



# Impact of Laspau-Administered Scholarships 2007-2017

## Citation

Cueva Navarro, Ana Paola. 2018. Impact of Laspau-Administered Scholarships 2007-2017. Master's thesis, Harvard Extension School.

## Permanent link

<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:42004009>

## Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA>

## Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.  
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

Impacts of Laspau-Administered Scholarships, 2007-2017

Ana Paola Cueva Navarro

A Thesis in the Field of International Relations  
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

May 2018



## Abstract

Laspau is a non-profit organization affiliated with Harvard University. Established in 1964, Laspau's mission is to "connect individuals and institutions with opportunities to enhance the quality and impact of higher education in the Americas."<sup>1</sup> For more than 50 years, Laspau has designed, administered, and implemented over 240 scholarship programs, in all countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and thus administered the scholarships of over 18,000 individuals.

This thesis assesses the impact Laspau's scholarships have had from August 2007 to August 2017. It examines the effects that the scholarship opportunity has had on the Laspau administered-scholars, and through them, the impact on their communities, cities, countries, and ultimately in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The thesis hypothesis has two components. First, having access to quality higher education means access to quality employment and a better life. The hypothesis also posits that most Laspau-administered scholarships are not awarded to individuals who are from socially or economically vulnerable backgrounds, and that the cycle of the scholarship is missing the scholars' reintegration into the workforce. Because of these two factors, the impact of the scholarships is diminished.

To test this hypothesis a 62-question survey was sent to 3,489 Laspau-administered scholars from 33 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean. The survey

---

<sup>1</sup> Laspau website, "Mission and Vision," accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.laspau.harvard.edu/mission-and-vision>.

results show that in fact Laspau-administered scholarships are an instrument that provides access to quality employment opportunities and a better life. More than half of the scholars who participated in the survey (59 percent) stated that the scholarship enabled them to have a better job than their peers who remained in their home country and studied there.

The results also confirmed that almost half (49.9 percent) of Laspau's scholarships are awarded to students who are not socially or financially vulnerable. The research found that it is difficult for scholars to reinsert themselves into their home countries' workforce regardless of their social or economic background. Indeed, more can be done to maximize the impact of Laspau-administered scholarships in terms of social access and economic mobility.

The thesis hypothesis was challenged, however, in that although most scholars are not impoverished or vulnerable socially, the scholarships do create degrees of access and social mobility. More importantly, the percentage of scholars who do consider themselves to be socially or financially vulnerable is 46.3 percent—remarkably higher than expected.

Laspau-administered scholarships give talented individuals, regardless of their social or economic background, a way to pay for and access a privileged academic opportunity that they would not have had were it not for the scholarships administered by Laspau. A remarkable 83.1 percent of respondents stated that without the scholarship, they would have not been able to afford the education they received.

Laspau-administered scholarships have had an important quantifiable impact in the last ten years. This thesis shows that because of their scholarships, Laspau-

administered scholars are better positioned professionally and socially, and they are benefiting the institutions where they work, their communities, their countries and the Latin America and Caribbean region.

## Dedication

To my family: I am who I am because of you. I strive to make you proud in all that I do.

To Rodolfo and our future children.

To Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean and their people. I believe in you. Onward.

## Acknowledgements

This project is certainly not mine alone. I want to thank Professor Haiyan Hua, for contributing his knowledge and guidance to this research; I could have not done this thesis without him. His patience, expertise, and work ethic pushed me to do better until the end. I am forever in his debt.

I am also grateful for the continued help that Professor Doug Bond provided to me for two years (astonishingly), to finish this thesis. This research would not have started if it were not for his unwavering support. I am truly grateful for everything he has done to get me to this point.

Thank you to Angélica Natera, Laspau's Executive Director, for opening Laspau's doors to me so I could conduct this research and bring it to completion. I am also grateful for Angélica's mentorship and for her enabling my professional growth. To my Laspau colleagues, Colleen Silva-Hayden, Lindsey Nicholson, and Mary Helen Ybarra-Johnson—thank you for helping me to review and think beyond what seemed evident. They each helped me when they did not have to, so I thank them very much.

I want to also express my thanks for the generosity of Aline Santos and Gláucia Ribeiro. Aline helped me analyze data, correct it, and in general think outside the box. With remarkable patience, Gláucia helped with the formatting, and uplifted me when I was ready to give up. Both of them went above and beyond in supporting me with this project. I appreciate both of them very much.



Lina Tramelli has been an instrumental friend and thesis partner as we navigated this process together. With patience, Lina did not let me falter, from my earlier statistics class to the very end of writing this thesis. I am grateful for her help and especially for her friendship.

Thank you to Maria Teresa and Rodolfo Neirotti. They have always supported me and treated me like family and now we are officially a family. I am grateful for their support during this process and always.

Thank you to Rodolfo Neirotti, my fiancé when I began this process, and now my beloved husband. He provided advice and contributed his unparalleled intellect, unconditional support and care, cheered me on and always believed that I could do this, even when I did not. I am so lucky to be his life partner, I am so excited for our lives together. I am honored to be your wife. *El viaje apenas comienza. Te quiero.*

I owe my greatest debt to my family. First and always, to my parents Graciela Navarro and Carlos Cueva; my grandparents, Antonio Navarro, Dora González, Ana María López, Francisco Cueva, Pina Silva and Felipe Guerrero; and my hero-siblings: Karla Cueva, Tatiana Cueva, José Enrique Cueva, and Carlos Gerardo Cueva. They have always and continue to support me in all my personal and professional endeavors and are my inspiration and source of strength. They are what got me through seven years of a master's program that has finally come to a successful end.

*Los quiero, gracias por todo.*

## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	vi
Acknowledgments.....	vii
List of Tables .....	xi
List of Figures.....	xiii
List of Terms and Acronyms .....	xv
I. Introduction.....	1
Laspau and Higher Education in the Americas.....	1
Justification for This Research.....	4
II. Research Methodology and Limitations .....	7
Survey Tool Development .....	7
Target Group for Data Collection.....	10
Challenges and Limitations.....	10
III. Research on the Impact of Laspau-Administered Scholarships, 2007-2017 .....	11
Survey Statistics.....	11
IV. Return and Reinsertion .....	16
Findings.....	16
Reinsertion Challenges .....	22
V. Access Benefits.....	26
Access to Better Employment.....	26

	Access to a Better Economic Situation.....	30
	Access to a Better Life and Professional Recognition.....	34
	Scholarships, Social Mobility, and Access.....	35
	Access for Women.....	41
VI.	Scholars as Leaders and Agents of Change.....	45
	Individual Impact: Leadership Levels.....	45
	Institutional Impact.....	46
	Impact in Communities, Cities, Home Countries, and the LAC Region.....	47
VII.	Laspau Scholars and Harvard Alumni: Leadership in Three Indicators.....	54
	Participation in Boards of Directors.....	54
	Participation as Volunteers.....	57
	Entrepreneurial Participation.....	62
	Harvard and Laspau Survey Comparisons.....	67
VIII.	Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	72
	Summary.....	72
	Research Conclusions.....	73
	Areas for Improvement.....	74
	Recommendations.....	77
	Concluding Remarks.....	80
	Bibliography.....	82

