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Employee Volunteer Program in the Eyes of College Students

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Honors Thesis Spring 2019

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study is to understand University of New Hampshire (UNH) students' opinions about Employee Volunteer Program (EVP), especially what value they place upon EVP and what they are looking for in an ideal EVP. Based on the background and context of EVP among Millennials recently, the paper raises questions about EVP's value to students generally and how factors like past volunteering experience, gender, and occupation/majors impact students' valuation of EVP. Data collected from this research leads to several conclusions. Although many students do not fully understand EVP, most of them have positive opinions of the program, leaving great potential for employers' education and recruiting messages transmission. It also suggests some potential areas for further study and recommendations to employers regarding EVP as a tool to attract top talent and keep employees engaged.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“I think my peers and I are especially drawn to doing community service because we have been raised in a world where there are a lot of problems, but also with the opportunity to change things” – Frances Nguyen (Ronald, 2008)*

Millennials, characterized by their ambition and eagerness to make impact on the workplace, are also referred to as a generation who take giving back and contributing to the community an essential part of their life. According to McGlone et al. (2011), Millennials considered helping others and addressing social problems to very high on their list. Recruiters and companies’ management team also observed this as they receive more questions about volunteering and social responsibility from Millennials than from any other generations (Cone, 2016). To young people nowadays, just a good sum of salary is not enough to make their lives meaningful. They enthusiastically keep looking for chances to cast their impact not only on the workplace but also on society around them, hoping to change it for the better. 77 percent of Millennials have involved themselves in a charity or “good cause” in 2017, showing a rise compared to previous year (Deloitte, 2017).

As being ambitious to making much contribution both to work and community, Millennials have many things on hand that keep them busy. That fact gives chance to the advent of EVP as a great way for employers to address their employees’ different concerns at once. As a formal volunteering program organized and managed by employers, EVP give companies a chance to match their associates’ values and walk the talk of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Recently, EVP has been receiving much attention and becoming more popular among employers, employees and job seekers (Mazzoni, 2016). Therefore, EVP is emerging as a great topic of research as it helps cast a view on understanding Millennials, the rising generation in

workplace. It is also worthy to be studied among potential job seekers, specifically college students, as any finding about EVP and related factors can be beneficial to both employees and employers in the long-run.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Lack in Researches & Literature**

As people and companies increasingly pay more attention to community service and giving back, CSR has become a popular topic among media and research coverage. One of the latest trends regarding companies' CSR effort is EVP, which receives much organizational investment and is welcomed by employees as a positive sign of business ethic and social responsibility. Although many researches have been conducted on how employees think about their companies' EVP, there is not much of studies done on students, who are potential candidates about to enter the workforce. Due to the lack in researches and studies regarding this specific demographic group, the literature review section is expanded to cover Millennials instead of only college students and CSR instead of just EVP. In other words, this section looks at how Millennials, including the sub-group of college students, think about CSR and volunteering.

Generally, Millennials, or Generation Y, consist of people born after Generation X. There are various definitions of Millennials regarding the year range when they were born. Cone (2006) defined Millennials as anyone born between 1979 and 2001, while Gloeckler (2008) considered them to be born between 1980 and 2000. Despite slight variations, most of those definitions point at current "college-aged Millennials" as the youngest sub-group within Generation Y. In this paper, the target researched group is college student, also referred to as "young Millennials". Being referred to as the "demographic tsunami" (Gloeckler, 2008), this

group is believed to create a “values revolution” (Global Tolerance, 2015) in the workplace, college environment and the community.

Just as the definition of Millennials varies, so does that of CSR. According to Dahlsrud (2008), there are 37 different definitions of CSR. However, generally, CSR is a business practice that “involves participating in initiatives that benefit society” (Fallon, 2015). Nowadays, a slogan is not enough to show how much an organization cares about society. As customers, employees and other stakeholders care more about giving back, it is necessary for companies to take specific actions. With this tendency, EVP evolved as a visible way for companies to walk their talk. A definition of EVP was given by Knox (2008) as “management-led initiatives to facilitate and encourage employee volunteerism in the local community”. In other words, employees’ volunteering receives support from and then recognized by the company they work for. According to a survey done among Human Resource professionals, 85 percent of respondents identified EVP as a formal part of their company’s corporate responsibility efforts (Kosakowski, 2017).

## **2.2 Current Trend and Statistics of Millennials Volunteering**

Growing up in conditions different from that of other generations, Millennials come to believe that they need to and can make an impact on the community. It is not only due to social and natural incidents like 9/11 that make Millennials more united and engaged in giving back but also their global awareness that really makes the difference. The internet and the emergence of social media set Millennials apart from older generations. Thanks to such platforms, young people now are aware of all incidents happening around the world, giving them a broader view of life and feel a stronger need of helping other people out and building a positive community. Their thought of community is also different from that of their parents or grandparents,



extending above just the backyard or neighborhood to be global. According to a survey conducted by Cone Inc. (2006), among top ten adjectives that Millennials choose to describe themselves, “Responsible” ranked fifth and “Caring” ranked sixth. Additionally, this survey also points out that 61 percent of Millennials are worried about the state of the world and feel personally responsible to make a difference. More importantly, Millennials are clearly aware of their potential and strongly believe that they can address those. 67 percent of Millennials consider the impact they can make to range from moderate- to big-scaled (Achieve, 2016).

As they themselves care about the issue, Millennials also have high expectations of others, especially companies. Nowadays, young people think that business has enough resources and potential to address economic, environmental and social challenges and it is the responsibility of business to do so (Deloitte, 2017). Over the year, the business goals eventually needs to change from sole money-focus to a wider target of the Triple Bottom Line covering profit, people and planet.

With their strong belief in community service, it is no surprise that statistics show considerable increase in volunteering among Millennials over the years compared to other groups. According to Luke (2018), Millennials volunteer more than non-Millennials. On average, 70 percent of millennials regularly volunteer, compared to 61 percent of baby boomers and 63 percent of Generation X. Another report by Cone Communications (2015) revealed the same point, quoting 74 percent of Millennials Volunteer for a cause supported by a company they trust compared to 56 percent of U.S. average. The same report also showed that 62 percent of Millennials will take a pay cut to work for a socially responsible company compared to 56 percent of U.S. average. Furthermore, 82.2 percent of Millennials engage in "informal volunteering" (CNCS), which refers to small daily-life behaviors like picking up garbage in the

neighborhood, shoveling the sidewalk or any other actions believed to do good to the community around. Such informal volunteering has a potential to be transformed into more organized and formal volunteering effort when there are chances.

