive experience he had as a student. He said, “I like to give back what I think I received from going to school here and living in this community and going to this community college. I owe them something back. That’s why [I] do it”. RCCA-6 echoed similar sentiments saying, “It’s just that I had a good time at [college] and I’d like to repay it a little bit. I guess that’s the bottom line”. RCCA-13 also appreciates the education she received and the experience she had as a student. She says, “The school had not only given me a great education, a great experience, but now they are providing me with a very good job”. RCCA-13 feels it is important to repay that generosity by contributing her time and financial resources to benefit the current students at the college.

The altruists are not interested in accolades or recognition. They feel that giving is a moral imperative, and they support causes that assist the elderly or the poor. Altruists appreciate interpersonal bonds with recipients of their generosity (Prince & File, 2001). RCCA-2 demonstrates an altruistic approach to donating funds saying, “I just want to do it [contribute financially]. What I have put together in my lifetime working...I don’t know that I need all of it, and maybe somebody else can use part of it and put it to good use”. RCCA-7 similarly noted, “I know a lot of people struggle to get that money put

together, even at the community college level, because it's still expensive. It's money that they need, and they're working a full time job and raising a family”.

Conclusions

This section details the conclusions to the research. After analyzing the data, the following conclusions are presented: (a) RCC alumni who had positive experiences as students are likely to support the college; (b) RCC alumni who support the college will contribute financially, but are also inclined to donate their time, professional services, and influence to benefit the college; (c) RCCs can capitalize on the “small town” atmosphere on campus by promoting opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and alumni to get to know each other; and (d) RCCs have inherent advantages with being rural including an opportunity to cultivate future college supporters prior to graduation from high school, while they are students, and after graduation.

Positive Experiences of Alumni

This research confirmed what was documented in the literature review. Positive emotional attachment is an attitudinal characteristic that has been linked to increased philanthropic tendencies and can occur in many ways (Beeler, 1982; Caboni, 2003; Clotfelter, 2003; Gardner, 1975; Monks, 2003; Shadoian, 1989; Weerts & Ronca, 2007). All sixteen participants indicated strong satisfaction with their community college experience as students. Similarly, all sixteen interviewees reported a strong emotional attachment with the college. Strong emotional attachment was directly linked to the positive experiences participants had in developing relationships with college faculty and staff as well as with other students.

RCC Alumni Contributions

RCC alumni who support the college will contribute financially, but are also inclined to donate their time, professional services, and influence to benefit the college. This study did not attempt to address the amount of financial contributions or quantify the value of non-monetary donations. From the researcher's perspective, there may very well be a greater value to the non-financial services donated than the cash gifts. The alumni interviewed in this study contributed their influence in the community to benefit fundraising campaigns, advocated for successful bond initiatives, and brought friends to the college foundation events.

Developing Relationships

RCCs can capitalize on the "small town" atmosphere on campus by promoting opportunities for students and staff to get to know each other. All sixteen participants had positive recollections of their relationships with faculty members. Similarly, all sixteen interviewees spoke of positive experiences interacting with other students. Finally, at both College One and College Two, alumni described opportunities to associate with the college president.

Rural Advantages

RCCs have inherent advantages with being rural including an opportunity to cultivate future college supporters prior to graduation from high school, while they are students, and after graduation. RCCA-1 participated in an early-college preview event that helped him decide to attend the local college. He subsequently developed strong relationships with faculty and staff at the college. After completing a four-year degree, he returned to the community and continues to be a strong supporter of the community college. Universities do not have service districts as they recruit students from across the

country and even internationally. Urban and suburban colleges are unlikely to be small enough to have the same opportunities for students and faculty to interact with students on as regular basis as at RCCs.

In this research, RCC alumni had positive experiences as students and later they all found meaningful ways to contribute their time, talents, and money to benefit their alma mater. In fact, fifteen of the sixteen interviewees were from the college service district prior to enrolling. All fifteen people indicated success in working with community members and friends to build support for college initiatives, asking for financial support, or participating in campus activities. The one participant who was not from the college service district prior to enrollment noted that his friends from college that no longer live in the college service district have not supported the college.