## List of Tables

Table 1. Respondents by Sponsoring Institution.....	12
Table 2. Distribution of Respondents by Country of Origin.....	13
Table 3. Levels of Agreement: “It was challenging to reinsert myself professionally into my home country upon finishing my academic program” .....	20
Table 4. Reported Shifts in Professional Industries Before and after the Scholarship Program .....	28
Table 5. Levels of Agreement with Having a Better Job Than Colleagues Who Stayed and Studied in Home Country .....	34
Table 6. Scholars’ Levels of Agreement with Being from a Vulnerable Economic or Social Background.....	37
Table 7. Ways in Which Scholars Implement Change in Their Organizations .....	46
Table 8. Scholars’ Level of Commitment, by Location.....	48
Table 9. Scholars’ Scope of Work Benefiting Different Levels, by Location .....	50
Table 10. Scholars’ Agreement with Wanting Open Access to Scholarships for Future Generations .....	52
Table 11. Scholars’ Service on Boards of Directors .....	55
Table 12. Scholars’ Rates of Volunteering .....	58
Table 13. Scholars’ Number of Hours Spent Volunteering (per month) .....	58
Table 14. Scholars’ Volunteering by Sector .....	60

Table 15. Scholars' Rates of Starting Their Own Company/Organization.....64  
Table 16. Type of Company/Organization Started after Scholarship Program .....64

## List of Figures

Figure 1.	Distribution of Top 20 Respondents by Country of Origin (%).....	15
Figure 2.	Reported Reasons for Not Returning to Home Country.....	17
Figure 3.	Levels of Agreement: “It was challenging to reinsert myself professionally into my home country upon finishing my academic program” .....	21
Figure 4.	Main Reinsertion Challenges Reported.....	22
Figure 5.	Scholars’ Current Jobs by Industry.....	27
Figure 6.	Access to Employment and Professional Growth: Comparison of Quality Employment Indicators.....	31
Figure 7.	Scholars’ Levels of Agreement with Having a Better Job Than Colleagues Who Stayed and Studied in Home Country.....	33
Figure 8.	Scholars’ Recognition in Their Professional or Academic Life.....	35
Figure 9.	Scholars’ Social and Economic Background.....	37
Figure 10.	Scholars’ Level of Agreement with the Cost of Standardized Exams Being a Financial Strain When Applying for a Scholarship.....	39
Figure 11.	Scholars’ Level of Agreement with Not Being Able to Afford the Cost of the Academic Program if It Were Not for the Scholarship .....	41
Figure 12.	Female Scholars’ Levels of Agreement with Indicators of Professional Access .....	43

Figure 13. Scholars’ Level of Commitment by Location.....	49
Figure 14. Comparison of Scholars’ Level of Commitment and Work at Different Impact Locations .....	51
Figure 15. Scholars’ Level of Agreement with Wanting Open Access to Scholarships for Future Generations .....	53
Figure 16. Scholars’ Service on Boards of Directors.....	56
Figure 17. Scholars’ Roles in Boards of Directors .....	57
Figure 18. Scholars’ Number of Hours Spent Volunteering (per month).....	59
Figure 19. Scholars’ Volunteering by Sector .....	60
Figure 20. Scholars’ Volunteering by Location.....	61
Figure 21. Scholars’ Level of Agreement that Scholarship Provides Entrepreneurial Skills .....	63
Figure 22. Type of Organization/Company Started after Scholarship Program.....	65
Figure 23. Industry Sectors of Ventures Started after Scholarship Program .....	66
Figure 24. Harvard Alumni Participation in Boards of Directors Compared with Laspau-Administered Scholars’ Participation in Boards of Directors .....	68
Figure 25. Harvard Alumni Volunteering Rate Compared with Laspau-Administered Scholars’ Volunteering Rate.....	69
Figure 26. Harvard Alumni Entrepreneurship Rate Comparison with Laspau- Administered Scholars’ Entrepreneurship Rate.....	70

## List of Terms and Acronyms

*Fulbright Foreign Student Program:* World-renowned scholarship program, established in 1946 by Senator William J. Fulbright from the United States, sponsored by the State Department of the United States, and funded with binational funds, with US monies in partnership with over 200 countries. The Fulbright Scholarship program has as an objective to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people from around the world.

*Knowledge Based Societies:* “refers to societies that are well educated, and who therefore rely on the knowledge of their citizens to drive the innovation, entrepreneurship, and dynamism of that society's economy.”<sup>2</sup>

*Laspau:* Non-profit organization affiliated with Harvard University, which has been designing and administering scholarship programs to create access to higher quality education for over fifty years.

*LAC:* Latin America and Caribbean.

*OAS:* Organization of American States.

*Reinsertion:* The return of scholars to their home country, their reincorporation into society and the workforce. Also referred to as reintegration.

---

<sup>2</sup> “Knowledge-based society,” Organization of American States, [http://www.oas.org/en/topics/knowledge\\_society.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/topics/knowledge_society.asp).



*Scholars:* Laspau-administered students, who are awarded scholarships to study higher education programs. For the purposes of this thesis, this term is interchangeable with grantee, student, participant and respondent.

*STEM:* Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

## Chapter I

### Introduction

This introductory chapter introduces Laspau in the context of higher education in the Americas. It also provides justification for this research.

#### Laspau and Higher Education in the Americas

Countries in the process of development find in education the best tool for growing in a sustainable manner. Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are high-growth regions, hence the most strategic investment for promoting such growth is to educate human capital in key areas. Rising employment as a result of access to education in LAC countries confirms that a higher level of education corresponds to higher employment. The average rate of employability for citizens of OECD countries is 82 percent for a bachelor's degree, 87 percent for a master's degree, and 91 percent for individuals with a doctoral degree or equivalent.<sup>1</sup>

Despite such positive figures, the chasm of inequality between developed and developing countries continues to widen as access to quality education remains limited in developing countries. Most of the world's best universities are located in the United States, which makes the work of institutions that offer access to quality academic opportunities very relevant.

---

<sup>1</sup> OECD, *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2016).

Laspau is a non-profit organization affiliated with Harvard University. Since its inception in 1967, Laspau has sought to develop the human capital of Latin America and the Caribbean by designing and implementing scholarship programs and other offerings that strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in universities in the region. Laspau's *mission* is to "connect individuals and institutions with opportunities to enhance the quality and impact of higher education in the Americas." This mission supports Laspau's *vision*: "To foster knowledge-based, inclusive societies throughout the Americas."<sup>2</sup>

Throughout its 50-plus years of operation, Laspau has offered services continuously but has not properly measured the impact of its endeavors in Latin America and the Caribbean. That this information is lacking is especially important since Laspau's scholarship design and management services are its core contributions. For more than 50 years, Laspau has designed and implemented some 240 scholarship programs and administered scholarships for more than 18,000 individuals from all over the Americas, enabling scholars to pursue undergraduate and graduate studies.<sup>3</sup> The locations, professional trajectory, contributions to society, the overall effects of scholarship opportunities, and Laspau's services to the majority of scholars are largely undocumented.

