



**A Commitment to Volunteerism:  
Volunteer Activities among CEW Scholarship  
Recipients Compared to the National Profile**

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“I feel a strong commitment to “give back” what I have  
received by serving others...”

Every year, millions of Americans donate their time and talents to numerous types of volunteer organizations. They find time in their busy lives to work without pay, and often without much recognition. Through their volunteerism, they support charities, religious institutions, hospitals, colleges, and cultural organizations by raising money or helping those organizations carry out their functions. Although substantial information about participation in volunteer activities is available on a national level, we decided to examine the volunteer activities of a group of women who received scholarships targeted for returning students.

The Center for the Education of Women (CEW) Scholarship Program for returning women students was established in 1970, in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the admission of women to the University of Michigan. Scholarships awarded through this program target women of high academic potential whose education has been interrupted for at least 48 consecutive months at any point in their pursuit of higher education<sup>1</sup>. Recipients are pursuing clear educational goals in a graduate, undergraduate, or professional academic program, on a full or part-time basis, at any campus of the University of Michigan. Through the generosity of individuals, corporations and foundations, CEW has awarded over 1000 scholarships since 1970. These awards are invaluable, as they often mean the difference between completing a degree and not doing so for many non-traditional women students. (Information on the CEW Scholarship program is available on our website: <http://www.cew.umich.edu/students/scholar.htm>).

What becomes of CEW scholarship recipients? Beyond the immediate impact of supporting and encouraging scholarship recipients in their educational goals, we wondered whether there was a larger and more lasting effect. Would being the beneficiary of such support foster a sense of altruism, civic duty, and the moral obligation to give something back? Would it promote a commitment to engage in volunteerism? To explore these questions we compared the results of our survey of CEW Scholarship recipients (referred to here as CEW Scholars) with the national profile of individuals engaging in volunteer activities according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

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<sup>1</sup> The length of the required hiatus has varied over time.

## The National Profile of Volunteerism

According to recent Bureau of Labor Statistics data<sup>2</sup>, more than one in four (28%) Americans engage in volunteer activities; up from one in five (20%) in 1989. They spend a median 52 hours annually, or one hour per week volunteering. Over a third (34%) reported spending more than 100 hours per year and 6% spend more than 500 hours annually. A large majority (70%) volunteer their time with a single organization; 19% split their time between two organizations. Over a third (34%) of volunteers donate their time to religious affiliated organizations and 27% to youth and educational endeavors.

Gender, race, age, and educational attainment all affect an individual's propensity to give their time and energies to volunteer activities. Though overall volunteerism has increased since 1989, the following trends have remained consistent:

- Women are more likely than men to engage in volunteer activities (31% vs. 24%) overall and at every age bracket.
- In the 16-24 year old age bracket, those enrolled in school (high school or college) volunteer at nearly twice the rate (29%) of those not enrolled (15%).
- Those with higher levels of educational attainment tend to volunteer at greater rates; 44% of college graduates volunteer, which is double the rate of high school graduates, and four times the rate of those without a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Whites are more likely to volunteer (29%) than any other ethnic group, compared with African-Americans and Hispanics, 19% and 16% respectively.
- People between the ages of 35 and 54 are more likely to volunteer than those younger or older.
- The presence of children significantly increases volunteerism; 37% of parents volunteer compared with 24% of those without children in the home.

## METHODOLOGY

In the fall of 2002, we sent a paper and pencil questionnaire to all CEW scholarship recipients (also referred to as CEW Scholars) who were still living and for whom a valid address could be obtained (n=797). The questionnaire was designed to gather both quantitative and

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<sup>2</sup> The source for all national data in this reports is from the Bureau of Labor Statistics – see bibliography for complete citations.

qualitative data about volunteerism, educational attainment, employment, satisfaction with various life aspects, and demographics. Non-respondents received a second hard copy and a third reminder via email. Ultimately, a 35% response rate was obtained.

The respondents are predominantly (79%) Caucasian, approximately two thirds are employed full time (65%) and live with a spouse or partner (64%). Not surprisingly, they are also extremely well educated; 93% have completed at least a baccalaureate degree and 42% have attained doctorates or other terminal degrees (see Tables 1, 2 and 3).

