

# Leveraging Athletic Success: Cultivating Law School Support from Athletic Donors

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Discussion Panelists:  
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Dean, University of Louisville Law School  
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# Fundamental Question

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Can Athletic Programs Be Leveraged to Generate Law School Support?

- Review Recent Survey on Opinion
- Review Empirical Evidence
- Examine Athletics as a Donor Cultivation Tool
- Law School Success
- Panel Discussion

# Law School Use of Athletics in Fundraising

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- ◎ 50% of respondents indicate some use of athletics in fundraising
  - Division I, higher enrollment schools, fundraisers who more strongly agree that athletics contribute positively to the university
- ◎ Still, strong disagreement ( $M=4.89$ ) with perception that athletic success influences law school fundraising.

# Athletics: Friend or Foe?

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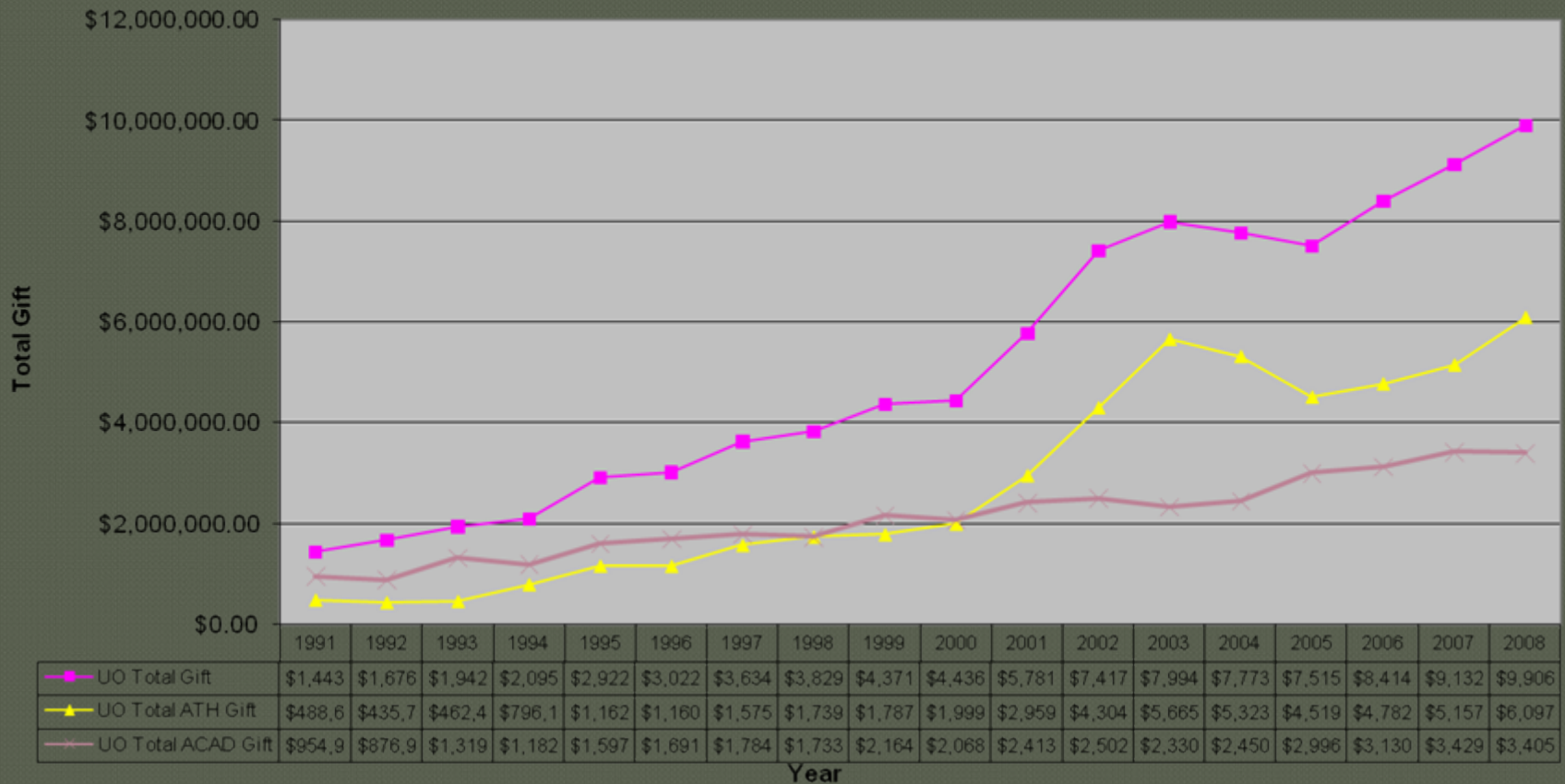
2 Schools of Thought:  
“Crowding Out” v. Symbiotic effect