There are two key limitations to consider when researching Laspau's impact vis-à-vis its scholarship administration services. First, Laspau does not have access to the contact information of all scholars who graduated in the past 50 years. Consequently, this research analyzed a segment of its grantees who have graduated, and these results are

---

<sup>2</sup> Laspau website, "Mission and Vision," accessed February 28, 2018, <http://www.laspau.harvard.edu/mission-and-vision>.

<sup>3</sup> Laspau, "Salesforce Report," internal Laspau publication, 2017.

used as the foundation for further research on Laspau's impact. Furthermore, education has changed along with access to technology, and this has affected the relevance of Laspau's work. Technology and the internet have made information accessible, allowing students across the world to obtain information on a wide range of universities and programs and apply directly without the need of intermediaries. This has had a permanent impact on the relevance of international exchange programs and services such as the ones provided by Laspau.

Given these two factors, for the purpose of this thesis I analyze the impact that the organization has had in the last ten years of its scholarship design and administration. I focus only on the last ten years for two reasons: (1) this is the segment of scholars for which Laspau has the most comprehensive and up-to-date information, and (2) because in the last ten years technology has had the greatest influence on the relevance of organizations like Laspau. Narrowing the focus in this way meant I can better understand the effects of the organization on its scholars over the last ten years of the economic, social, and political environment in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the challenges and transformation of technology and higher education.

In the past five decades, it has not been longitudinally measured whether Laspau's scholarship design and administration services, as a complement to the investment made in individual scholars by the sponsor, have opened opportunities for the scholars. It is also unclear whether without the scholarship students would have had access to the varied opportunities. By analyzing its impact, Laspau can better serve its mission of providing access to opportunities for quality education, as well as its vision of creating knowledge-based societies.

### Justification for this Research

Some of general objectives of international higher education scholarship programs are to promote knowledge exchange, create ties between nations through educational diplomacy, promote internationalization, and instigate social mobility. Scholarship programs aim to educate the human capital of a country by developing subject-matter experts and leaders who can make decisions that lead to better social and economic conditions. Scholarship programs also seek to transform institutions by educating individuals who are part of them and who, upon their return, will replicate best practices.

This thesis hypothesis has two contentions:

- First, higher education that becomes accessible to prospective students through Laspau-administered scholarships has provided quality employment opportunities and an overall better life for its scholars. Laspau's scholarship programs have produced social, academic, and political leaders who are having an influence on their places of work, cities, countries, and the whole LAC region.
- Second, I contend that the scholarships designed and administered by Laspau have inherent limitations in that they are typically accessed by prospective students who are higher up the social ladder. I also suggest that Laspau's work is missing a crucial link: the programs do not complete the scholarship cycle/cycle of benefit by connecting each grantee with his/her home country's workforce, thereby enabling them to obtain a job that ensures maximized impact.

Laspau's impact has been apparent in different ways over the years: the number of scholars sponsored, the number of countries from which scholars came, the areas of study sponsored by scholarships, the number of minority individuals who have received scholarships, whether scholars have had a leadership role in their communities upon their return, or any a combination of these factors. For this thesis, *impact* is defined as (among other variables) the scholars' access to opportunities.

Evaluating Laspau's impact is important because:

- The results of the evaluation will help define an impact-based strategy for the organization and give direction to its development efforts.
- The research results will help define medium- and long-term outcomes for Laspau.
- The findings will help Laspau strategize for innovation and growth, not merely for organizational survival.
- The evaluation results will identify paths to promoting innovation within the organization, making it more efficient and effective.
- It will establish a basis for creating a Laspau alumni culture while also defining strategies for fundraising and implementing those strategies.
- Results can serve as a reference for governments and other institutions that design or administer scholarships, aiding them in establishing best practices for structuring and administering effective scholarship programs.

The questions to be answered as a result of this research are:

1. Has access to quality higher education through the scholarship programs administered by Laspau enabled scholars' access to (a) a better job, (b) a higher income, (c) a

decision-level leadership job, and/or (d) a professional or academic leadership role in society?

2. What challenges face each scholar upon reinsertion into her/his home country?
3. Have scholarship programs had an effect on individuals causing them, in turn, to influence their communities, institutions, cities, countries, and the LAC region as well?
4. What ultimately changed for each individual because of this opportunity?

## Chapter II

### Research Methodology and Limitations

In this chapter I discuss the methodology used to conduct research for this thesis, including development of the survey tool and how it was utilized, the groups targeted for data collection, and the challenges and limitations encountered.

#### Survey Tool Development

I researched the impact of Laspau-administered scholarships by developing and applying a survey tool. To aid in creating the survey, the following factors were considered:

- employment status before and after the scholarship;
- employment by sector: academia, government, and private sector;
- reinsertion, retention, and return to home country;
- leadership, i.e., volunteering, board service, and entrepreneurship;
- scholarship benefits: a better quality of life, professional recognition, access to professional opportunities as a female;
- access to scholarships: barriers and enablers;
- English proficiency requirements;
- range of impact: individual, community, country, LAC; and
- building knowledge-based societies: innovation and research.



These are factors associated with Laspau-administered scholarships as an instrument for access to better employment, and they are related to the hypothesized limitations of the programs.

The survey had 62 questions in 28 pages. Thirteen questions had *Other* as a category, which then prompted the survey respondent to specify and write out an answer. For the other survey questions, participants chose from a set of options or gave a numerical answer. This was done specifically to enable efficient quantification of the responses.

The survey was conducted online using the Survey Monkey platform, which allowed a more efficient data collection method. On the website, questions were hidden or shown depending on the responses given by participants, which means respondents only answered questions that were pertinent to them.

The survey was conducted in English and Spanish, as most of the scholars who replied came from Spanish-speaking countries. The English version catered to scholars for whom Spanish is not their first language, such as grantees from Brazil and Haiti, among other non-Spanish-speaking countries in LAC.

Providing personal information was optional in order to protect respondents' identity. This was done because most Laspau-administered scholarship programs have specific requirements and policies, such as a mandatory return to one's home country, and the survey asked about compliance with these requirements. To avoid deterring scholars from participating, the survey was anonymous unless scholars decided to share their identity and contact information. The only identifiers used were country of origin,

gender, and sponsoring institution. However, these fields were also optional and were included only for the purpose of sorting data and for analysis.

The survey used three sources as reference points. One was a report produced by the Institute of International Education (IIE) in 2015 on the results of the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program (IFP).<sup>4</sup> The report summarized the results of the IFP's ten-year longitudinal study; those results were used as a baseline to design the research survey.

The survey design was also based on a 2003 survey sent to Laspau-administered scholars, and was specifically designed to evaluate the effects of the Fulbright Faculty Development, Ecology, and Cost-Shared Programs from 1976 to 2000.<sup>5</sup> The survey devised for this thesis is a continuation of the Fulbright survey but covers a wider target segment by evaluating the effects of all (not just one) of the Laspau-administered scholarship programs available during the last ten years.

Lastly, the instrument also used a survey by Professor Haiyan Hua of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, designed to be implemented as a follow-up to the aforementioned Laspau-Fulbright survey. Hua's survey was never used by Laspau but was utilized as a foundation for the survey and evaluation in this thesis.