White/Caucasian	79%
Black/African American	10%
Hispanic/Latina	4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%
Other*	3%

\*includes those who identified as Multiracial, Native American, or Other

Ph.D. or Terminal Professional Degree	42%
Masters	39%
Baccalaureate	12%
Associate	3%
High School / GED	4%
Also currently enrolled	16%

Approximately two of five (42%) have children in the home, and a fifth (21%) of these women have children under five years of age. Respondents ranged in age from 29 to 78 years, averaging 50 years of age. Nearly three quarters (73%) of the Scholars who are currently enrolled are pursuing graduate degrees. The majority of those enrolled are also engaged in paid employment – 38% are employed full time, 34% part time, and a fifth (20%) also work a second job.

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**Table 3: CEW Scholars by Employment Status**

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	Primary employment status	Percentage holding a 2 <sup>nd</sup> job
Full time	65%	15%
Part time	20%	26%
Retired, not employed	6%	0%
Not employed, not seeking employment	6%	0%
Not employed, seeking employment	3%	0%

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Includes 44 currently enrolled students, 75% of whom are also working.

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With so many respondents holding Ph.D. or terminal professional degrees, it is perhaps not surprising that two out of five (41%) work in higher education settings (see Table 4). No other employer category comes close with corporate and health care careers each at 10%.

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**Table 4: CEW Scholars by Employer Type**

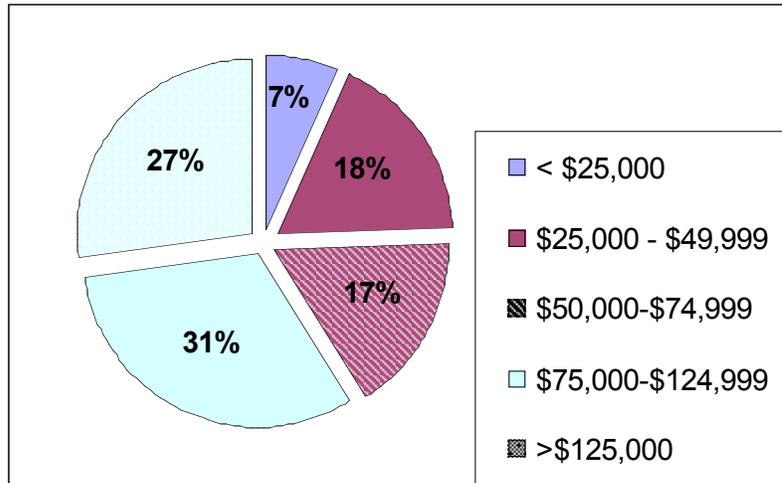
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University / college	41%
Health care	10%
Industry / corporate	10%
Government	9%
K-12/preschool	8%
Private practice / consulting	8%
Small business / self employed	7%
Not-for-profit	6%
Other	1%

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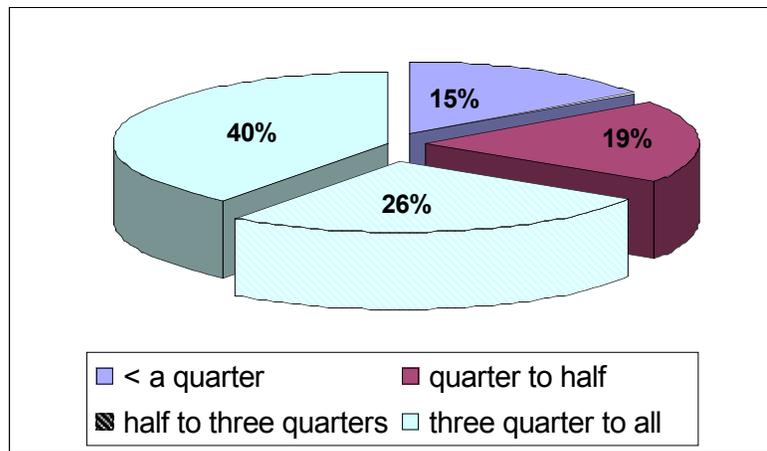
The income level among CEW Scholars (see Figure 1) is not distributed evenly. In keeping with their overall higher level of educational attainment and low rate of unemployment, CEW Scholars enjoy high household incomes. Few Scholars have household incomes less than \$25,000, and only a quarter have household incomes below \$50,000. almost two-thirds (58%) have incomes of \$75,000 or more.