Evidence supports *both* points of view!

I see athletic fundraising as competition  
for the law school-- but I am not a  
development professional.

# University of Oregon Total Annual Giving

UO Total Giving by Program



# University of Oregon Average Annual Gift

UO Average Gift by Program



# Not Just Oregon...

<i>US News &amp; World Report Rank</i>	<b>Football 1998 % ATH gift</b>	<b>Football 2003 % ATH gift</b>	<b>Basketball 1998 % ATH gift</b>	<b>Basketball 2003 % ATH gift</b>
All	14.7	26.01	6.27	7.83
Tier 1	7.76	17.35	5.13	6.01
Tier 2	22.14	33.34	6.41	9.56
Tier 3	14.97	32.7	6.24	7.27
Tier 4	17.95	37.24	6.23	8.30
Tier 5			9.13	10.57

Donors showing a preference for athletic giving across institutions.

# But Crowding Out or Symbiotic?

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## I-A Institutions

- Substantial shifts in allocation patterns. Athletic giving increasing, often at the expense of academic support.
- Evidence of crowd-out effect.
- Athletic performance only directly influences giving to athletic programs.
- Indirect effect of athletic performance on academic support
- Athletic success expands donor base; new donors rarely make gifts to academic programs.

## I-AA/AAA Institutions

- Smaller magnitude changes in allocation patterns. Both athletic and academic giving increasing simultaneously.
- Evidence of symbiotic effect.
- Athletic performance influences total giving, athletic giving, and academic giving.
- Direct effect of athletic performance on academic support (at I-AA institutions).
- Athletic success expands donor base; new donors appear to make gifts to support both athletic and

## Key Findings

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Nationally, over past decade, an increasing percentage of total dollars donated to all institutions directed to athletics  
(Effects moderated by “winning,” academic reputation, athletic tradition)

Successful athletics programs attract new donors to the institution, though many make only athletic gifts.

**Bottom-line: Athletic giving is growing more rapidly than academic giving**

# Athletics vs. Academics Giving

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## ◎ Athletics giving

- Many transactional benefits offered
- Majority of donors give no more than necessary to receive desired benefits
- Research on motives supports strong role for transactional benefits
- Consistent with Patrons, consumption philanthropy

**ATHLETICS** giving is often more consistent with **TRANSACTIONAL** exchange.

# Athletics vs. Academics Giving

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## ○ Academics giving

- Few transactional benefits offered
- While there is some responsiveness to club/giving levels, not nearly to the degree in athletics
- Most consistent with Philanthropists and Adoption Philanthropy

ACADEMICS giving is often more consistent with PHILANTHROPIC exchange.

# Transactional Nature of Athletic Giving

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## Athletic Giving is Transactional

“It’s all about the tickets”

*Material benefit exchange very compelling*

*OSU Minimum Donation Requirements for FB Season*

*Tickets*

*-\$1,500 for Buckeye Club*

*-\$2,500 for any Academic Gift*

## “Ceiling Effect” on Athletic Giving

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Vast majority of athletic donors give only up to the required *minimum* necessary to receive tangible benefits desired.

