

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Approximately 80 percent of the respondents have received Single Parent scholarships at some time, and the remaining 20 percent have applied, but not received a scholarship. The groups are similar with respect to gender and marital status, but applicants have slightly larger households than recipients do. The very large household sizes of the applicants and recipients may result from having housemates and their children or blended families. Nearly all have school-aged children living with them and a large share have either adult children in college or not in college living with them. On average recipients and applicants help their children with their homework three or four days weekly, but applicants help their children more frequently than recipients do. Nearly all recipients and applicants have visited their children's teachers this year, but applicants have visited their children's teachers more often this year than recipients have. The differences reported in helping with homework and visiting teachers may indicate that applicants have more time available than do recipients, and while they may be more interested than recipients in visiting their children's teachers, they appear to have more children than recipients, on average. In addition, it is possible that their children have more problems with homework and with classroom behavior than do the children of SP scholarship recipients.

Much larger proportions of recipients than applicants contribute to community organizations. Receiving a Single Parent scholarship somewhat influences recipients' and applicants' decisions to give to religious organizations and schools. While the scholarship somewhat affects recipients' decisions to give to nonprofits and influences their donations to SPSF itself, it has little effect on decisions of applicants to give to either of these two groups.

Recipients have received scholarships between 1984 and 2010 whereas the earliest applicant first applied in 2005. When they apply, recipients are twice as likely as applicants to attend the University of Arkansas, but slightly less likely than applicants to attend NW Arkansas Community College. Nonetheless, these two institutions are attended by the vast majority of recipients and applicants. When they apply for scholarships, applicants are in the fields of health, business, human services, physical sciences, humanities, or technical fields including cosmetology, in declining order. A strong majority of recipients have completed the program they were attempting when they applied for the scholarship; recipients are approximately six times more likely than applicants to have completed the degree they were attempting when they applied. Scholarship recipients are more likely than applicants to have earned an associate's or bachelor's degree, but applicants are more likely to have earned technical certifications.

Men and women who are interested in receiving a Single Parent scholarship now tend to apply online compared with their predecessors who, at least prior to 2007, largely applied with a paper-based process. Regardless of how they apply, applicants and recipients find the application process to be easy, on average. Online applicants judge the process as slightly easier than do those who apply on paper; recipients view the online process as slightly easier

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than do those not receiving a scholarship. This difference is probably more a function of the recipients' and applicants' relative computer-related and application skills, but SPSF might explore with those never having received a scholarship what confuses or otherwise challenges them in the application process. Respondents counsel SPSF about making application requirements and schedules more obvious and the website easier to follow. Respondents request that SPSF remind them about application deadlines. Since SPSF's application deadlines are constant across years, those who apply more than once would be more familiar with the due dates, but it may be difficult to overemphasize the deadlines on the SPSF website.

Interviews are necessary in order to receive a scholarship from the SPSF, and large majorities of both applicants and recipients view them as beneficial. Benefits of the interviewing process include increased confidence and poise in general and in entering new situations, and/or meeting new people and improved interviewing skills. Applicants, however, are more likely than recipients to describe the interviews as having had no or a negative effect. In their comments, respondents offer ideas for SPSF to explore about the interviewing process, including spreading the interviewing process across more than one day to accommodate applicants' schedules, finding ways to allow applicants who are kept from interviewing by unexpected events including car trouble, ill children, etc. and letting them know they will be interviewed by small groups – or give references that might help applicants prepare for interviews with groups. Some of these comments reflect former policies, for example, SPSF now interviews over several days in order to accommodate the needs of students, as suggested by the program's alumni.

Applicants and recipients largely find the SPSF office to be conveniently located. In their comments, however, two program alumni advocate that SPSF expand its office space. The alumni whom SPSF referred to other organizations and/or resources in the community, by and large, followed through on the referral(s) and found them to be beneficial. Nearly all the alumni received at least some of their scholarship funds directly. They appreciate the direct funding and felt trusted and empowered to make decisions as a consequence of having received the funds directly.

Prior to 2006, SPSF annually held one event to bring recipients together and enjoy themselves and the networking opportunities. Starting in 2006, SPSF held more than one event to give recipients chances to network with each other and SPSF staff. The alumni who have attended such events do so for a variety of reasons: The events are fun for their children, food is provided, they are inexpensive and good chances to meet other similarly situated individuals. SPSF alumni cite scheduling as a reason both to attend and not to attend these events. Small percentages view attendance at such events as obligatory. Large share of those not attending cite not only the scheduling of such events, but also a lack of time.

Those who apply for SP scholarships learn of the opportunity primarily via friends and/or family, but secondarily through the financial aid, student affairs and/or other office at their school. Tiny percentages learn about this opportunity through other types of media. When

they learned about the Single Parent Scholarship, the vast majority were enrolled at NWA Community College, University of Arkansas or NW Technical Institute.