**Figure 1: CEW Scholars by Income Bracket**



Two thirds (66%) of respondents are major wage earners in their households, earning at least half of total household income (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Portion of Household Income Earned**



Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS; descriptive statistics and frequencies were used to examine the data. ANOVA and chi-square tests were employed where appropriate to determine statistical significance. Comparisons of the results of this survey with the national volunteer profile refer to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey.

## VOLUNTEERISM AMONG CEW SCHOLARS COMPARED TO NATIONAL DATA

In many demographic respects, our sample is similar to the national profile of volunteers. It should be noted that CEW Scholars are all women, accordingly references in this section are to the BLS statistics for women to make comparisons more meaningful. Our population of Scholars is predominantly (79%) Caucasian, similar to the nationwide BLS survey population (78%). Nearly two thirds (64%) live with a partner or spouse compared with 54% nationally. Overall, 30% of the population has children less than 18 years of age in the home compared with 35% for CEW Scholars.

However, on numerous measures of volunteerism, CEW Scholars exceed the national average (see Table 4). While nearly one third of women nationally engage in volunteer activities, more than two thirds of CEW Scholars reported engaging in such activities in the last year. Nationally, women who work, women with minor children, and women with college degrees volunteer at approximately half the rate of CEW Scholars in the same demographic categories.

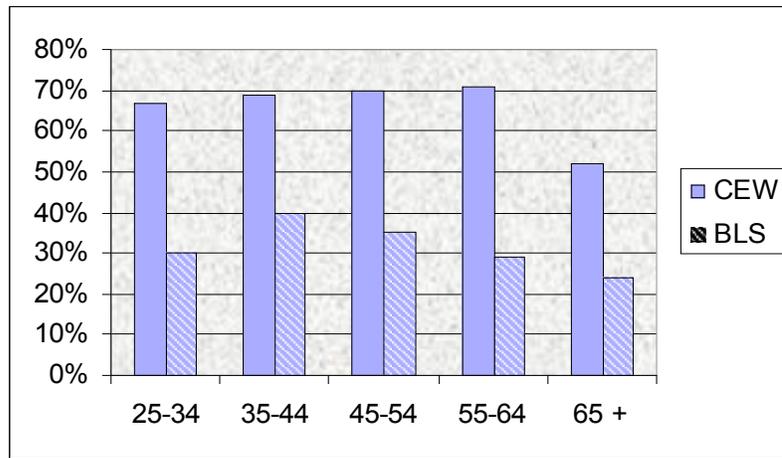
**Table 5: CEW Scholars' Participation in Volunteer Activities  
Compared to the National Average**

	CEW Scholars	National Average
All Women	68%	31%
Employed full time	65%	32%
Women with children under 18 years	86%	40%
College Students	95%	27%
Baccalaureate degree or greater	95%	48%

The effect of age

Nationally, 40% of women between the ages of 35 and 54 engage in volunteer activities; more than in any other age group. Compare this with CEW Scholars who, in every age category, volunteer at substantially higher rates than those of women nationally (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Rates of Volunteerism by Age Group**



The effect of employment status

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of CEW Scholars are employed full time, 20% work part time, and 15% are either unemployed or retired. Those employed full time worked an average of 51 hours per week, and those reporting part time employment worked an average of 22 hours per week. These women are enormously committed to their volunteer activities; a majority include volunteering in their schedules regardless of their employment status (see Table 5). A quarter of those who work in excess of 80 hours per week still find time to do volunteer work. Nearly one in five (17%) also work at a second job; rather surprisingly, nearly three quarters (73%) of these women still find time for volunteer activities.