Increase in Millennials' volunteering consequently leads to an increase in formal EVP as a response of companies to employees' demand. Researches show an impressive growth of EVP from 18 percent of US companies offering volunteer programs to employees in 2011 to 80 percent in 2015 (Mazzoni, 2016). Among all EVP, paid time off volunteering has been among the most popular types, favored by many employees since it provides them with some flexibility over where, how and which causes they can use their time and effort to support. According to a survey done among recipients of Points of Light Corporate Engagement Awards of Excellence 2010, 76 percent of companies have released time policy for at least some of their employees, showing 16 percent increase since 2007. Additionally, Committee Encouraging Corporate Philanthropy's Giving Number 2011 Edition Report shows that paid release time ranks second on the list of most successful employee volunteer programs, both among companies' domestic and international sites (Points of Light). EVP is believed to make great contribution to companies' success as 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies and 70 percent of Fortune 1000 companies have volunteer programs (Boccalandro, 2009). Furthermore, whether having official EVP or not, 81 percent of companies demonstrate "espoused support" for employees' volunteering (Booth & Rodell, 2015). Among all volunteering activities, the most popular one is fundraising as chosen by the majority of employees working in 11 out of 17 non-labor occupations (CNCS, 2008). This was then backed up by a research by MacPhail and Bowles (2009), showing that fundraising is a favorite volunteering activity for both men and women, ranking first in female's employees list and third for male employees.

### **2.3 Value Millennials Place upon Volunteering**

Referred to as a “generous generation”, Millennials are associated with their “pro-social mindset” that urges them to identify social and global issues and grab any chances available to create positive changes. In the book *The Trophy Kids Grow up: How the Millennial Generation Is Shaking up the Workplace*, Ronald (2008) cited plenty of specific stories showing how Millennials value social issues and community service differently from other generations. One of the examples was the story of a young college student who has been identifying herself as an active environmentalist since the age of three. Millennials are continuously looking for ways to find meanings and create connections “beyond themselves”, referred to as “unconventional way of leadership development”. According to Paul Danos, dean of the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College, “Ethics, sustainability, poverty, health, and global economic development are just as important to them as balance sheets and marketing studies” (Ronald, 2008). One different trait of Millennials regarding service is the need to make their work visible and inspire other people around to do the same. With the development of technology, it is much easier now for people to share their concerns about causes and volunteer work. 76 percent of young Millennials regularly share volunteering photos, videos and experiences on social media with the most popular sites being Facebook and Instagram (Cone, 2016). By doing that, they hope to encourage their friends and peers to step up and do the same work. The same survey also shows how important it is for Millennials to engage people around in volunteering, stating that 77 percent of young Millennials wish their employer would provide volunteer opportunities they could do with friends or family. This is also supported by a previous research, demonstrating that 72 percent of Millennials think that it is important to educate their families and friends about causes they care (Cone, 2006).

## **2.4 Why Millennials volunteer more than others?**

There are different reasons why Millennials place higher importance in volunteering and giving back. First, they volunteer just for the sake of giving back, or in other word, for altruistic purposes. 60 percent of Millennials, aged 13 to 25, claim that they are personally responsible for making a difference in the world (Cone, 2006). Among various reasons to volunteer, 36 percent of Millennials list “helping others” as the main one, ranking first, and 31 percent volunteer because they believe in the cause, ranking second (Booth & Rodell, 2015).

Second, Millennials volunteer to enhance themselves, or in other words, for egoistic reasons. One of the most common motivations for volunteering among young people is to improve skills, usually those they do not have chances to sharpen through work. That is why the number of young employees committing to non-job-related-skill volunteering is fairly low compared to job-related one (CNCS, 2008). In this case, volunteer work serves as an additional opportunity for people to learn and improve themselves. This may imply that most of the time, altruistic motivations keep people volunteering for longer time while people who look for skill-acquiring chances through volunteering tend to stop volunteering when they get the skills they need. Also, people with more past volunteering experience tend to continue volunteering for the sake of helping others while people with little past experience may approach it more from a skill-based perspective. This implication gives rise to one of the research questions raised in the following section. According to the survey by Cone Inc. (2016), professional growth and opportunities to make connections outside workplace border are another reasons with 93 percent of Millennials agree that professional growth can be reached by volunteering. 90 percent Millennials volunteer because they look for meaningful personal experiences when they can explore new places and meet new people while released from stressful working moments. 87

percent Millennials list personal recognition as another motivation as people believe volunteering is a type of success that they can accomplish and be proud of. Other reasons for volunteering include organization's requirements, extra-credit opportunities, resume-building, and the value being part of a team (McGlone et al., 2011). As the job market is getting more and more competitive, more people are looking at volunteering as a way to make their resumes become more impressive and differentiate themselves from other candidates (Ronald, 2008).

Finally, the increase in Millennials volunteering is the result of effects from external factors. Impact from childhood education, family and social connections is an important one. According to McGlone (2011), younger Millennials are "slightly more likely to rate family influence as more important reasons for volunteerism". Interestingly, on one hand, active young Millennials like to influence other people around into volunteering more. On the other hand, they are also easily influenced by their peers and close acquaintances and tend to volunteer more if their friends and family do it.

Education plays a part in shaping Millennials' perspectives towards the concept of service. Nowadays, more colleges and universities are integrating business ethics, CSR and importance of service into undergraduate curriculum (Arnold, 2017). Many college students are exposed to courses focusing on ethics and CSR before graduating, leading them to believe that giving back to the society is a part of running the business. In 2001, one third of business schools make business ethics and society issues courses compulsory for students, growing into two thirds in 2007 (Ronald, 2008). This number is projected to continue growing, reaching 100 percent in the near future. This is a positive sign as the study by Arnold (2017) shows a strong link between college assignments regarding service and students' volunteering efforts after graduating. The

increase in the integration of social responsibility into undergraduate academic curriculum leads to higher value young Millennials place upon volunteering and service after graduating.

The social conditions and current events also affect how Millennials think about giving back. Growing up amid various incidents and difficulties, Millennials gain familiarity with helping others and changing the society for the better. According to Cone Inc. (2006), this generation has been shaped by “tragic world events such as 9/11 and natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina” which develop within themselves “a strong social conscience”. The study also points out that 37 percent of survey respondents consider natural disasters a significant influence on their community involvement.