Implications for Action

This research has the potential to influence RCC practitioners including RCC presidents, foundation officers, student services professionals, and academic leaders/faculty. Policy makers, including legislators and RCC trustees, can benefit from the findings of this research as well. The implications affecting RCC practitioners are detailed in this section.

Presidents

The president is the central person on a successful fundraising team (Cook & Lasher, 1996; Grover, 2009; Ryan, 1989; Wenrich & Reid, 2003). Executive leadership in providing institutional stability, vision, and success is paramount for developing relationships with alumni donors who have had a positive student experiences. RCCA-8 said, “It just seems like that longevity of presidents is pretty short these days. I think the

community sees that, and I think that's one thing that there is some skepticism. 'How long is this guy going to be here?' There's not that continuity that a lot of the older people with more money like to see."

Presidents should seek opportunities to develop meaningful recognition programs for students who engaged in significant learning opportunities or activities that create life-altering experiences. Three participants, RCCA-5, RCCA-8, and RCCA-13, all had significant interactions with the college president as students. The opportunity for students to interact with the college president, whether it is on a personal level or as a result of college activities, provides a memorable and valuable experience.

Establishing a culture of philanthropy should permeate the college. This starts with the stability in the president's office, but can be developed in individual courses by incorporating civic engagement projects and service learning into the curriculum. "With tax cuts, unforeseen enrollment growths, rapidly changing needs in technology and an ongoing recession, a new 'culture of development' must be created" (Errett, 2003, p. 1). As noted by Grover (2009), "a fundraising frame of mind should permeate [the] college" (p. 77).

RCC alumni are not immediately in position to make large financial contributions. College presidents can encourage a hierarchy of giving levels recognizing that people willing to make small contributions now may be in position to donate larger amounts in the future. An initial gift, regardless of the amount, demonstrates commitment to the college.

RCC alumni who remain in the service district are often available and interested in remaining engaged with the college. Proactively identifying opportunities to engage

local alumni by utilizing their professional skills and/or personal talents builds college supporters who impact other community members. Alumni can be effective recruiters through service organizations, local advocacy for college initiatives, and outreach efforts involving high school students. College must promote a value-added alumni service within their service districts.

Foundation Officers

The review of the literature indicated that foundation officers play an important role in the success of fundraising efforts. One function of the foundation is to provide money for scholarships. Students appreciate financial support, regardless of the amount of money. Fifteen of the sixteen alumni interviewed received some sort of financial assistance as a student. Alumni are grateful for the opportunities to make a difference for students. More importantly, both students and alumni enjoy the opportunity to interact with each other. Meaningful interactions occur when students are able to express their appreciation directly to the alumni supporters. Foundation officers can provide the forum for alumni donors and student benefactors to meet and mingle. RCC foundation officers, in particular, can make these meetings significant because there is a strong possibility that the students are either from the local community or will remain close to the college. This form of friend-raising before fundraising is consistent with the findings in the literature review (Babitz, 2003; Duronio & Loessin, 1991; Grover, 2009; Hall, 2002; MacArthur, 2000; Mercatoris, 2006; Pokrass, 1989; Tromble, 1998; Wise & Camper, 1985) and presents a unique opportunity for RCCs.

Another strategy to strengthen the relationship between those who receive funds and the college is to provide faculty the opportunity to select scholarship recipients and

actually award the scholarships directly to those students. There is great strength in allowing individual faculty members to award scholarships directly to students. Several alumni reported being identified for scholarships by individual faculty members who recognized their interest and/or abilities in certain academic disciplines. RCCA-3 said, “It was always the faculty members that I associate in getting those scholarships with”. Programs that empower faculty to recruit and/or retain students through the awarding of scholarships provide opportunities for students and faculty to form strong professional relationships. Furthermore, several interviewees in this study have served on scholarship committees at their college. Each participant indicated appreciation with the opportunity to select college students for scholarships.

According to the review of the literature, foundations are frequently expected to create relationships that are based on a fair exchange of services and developing stewardship in the community (Hall, 2002). RCC foundations should take advantage of alumni who are from the community, attend the college, and remain in the community. Participants in this research were inclined to donate significant professional services on behalf of the college. In addition, nearly all of the participants mentioned using their influence with friends and community organizations on behalf of the college. These efforts from alumni should be recognized and fostered by foundation officers.