---

<sup>4</sup> International Institute of Education (IIE), "Social Justice and Sustainable Change: The Impacts of Higher Education," accessed September 15, 2017, <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/IFP-Alumni-Tracking-Study/About/>.

<sup>5</sup> Laspau, "Fulbright Faculty Development, Ecology, and Cost-Share Programs: A Survey of Alumni 1976-2000," internal Laspau publication, n.d.

### Target Group for Data Collection

The survey was sent to Laspau-administered scholars who graduated between August 2007 and August 2017. It was sent to 4,638 scholars—all scholars for whom Laspau had email addresses. Of that total, 1,149 email addresses were faulty, yielding a total of 3,489 scholars who received the link to the survey. The gender distribution to recipients was 1,823 (52.2 percent) males, 1,663 (47.7 percent) females, and 3 (0.1 percent) of unknown/unspecified gender.

### Challenges and Limitations

The results of this survey are general and preliminary. The primary survey limitation was that Laspau's impact is being evaluated with a retrospective study rather than longitudinally. It was a random-control trial or a semi-experiment study. Given personal time constraints, the size of the group being evaluated, and the scope of impact being assessed, a retroactive research was chosen as the methodology. Without doubt, a retrospective impact evaluation, in which the status of scholars who have already completed programs is compared to available data on employment and other variables, versus doing a prospective impact evaluation, will yield (as Paul Gertler says in his book on *Impact Evaluation*)<sup>6</sup> debatable results. While recognizing such a limitation, this retrospective study nonetheless provides valid and reliable data that will serve as a foundation for further research on Laspau's impact. I am hopeful that this thesis will also validate the need to include prospective evaluations as part of new scholarship programs that Laspau will design in the future.

---

<sup>6</sup> Paul Gertler, *Impact Evaluation in Practice* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2011).

## Chapter III

### Research on the Impact of Laspau-Administered Scholarships, 2007-2017

There are several important aspects to consider regarding the data analysis. First, not all survey domains were included in the analysis. Instead, for the sake of brevity, I chose the most relevant indicators that addressed both parts of the thesis hypothesis. The analysis used percentages based on the number of scholars who responded to each question rather than the total number that responded the survey. This reflected the fact that not all respondents answered every survey question; in fact, only seven questions were mandatory. For the 13 questions that had the option *Other* as one of the responses, the text entered by the respondent was categorized and analyzed. Also, note that in the data analysis, the actual number of respondents (N=X) is referenced when the data is in a table.

#### Survey Statistics

- The survey was sent to 1,823 (52.2 percent) men, and 1,663 (47.7 percent) women.
- Of the 3,489 scholars who received the survey, 635 responded—roughly 18.2 percent participation.
- The distribution among survey respondents was 284 females (51.1 percent) and 268 males (48.2 percent). Interestingly, even though most of the graduates from 2007 to 2017 were males, the majority of survey respondents were females.

- Every country that had a Laspau-administered scholar in the last ten years was represented in the survey.
- 15 sponsoring institutions were represented, with the largest number (46.1 percent) from the Fulbright scholarship program (see Table 1).

Table 1. Respondents by Sponsoring Institution.

Sponsoring Institution	Percentage	Number of Respondents
CAPES	3.3%	21
CNPq	0.0%	0
COLCIENCIAS	13.6%	85
FANTEL	1.8%	11
FINCyT	1.0%	6
Fulbright	46.1%	289
Ruperti Corporation Consortium	0.0%	0
Organization of American States (OAS)	31.9%	200
Universidad CEU San Pablo	0.0%	0
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	1.6%	10
InterGen Mexico	0.0%	0
Inicia Educacion	0.5%	3
Dominican Republic – Ministry of de Higher Education, Science and Technology	0.3%	2
Universty Antonio Nariño	0.0%	0
Brazil STR	0.0%	0

*Source: thesis author.*

The 635 survey respondents came from 33 countries in the LAC region. Colombia had the largest number of survey respondents, 27.4 percent. Mexico was second with 6.7 percent (see Table 2 and Figure 1). The steep difference in participation by country of origin makes sense because more scholars from Colombia graduated in the last ten years than from any other country. Thus, more Colombian scholars received the survey (1,018, 29.2 percent) among the total number of scholars contacted.

Table 2. Distribution of All Respondents by Country of Origin (% , number).

Country of Origin	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Colombia	27.4%	169
Mexico	6.7%	41
Dominican Republic	5.5%	34
Brazil	4.7%	29
El Salvador	4.7%	29
Argentina	4.2%	26
Guatemala	3.7%	23
Peru	3.7%	23
Honduras	3.2%	20
Ecuador	2.9%	18
Costa Rica	2.8%	17
Paraguay	2.6%	16
Nicaragua	2.3%	14
Haiti	2.1%	13

Country of Origin	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Jamaica	2.1%	13
Trinidad and Tobago	1.9%	12
Chile	1.8%	11
Panama	1.6%	10
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1.6%	10
Bolivia	1.5%	9
Saint Lucia	1.5%	9
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1.5%	9
Uruguay	1.5%	9
Belize	1.3%	8
Grenada	1.3%	8
Venezuela	1.3%	8
Antigua & Barbuda	0.8%	5
Barbados	0.8%	5
Guyana	0.8%	5
Canada	0.5%	3
Dominica	0.5%	3
Suriname	0.5%	3
United States	0.5%	3
Spain	0.2%	1