The effect of social incidents and conditions is further intensified by the growth of social media and other technology platform through which people have more accessibility to information and make use of faster information dissemination. According to Alexis Magnan-Callaway, an older Millennial and the founder of fashion company Pax Cult, "Technology has brought global connectivity and enabled advocacy and awareness for social situations that were once obscure" (Fallon, 2015). Pax Cult itself donates 10 percent of its profits to an organization of the customer's choice each year. The way that Millennials volunteer and think about volunteering is redefined by technology and social media which help them know more about causes over the world. Having better view of society, young Millennials, instead of focusing only on themselves, are now paying more attention to incidents happening around them, either in the community nearby or somewhere across the globe. Technological development further aids with the influence of positive public figures. Many millennials were drawn to president Obama because “his message of change matched their idealistic vision of a better world. Some millennials even took to calling themselves Generation Obama” (Ronald, 2008).

All the reasons above together explain why Millennials now care more about volunteering than any other generation. They even come as far as restructuring the benefit package by listing two new elements as crucial besides traditional elements like salary and health insurance. According to the survey by Cone Inc. (2016), 77 percent of young Millennials want opportunity to support causes they care and 57 percent want paid time off volunteering to be parts of the new blend of benefits.

## **2.5 Theoretical Explanations**

There are some theories explaining Millennials' commitment to volunteer work. Those includes Social Exchange Theory, Gift Exchange Theory, and Theory of Planned Behavior. First, the Social Exchange Theory refers to "the socioemotional reciprocal relationships between parties that go beyond economic exchange" (Blau, 1964). In this case, the theory applies to the relationship between individuals and society. As people receive resources and support from the society to succeed, they are responsible for contributing back to the community around. The theory is also true in case of organizations. Millennials do believe that there should be a reciprocal connection between businesses and the community as well, since no company can thrive on its own in isolation. If organizations are not socially responsible, they will not be able to achieve sustainable growth and long-term success. Looking at this idea from a different perspective, especially for people motivated to volunteer by egoistic purposes, volunteering is done with the expectation of gaining something back. People engage in certain activities "when they perceive their outcome to be at least equal to the costs of engaging in those activities" (Marthur, 1996). When Millennials expect to improve their skills or add more connections to their network through volunteering, they tend to be more engaged. Increase in volunteer hours is supposed to result in greater skill acquisition. Additionally, reports show a positive association

between skills acquisition and workplace recognition with skill-based volunteering (Booth et al., 2009).

Second, Gift Exchange Theory is a further development of the Social Exchange Theory and has been used by many researchers in explaining the trend of Millennials' volunteering. Gift Exchange Theory is referred to as "a theoretical framework for identifying rewards seek through giving" (Marthur, 1996). Specifically, according to Marthur (1996), in case of volunteering, "gift" refers to "the donation of money, material possessions, time, and skills" and "rewards" can be anything volunteers receive back in turn, ranging from a feeling of success, happiness for helping others, pride in making an impact on the society, meaningful social connections, chances to build valuable skills, etc. Additionally, an important aspect of gift giving is the exchange relationship between the donor and the recipient. This theory looks at Millennials' volunteering as if they are giving a "gift" to the community around them and as the result, receive back a "gift". This kind of "reward" stimulates people to start their volunteering journey and the exchange relationship mentioned above helps keep them in the journey for longer time.

Finally, Millennials' volunteering can be explained by the Theory of Planned Behavior. According to Ajzen (1991), a person's intention creates and strengthens motivational factors which in turn have much impact on the action of conducting a behavior. The process begins with the individual's attitude towards the action and additional effects of subjective norms. Those then form his/her intention to do the action. If the intention is strong enough, he/she will finally put the intention into practice. A later study in 2014 gives more specific description of those intention predictors. According to this study, attitude or "attitudinal factor" refers to how a person thinks about and evaluates the consequences of performing a certain behavior; subjective norm or "social/normative factor" refers to what the individual should do according to other



people's beliefs (Marta et al., 2014). Besides those two predictors, Ajzen (1985) added a third predictor of intention, perceived behavioral control, explained as a person's perceptions of his/her ability to perform the behavior. Applying the Theory of Planned Behavior to the specific case of volunteering, many Millennials have positive attitude towards social responsibility and community service. It is also common that other people around them regard volunteering work to be a right thing to do as many young volunteers say that they receive support from their families and friends for volunteering. The most important predictor that sets Millennials apart from other generations is that they strongly believe in their potential and ability to do the action well and make changes that they are seeking to make; 67 percent of Millennials believe they would be able to make a moderate to big impact on the society (Achieve, 2016). All those three predictors lead to more Millennials having intention to volunteer and, finally, the increase noticed in volunteering among young Millennials.

## **2.6 What are Millennials looking for while participating in an EVP?**

Besides studying the intention to volunteer, it is also important to know the other end of the process. Different volunteers seek different results when joining an EVP. In this section, those reasons are divided into organization-related and non-organization-related ones. Organization-related factors include the pride in representing the company in giving back, aligning organizational values with personal values, and organization-person fit. For employed Millennials, it is very different to volunteer in a company-organized program compared to a program not connected to employers. When joining a formal EVP, they have a feeling of belonging to a group and take pride in representing the group in doing good work. EVP is also a way for employees to align the common organizational values with their own, strengthening the fit between them and their organization, especially when EVP provides them with some

flexibility to contribute to causes they care about. The more an employee engage in an EVP, the stronger the employee-company identification, which leads to higher commitment and better performance (Kim et al., 2010).

Some major non-organization-related results include skills improvement or acquirement, making connection and searching for potential opportunities, which coincides with egoistic volunteering purpose.

## **2.7 Gender Factor**

Most researches concerning volunteering show that women tend to volunteer more than man, which tends to be true in all population groups (Cornwell & Warburton, 2014; Bussell & Forbes, 2001; MacPhail & Bowles, 2009). Interestingly, nowadays, more companies start taking volunteering and community engagement as parts of performance review. 50 percent of companies on Points of Light's 2014 Civic 50 list include community engagement work in performance reviews for at least some employees (Turner, 2014). Some of the pioneers in this trend include McKesson, PwC, Cbeyond, and Western Unions (Scott, 2015). Although there is not much statistics reported on detailed impact of this trend on promotion and workplace advancement, this addition might suggest a way to close workplace gender gap due to women's high volunteering rate.

There are different reasons accounting for the dominant rate of female volunteers but the most popular one is family and childhood education. According to Wuthnow (1995), when little, girls are more likely to help with household chores and most of the time, for their mothers. Children are also more likely to see their mothers volunteering outside of home compared to fathers. Additionally, the author added that some boys were teased at school for volunteering since this is associated with "being naive and childish". Such experiences affect people's

opinions about volunteering, leading to the difference that men tend to approach volunteering, or at least talk or think about it, from a skill-based perspective while women usually have more emotional thoughts.