Foundation officers usually work closely with alumni associations. Alumni who remain in the area and/or return to the area are excellent sources of support and should be involved with the college. Of the sixteen participants, five (RCCA-4, RCCA-8, RCCA-12, RCCA-13, and RCCA-16) remained in the service district immediately after completing course work at their respective colleges. The other eleven participants

(RCCA-1, RCCA-2, RCCA-3, RCCA-5, RCCA-6, RCCA-7, RCCA-9, RCCA-10, RCCA-11, RCCA-14, and RCCA-15) pursued bachelor degrees but later returned to the college service district. Alumni can participate in recruitment efforts, social events, and college activities.

Student Services Professionals

The literature review noted the importance of students being engaged with the college as an important component of developing future college supporters. In fact, several studies have indicated a correlation between involvement with the college and making a financial contribution to the college (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; Dugan et al., 2003; Fygetakis, 1992; Leslie & Ramey, 1988; Hall, 2002; Mercatoris, 2006; Miller, 1997; Oglesby, 1991; Shadoian, 1989; Werts & Ronca, 2007).

Student services professionals are often in position to foster relationship development for students. Students form strong bonds with their peers and with college employees when they are able to participate in activities designed for social interaction or learning initiatives. These activities should augment learning that takes place in the classroom and emphasize the importance of positive interpersonal relationships. Student services professionals can strategically infuse relationship development into new student orientations, bridge programs, student activities, clubs, intramurals, advising, and more. This researcher recommends that additional efforts be made to develop relationships with future college students by fostering relationships between local high school students and college employees through early entry programs.

Academic Professionals and Faculty Professors

Faculty who interact with students improve the students' experience and success. All sixteen participants had positive recollections of faculty members. Faculty and student interactions can occur in a variety of ways. RCCA-14 interacted with her professors outside of the classroom as they jointly conducted undergraduate research projects related to the curriculum. RCCA-4 felt "I could always talk to [instructors] about anything. If I needed help, they were there to help me". In order to maximize the impact of faculty and student relationships, RCCs should maintain reasonable faculty-to-student ratios, encourage teaching and learning models that emphasize the development of critical thinking and engagement with the curricular content, and train instructors to recognize and respond to students' non-academic challenges.

A unique discovery made in this research is that strong bonds are formed when students travel as part of college courses or activities. Students who have the opportunity to travel as part of an academic program form strong relationships with their faculty advisors and their fellow students. RCCA-1, RCCA-3, RCCA-5, RCCA-6, RCCA-7, RCCA-9, RCCA-10, RCCA-12, and RCCA-14 all participated in college-related travel. Every participant indicated it was a highly positive experience that helped them forge strong relationships with other students, bond with college faculty and/or staff, or gain a stronger understanding of the curriculum. Travel opportunities should be an extension of the classroom and supplement the curricular activities. The travel and service opportunities presented to RCCA-9 while as a student created such an impact that she is now in a position to provide similar opportunities to college students.

Auxiliary Services

Of the sixteen participants, fifteen indicated they used the library and that the library contributed to their success as students. In fact, the library was a key physical location for students to gather for a variety of purposes. The library should provide the traditional aspects of libraries including areas for studying, research tools, hard copy volumes of information that support college programs, and access to computers.

Additionally, library personnel should recognize that students use the physical space in the library for social purposes, which should be encouraged, and possibly planned.

Legislators

Participants from both colleges that participated in this study noted fundraising initiatives that were matched by state funding. Matching funds provide state and federal legislators an opportunity to offer revenue based on local community support. State and federal legislators can recognize and incentivize opportunities to strengthen rural America by investing in higher educational opportunities in small towns. In a matching fund arrangement, the dollar is stretched for both sides forming a symbiotic relationship of mutual interest. Interviewees indicated that matching funds were a significant motivator that increased donations and support for the college.

Trustees

College trustees, in policy governance systems, are responsible for hiring presidents. College One has experienced significant presidential turnover throughout the past twenty years. Participants reported that continuous presidential turnover was detrimental to fundraising because key relationships were never established. College Two, on the other hand, has enjoyed a history of stable presidential leadership. Although

interviewees from College Two did not explicitly credit stable presidential leadership with increased donations, they did indirectly indicate that a focused and sustained institutional vision was helpful. Trustees should examine their presidential recruitment and retention policies to determine how to allow time for effective relationship building between the president and key supporters.