*Source: thesis author.*

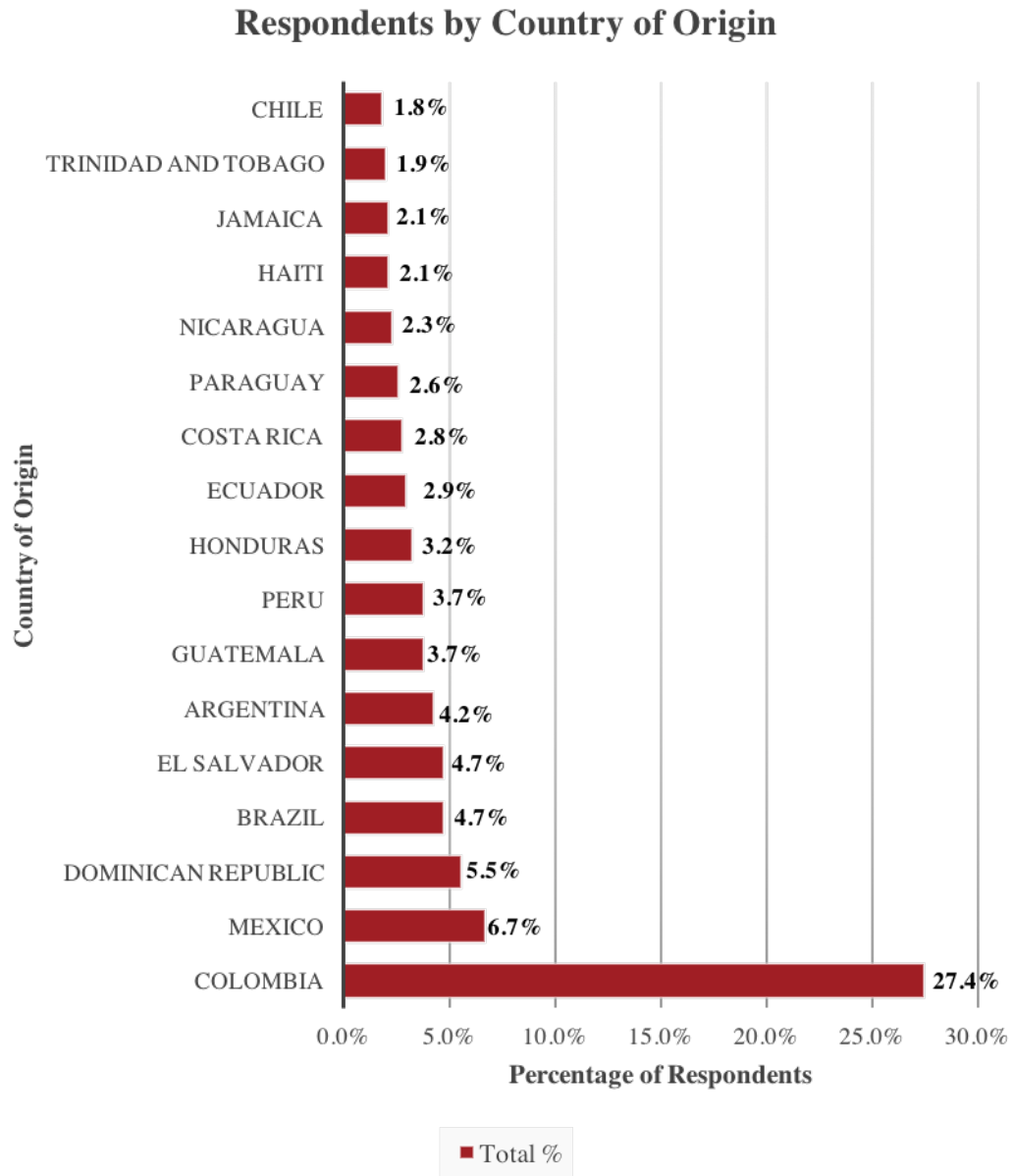


Figure 1. Distribution of Top 20 Respondents by Country of Origin (%).

*Source: thesis author.*



## Chapter IV

### Return and Reinsertion

One of the fundamental tenets of this thesis work is that access to quality education should translate into access to a better life. This is defined as a better job, a higher salary, increased leadership and decision-making opportunities—all of which the scholarship should offer.

One domain the survey tested was reinsertion, which I define as the scholar returning to his/her country of origin and becoming reinserted into the workforce and society. The survey measured different aspects of this process including difficulties encountered upon returning and the types of difficulties faced by scholars. Are scholars able to go back to their home countries, reinsert themselves professionally, and have a “better life?” The answer to this question will provide an answer to two of my research questions: (1) Is it difficult for scholars to reinsert themselves professionally and socially into their home countries? (2) What challenges do scholars face upon reinsertion into their home countries?

### Findings

In the survey, under the “Return to Home Country” domain, survey participants were asked, “The factors that made me not return to my home country include: . . .” and respondents could select multiple answers, if applicable. The options were, “I could not find a job,” “I could not find a job that paid well,” “I could not find an organization/

company with a mission that interests me,” and/or “I do research and the laboratories in my home country are not equipped to do my kind of work.” The last option was “Other,” and respondents were asked to provide specific text in their response. Nine survey responses included text answers (see Figure 2).

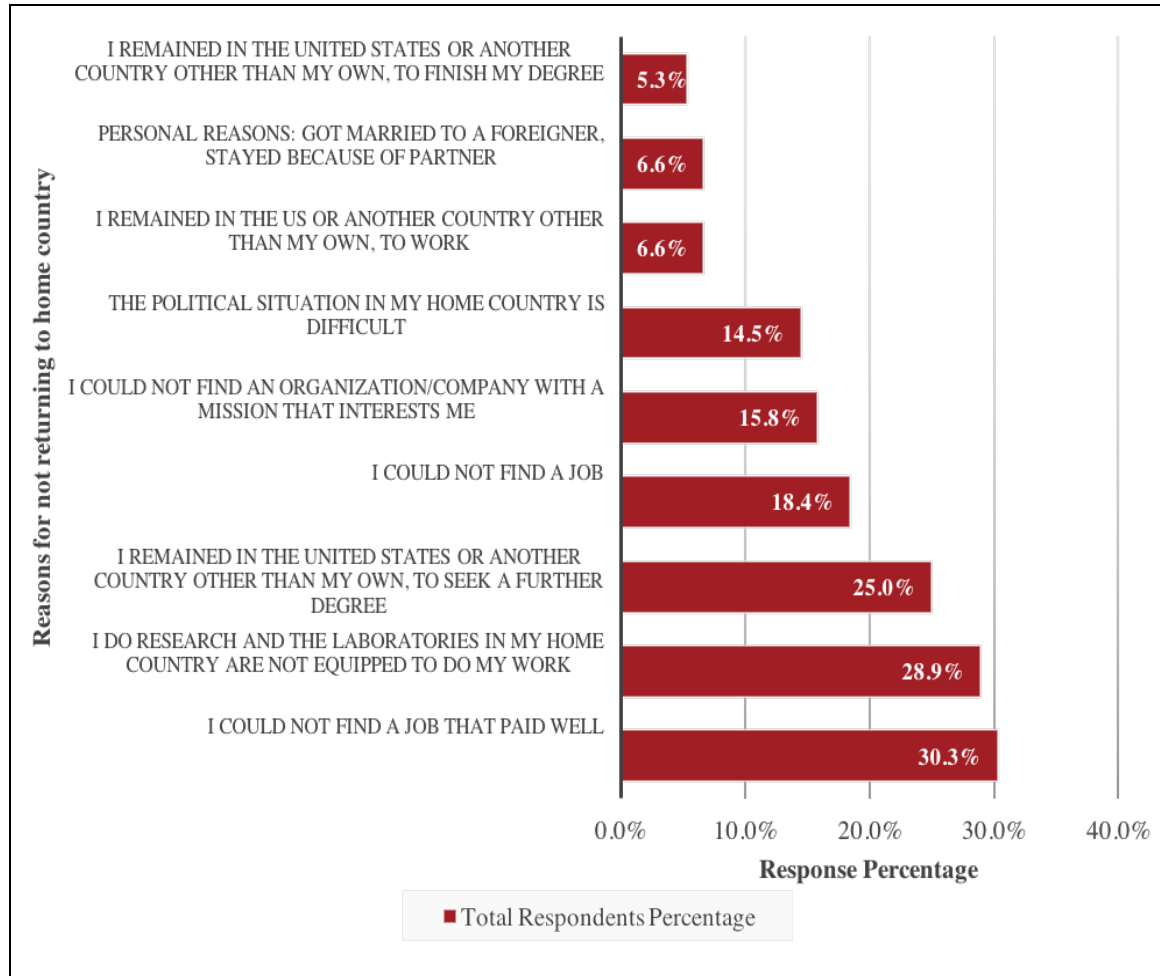


Figure 2. Reported Reasons for Not Returning to Home Country.

Source: thesis author.