Early impact also leads men and women to be attracted to different volunteering activities. Women are more likely to engage in direct-caring activities while men probably choose to participate in indirect caring such as repairing buildings and organizing events. Researches also point out that most of political volunteers are male while the opposite is true for religious volunteer groups (Wuthnow, 1995; Bussell & Forbes, 2001). However, studies also demonstrate that a group of the most popular volunteering activities are appealing to both male and female volunteer. Those include organizing activity, canvassing, campaigning, fundraising, serving as board members, providing information for education, consulting, and doing executive and administrative work (MacPhail & Bowles, 2009).

Although women have higher rate of volunteering, men have much higher average annual volunteering hours than women (Macphail & Bowles, 2009). In other words, once committed to volunteering, male volunteers tend to devote more time to causes. Additionally, among all male volunteers, the biggest group are people currently in the workforce. (ABS, 2001). Interestingly, the existence of an EVP, or employer-support program, has larger impact on women than man (MacPhail & Bowles, 2009). Moreover, there is a higher correlation between job satisfaction and volunteering among women than among men (Peterson, 2004). Despite that, women are less likely to receive employer support than men by 17 percent, mostly in term of flexible hours and time off (Macphail & Bowles, 2009).

## **2.8 Occupational Factor**

Researches show that volunteering rate differs from occupation to occupation. According to Lammers (1991), white-collar employees tend to volunteer more than blue-collar ones. Consequently, the recent increase in EVP participation is attributed to the fact that more people are moving from manufacturing jobs to the service sector. A survey by CNCS (2008) organizes occupations into three different groups including Management, professional and related occupations, Service, sales and office occupations, and Labor occupations. Statistics show that Management, professional, and related occupations have higher volunteer rates than the other two. This is reconfirmed by another research by Webb and Abzug (2008), claiming that management occupations and professional occupations rank third and fourth in top volunteering rate with respectively 44.6 percent and 42.5 percent, following social services (49.1 percent) and military service (47.2 percent). In term of time amount devoted to volunteering, leading the trend is social service occupations with 69.1 hours of volunteering annually, followed by military occupations (48.4 hours), management (40.2 hours), and professional occupations (39.3 hours). Volunteering rate also varies among specific occupations. With the average rate of about 27 percent for all occupations, the higher end is occupied by education, training, and library professionals (50.3 percent) and legal profession (47.1 percent) and the other end belongs to construction and extraction laborers (15.8 percent) (CNCS, 2008).

Besides, people working in different occupations favor different kinds of volunteering activities. The most popular activity for management and service employees is fundraising while most of manufacturing workers participate in general labor and transportation providing as a main part of their service (CNCS, 2008). Additionally, the same study shows that legal professionals tend to use more work-related skills while volunteering with about 36 percent of them providing professional or management services for at least one of their volunteer activities

and 23.3 percent use those services as their main volunteer activity. By having the highest percentage, the legal profession takes the lead in the field of job-related-skill volunteering.

## **2.9 Why is the issue important to companies?**

As young Millennials are taking over the workforce, they provide companies with a high-skilled but demanding pool of labor. Because hiring the right people is very important to companies' success, it is crucial for companies to understand what young Millennials need and how to meet their needs. First, building a good EVP helps companies attract potential talent. An experiment conducted by McGlone et al. (2011) shows that many students changed their attitude from neutral to favoring certain companies after knowing about the companies' CSR efforts and even some moved from unfavorable to favorable. Those favorable attitudes also went further to students' willingness to work for those companies. Those idea is supported by Ronald (2008) when he wrote in his book that Millennials "like the thought of going to work for a company that has enough financial resources to make a meaningful difference". The author also cited the result of a survey done by Cone Inc. and Amp Insight, stating that 80 percent of millennials prefer to work for companies devoting to making contributions to society. A different survey by Cone Inc. (2006) shows that 83 percent of Americans think that companies will have more credence if showing their social responsibility effort. From the recruiting perspective, it is equally important for companies to communicate well their community engagement effort since 74 percent Millennials are more likely to pay attention to a company's message if it shows a deep commitment to a cause (Cone, 2006). Additionally, according to The 2017 Millennial Impact Report, 55 percent of respondents consider a company's support for social causes to be an important factor in accepting a job offer. Not only highly valuing socially responsible

companies, Millennials are also ready to punish those indifferent to social issues. 56 percent of Millennials would decline job offers from an irresponsible company (Cone, 2006).

EVP does not only attract new talent, it also helps companies retain them for longer time. 69 percent of Millennials sense a feeling of pride while working for socially responsible employers and 64 percent reported a stronger loyalty to employer based on CSR (Cone, 2006). A different survey later in 2016 by Cone Inc. confirms this point, showing that this 64 percent in 2006 has grown into 82 percent of young Millennials expressing higher loyalty to companies helping them make contribution to social and environmental issues (Cone, 2016).

Besides, EVP emerges as a new attraction to candidates in term of benefits, taking over traditional ones. Studies have been conducted over time comparing employer-supported volunteering and salary when a candidate consider a job offer. As mentioned in the previous sections, many Millennials even accept lower salary to work for a company having great reputation of community engagement. 53 percent of respondents said that they would work harder if their companies provide them with chances to make positive differences to others (Global Tolerance, 2015). It is important for companies to catch up with this trend since there is a big difference between employer-supported and non-employer-supported volunteering. Millennials' taking part in informal volunteering or a program that is not EVP might not lead to the same desired results as those brought about by EVP. Research shows that an average employee would volunteer 45 percent more hours per year if the organization supports his/ her efforts through approved or paid time off, flexible schedules, and other resources (Booth et al., 2009). It is time for employers to gain employees' trust with an EVP demonstrating authenticity and engagement.

### 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to the lack of previous researches about the same topic, there is not much material to base the predictions on. Therefore, this paper is built around a set of research questions rather than predictive hypotheses. The main questions that the study focuses on include:

*Research question 1:* Do students place high value upon EVP compared to other job elements?

*Research question 2:* What are the top values that students are searching for in an ideal EVP?

*Research question 3:* What impact does past volunteer experience factor have on students' approach to EVP?

3a. Do students with much past volunteering experience tend to approach EVP more from egoistic perspective or altruistic perspective?

3b. Do students without much past volunteering experience tend to approach EVP more from egoistic perspective or altruistic perspective?

*Research question 4:* What impact does gender factor have on students' approach to EVP?

4a. Are there any significant differences among genders, regarding importance of EVP?

