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Younger Donors Just as Generous as Other Generations

Study Funded by Campbell & Company at the Center on Philanthropy
at Indiana University Analyzes Generational Giving Trends

CHICAGO, May 8, 2008—Donors across all generations tend to give roughly the same amount to philanthropic causes, when controlling for other factors such as income, education and frequency of attendance at religious services, according to a report by the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University in a study funded by Campbell & Company.

The study of more than 10,000 individuals across five generations examines differences in giving trends, including motivations for giving, types of causes supported and amount donated. While those in the Millennial generation (born after 1981) are generally less likely to give and tend to give less when they do make a donation, the study found that this trend is associated with income, education level and religious attendance, rather than generation. All other factors being equal, the average giving level of Millennials was roughly equivalent to that of other generations.

“There’s a perception in the nonprofit world that young people aren’t as philanthropic, so this is great news,” says Shaun Keister, Ph.D., annual giving consultant with Campbell & Company. “A lot of the members of the Millennial generation are still in school or have lower salaries because they’re at the beginning of their careers, so this suggests that their giving may rise along with their earning power.”

Other key findings of the Center on Philanthropy study included:

- Members of the Millennial generation are more likely than any other generation to cite the “desire to make the world a better place to live” as a key motivation for their philanthropic giving.
- Members of the Silent generation (born between 1929 and 1945) are more likely to cite “need to provide services that the government can’t or won’t” as one of their most important motivations for giving.
- Individuals in all generations who attend religious services at least once a year are more likely than those who never attend to support both religious and secular organizations.

“Our previous research has shown that Baby Boomers and younger donors give less to religion than do older generations,” said Patrick Rooney, Ph.D., director of research for the Center on Philanthropy. “This new study, using different data, confirms those findings and extends our understanding by allowing us to look at differences in motivations for giving as well.”

The findings suggest that younger individuals will respond better to messages that focus on the global impact of an organization’s work, while older donors are more likely to give to groups that highlight services they provide that the government does not. But the bigger implication, Keister says, is that organizations shouldn’t underestimate younger donors, as the study shows they are just as generous as other donors.

“A lot of nonprofits think younger donors just don’t make big gifts, so they ask for small amounts,” Keister says, noting that Millennials tend to value the dollar differently than older donors. “Young people are willing to give larger amounts, but they won’t if they’re under-asked. A lot of Millennials can easily give \$100, but in our experience, organizations are only asking them for \$25 or \$50 gifts.”

Keister will host a webinar that further explores generational giving trends and strategies for soliciting annual donors of different ages on Tuesday, May 13. Please visit www.campbellcompany.com for further details and to register for the ninety-minute course.

This study used data collected through a web-facilitated survey, fielded by Knowledge Networks in March 2007. More than 10,000 individuals responded to the survey. To request a copy of the full results, please e-mail study@campbellcompany.com or visit www.campbellcompany.com or www.philanthropy.iupui.edu.

About Campbell & Company

Campbell & Company is a national consulting firm offering advancement planning, fundraising, marketing communications and executive search for nonprofit organizations in education, health and medicine, arts and culture, environment, social service and professional societies.

Through thirty-one years and thousands of engagements, Campbell & Company has helped nonprofit organizations anticipate and manage the challenges of the philanthropic marketplace. Campbell & Company’s offices are located in Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Portland, the San Francisco Bay Area and Washington, DC. For more information, please call 866-957-0000 toll-free, e-mail info@campbellcompany.com or visit www.campbellcompany.com.

About the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University

The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University is a leading academic center dedicated to increasing the understanding of philanthropy and improving its practice through research, teaching, public service and public affairs programs in philanthropy, fundraising, and management of nonprofit organizations. A part of the Indiana University School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI, the Center operates programs on the IUPUI and IU Bloomington campuses. To learn more please contact the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University at 317-274-4200 or visit them online at www.philanthropy.iupui.edu.

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