The review of the literature outlined strategies for college trustees and foundation board members to work collaboratively to enhance fundraising and generating support for college initiatives. For RCCs, the emphasis on trustee and board member relationships should focus on outreach to and involvement with the local community. The trustees and the foundation board members should work to include the college president in relationship development known as friend raising.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is important the research related to RCCs continues. With regards to the findings in this doctoral dissertation, the researcher recommends the following research projects: (a) Determine the economic impact of RCC alumni who contribute their time, professional services, and influence in support of the college; (b) Replicate this research with non-RCCs as well as with universities; (c) Examine perceptions of current RCC students as it relates to their sense of attachment to the campus; (d) Conduct a longitudinal study comparing RCC graduates from the college service district with RCC graduates who are not from the area; and (e) Quantify the level and frequency of giving that occurs with RCC alumni and determine correlational factors that influence philanthropic tendencies. This section details the reasons the above-mentioned recommendations should be considered by other researchers.

In this researcher's review of the literature, no attempt has been made to document and/or account for the economic impact and benefits of alumni who contribute non-monetary support to the college. This research project revealed multiple examples of extensive contributions of time, talents, professional services, and influence that originated from alumni who desire to support the college. While cash support has numerous advantages, an in-depth analysis of the economic impact of non-financial donations may encourage college officials to invest in student success strategies that serve the immediate purpose of facilitating timely graduation with the added benefit of creating long-term college supporters.

As has been detailed in this research, RCC's have several significant differences with their urban and suburban counterparts as well as with four-year colleges and universities. Is there a rural milieu that naturally provides RCC's with advantages to developing strong relationships? This researcher recommends that this study be replicated with suburban and urban community colleges as well as with universities to determine what similarities and/or differences exist between alumni.

Every single participant in this project reported having a positive experience as a student. RCCs would benefit from knowing when and how a strong sense of attachment is forged between students and the college. A similar case study approach should be undertaken to detail the student phenomena related to developing a strong attachment to the college.

It is recommended that a longitudinal study comparing RCC graduates from the college service district with RCC graduates who are not from the area be conducted. The literature review documented the "brain drain" (Carr & Kefalas, 2009) that plagues rural

communities. While this research focused on those who are from the college service district, there may be opportunity to reverse the out-migration of talented people by recruiting individuals to rural communities.

This researcher recommends a study be conducted to quantify the level and frequency of giving that occurs with RCC alumni and determine correlational factors that influence philanthropic tendencies.

The researcher recommends a comparative analysis between donors and non-donors. This project focused specifically on the characteristics and motivations of alumni donors. In order to strengthen the analysis, it would be beneficial to study a similar sample of the RCC population, except focus on non-donors.

Summary

Chapter Five provided a review of the study including a presentation of the research questions and the purpose. This chapter provided an overview of the methodology. A discussion of the key findings regarding RCC alumni was documented. A strong comparison between the participants and their reported experiences and the findings from the literature review was discussed in this section. The researcher has provided recommendations for future research projects. In order to meet the needs of community college practitioners, this chapter also outlined implications for action.

This study provided evidence of the tangible and intangible support alumni provide RCCs. As colleges with ongoing shortages of human resources during difficult economic times, and supporters with advanced educations, RCC's may benefit disproportionately in the service, support, and booster efforts alumni give back to the

college. This support cannot always be measured in financial terms alone but it can benefit the next generation of students by contributing to a quality learning environment.

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Appendix A – IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board • Office of Research Integrity
 838R Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-2143
 Tel: 541-737-8908 Fax: 541-757-5053 | IRB@oregonstate.edu
<http://oregonstate.edu/research/office/human-subjects.html>

NOTIFICATION OF EXEMPTION

November 12, 2011

Principal Investigator:	Dr. Alex Sanchez	Department:	A&IE
Study Team Members:	None		
Student Researcher:	Jason Wood		
Study Number:	5018		
Study Title:	Fund Raising in a Rural Community College: Characteristics and Motivations of Alumni		
Funding Source:	None		
Funding Proposal #:	N/A		
PI on Grant/Contract:	N/A		
Submission Type:	Initial Application received 6/24/11		
Review Category:	Exempt	Category Number:	2

The above referenced study was reviewed by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and determined to be exempt from full board review.