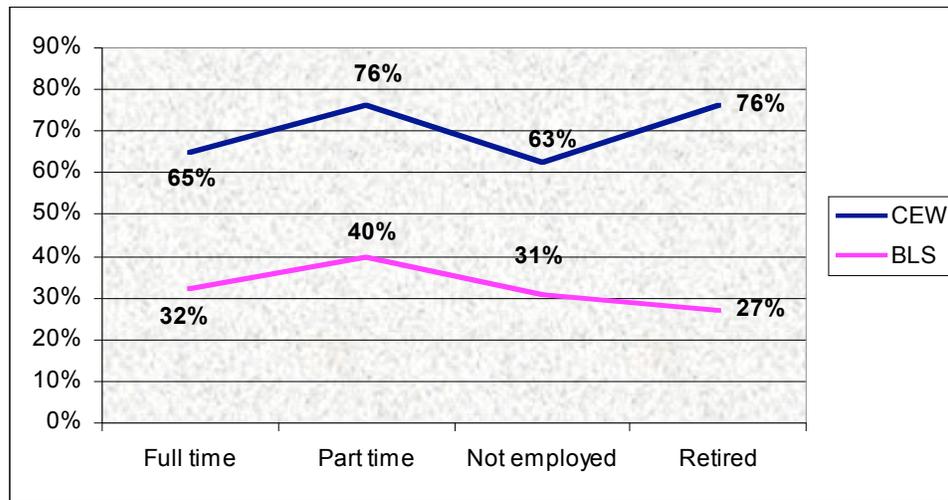
**Table 6: Volunteerism by Employment Status**

	CEW Scholars	National Average
Full time	65%	32%
Part time	76%	40%
Unemployed	63%	31%
Not in the workforce <sup>a</sup>	76%	27%
Working a second job	73%	not available

<sup>a</sup>This caption includes those who choose not to work as well as those who are retired.

Overall, 69% of CEW Scholars engage in volunteer activities, compared with only 34% of women nationally. Examined by level of employment, CEW Scholars volunteer at approximately twice the national rate. Not surprisingly, volunteerism is highest among CEW Scholars who are not employed (79%), compared with unemployed women nationally (31%), whose participation in volunteer work is nearly the lowest (see Figure 5); only retired persons volunteer less.

**Figure 4: Rates of Volunteerism by Employment Status**



The effect of educational attainment

Generally, enrollment status tends to increase the incidence of engaging in volunteer activities. For young people (aged 16 to 24 years), those enrolled in school (high school or college) volunteer at almost double the rate of those not in school. Almost all (95%) of CEW scholarship recipients report engaging in volunteer activities while they were in college. This is nearly four times the rate (27%) for college students nationally (see Table 8).

Further, the effects of volunteering in college appear to carry on after graduation. Nationally, women with higher levels of educational attainment tend to volunteer at greater rates. Nearly half (48%) of all college graduates volunteer, which is double the rate for high school graduates (24%), and more than four times the rate for those without a high school diploma (11%).

	Volunteered as a student		Volunteer currently	
	<u>CEW</u>	<u>Nat'l</u>	<u>CEW</u>	<u>Nat'l</u>
Baccalaureate degree or more	95%	27%	70%	48%
Non-college graduate	95%*	15%	56%	26%

\* The majority of these individuals are currently enrolled; only 1.4% of scholarship recipients do not go on to graduate from college.

CEW grants are given in support of academic endeavors, so not surprisingly, our population is substantially more highly educated than the general population; 27% of the general population has at least a baccalaureate degree compared with 93% of CEW Scholars. While educational attainment shows the same general effect in our survey population, those with at least a baccalaureate degree and non-graduates both volunteer currently at levels substantially higher than national levels (see Table 8). Although Table 8 indicates that a substantial majority (95%) of CEW Scholars who volunteered as students are classified as non-college graduates, it should be noted that the majority of these women are currently enrolled. Further, only 1.4% of scholarship recipients do not go on to graduate from college.

#### The effect of marital status and children

Nearly two thirds (64%) of CEW Scholars live with a partner or spouse, somewhat higher than the national average (54%). In part this may be due to the way this data was categorized. The BLS category is “married with spouse present” compared to our broader definition of “living with a spouse or partner”. Nationally, married women are more likely to volunteer than single women, 37% and 26% respectively. This pattern of volunteerism is also evident for CEW Scholars though at higher overall levels, 72% of women with partners and 61% of those living alone.

