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Kellogg Foundation Follow-Up Study: Alumni Assess Usefulness of Nonprofit Management Education

Battle Creek, Michigan, April 11, 2002 - A new study, released by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, reveals significant information about the importance of and satisfaction with the coursework, community connections and utility of university-based nonprofit management education programs, as related by the alumni-practitioners involved in the program.

This alumni study follows on the heels of a study of nonprofit management students, conducted by Applied Research (East Lansing, Michigan) in 2000 – 2001. The first study provided new information about the demographics and motivations of nonprofit management students.

This follow-up study, conducted by Applied Research in 2001 - 2002, surveyed 160 of the original respondents who have now completed or nearly completed their course of study in certificate or master's programs in nonprofit management education at six universities across the country. The six universities are part of a larger Kellogg Foundation initiative entitled 'Building Bridges between Practice and Knowledge in Nonprofit Management Education.' Both studies are available online at <http://www.centerpointinstitute.org/bridges/Papers&Reports/papers.htm>.

The follow-up survey asked the respondents to assess their educational experience from an alumni perspective in three general areas:

- **Course topic importance** or the extent to which nonprofit courses reflect the interests and needs of the practitioner,
- **Connection of practice and knowledge** or the quality and strength of the links among the university, the nonprofit community and the students, and
- **Benefits of nonprofit management education** or how their management skills have changed as a result of their education.

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Course Topic Importance

The accompanying table compares responses from Time 1 (as students) and Time 2 (as alumni). There is little movement in the relative ranking of courses. The same five to six courses ranked highest and lowest at Time 1 were also ranked highest and lowest at Time 2, suggesting, as Applied Research Director R. Sam Larson, Ph.D., says, “respondents still preferred courses that could immediately help them in the day-to-day operation of a nonprofit such as fundraising and development, governance, and proposal writing, and were less concerned with courses like government-nonprofit relations, international issues or nonprofit history.” The value of individual courses fluctuated somewhat between Time 1 and Time 2 but the overall trend held. There were also few differences among alumni respondents based on socio-demographic information. Larson says, “Simply put, alumni – regardless of their degree type, the university they attended, their age, or how long they have worked – tend to value the same course topics and these topics typically focus on the internal day-to-day management of nonprofit organizations.”

Time 1 and Time 2 Mean Score Ranking of Course Topics		
Course	Time 1 Rank	Time 2 Rank
Fundraising and development	2	1
Governance (e.g., board responsibilities)	4	2*
Budgeting and accounting	3	3
Strategic planning for nonprofits	1	4
Legal structure (e.g., incorporation, tax law)	6	5
Ethics and values in philanthropy	5	6
Proposal writing	8	7
Evaluation and accountability	7	8
Human resources	12	9
Marketing	10	10
Volunteer management	13	11
Policy making processes	9	12*
Organizational theory and behavior	16	13
Advocacy in public policy	11	14*
Government-nonprofit relations	15	15
Diversity (culture, ethnicity) issues	14	16*
History of the nonprofit sector	19	17
Information systems for nonprofits	17	18*
Economic and market issues	18	19*
Quantitative analysis	20	20*
International organizations and issues	21	21*

Note: “*” indicates a mean score change was statistically significant at $\alpha \leq .05$

These research findings are published in a paper entitled “*Building Bridges Initiative Cluster Evaluation: Nonprofit Management Alumni Survey Report.*” The paper is available in PDF format on the Building Bridges Initiative web site at www.CenterPointInstitute.org/Bridges/papers&reports/papers.htm.

More research findings from the second and third section of the survey, which solicited alumni opinions about the importance of university-community links and how management skills have changed as a result of coursework, will be available as soon as final data analysis is complete.

The Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), now in its fifth and final year, supports the development of comprehensive educational programs for managers and leaders in nonprofit and public organizations. There are 19 BBI projects based in the United States and eight BBI programs in Latin America and the Caribbean. The ultimate goal of the Building Bridges Initiative is to raise the quality of life in communities by enabling nonprofit managers serving those communities to be more effective through increased opportunities for training and education, as well as greater relevance of nonprofit management curricula in higher education. Grantees have designed projects and programs to conduct research, train future nonprofit leaders, or improve knowledge about nonprofit management practices.

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 to “help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations.” Its programming activities center on the common vision of a world in which each person has a sense of worth, and accepts responsibility for self, family, community, and societal well being. It is believed that each individual has the capacity to be productive, and to help create nurturing families, responsive institutions, and healthy communities.

To achieve the greatest impact, the Foundation targets its grants toward specific focal points, or areas. These include Food Systems and Rural Development; Youth and Education; Health; and Philanthropy and Volunteerism. When woven throughout these areas, funding is also provided for leadership; information and communication technology; efforts to capitalize on diversity; and family, neighborhood and community development programming. Grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the southern African nations of Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland, and South Africa.

For more information about the Kellogg Foundation, please visit www.wkkf.org. For more information about the Building Bridges Initiative, please visit www.CenterPointInstitute.org/Bridges.