

# Students & Philanthropy

An exploration of undergraduate  
fundraising patterns and outcomes  
at BuckeyeThon

Center for the Study of Student Life

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## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

Philanthropy is a multi-billion dollar industry in the United States. The Giving USA Foundation estimated that Americans donated \$298.42 billion in 2011 alone (Giving USA, 2012). With giving on the rise – Giving USA reported a 4% increase from 2010 – it is important to examine the different factors and outcomes of the fundraising process.

One of The Ohio State University's signature philanthropic events is BuckeyeThon, a 24-hour dance marathon. BuckeyeThon's mission is to raise money and awareness for childhood cancer and, according to its website, the organization is "the largest, student-run philanthropy" at Ohio State (BuckeyeThon, 2013). The 2013 Dance Marathon raised \$608,623.29.

A Pre-Event Survey and a Post-Event Survey were administered by the Center for the Study of Student Life (CSSL) to assess the 2013 BuckeyeThon, held February 8-9. By January 25, a total of 3,726 individuals had registered to participate. From these registrants, a random sample of 1,200 individuals received e-mail invitations to complete the Pre-Event Survey January 27 – February 8 and the Post-Event Survey February 28 – March 8. In total:

- 536 surveys were completed
- 206 cases were removed for
  - Non-consent,
  - duplicate or improper completion of a survey, or
  - for not being an undergraduate student. (Center for the Study of Student Life, 2013)

This brief explores the patterns related to participants' philanthropic participation, focusing specifically on methods and results. It uses the data from the Post-Event Survey only.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- To raise funds, students most commonly asked family and friends (**86.2%**) and/or posted on Facebook or Twitter (**58.5%**).
- Most students (**71.9%**) raised more than the minimum amount of \$100.00.
- The majority of students reported intentions to donate money to (**65.0%**) and/or volunteer for (**74.2%**) an organization within six months of attending BuckeyeThon.
- As a result of attending BuckeyeThon, the vast majority of students reported a greater understanding of philanthropy, including why organizations ask for donations (**94.2%**) and how to organize a fundraising effort (**73.3%**).

## DEMOGRAPHICS

The Post-Event Survey was completed by 130 undergraduate students. As reflected in the tables, more females (74.6%) than males (25.4%) responded. White/European Americans (81.5%) represented the majority of respondents. In addition, 65.4% indicated they were financially dependent on their parents or guardians, 26.9% were members of a social Greek organization, 1.5% were varsity-level athletes, and 0.8% were international students. More than half of the students were employed (58.5%) and the majority (52.3%) lived in on-campus housing. Fifty-seven percent of respondents reported holding a leadership position outside of BuckeyeThon.

Race/Ethnicity	%
African American/Black or African descent	2.3
Asian American/Asian (East, South, Southeast)	7.7
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0
Latino(a)/Hispanic American	0.0
Native American/American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.0
Middle Eastern/Arab American	0.8
White/European American	81.5
Other	0.0
Prefer not to answer	0.0
Multiple Races/Ethnicities	7.7

Gender	%
Male	25.4
Female	74.6
Transgender	0.0
Self-defined	0.0
Prefer not to answer	0.0

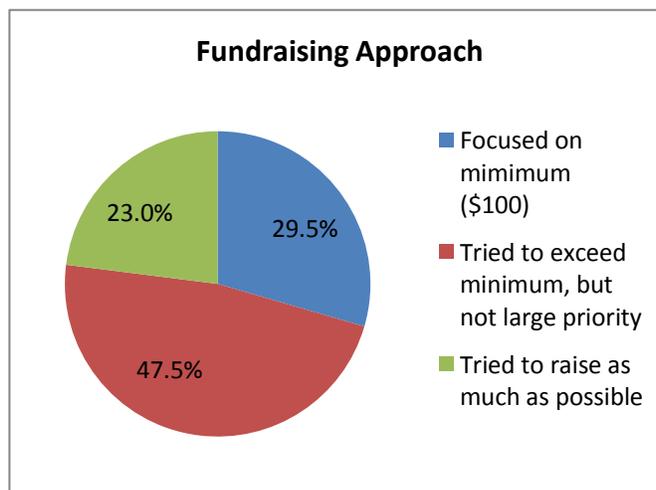
Rank	%
First-year undergraduate	30.8
Second-year undergraduate	30.8
Third-year undergraduate	30.0
Fourth-year undergraduate	5.4
Fifth-year undergraduate	3.1