*At Ohio State, 72% of athletic-only donors gave the minimum amount required to secure or renew FB season ticket privileges.*

*At Oregon, every \$1.00 of required ATH giving results in an ATH gift of \$1.06; at Louisville \$1.13; at Ohio State \$0.97.*

# Athletics as “Acquisition Tool”

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Empirical evidence indicates “athletics-only” donors may commit significant share of annual gift to academics

*71% of 2006 “Split” donors at Ohio State made **first** gift to Athletics (only)*

*“Our entry point was athletics. It opened up our awareness to all that was going on at OSU and the to programs and students we support” (OSU donor, 6/07)*

*“As time went on, I was in a position to really give for charitable reasons as opposed to just wanting tickets” (OSU donor, 6/07)*

# Cultivating a SPLIT Donor

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## Changing gift patterns of first-year SPLIT Donors

### Institution #1

#### ATH to SPLIT Donors (Year 1 of Switch)N=814

- Total Gift Change 861.24
- ACAD Gift Change 919.71
- ATH Gift Change -58.02

### Institution #2

#### ATH to SPLIT Donors (Year 1 of Switch)N=1606

- Total Gift Change 650.36
- ACAD Gift Change 654.88
- ATH Gift Change -4.51

### Institution #3

#### ATH to SPLIT Donors (Year 1 of Switch)N=1146

- Total Gift Change 1038.26
- ACAD Gift Change 1183.14
- ATH Gift Change -144.88

## Retention Rates of Major Donors by School

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Athletic</b>	<b>Academic</b>	<b>Split</b>
<b>Oregon</b>	34.76%	38.31%	23.47%	64.96%
<b>Ohio State</b>	35.45%	62.77%	21.15%	68.75%
<b>Louisville</b>	29.08%	48.87%	19.41%	65.91%

## Some Implications

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**Integrated Development Model critical to realizing the symbiotic relationship between athletics and academics**

We have regular meetings and know them well. We coordinate cultivation, solicitation and stewardship of donors as appropriate.

All development officers, including athletics, are part of the University Advancement department. There are regular meetings and retreats where development officers get together.

New Athletic lead fundraiser working to integrate athletic program fundraisers with university donor management system in addition to the establishment of a unit based fundraising liaison program.

## Some Implications

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Tangible benefits motivate:

1. Develop own tangible benefits
2. Leverage ATH benefits

The dean and development staff host prospects to games and such activities serve cultivation and stewardship. Games provide prospects a reason and date to return to campus and they enjoy the opportunities.

Donors to areas other than athletics receive minimal credit toward athletics for their gifts, so it is not much of an incentive for our donors to give to the law school. We have several donors who give more to athletics at our university than they give to us because they get significantly more points toward tickets, etc. by giving to athletics rather than academics.

New program being developed for major gifts of \$50K and up. A gift of \$50K to athletics matched by a \$50K gift to academics will qualify donor for \$100K benefit in new basketball arena. No football program available to date.

# Some Implications

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## Impact of Relationship Building

- *“We were invited down to a football practice, and that was the beginning”*
- *“We have never had one of **our** scholarship recipients not graduate.”*
- *“There is also the bonus from getting that letter from **my** player”*
- *“At the party my wife and I were sitting with one of the students who told us about how meaningful her academic program had been . . .”* (resulted in substantial donation to the student’s academic program)

The amount of time you spend with a donor during a typical sporting event is generally longer than you can spend with them in any other kind of meeting. Despite the distractions of the event, relationships are formed during these events that bear fruit beyond the stadium.

# Academic Stewardship

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## ***Beyond Leveraging:***

- ◎ *“I’d be delighted if a plant specialist would take the time to visit my home to help me identify the plants in my yard and tell me about my soils”*
- ◎ So, why not provide the same kind of access to professors, laboratories, high-achieving students?

# Conclusion

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Whether crowd-out effects or symbiotic effects result from increased athletics fundraising and success may be a function of donor cultivation and solicitation as much as it is a shifting preference on the part of donors to support athletics.

**ATHLETICS CAN BE A SUCCESSFUL  
FUNDRAISING TOOL**