The top five reasons given for not returning to his/her home country were:

1. “I could not find a job that paid well” 30.3 percent (N=23).
2. “I do research and the laboratories in my home country are not equipped to do my work” 28.9 percent (N=22).
3. “I remained in the United States or another country other than my own, to seek a further degree,” 25 percent (N=19).
4. “I could not find a job 18.4 percent” (N=14).
5. “I could not find an organization/company with a mission that interests me,” 15.8 percent (N=12).

These results are important when considering the types of challenges preventing scholars from returning. Moreover, these responses give an indication of the opportunities that cause graduates to decide to remain in a country other than their own.

The top reason for not returning, “I could not find a job that paid well,” reflects the expectation of scholars (and also aligns with the hypothesis of this thesis) that a higher-education degree should translate into better pay and a job with leadership and decision-making opportunities. The so-called “brain drain” reflects a dichotomy that takes place in developing countries: such countries need educated human capital the most, yet they are unable to retain qualified professionals because of the lack of well-paid jobs and leadership positions.<sup>7</sup>

Among the top five reasons for not returning to their home country, the percentages underline the fact that even though each scholar returns with a higher degree, most still cannot find quality employment, or that their home countries are not able to

---

<sup>7</sup> “The Brain Drain,” *Economist Online*, accessed March 28, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/node/10766106>.

absorb the scholars' new skills because facilities and laboratories lack up-to-date equipment. This is relevant because the common expectation is that if a country sponsors a scholar, then that country also will be able to offer a context for reintegration into the workforce.

Additionally, scholars are not returning to their home countries because they decide to seek further degrees (25 percent), which indicates that they see value in their education as a tool for advancement. This is a vicious cycle, however, as they may be unable to find jobs that pay appropriately for their additional skills, they may be deemed "overqualified," or they cannot find laboratories functioning at the level they will like. It is interesting to note that this question had one of the lowest response rates—559 respondents skipped this question out of 635, or just 76 responses. Nevertheless, the answers were linked and were similar to the answers given for degree of difficulty in reinsertion.

Under the "Reinsertion" domain, survey participants were asked to agree or disagree with this statement: "It was challenging to reinsert myself professionally into my home country upon finishing my academic program." The options provided were strongly agree (5), agree (4), disagree (3), strongly disagree (2) and not sure (1). Survey respondents answered quite evenly when asked about their reinsertion experience: 46.3 percent (N=252) chose "strongly agree" or "agree" that it was challenging to reinsert themselves professionally into their home country. A total of 44.5 percent chose "strongly disagree" or "disagree" that it was difficult to reinsert themselves (N=248), and 10.2 percent stated that they were not sure (N=57).

The aggregate of agreement and disagreement shows this even distribution, with a little over 45 percent of the respondents answering that it was difficult to reinsert themselves, a little under 44 percent that it was not difficult to reinsert themselves back into their home countries professionally (see Table 3 and Figure 3).

Table 3. Levels of Agreement: “It was challenging to reinsert myself professionally into my home country upon finishing my academic program.”

Strongly Agree and Agree	Strongly Disagree and Disagree	Not Sure
45.2%	44.5%	10.2%
Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents
252	248	57

*Source: thesis author.*

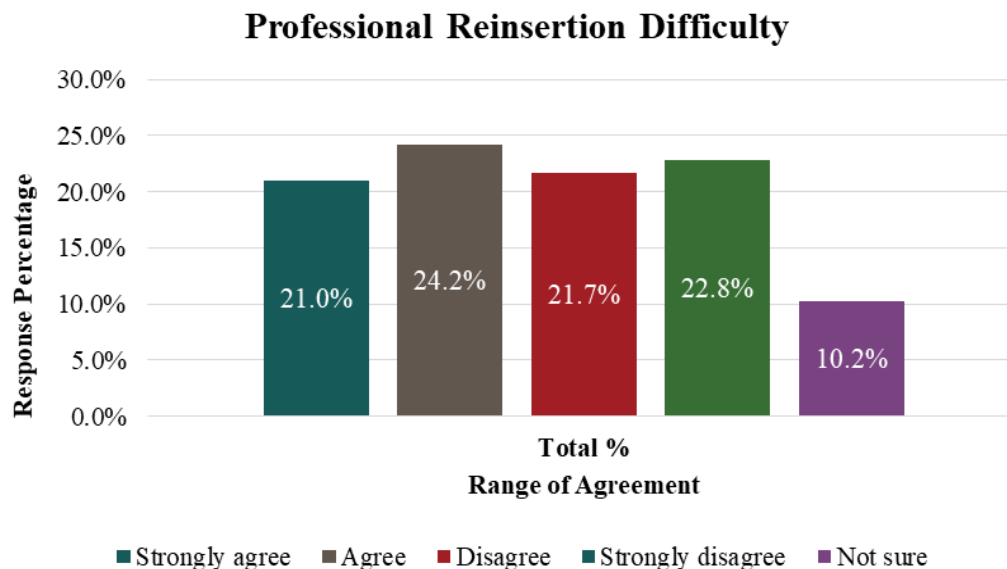


Figure 3. Levels of Agreement: “It was challenging to reinsert myself professionally into my home country upon finishing my academic program.”

*Source: thesis author.*

It is important to observe that even though the numbers show an almost even split, respondents answered slightly higher (0.7 percent) that it was difficult to return and find work. Although not even a one percent difference, qualitatively it raises a red flag. The general assumption is that scholars should have an easier time being hired if they have a higher-education degree from a quality university, which is certainly the case among Laspau-administered scholars.

The percentage of respondents that agreed it is difficult to reinsert themselves is high against my hypothesis and confirms that there needs to be an established process for connection between scholars and their home countries to facilitate reincorporation into the workforce and society. Generating specific mechanisms to connect scholars to their home countries’ productive sector will ensure that the scholarship has the intended

impact of enabling individuals to contribute their new knowledge and skills to their home countries' workforce and society.

### Reinsertion Challenges

Respondents who reported facing difficulties found themselves facing many. In the survey, a total of 21 challenge categories surfaced. The top difficulty was “lack of employment opportunities,” with 55.3 percent of respondents reporting some type of difficulty when reinserting themselves professionally into their home countries. Figure 4 shows the top five reinsertion challenges.

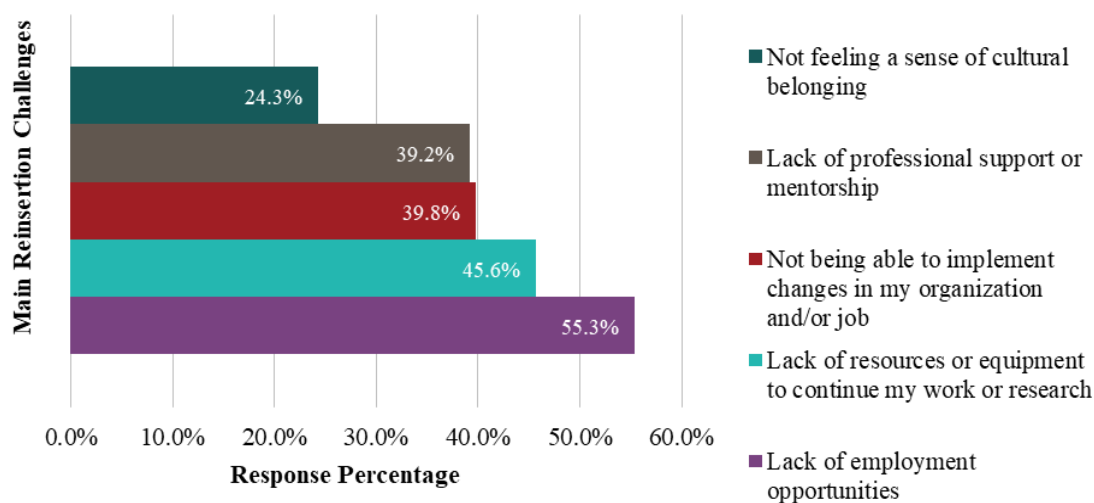


Figure 4. Main Reinsertion Challenges Reported.