## FUNDRAISING

### Approaches

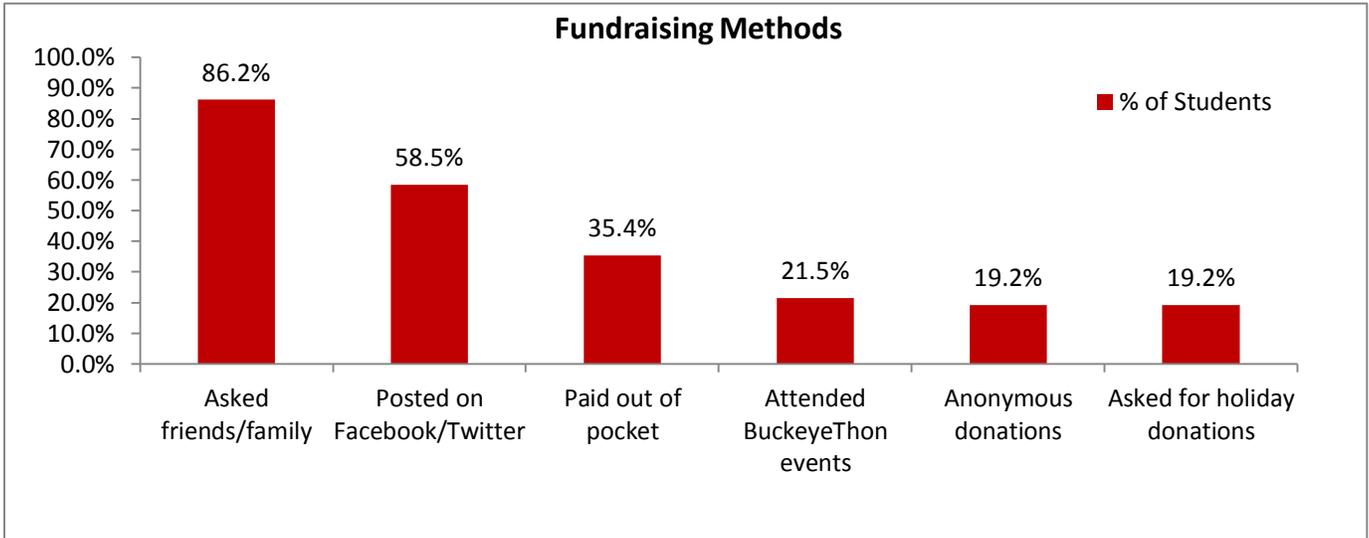
Students reported using a variety of different fundraising approaches and techniques in their efforts for BuckeyeThon. As shown in the chart to the right, the greatest percentage of undergraduate students (47.5%) reported trying to exceed the fundraising minimum of \$100, but did not place it as a high priority.

Statistically significant differences emerged between returning and first-time student participants. Students who had previously attended BuckeyeThon (38.1%) were more likely to try to raise as much as possible compared to new BuckeyeThon participants (15.0%) ( $p < .05$ ).



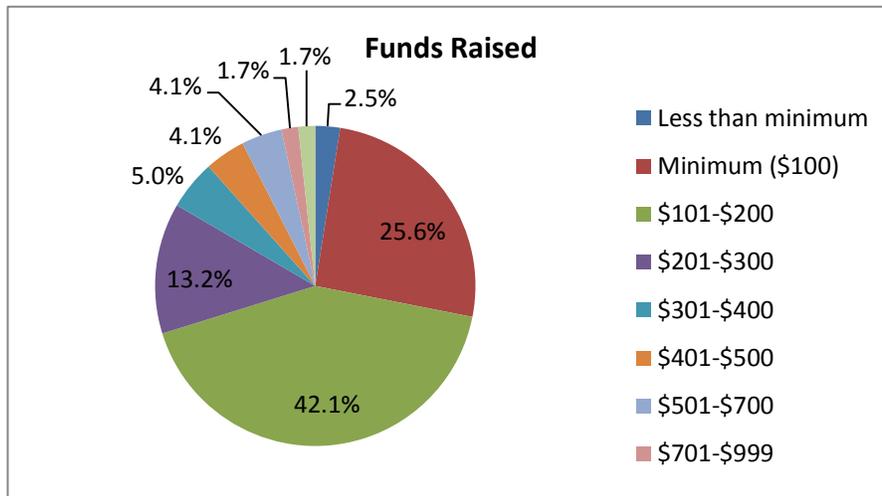
## Methods

To raise the funds, students most commonly asked friends and family (86.2%), posted a request on Facebook or Twitter (58.5%), or paid out of pocket (35.4%). Of the respondents who did pay out of pocket, most students contributed \$40.00 or less (65.2%). Some people did, however, contribute \$90.00 or more (15.2%).



## Outcome

At the end of the fundraising drive, the majority of students (67.7%) reported having raised between \$100.00 and \$200.00, with 25.6% raising exactly the minimum amount. Only 2.5% reported failure to reach the minimum fundraising amount. In total, 71.9% of students exceeded the minimum requirement.