4b. Are there any significant differences among genders, regarding what they look for in EVP?

*Research question 5:* What impact does occupational/ major/ industries factor have on students' approach to EVP?

5a. Are there any significant differences among students' anticipated industries in which they want to work, regarding importance of EVP?

5b. Are there any significant differences among students' anticipated industries in which they want to work, regarding what they look for in EVP?

#### **4. METHOD**

This research was done based on primary data collected from students at University of New Hampshire (UNH). An online survey created through Qualtrics (2005) was used as the main method of data collection, hoping to get respondents from different years, majors, genders and past volunteer experience. The survey questions were designed to learn how students think about EVP, the importance of EVP in accepting a job offers and considering recruiting messages, what features students want an EVP to include and how a good EVP can add value to them as employees.

After the survey is created, a link address of the survey was sent to UNH students via emails. Respondent recruitment was also aided by social media posts (Facebook), newsletter, and weekly emails sent out by different school offices and colleges' departments. The data collection time lasted for approximately three weeks. After the survey was closed, responses from 104 students were recorded and then analyzed using SPSS (IBM Corp, 2017). Different tests like means comparison, ANOVA, Pearson Chi-square, etc. were run in SPSS to compare the data among different factors. The results from the tests were then used to draw conclusions for the research.

The survey also includes necessary explanative definition to help respondents give informed responses. For the purpose of the survey, "formal volunteer" is defined as activities within an organizational context, often involving defined supervision structures and roles to be separated from "informal volunteering", which refers to activities not coordinated by an organization or any assistance given directly to non-households individuals. Those explanations were based on the definition given by Ajrouch and Tesch-Roemer (2017). Additionally, Employee Volunteer Program was defined as a formal volunteering program planned and



managed by employers to motivate and enable employees to give back to the community and become socially responsible. This explanation was based off Knox’s definition of EVP (2008).

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Population description

*Table 1. Percentage description of population*

Variable		Percent	Count
<b>Class standing</b>	Junior	42.30%	44
	Senior	57.70%	60
<b>Gender</b>	Female	73.30%	74
	Male	26.70%	27
<b>Colleges</b>	Peter T. Paul College of Business and Economics (PCBE)	52.90%	55
	College of Engineering and Physical Sciences (CEPS)	7.70%	8
	College of Health and Human Services (CHHS)	1.90%	2
	College of Liberal Arts (COLA)	18.30%	19
	College of Life Sciences and Agriculture (COLSA)	19.20%	20
<b>Work experience</b>	Having full-time job experience	54.80%	57
	Having no full-time job experience	45.20%	47

Survey respondents were equally distributed between junior and senior class standings, without any class standing accounting for a significantly larger percentage of the population. Female respondents account for a large portion (73.3 percent) compared to male respondents (26.7 percent). It is also important to note that there are three missing responses recorded for gender variable, which is omitted from the percentage calculation above and further analysis. Regarding academic colleges, most respondents come from PCBE, accounting for more than half of the respondents (52.9 percent), followed by COLSA (19.2 percent) and COLA (18.3 percent). In terms of work-experience, the number of respondents who had or are having a full-time job and who have never held a full-time job shows no significant difference (see table 1).

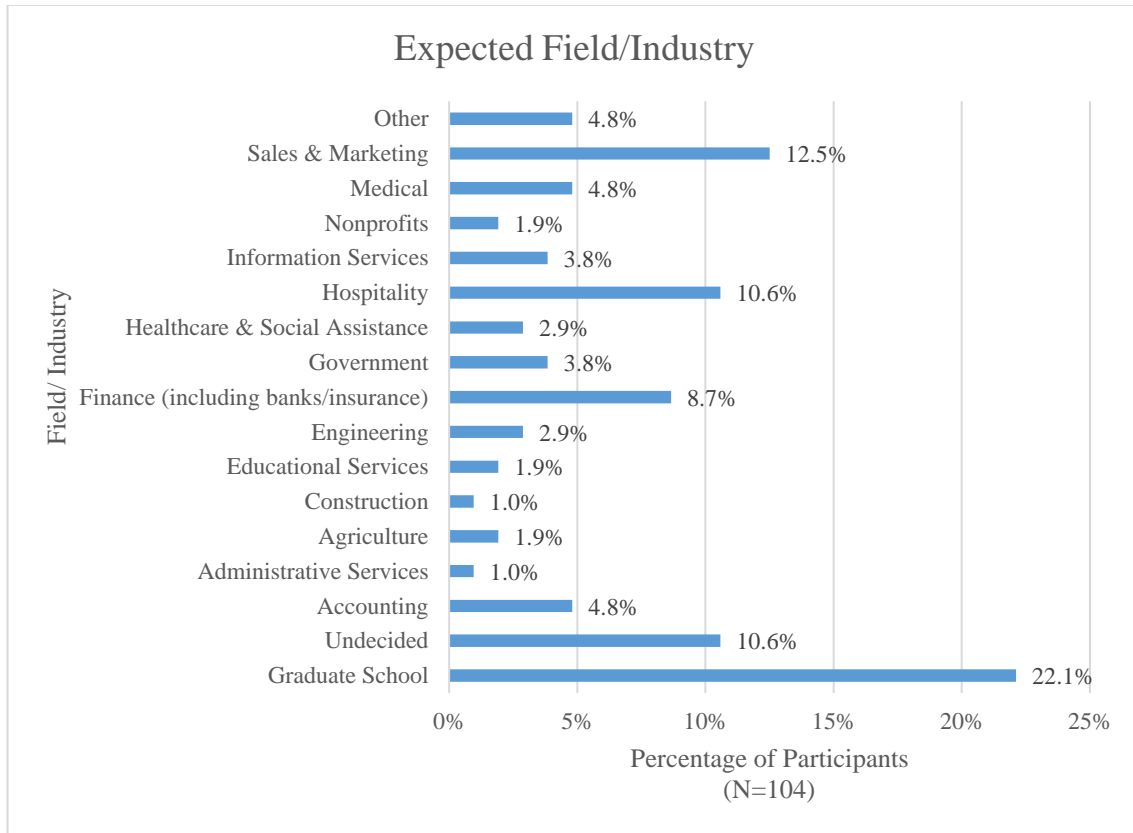


Figure 1. Expected field/industry percentage distribution

The percentage distribution of respondents regarding intended career field or industry shows great differences among options, skewing towards the Business area with the most popular choices being Sales and Marketing, Hospitality, and Finance. Additionally, a large number of respondents decided to continue with higher education (22.1 percent) and many respondents were still not sure about their future career (10.6 percent). It is important to notice that among the remaining options, each of which accounts for such a small percentage of the population that it makes analyzing the data at the scale of intended field/ industry not objective and will not truly reflect the relationship between industry and EVP (see figure 1). The same situation happened for academic major as the percentage distribution is too dispersed to make most of the groups big enough to represent the student body of that corresponding major.