The presence in the home of children under 18 years of age tends to increase volunteerism. Nationally, 40% of mothers with children under 18 years of age volunteer, compared with 27% of those without children in the home. Not coincidentally, married women, perhaps since they are more likely to have children in the home also volunteer at greater rates than other women. Two thirds (67%) of CEW Scholars with children in the home under 18 years

of age report engaging in volunteer activities. Having very small children, under the age of five years, is no impediment to volunteering; 68% of these Scholars find time to volunteer. Contrary to the national profile, Scholars without children under 18 in the home volunteer at a slightly higher rate (70%) than those with children.

Types of volunteer organizations

Volunteerism involves numerous skills and activities, and encompasses many types of organizations.

<b>Table 9: Most Frequently Chosen Organizational Types</b>		
	CEW Scholars	National Average
Educational or youth services	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Social or community service	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Religious	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>

The three organizational types most frequently chosen by those wishing to donate their time are: educational and youth service organizations; neighborhood, community and social service organizations; and religious organizations. These organizational types are the top three picks for both CEW Scholars and the national group (see Table 9), though the order is different.

WHY CEW SCHOLARS VOLUNTEER

Our survey also asked respondents about aspects of volunteerism for which there is no comparable information reported by BLS.

Motivation to volunteer

CEW Scholars engage in volunteer activities for many reasons (see Table 10). Among the most commonly cited reasons to volunteer were the altruistic motivators “opportunity to make a difference” (52%), and “opportunity to give back to the community” (47%). More than half (52%) of the Scholars indicated that engaging in volunteer activities was consistent with their personal values or belief system. Half of the respondents indicated that their volunteerism resulted in a sense of personal fulfillment. Relatively few indicated that they were motivated to

volunteer for reason that might have a self-serving component, such as the opportunity to meet people (25%) and engage in networking (13%).

**Table 10: Motivations to Volunteer**

Opportunity to make a difference	52%
Consistent with belief system/personal values	52%
Sense of personal fulfillment	50%
Opportunity to give back to the community	47%
Opportunity to repay a benefit I received	28%
Opportunity to meet people	25%
Family tradition	20%
Inspired by the work of an organization or person	15%
Opportunity to network	13%

Impediments to volunteering

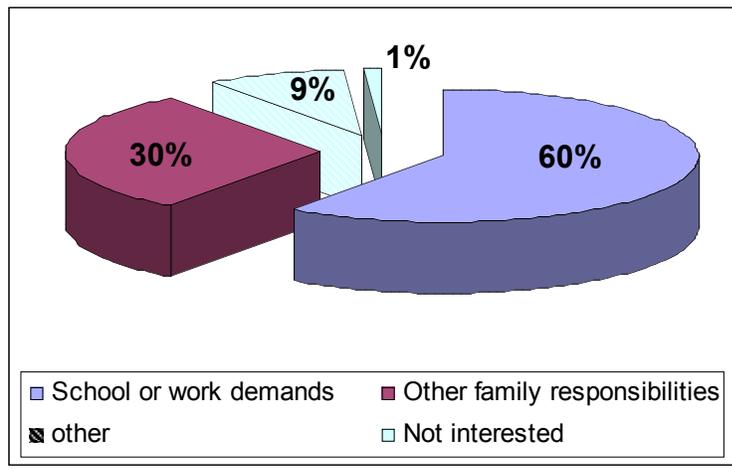
CEW Scholars lead busy lives, as evidenced by the number of hours they spend at work and/or in school. Those who indicated that they had not engaged in volunteer activities in the past year were asked to identify the reasons (see Table 11).

**Table 11: Impediments to Volunteering**

School or work demands	60%
Lack of child care	27%
Other family responsibilities	3%
Not certain where to volunteer	8%
Unclear if my involvement would make a difference	2%
Not interested	1%

It is clear that other life demands are the main impediment to the majority of those who do not volunteer their time. Nearly two thirds (60%) of respondents cite the competition from work or school, and more than a quarter (27%) cite the lack of available child care as the reason they do not volunteer. Only 10% don't volunteer due to uncertainty where to volunteer or whether their efforts would be effective, and only 1% do not volunteer due to lack of interest (see Figure 6).