*Source: thesis author.*

Corruption and feeling unsafe were also difficulties faced, with 2.9 percent of respondents reporting these challenges. Other difficulties included differences in working culture, colleagues feeling threatened, low-paying jobs, research not being done in the

area of specialty, lack of interest in research, or poor research quality in the new job/institution.

It is significant that one challenge ranked by respondents as being in the top five was “not feeling a sense of cultural belonging.” This could be an outcome of the cultural, academic, and professional exposure that students had during their programs in a wide range of social, academic, and professional environments in the United States and other countries where scholars studied. This suggests that personal transformations occurred as a result of scholarships and because of the academic program.

A similar impact is reflected in other survey answers in which scholars reported feeling “overqualified,” “not connected to the work culture,” etc. Again, it is likely that these challenges were the result of the social and cultural transformation of scholars because of their scholarship experience, and a meaningful outcome of the scholarship program because students returned with enhanced knowledge, cultural identity and work ethic. This is another dichotomy in which the scholars bring new perspectives that enrich their societies and workforces, while at the same time confronting the scholar with an environment where societal and professional rules remain unchanged.

There were some difficulties reported among a smaller percentage of respondents, but they are relevant because they illustrate the spectrum of challenges faced by scholars throughout the LAC region. They also are notable for Laspau to consider in defining its future strategies as the organization develops new programs and works with governments in the LAC region.

A noteworthy factor that surfaced is that 1 percent (N=3) of the respondents reported difficulty having the academic titles, awarded during their studies in the United



States or a country other than their own, validated by the governments of their home countries. A masters or a doctorate cannot be put to use if the degree is not accepted in their home countries. This challenge nullifies the point of the program and thus the investment and opportunity created as a result of the scholarship.

Other challenges reported an equally low percentage (0.3 percent, N=1), but they nonetheless highlight other critical difficulties faced upon return. For example, scholars were offered jobs with more responsibilities but equal pay (0.3 percent, N=1), they felt overqualified (0.3 percent, N=1), they were not able to find a job in their academic field (0.3 percent, N=1), or they could not find a job where they could use what they learned during their academic programs (0.3 percent, N=1). Additionally, 0.3 percent (N=1) of respondents reported facing difficulties because of physical disabilities, capturing another significant challenge faced by scholars specifically and the population in general in LAC.

It is positive that these difficulties were reported at a low percentage, indicating they are not widespread. However, they do let Laspau know the range and type of difficulties that scholars face upon reinsertion. This will inform Laspau's strategies when structuring scholarship programs with partners and enable the organization to speak knowledgeably about these challenges and suggest possible policy changes to address them.

In sum, the majority of participants responded that they found it difficult to reinsert themselves professionally and the difficulties they faced were many, ranging from high response to the lack of access to employment (55.3 percent, N=171), to a lesser response to the lack of access for individuals with disabilities (0.3 percent, N=1) and the inability to validate their degree titles (0.3 percent, N=1).

The reasons for not returning to one's home country and the difficulties faced in reinsertion tell an important story. The common expectation is that scholars should be able to return to their home countries and gain access to excellent employment, but this is not always the case. A significant number of scholars do not return to their home countries, and those who do find it difficult to reintegrate themselves socially and into the workforce. I suggest that a reinsertion mechanism should be considered as part of Laspau's scholarship services, to ensure that scholars not only return but also return to become a strategic part of their home countries' workforce in leadership positions, thus maximizing the influence they have in their home countries as they work to build knowledge-based societies.

## Chapter V

### Access Benefits

The positive impact of the Laspau-administered scholarship programs was clear in the survey responses. One of my research questions central to resolving the hypothesis is whether access to quality education means access to quality employment. In this thesis, I define quality employment as a job in a leadership position, one that is well compensated, and is in a professional sector that can affect the social, academic, economic, and/or political development of the scholars' home countries. In the sections below, I identify and discuss some of these access opportunities.

#### Access to Better Employment

The vast majority of survey respondents reported they were currently employed (85.28 percent, N=539), and only 14.72 percent (N=93) reported not being employed. Of those employed, 89.6 percent (N=482) worked full time, meaning 30 hours or more weekly. These percentages correspond to general expectations and the hypothesis that a better education creates access to employment.

Regarding the quality of such employment, the majority of the scholars contribute to key sectors in their home countries' economies and social development: 50.8 percent (N= 303) work in academia, 20.5 percent (N=122) in government, 18.6 percent (N=111) in the private sector, and 3.9 percent (N=23) in multinational organizations (see Figure 5).

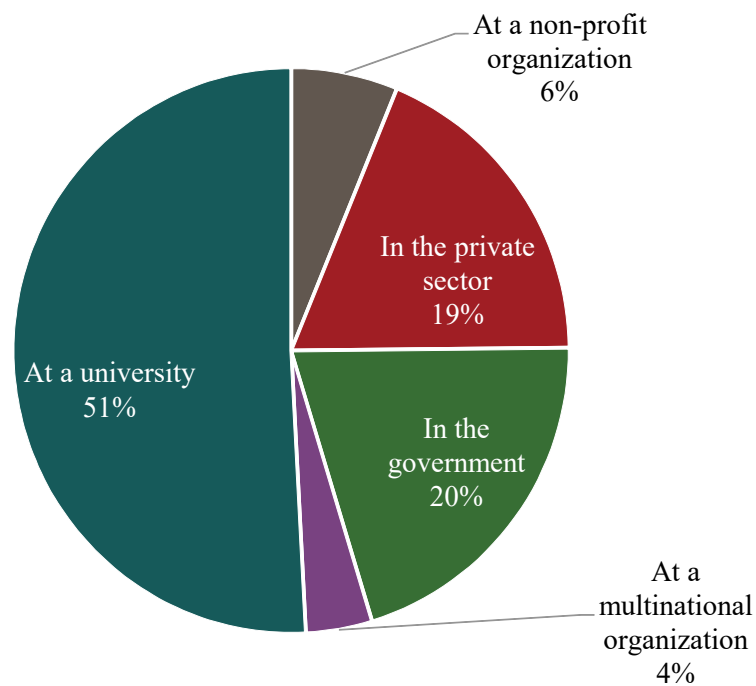


Figure 5. Scholars' Current Jobs by Industry.