Therefore, in the later section of this paper, data will only be analyzed at the level of academic colleges.

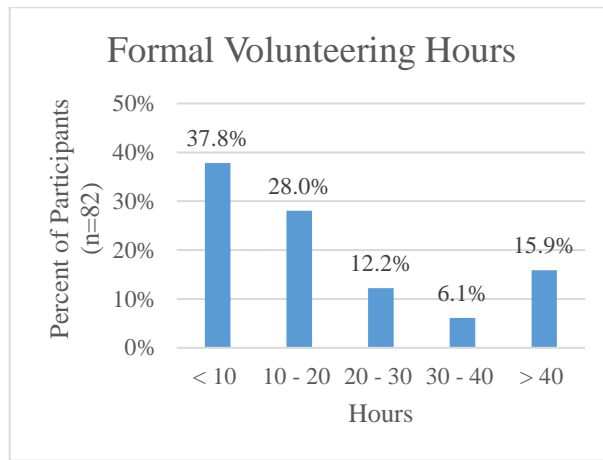


Figure 2. Formal volunteering hours by percentage

Most of the respondents (82 out of 104) had experience participating in a formal volunteering program. Among those, 65.8 percent devoted 20 hours or fewer to volunteering annually (see figure 2). Additionally, most of respondents (90 out of 104 or 86.6 percent) estimated to volunteer informally for 8 hours or fewer monthly.

## 5.2 Value that students place upon EVP compared to other job elements

Table 2. EVP importance and influence by percentage

	Extremely/ very important	Moderately important	Slightly/not at all important
<b>Regarding potential employers</b>			
Provides support/resources to make positive changes	54.8%	28.8%	16.3%
Making effort to help and get involved in community	42.3%	38.5%	19.3%
Provides volunteering opportunities with families and friends	39.5%	34.6%	25.9%
Helps you identify ways to get more involved in the communities	35.5%	40.4%	24.0%
Shares community involvement progresses in recruiting efforts	30.8%	43.3%	26.0%

	Extremely/ somewhat likely	Neither likely or unlikely	Extremely/ somewhat unlikely
<b>Regarding recruiting efforts and messages</b>			
Change opinion from neutral to positive due to positive EVP information	50.0%	31.7%	18.3%
Change opinion from negative to neutral/ positive due to positive EVP information	46.2%	33.7%	20.1%
Pay more attention to recruiters if they mention EVP/CSR	50.0%	27.9%	22.1%
<b>Regarding job offers</b>			
Decline a socially irresponsible employer	60.6%	21.2%	18.2%
Choose EVP over flexible hours	43.3%	22.1%	34.6%
Accept lower salary to work for an employer providing EVP	25.0%	26.0%	49.0%
<b>Regarding company while supposingly working</b>			
Participating in EVP	68.3%	20.2%	11.6%
Participating in non-employer-supported volunteering programs if there is no EVP	52.9%	26.9%	20.2%
Feeling more loyal to the company resulting from EVP participation	65.4%	23.1%	11.5%
Feeling more enthusiastic and motivated to work resulting from EVP participation	64.4%	25.0%	10.6%
Feeling a stronger company-employee identification resulting from EVP participation	65.4%	21.2%	13.4%

When asked about potential employer, many respondents (42.3 percent) expressed the importance of the option that employer makes efforts to help and get involved in the community around. Despite that, up to 43.3 percent of the respondents thought that it is only moderately important for employer to mention their community involvement progresses in recruiting messages. Additionally, while more than half of the respondents (54.8 percent) considered it very/extremely important that the company provide support or resources to help them make

positive changes to the society, only 35.5 percent needs employer’s help in identifying ways to get involved. Noticeably, up to half of the respondents said they would be extremely/somewhat likely to change their opinion from neutral to favoring the company if the company shares positive information about its EVP. Not only giving potential candidates favorable opinions, EVP also helps with messages transmission since half of the respondents believed they will pay more attention to the recruiters if EVP/CSR is mentioned.

When putting respondents in more specific situations, supposing they receive a job offer from a company or are working for a company, the impact of EVP becomes even clearer. Up to 60.6 percent of respondents would decline the job offer from a socially irresponsible company. On the other hand, a large number of respondents appeared to be in favor of EVP since more than 68 percent said they would be extremely/somewhat likely to participate in the EVP if their future employer offers one. Additionally, many respondents believed that EVP would bring to them positive effects regarding works and connections to employers. More than 65 percent thought that participating in EVP would help them feel more loyal to the company and feel a stronger employee-company identification. For more statistics, see Table 2.

Respondents were also asked to rank ten different benefit options according to their importance (with 1 being most importance and 10 being least importance); the result is recorded in the following table:

*Table 3. Rankings of benefit options*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Means (<math>\mu</math>)</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Financial package	2	2.38	1
Health insurance	4	3.85	2
Flexibility	4	3.89	3
Job training/career development	4	3.93	4
Diverse & inclusiveness workplace	4	4.6	5
Tuition reimbursement	6	6.13	6
Opportunities to support community causes/issues	7	6.87	7

Paid time off volunteering	8	7.38	8
Wellness program	8	7.71	9
Matching gifts	9	8.25	10

The mean of each option is calculated based on the equation below:

$$\mu = \rho \times ranking$$

$\mu$ : means score of each option

$\rho$ : percent of respondents ranking the option in each score (1 to 10) accordingly

ranking: score (1 to 10)

Ten benefit options were then ranked based on the means. Among the ten options, EVP-related ones include “Opportunities to support community causes/issues”, “Paid time off volunteering”, and “Matching gifts”. It can be seen that EVP-related options were not highly ranked compared to other conventional options like financial package, health insurance, flexibility, etc.; none of them falls into top 5 of benefit options. However, up to 43.3 percent of respondents would be extremely/somewhat likely to choose EVP over flexible hours (see Table 2). Therefore, it cannot be simply inferred from the rankings that EVP is not important to students. This discrepancy will be discussed more in the next section.