**Figure 5: Impediments to Volunteering**



### THE EFFECT OF CEW SCHOLARSHIPS

CEW scholarships are awarded to women with academic potential whose pursuit of higher education has been interrupted. Among the criteria for choosing the Scholars are: strength of motivation, promise of impact in a chosen field, academic record, potential, creative and scholarly contributions appropriate for the undergraduate, graduate and professional school status. CEW Scholars nearly all go on to complete their academic degrees, though they might not have done so without the support and encouragement that the awards provide.

“I probably would not have finished my degree. CEW gave me encouragement that I was not getting [elsewhere] and confirmed the direction I was going. The resulting degree has opened doors for me and allowed me to contribute a great deal to my teaching, work and students.”

“It was also a phenomenal influence on my daughter and son’s appreciation for the education I was striving toward and understanding the potential for women to collectively succeed.”

However the effect of the awards goes far beyond merely funding and encouraging academic pursuits as numerous Scholars expressed in their survey responses:

“It seems no one believes in you when you are older, without funds, and at a dead end. For me, it made a real difference – it allowed me to

rise above the voices, both internal and external, that had no faith in my ability.”

“The scholarship boosted my self-esteem immensely – someone had faith in me when I didn’t yet have faith in myself.”

“Of course the money was important. I think the greatest pleasure though was the achievement and recognition. Until then, very little of that came my way; the boost to self-esteem, the knowledge that others recognized and rewarded me, was a source of joy and a boost for me to know I could do these things. That may be difficult to understand – the importance of recognition – but having come from a background of poverty, being the first to have attended college in my family, let alone getting a masters degree, I needed that. People... rarely understand what being poor does to a person; there is always a stigma, feeling not as good as others, working very hard to achieve that many are offered freely, and always the nagging suspicion that you are set for failure. CEW helped me on my way up and out.”

Many of the Scholars feel the obligation to provide similar intangible support to others. It may well be that this motivates them to volunteer at rates far in excess of college-educated women in the general population.

“The receipt of the CEW scholarship award has always over the years served to remind me that my career is not mine alone – it occurred due to much support from others and my work each day should be (and is) motivated by a commitment to serve others. I feel a strong commitment to “give back” what I have received by serving others...”

“I am active in efforts to improve post-secondary options for women. I am committed to a local math/science conference for middle school girls and career development in general.”

The effect that CEW scholarships have on the women who receive them is clear and we believe that this program contributes significantly to our mission of service, advocacy and research to improve the lives of women.

## CONCLUSION

So, does being the recipient of philanthropy foster a propensity for volunteerism? We can’t demonstrate that a causal relationship exists. What is clear, however, is that the recipients of CEW Scholarships are seriously committed to their volunteer activities. Despite their full lives

a substantial majority still find time to volunteer their time and energies at rates that far exceed the national profile for volunteerism among women. Scholars who work and/or have minor children still find time to donate their time and talents to worthy causes, and do so at approximately double the rate for non-CEW Scholar women. As college students, CEW Scholars engaged in volunteer activities at four times the national average.

Is this high rate of volunteerism simply a matter of self-selection? Are we selecting as recipients women who may be pre-disposed to civic engagement, are we “stacking the deck”? We think not. The scholarship selection criteria, noted above, do not include prior civic activity. Further, it is worth noting that selection committee membership changes over the years. Some committee members have focused more on an applicant’s academic record and potential for future success, while others have placed more value on a well-rounded individual who will contribute to the social good. Again, while not suggesting a causal relationship, it does seem that receiving a CEW Scholarship program tends to result in participation in volunteerism at rates that substantially exceed the national rate.

If civic engagement and encouragement of volunteerism are worthy goals, then providing financial support to women of high academic potential through programs like the CEW Scholarship Program would seem to promote those ends. Furthermore, enabling women to achieve greater educational attainment should result in greater volunteer activity.

## REFERENCES

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Table 1 <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.t01.htm>

More information on the CEW Scholarship program is available on our website:

[www.cew.umich.edu/students/scholar.htm](http://www.cew.umich.edu/students/scholar.htm)

Additional CEW research reports are available at [www.cew.umich.edu/research/resreps.htm](http://www.cew.umich.edu/research/resreps.htm)