## EVENT OUTCOMES

### Philanthropic/Volunteer Intentions

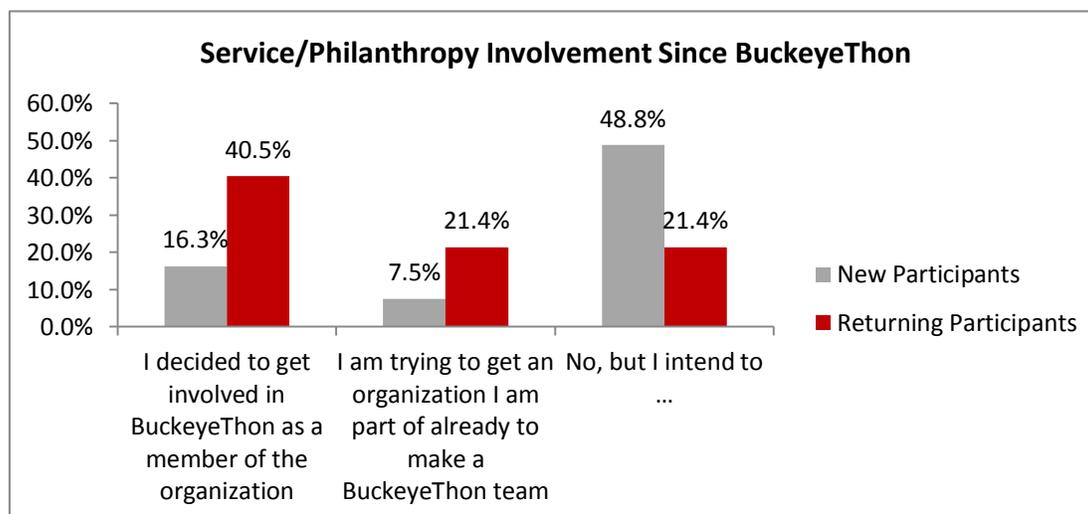
Many students reported gains in service or philanthropic intentions as a result of participating in BuckeyeThon. 65.0% of students reported intentions to donate money to a social issue or nonprofit organization in the following six months, and another 74.2% intended to volunteer. In the long-term, the numbers grew even more, with 82.5% reporting intentions to donate to a particular cause or organization upon graduation.

BuckeyeThon's specific cause also received significant support, as 84.2% of respondents reported motivations to become further involved in the issue of childhood cancer. In addition, 79.2% of respondents reported that they plan on attending the 2014 BuckeyeThon event, while only 3.1% said they would not participate for a reason other than not attending Ohio State.

While not a majority, some students reported getting more involved in service or philanthropic efforts within a month of the BuckeyeThon event. Intentions to increase involvement in service/philanthropic events/activities garnered the most support (36.9%), but just under a quarter of participants had since joined the BuckeyeThon student organization (23.1%) or had attended another service or philanthropy event (23.1%).

Significant statistical differences also emerged between returning and new BuckeyeThon participants. Since attending the event, returning participants were more likely to have gotten involved with the BuckeyeThon organization ( $p < .01$ ) and to have attempted to motivate another organization to create a BuckeyeThon team ( $p < .05$ ). New participants, however, were more likely to intend to get more involved with some sort of service or philanthropy efforts, even though they had not actually done anything at the time of the survey ( $p < .01$ ).

Service/Philanthropic Involvement Since BuckeyeThon	
Item	% Yes
No, but I intend to do one of the [below]	36.9
Yes, I decided to get involved in BuckeyeThon as a member of the organization	23.1
Yes, I have since attended another service and/or philanthropy event	23.1
Yes, I have begun regularly volunteering on campus or in the community	14.6
Yes, I am trying to get an organization I am part of already to make a BuckeyeThon team	11.5
Yes, I have joined a new organization related to service and/or philanthropy	10.8
No, and I do not foresee myself doing so	6.9
Yes, I have started a new service or philanthropy initiative in an organization I am part of already	3.8



## Learning Outcomes

The majority of students reported learning more about philanthropy as a result of participating in BuckeyeThon. A vast majority of students reported gaining a greater understanding of the reason organizations ask for donations (94.2%).

Item	% Yes
Greater understanding of the reason organizations ask for donations	94.2%
Confident I could identify the process of how to donate to another organization or cause	85.8%
Can articulate how volunteering and philanthropy are different in terms of their impact on non-profit organizations or social issues	79.2%
Confident I have the knowledge to organize a fundraising effort around a cause or organization I am passionate about	73.3%

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of this study provide insight into undergraduate students' participation in and attitudes toward BuckeyeThon. Specifically, undergraduate respondents indicated that they frequently raised more than the minimum amount required, used a variety of fundraising methods to reach their goal, and have become or intend to become more involved in service and philanthropy. Respondents also reported an increase in their knowledge regarding philanthropy as a result of their participation in BuckeyeThon. While the numbers and conclusions may not be generalizable to other events or causes, this brief provides an initial exploration of philanthropic patterns in an undergraduate sample.

## REFERENCES

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