Expiration Date: 07/23/2016

The exemption is valid for 5 years from the date of approval.

Annual renewals will not be required. If the research extends beyond the expiration date, the investigator must request a new exemption. Investigators should submit a final report to the IRB if the project is completed prior to the 5 year term.

Documents included in this review:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recruiting tools | <input type="checkbox"/> External IRB approvals |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent forms | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test instruments | <input type="checkbox"/> Translated documents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assent forms | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment A: Radiation | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment B: Human materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grant/contract | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Letters of support | <input type="checkbox"/> Project revision(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | | |

Comments:

Principal Investigator responsibilities:

- Amendments to this study must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to initiating the change. Amendments may include, but are not limited to, changes in funding, personnel, target enrollment, study population, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment material, sites of research, etc.
- All study team members should be kept informed of the status of the research.
- Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be submitted to the IRB within three calendar days.
- The Principal Investigator is required to securely store all study related documents on the OSU campus for a minimum of three years post study termination.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Office at IRB@oregonstate.edu or by phone at (541) 737-8008.

Appendix B – Consent Form

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Dr. Alex Sanchez and Mr. Jason Wood from Oregon State University. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about alumni of Casper College or Northwest College.

The purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics and motivations of Rural Community College (RCC) alumni who are likely to support their alma mater. Criteria for participation include:

- (1) Graduated from their colleges;
- (2) Participated in at least one college-related event in the past calendar year; and
- (3) Currently reside in their respective college service districts.

There are two research questions being addressed in this study.

1. What are the characteristics of RCC alumni who are likely to support the institution?
2. What factors motivate RCC alumni to support the institution?

By signing the document below, I agree to the following:

- My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- There are no known risks associated with participation in this study. Some questions may cause discomfort or embarrassment, but not beyond what would occur throughout the course of a routine day. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview at any time.
- Participation involves being interviewed by Jason Wood, a doctoral candidate at Oregon State University. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Notes may be written during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded and dialogue will be transcribed. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study. I will be provided an opportunity to review the transcripts of my interview and check for accuracy and intent.
- I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain as secure as possible. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect anonymity of individuals.
- I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for Studies Involving Human Subjects by Oregon State University. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted at (541) 737-8003 or irb@oregonstate.edu.
- I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all of my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I have been given a signed copy of this consent form.

X _____ X _____ X _____ X _____
 Participant Date Researcher Date

Appendix C – Interview Questions

Primary Questions – Asked of all Participants

1. Review basic demographic and background info – name, year graduated, and area of study.
2. Please describe your overall experience as a student at NC or CC.
3. Now that you have graduated, how do you currently interact with NC or CC?
4. What motivates you to become involved with the college? What areas of the college would you like to strengthen with your involvement?

Supplemental Questions – Depending on Responses

1. Please talk about some of the relationships you developed with other people while at NC or CC? (Students, faculty, staff, etc.)
2. What activities did you participate in while at NC or CC? (May need to offer options based on earlier responses: sports, theatre, dance, intramurals, trips, etc.)
3. What was your experience using college support services? (Tutoring, advising, computer labs, library, etc.)
4. What did NC or CC do to help prepare you to transfer to a university or get a job?
5. Did you receive any financial assistance while at NC or CC? Did you associate the financial assistance with someone who donated money to NC or CC? Please talk about that experience.
6. Please talk about how you currently stay involved with NC or CC.

7. Are there faculty or staff who you met while at NC or CC that you still associate with? Please describe your current interactions with those people.
8. What motivates you to stay involved with NC or CC?
9. How would your donation to the NC or CC foundation benefit NC or CC? What impact would it have? Who would it benefit the most? (Only asked if they mention financial contributions)
10. Does any form of acknowledgement for your giving contribute to your decision to donate? (Only asked if they mention financial contributions)
11. What does the concept of “giving back” mean to you with regards to your experience at NC or CC?
12. Would you encourage other alumni to support NC or CC? Why or why not?
13. Please provide suggestions for how NC or CC could increase interactions with alumni.
14. How can NC or CC increase support of alumni?