### 5.3 Ideal EVP

This section of the survey asked respondents to give their opinions on the importance of six different features of EVP. The result was then documented in Table 4 below:

*Table 4. EVP features importance*

Features	Extremely/very important
Applying job-related skills	73.1%
Chances to make meaningful connections	69.2%
Chances to learn new skills	67.3%
Contributing to causes you really care about	58.7%
Enhancing teamwork	58.6%
Making trackable/specific changes on community	49.1%

It can be seen from Table 4 that respondents tend to approach EVP from an egoistic perspective with the top options being “Applying job-related skills”, “Chances to make meaningful connections”, and “Chances to learn new skills”. Up to 73.1 percent of respondents thought that it would be extremely/very important that an EVP let participants apply job skills into volunteering.

Respondents were then asked to rank the same six EVP features from 1 to 6 based on their perceived importance of each feature (with 1 being most important). This is where the discrepancy arose, again. The ranking is recorded in Table 5 below, using the same equation for ranking benefit options ( $\mu = \rho \times ranking$ ):

Table 5. Ranking EVP features

<b>Features</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Means</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Ability to contribute to causes you really care about	2	2.75	1
Learning new skills	3	2.93	2
Ability to make a positive change on the community	3	3	3
Making meaningful connections	4	3.57	4
Applying job-related skills	4	4.08	5
Enhancing teamwork	5	4.67	6

Although many respondents considered skills application and making connections extremely/very important, when it comes to ranking and comparing the importance of each feature, altruistic features of EVP tended to win. On top of the list are “Ability to contribute to causes you really care about” and “Ability to make a positive change on the community”. The remaining feature in top 3 is “Learning new skills” (with slightly higher mean than top 1 feature), showing that skills are still an important part to potential EVP participants but not the only one. An ideal EVP, to college student, should be a combination of both aspects, creating positive impact on the community around and helping participants become better-rounded.

#### **5.4 Past Volunteer Experience Factor**

Chi-square test is run to test the statistical relationship between past volunteer experience and all other EVP-related and potential-employer-related variables. The only option where test result shows statistically significant relationship is “Regarding recruiting efforts, how likely respondents will pay more attention to recruiters if they mention information about EVP and CSR” (see Table 6).

Table 6. Chi-square test for past volunteer experience factor

	Pearson Chi-square	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
How likely will you pay more attention to recruiters if they mention information about EVP and CSR?”	10.065	4	.039

The two hypotheses for Chi-square test are:

*H<sub>o</sub>: There is no statistical significant relationship between the two variables.*

*H<sub>a</sub>: There is statistical significant relationship between the two variables.*

With  $X^2(4) = 10.065$  and significance level of .05,  $p = .039$ , which is smaller than .05, rejects the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). In other words, there is statistical significant relationship between past volunteering experience and how likely respondents will pay more attention to recruiters if they mention EVP/CSR. Table 7 displays a closer look into the relationship:

Table 7. Comparing past volunteer experience in relation to other variables

“How likely will you pay more attention to recruiters if they mention information about EVP/CSR?”	<b>Extremely/somewhat likely</b>	<b>Neither likely/unlikely</b>	<b>Extremely/somewhat unlikely</b>
Had formal volunteering	54.9%	28%	17.1%
No formal volunteering	31.8%	27.3%	40.9%

According to Table 7, respondents who participated in a formal volunteering program before will be much more likely to pay attention to recruiters if they mention EVP/CSR.



Regarding research question 3, the statistical relationship between past volunteering experience and the importance of each ideal EVP features is not strong enough to conclude that whether students who have formally volunteered before would approach EVP from egoistic or altruistic point of view. In other words, the result of the tests do not show that past volunteering experience has significant impact on how students approach EVP.

### 5.5 Gender Factor

Chi-square test is run to test the statistical relationship between gender and all other EVP-related and potential-employer-related variables. All features that show statistically significant relationship are recorded in Table 8.

Table 8. Chi-square test for gender factor

	Pearson Chi-square	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
<b>Regarding recruiting efforts, how likely will you...</b>			
“Pay more attention to recruiters if they mention information about EVP/CSR?”	10.373	4	.035
<b>Suppose you are working for a company, how likely will you</b>			
“Participate in the company’s EVP?”	14.001	4	.007
“Participate in a non-employer-supported formal volunteering program if your company does not have an EVP?”	12.845	4	.012

The two hypotheses for Chi-square test for each option are:

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistical significant relationship between the two variables.*

*H<sub>a</sub>: There is statistical significant relationship between the two variables.*

With  $p < .05$  rejecting the null hypothesis, the three features above (Table 8) show statistically significant relationships with gender factor. In other words, gender has impact on whether students will pay more attention to recruiters mentioning CSR/EVP, whether they will join an EVP offered by future employers and whether they will participate in a non-employer-supported volunteering program without the existence of EVP. The strongest difference appears in

respondents' probable participation in future employers' EVP with  $p=.007$ . For a closer demonstration of difference, see Table 9.

Table 9. Comparing genders in relation to other variables

“How likely will you pay more attention to recruiters if they mention information about EVP/CSR?”			
	<b>Extremely/somewhat likely</b>	<b>Neither likely/unlikely</b>	<b>Extremely/somewhat unlikely</b>
Female	56.8%	23%	20.2%
Male	37%	40.7%	22.3%
“Suppose you are working for a company, how likely will you participate in the company’s EVP?”			
	<b>Extremely/somewhat likely</b>	<b>Neither likely/unlikely</b>	<b>Extremely/somewhat unlikely</b>
Female	78.4%	14.9%	6.7%
Male	44.4%	29.6%	26%
“Suppose you are working for a company, how likely will you participate in a non-employer-supported formal volunteering program if your company does not have an EVP?”			
	<b>Extremely/somewhat likely</b>	<b>Neither likely/unlikely</b>	<b>Extremely/somewhat unlikely</b>
Female	58.1%	29.7%	12.2%
Male	37%	18.5%	44.5%

Regarding research question 4a, female respondents will be much more likely to pay attention to the recruiters if they mention CSR/EVP. Nearly 20 percent more female respondents said they would do so than male respondents. 21.1 percent more female respondents would be extremely/very likely to take part in a non-employer-supported volunteering program if they do not have that option offered by their future employers. With that in mind, considering up to 65.8 percent of respondents estimated to devote 1 to 20 hours and 15.9 percent of respondents devoted more than 40 hours to a formal volunteering program annually (Figure 2, 3), the existence of an EVP brings much difference to companies having female associates accounting for large percentage of their employee body. If employers can save their associates some time by offering EVP, those can be invested back in work or life/personal usage which keeps employees happier and will eventually make them more motivated and enthusiastic in workplace. Table 9

also shows that nearly two times more female will be extremely/very likely to participate in an EVP. Additionally, about 65 percent of all respondents believe EVP participation would bring motivation, strengthen employee-company identification and company loyalty; EVP can offer female talent a great reason to stay with the company and enjoy their work better.