The Single Parent Scholarship Fund alumni identify the scholarship's benefits as (in order of mention): Direct economic benefits, educational benefits having economic implications, easing of time constraints, and encouragement and/or emotional support. In so doing, the alumni unanimously identify financial aid as a benefit of the Single Parent scholarships. The order of these benefits implies that the alumni value the financial benefits much more than the non-financial ones, but this is congruent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in which higher levels of needs are attempted after needs for food and other basics are met.¹

<http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/regsys/maslow.html>

Although the alumni would not be pursuing higher education if their and their children's most basic needs were not being met, single parents are usually very pressed for resources in order to meet their family's basic needs and the seemingly unlimited needs of children as well as to pay for the education they are pursuing. Therefore, while the supportive ways in which the Single Parent Scholarship Fund staff decide upon and nurture the recipients are undoubtedly appreciated, they are of secondary or tertiary importance to helping recipients meet their basic needs. Appreciation and affection are noted by 38 percent of all who comment about their experience with the Single Parent Scholarship Fund and/or provide recommendations.

¹ Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and Personality*. New York: Harper.

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Most of the Fund's alumni also indicate how beneficial receipt of the scholarship has been to their children, other family members and/or friends. Here, again, the recipients most frequently cite economic benefits, but these include such benefits as having been better able to support themselves – needing to rely less on their families and/or on government for support. In addition to noting generally positive impacts on their family and friends, the alumni say the scholarship and associated processes built confidence and hope among family and friends and fostered a sense pride in the recipient by family and friends. A large share also indicate that the process encouraged their children to perform better in school and encouraged not only their children but also other family and/or friends to go to college. The connections that their children made with others and the example of people helping each other are also seen as beneficent. Over the long term, the Fund's alumni are more likely than those not having received the scholarship to proffer that their children will have a better standard of living than they themselves had.

Both presently and when first applying for a Single Parent scholarship, nearly all applicants and recipients live either in a place they rent, a home they own or with their parents. Most live in rental homes or apartments (Table 39). Upon first applying for the scholarship, recipients were slightly more likely than applicants to rent and slightly less likely to own, whereas currently, recipients are more than twice as likely to own their residence, and therefore, less likely than applicants to rent. Both when first applying and currently, applicants are more likely than recipients to live with their parents.

Current incomes of scholarship recipients exceed their incomes when they first applied, but applicants' current and former incomes are similar. Recipients' average incomes have risen from \$7,500 to \$15,000 upon applying to \$25,001 to \$35,000 currently. Recipients tend to have lower incomes upon applying than applicants do, but higher incomes than applicants currently. When they first apply, recipients and applicants have similar levels of education, but currently recipients have higher levels of education than applicants do. On average, recipients have completed an associate's degree or technical certification whereas applicants have completed some college including business or trade schools. Currently, six times more recipients than applicants, proportionally, have completed a bachelor's, graduate or profession degree or some graduate school.

Both scholarship recipients and applicants are more likely to have health insurance now than when they first applied, but larger percentages of recipients than applicants currently have health insurance. Since most adults in the U.S. have health insurance because they have full-time employment, these differential health insurance rates undoubtedly result from recipients being more likely to be employed full-time than are applicants. Nearly all of the children of both groups of parents had health insurance when their parents applied for a Single Parent scholarship and currently. This probably reflects the availability of ARKids insurance offered by the State of Arkansas.

When they first applied for a Single Parent Scholarship, recipients and applicants were equally as likely to be working or unemployed, but recipients were more likely to be attending school full-time as well. Currently, however, recipients are nearly twice as likely as applicants to work outside the home full-time, much less likely to work part-time and somewhat less likely to be unemployed. Applicants are, however, more than twice as likely as recipients to be full-time students. Currently, respondents tend to be employed in somewhat higher levels of jobs than they were when they first applied for Single Parent Scholarships. Larger percentages are in the medical field, especially nursing, business, computers, cosmetology, helping professions, or laboratory/research work.

Approximately two-thirds of recipients and applicants received family support when they applied for the Single Parent Scholarship, but 43 percent currently receive such support. Recipients were more likely than applicants to be receiving some form of family support when they applied for the scholarship, but currently the opposite holds true. Applicants currently receive the same number of types of family aid as when they first applied for a scholarship, but recipients receive fewer types of family aid currently than when they first applied for a Single Parent Scholarship. Recipients, however, were receiving more types of family aid when they applied for the scholarship than applicants did, but a slightly smaller number of types of family aid currently. Currently the percentages receiving money, child care and/or housing are significantly lower than when they first applied, but larger percentages receive child support now than when they first applied for a scholarship.

Larger percentages of applicants and recipients received at least one type of government aid than family aid both when they applied and currently, and they received more types of government than familial aid when they applied for the scholarship than they do currently. While recipients were more likely to receive governmental aid upon applying for the scholarship, applicants are now more likely to be receiving some sort of governmental aid than recipients are. Furthermore, recipients received more types of governmental aid when they applied for the SP scholarship than they currently receive whereas the opposite is true for applicants. Recipients received more types of aid than applicants did upon applying for the scholarship, but applicants currently receive more types of aid than recipients do. The most common type of governmental aid received by Single Parent Scholarship applicants and recipients both when applying and currently is ARKids (health insurance for children) and they

are equally as likely to receive it currently as when they applied. The next most commonly received form of government aid, the Pell Grant, is currently received by much smaller shares of these respondents than when they applied for the scholarship.