Appendix D – Participant Demographics

RCCA *	Gender	Grad Year	Years Pass	Degree	Purpose	Graduate Degrees	From Community	Scholarships
1	M	1990	22	Art	Transfer	No	Yes	Yes
2	M	1961	51	Business	Transfer	No	Yes	Yes
3	M	1973	39	Communications	Transfer	PhD	Yes	Yes
4	F	2000	12	Business	Job	No	Yes	Yes
5	M	1984	28	Business	Transfer	No	Yes	Yes
6	M	1996	16	General Studies	Transfer	Masters	Yes	Yes
7	M	1979	33	Education	Transfer	Masters	Yes	Yes
8	M	1980	32	General Studies	Job	No	Yes	Yes
9	F	1995	17	General Studies	Transfer	Masters	Yes	Yes
10	F	1999	13	General Studies	Transfer	Masters	Yes	Yes
11	F	1979	33	Education	Transfer	Masters	Yes	Yes
12	M	1965	47	Agriculture	Transfer	No	No	Yes
13	F	1979	33	Journalism	Job/Transfer	No	Yes	Yes
14	F	1994	18	Education	Transfer	Masters	Yes	Yes
15	F	1995	17	Psychology	Transfer	Masters	Yes	Yes
16	F	1992	20	Education	Transfer	No	Yes	Yes

*RCCA 1-8 attended College One while RCCA 9-16 attended College Two.

Key:

Years Pass = Length of time between graduation and today.

Purpose = Did the individual transfer or get a job?

Graduate Degree = List of the highest degree earned after a bachelor's degree.

From Community = Was the individual from the college service district prior to enrollment?

Scholarships = Did the individual receive a scholarship?

Appendix E – Attitudinal Factors of Alumni

Attitudinal Factors							
	TRAPREP	JOB	SATEXP	EMOCOL	PERNEE	RECCOL	ADVCOL
RCCA-1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Yes
RCCA-2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Yes
RCCA-3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Yes
RCCA-4	No Transfer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM
RCCA-5	Yes	NM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RCCA-6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RCCA-7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RCCA-8	No Transfer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Yes
RCCA-9	Yes	NM	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Yes
RCCA-10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Yes
RCCA-11	Yes	NM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RCCA-12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RCCA-13	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Yes
RCCA-14	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Yes
RCCA-15	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Yes
RCCA-16	Yes	NM	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	NM

Key

TRAPREP = Did the individual feel the college prepared them well for transfer?

JOB = Did the individual feel the college prepared them well for their first job?

SATEXP = Was the individual satisfied with the community college experience?

EMOCOL = Does the individual feel an emotional attachment with the college?

PERNEED = Does the individual perceive a need for students to receive financial support?

RECCOL = Does the individual recommend others attend the college?

ADVCOL = Does the individual advocate for the college?

Appendix F – Engagement with the College as Students

	EXPFAC	COLTRAV	ACTSPON	ACTREL	HOUS	AUXSER
RCCA-1	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	On-Campus	Yes
RCCA-2	Yes	No	No	NM	NM	NM
RCCA-3	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	NM	Yes
RCCA-4	Yes	No	Yes	NM	On-Campus	Yes
RCCA-5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	On-Campus	Yes
RCCA-6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Home	Yes
RCCA-7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Home	Yes
RCCA-8	Yes	No	Yes	NM	On-Campus	Yes
RCCA-9	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Home	Yes
RCCA-10	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Home/Dorm	Yes
RCCA-11	Yes	No	No	Yes	On/Off	Yes
RCCA-12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	On-Campus	Yes
RCCA-13	Yes	No	Yes	NM	Home	Yes
RCCA-14	Yes	Yes	Yes	NM	Home	Yes
RCCA-15	Yes	No	Yes	NM	NM	Yes
RCCA-16	Yes	No	Yes	NM	Home	Yes

Key

EXPFAC = Did the individual have meaningful experiences with faculty?

COLTRAV = Did the individual travel as part of a college activity?

ACTSPON = Did the individual participate in college sponsored activities?

ACTREL = Did the individual participate in college related activities?

HOUS = What housing arrangements did the individual have as a community college student?

AUXSER = Did the individual use auxiliary services?