Regarding research question 4b, although gender does have some impact on how students value EVP, the statistical is not strong enough to conclude that gender affects what students look for in their ideal EVP.

### **5.6 Academic College Factor**

According to initial research focus, the study hopes to find some occupational impacts on how students value EVP. However, as the survey result shows that respondents are widely dispersed over various intended career fields and majors, each group is not large enough to objectively represent all students pursuing that career option or major. Therefore, this paper only analyze responses at academic college level, which can also be understood as large groups of majors. Specifically, among the five colleges at University of New Hampshire, a large percentage of respondents are currently enrolling in PCBE, COLSA, and COLA (see Table 1). The two other colleges have too few respondents to truly represent their whole student body; therefore, data will only be analyzed among the three colleges mentioned above. Chi-square test is run to test the statistical relationship between academic college and all other EVP-related and potential-employer-related variables, using below hypotheses:

*H<sub>o</sub>: There is no statistical significant relationship between the two variables.*

*H<sub>a</sub>: There is statistical significant relationship between the two variables.*

Test results show no  $p < .05$  to reject the null hypothesis, which means that there is no statistically significant relationship between academic college factor and any other variable.

However, some of the relationships do show *a clear trend to significance* with p slightly greater than .05 (see Table10). That proposes some areas for further study among a more diverse and larger population.

Table 10. Chi-square tests for academic college factor

	Pearson Chi-square	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
<b>Regarding potential employer, how important that they...</b>			
“Provide volunteer opportunities you could do with friends or family?”	15.220	8	.055
<b>While considering job offer, how likely will you...</b>			
“Decline a job offer from an employer who is socially irresponsible?”	14.953	8	.06
“Choose the opportunities to make contribution to social and environmental issues through an EVP over flexible hours?”	15.193	8	.056

Regarding research question 5, this research finds no significant impact of occupational factor (academic college/ groups of major) on students’ opinions of and approach towards EVP or what they look for in an ideal EVP.

## 6. DISCUSSION

According to a lack of previous studies on the same issues done among the same targeted groups, this research focuses on five research questions instead of hypotheses. Based on previous researches among Millennials, this study is done hoping to find the value of importance that college students place on EVP and the impacts of related factors including past volunteering experience, gender, and occupation. Results do show that students think positively of EVP and its effects in the workplace. Employers nowadays need to do much better than just offering a good amount of money and waiting to get top talent since this research found many respondents will decline a job offer from a socially irresponsible employer. Young candidates do care about

how the company performs socially, especially through an EVP. Volunteering and giving back to the community around play a part in young people's life. Many of them will join EVP without any hesitation and even go beyond that by participating in a non-employer-supported program if companies do not offer them the chance. With this young socially responsible and aware generation, EVP is one of the best areas where employers can really make a difference and show their care to employees. It is also explained why many people want to devote their time to such programs. Statistics show that a large percentage of them believe that EVP will make their work more enjoyable and strengthen their affiliation and connection to the company (see Table 1). Those are also what employers are continuously looking for a way to stimulate and maintain among employee body. In short, EVP serves as a bridge harmonizing the need of both employees and employers.

There are some other implications derived from this research. First, it can be noticed that respondents' preference is not consistent throughout the survey. Example can be the case of working experience factor when respondents having full-time job experience would be more likely to find it important for companies to mention community involvement progress while doing recruiting; however, the fact that recruiters mention such information would be much less likely to attract more attention from them than from respondents without full-time job experience. Another example of discrepancy is when respondents did not ranked job skills application high among other features they considered ideal for an EVP to have while over 73 percent of them think it is extremely/somewhat important that EVP involves skill application. Additionally, neutral responses ("neither likely nor unlikely") account for a considerable portion of each question (most of the time, fewer than positive responses and more than negative responses). This implies that many students do not have a full understanding of EVP and how the

program can benefit them in the future even when many are certain that volunteering is important to them. With that in mind, considering a large portion of the answers show positive responses (“extremely/very likely/important”), students, whether really know or just knowing a little bit about EVP, tend to think of it in a positive way. This suggest a great niche for employers to educate students, who will soon become potential job candidates, about EVP and how it can serve as a win-win option. Since students care about volunteering and giving back, once they have a better understand of EVP, recruiters can well leverage this as a point of attraction

Second, employers should make EVP/CSR and other related information easy to notice. The best way to make a message relevant to targeted audience is to speak about what they want to hear. According to the result collected from survey among UNH students, respondents want to know whether an employer is engaged in social/community issues and how. Besides mentioning in conversations, making such information noticeable on company website is advisory. Survey shows that up to 50 percent off respondents would be extremely/somewhat likely to change their opinions from neutral to favoring an employer and 46.2 percent from negative to neutral/positive based on what they hear about EVP. EVP is not only a point of attraction but also a great recruiting tool ready in hands to target today young and “generous” generation.

Third, the research suggests that both altruistic and egoistic approaches to EVP are equally important to consider. Instead of trying to separately measuring to see which one should be given the priority, it is better for EVP builders to incorporate both in an ideal EVP. The main purpose of an EVP is to help associates contribute to causes they care about and for companies to walk their talk regarding CSR. However, it is also necessary to take a business approach towards EVP including goals setting, outcome measuring, and skills application. Young people nowadays, who are usually looking to make impact on the workplace right on the first day, also want to see

changes they make on the community through EVP. Having a clear process of outcomes measuring will also help with information publicizing and keeping participants motivated. Besides, skills application is a trend among EVP now as more than 70 percent of respondents thought it is important to be included in EVP. That is something employers should consider when creating or revising their EVP policy.

Finally, factors like gender and past volunteering experience do have some impacts on how respondents value EVP and what they are looking for in a future EVP. Occupation factor, although not suggesting any impact in this study, does suggest potential relationship in future studies. Employers need to truly think about and understand their associates and potential candidates to build not just an EVP but an EVP that speaks to its own participants. Just like how each company has its own organizational culture, EVP policy is not something copied and pasted randomly. A good EVP should be customized to targeted participants pool according to demographic and other related features.

The present study has some limitations. The respondents group are not diverse enough to closely represent the whole UNH student body. Limitations appear most clearly when PCBE students account for nearly half of the population. Respondents group is also not gender-balanced since most of respondents are female. However, the study can serve as a meaningful addition to the topic, especially when not many researches regarding EVP have been done among college students.

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