About twice the share of applicants and recipients received a form of aid “other” than governmental or familial when they applied for the Single Parent Scholarship compared with the share who currently receive “other” aid. The most common type of “other” aid is a loan, followed by other types of educational financial aid including other scholarships. While the percentage of applicants receiving other types of aid when they first applied versus currently is the same, the share of scholarship alumni receiving other types of aid has declined substantially. Recipients currently receive fewer “other” types of aid now than when they first applied for the Single Parent Scholarship, but applicants currently receive the same number of “other” aid in each time period. Recipients of Single Parent Scholarships were better endowed with “other” forms of aid when they applied for the Single Parent Scholarship than applicants were.

Nearly all of the SP Scholars had access to a computer while they were attending school and the lion’s share owned a computer while in school. Therefore, with one exception, those who identified needs the SP Scholarship does not address mention needs other than computer acquisition. Rather these scholars identify financial needs that exceed the limits of the Scholarship including child care and transportation. On the other hand, in expressing their gratitude some recipients acknowledge that the funds are modest, but very much appreciated. The financial needs are underscored by the alumni’s and applicants’ additional suggestion that the Fund aim to offer larger scholarships. Most of the SP scholars and applicants offering additional comments express gratitude and suggest ideas to the SPSF. The large share praising the Single Parent Scholarship Fund generally opine that SPSF performs very well and encourage them to continue as they currently operate. Among the processes that SPSF employs that recipients appreciate is the caring attitude with which the work is implemented.

Some applicants and recipients suggest ways for SPSF to improve its communications. In the broadest sense, the SP scholars and applicants suggest that SPSF increase its advertising and check to determine if the advertising is actually reaching potential candidates. Others recommend that SPSF find ways to link recipients and applicants with helpful related services and to place advertising where students tend to congregate or study. Communication would be improved, according to some if very important announcements are also made by non-computerized methods.

One specific recommendation is that SPSF help with child care more directly, including one suggestion that SPSF itself offer child care services. A few recommend linking Single Parent Scholars with potentially helpful services, like housing, utilities, tutoring, counseling, and/or parenting, on the Webpage. Some of the suggestions are from alumni of the Single Parent Scholarship before some of the current services were offered. For example, the Fund has already addressed their scholars’ interest in a newsletter and additional networking opportunities, including references to the alternative learning centers at regional universities and colleges.

The Fund staff have already changed the interviewing process so that it spans more days and times in order to accommodate parents’ schedules, including those who experience unplanned events that preclude their interviewing at the scheduled time. To address the fears and concerns about the interviewing process the Single Parent Scholarship Fund includes interviewing educational materials via their Website. Furthermore, while some offer ways to

improve the application, including the interviewing, processes, others congratulate the organization on the processes used as in this comment, “Of all the scholarships I have applied for, this was the easiest and they actually cared about me.”

In conclusion, the findings of this study are that receiving a Single Parent Scholarship benefits not only the individuals who receive them, but also their families and society. Receiving a Single Parent Scholarship is associated with increased likelihood of completing a degree, and a degree reflecting a higher level of learning. This raises the society’s level of human capital. The Scholarships tend to convey numerous economic benefits – also to recipients, their families and society. Scholarship alumni envision a higher standard of living for their children than applicants do. The alumni are more likely than applicants to own their homes now and less likely to live with parents. Their incomes, lower when they apply than applicants’ are, now exceed their own and applicants’ incomes substantially. Larger percentages of both applicants and recipients have health insurance now than when they first applied, but recipients are even more likely to have it now (likely a function of relative employment status). Alumni are more likely to be employed full-time in the labor force now than when they first applied and in comparison to applicants, and are less likely to be employed part-time or to be unemployed than applicants are. Much smaller shares of scholarship recipients receive family and/or governmental and/or other types of aid now than when they first applied for the scholarship whereas somewhat larger shares of applicants currently receive family and/or governmental and/or other types of aid than they did upon first applying. Between the time when they first applied and currently, the number of other types of aid has declined for scholarship alumni, but remained about constant for applicants. In addition, compared with non-recipients, Single Parent Scholarship alumni are more likely to contribute time and/or finances to community organizations, and some of this giving is at least somewhat influenced by the scholarship.

Furthermore, scholarship alumni identify a host of qualitative effects of the scholarship on their family and friends. The scholarship relieves financial and other burdens on their families and increases family members’ and friends’ confidence. In some the scholarship leads to an increased willingness to obtain additional education – even to obtain a college degree. Some alumni’s children apply themselves more diligently to their own educational pursuits. Finally, the interviewing process bolsters the confidence and poise of both applicants and beneficiaries of the scholarships. Applicants and scholarship alumni rate the processes of applying for a Single Parent Scholarship similarly, although alumni find these slightly easier and more beneficial. Nonetheless, they offer ideas that the Single Parent Scholarship Fund may use to continue improving its current systems, as well as praise and gratitude for the good work of the Fund and the plentiful benefits derived.