*Source: thesis author.*

To measure mobility between industries and identify the professional sectors where scholars work, respondents were asked where they worked before and after their scholarships. The only industry that had a significant increase (+7.6 percent) from before to after the scholarship program was working at a university. Respondents working in the government had a +0.1 percent increase. The rest of the industries saw a decline (see Table 4).

Table 4. Reported Shifts in Professional Industries Before and After the Scholarship Program.

Industry where Scholars Reported Working	Percentage of Scholars Before Scholarship	Number of Scholars Before Scholarship	Percentage of Scholars After Scholarship	Number of Scholars After Scholarship	Before and After Scholarship Estimated Percentage Difference in Industry	Decrease
In the private sector	23.1%	145	18.6%	111	-4.5%	Yes
In the government	20.4%	128	20.5%	122	+0.1%	No
At a multinational organization	N/A	N/A	3.9%	23	N/A	N/A
At a university	43.2%	271	50.8%	303	+7.6%	No
Non-profit	7.5%	47	6.2%	37	-1.3	Yes
I did not work before my Laspau-administered scholarship	5.7%	36	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Source: thesis author.*

Due to a technical oversight, when respondents were asked about their job prior to the scholarship program, no option was available for them to report having worked at

multinational organizations. Similarly, respondents were asked if they had worked prior to the scholarship program, but they were not asked if they currently were not working; they were given only the option of indicating a professional sector. Therefore, a before-and-after comparison is not available for these indicators.

In terms of mobility between institutions and whether scholars came back and reinserted themselves in their old companies/organizations/universities (what I call in this thesis “home institutions”), 42.8 percent (N=266) survey respondents reported not returning to their home institutions. A close second (38.4 percent, N=239) reported having returned to their home institution and currently working there. Students who reported having “returned to their home institutions, but left,” 15 percent (N=93) reported they stayed in their home institution to work between one and three years before leaving.

This finding is relevant because many Laspau-administered scholarships require, as part of their policies, that upon graduation scholars must return to their home country to their sponsor or home institution and work there for a period of time. The survey results confirmed that many scholars did in fact return to their home countries and reinsert themselves professionally into their original institutions. This means they were both complying with scholarship policies and were going back to their earlier institution to create a corresponding impact. On the other hand, the negative consequence could be that the 38.4 percent of respondents who returned to their home institutions, actually continued working there because of a lack of employment opportunities somewhere else. Further analysis would be needed in order to determine which is the case.

Some of the Laspau-administered scholarship programs that require the return to the home country upon completion are Fulbright, the Organization of American States

(OAS) Scholarship Program, and the INICIA scholarship programs,<sup>8</sup> which account for 2,548 of the scholars that graduated in the past ten years and received the survey.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, I estimate that this is why the largest share of survey respondents stated that they returned to their home institutions and home countries.

Scholars that returned to work to their home countries are mostly employed full-time, and they are working in industries that are relevant to the development of their home countries, i.e., academia, government, and private sector. Thus, scholars have the institutional and social impact intended by their scholarship program and by Laspau, which confirms my thesis hypothesis that access to quality education means access to quality employment for the majority of Laspau-administered scholars. This result also confirms preliminarily that scholarships are a good investment for sponsoring institutions and sponsoring agencies.

#### Access to a Better Economic Situation

At the core of this thesis is the question of whether access to a scholarship program means access to a better life. To define the impact of the scholarship programs in this regard, the scholars were asked to assess their agreement with the statement that because of their scholarship program, they have a higher salary, improved their leadership skills, and were granted a better job with more responsibilities and influence. To all these assertions, the majority of respondents answered positively, as shown in Figure 6.

---

<sup>8</sup> INICIA is a social fund that sponsors one of the scholarships administered by Laspau.

<sup>9</sup> Laspau, Salesforce Report.

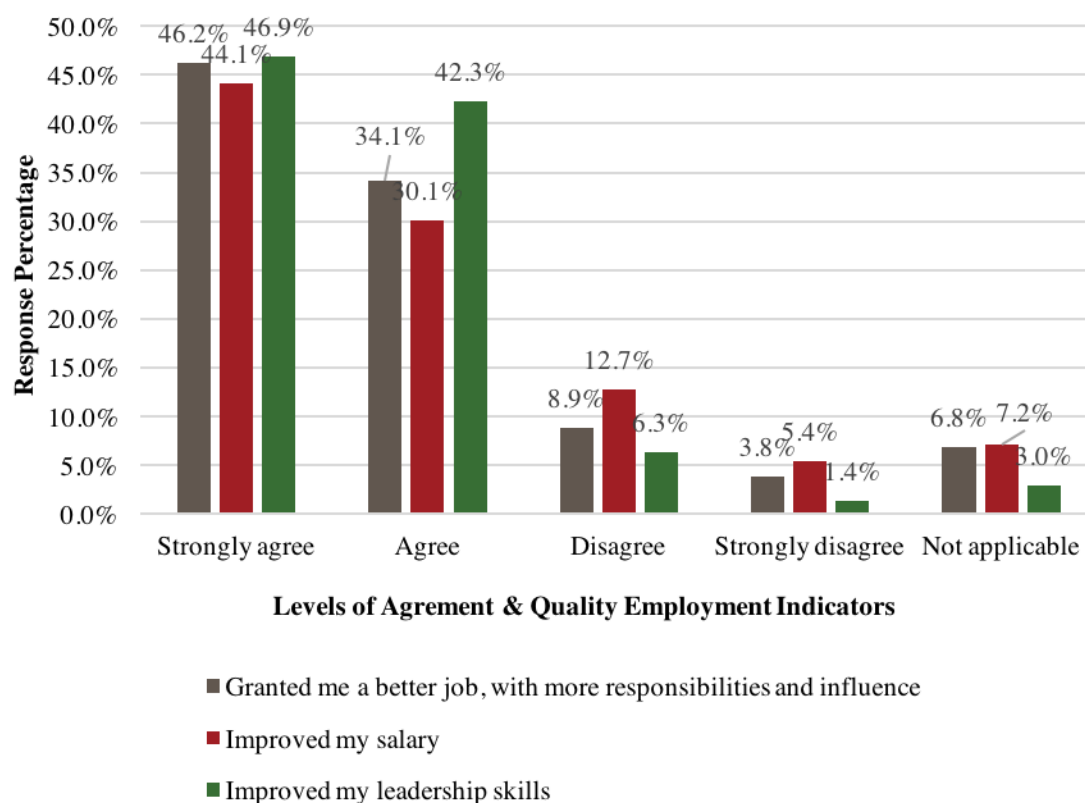


Figure 6. Access to Employment and Professional Growth: Comparison of Quality Employment Indicators.

*Source: thesis author.*

These percentages are at the core of the hypothesis and answer the central question of this research. Scholars do believe that because of their scholarship programs they have greater access to better jobs, have a better salary, and have improved leadership skills. The three tenets have the response “strongly agree” as their highest percentage rate.

Thereafter the survey assessed the impact of the scholarship not only on the scholar but on future generations, by inquiring whether the scholarship opportunity



meant a better education for the scholars' children. The question posed was, "I'm able to give my children a better education." A total of 35.4 percent of respondents strongly agreed with the assertion. The second-largest majority, 35.1 percent of respondents, indicated that the question did not apply. However, it was difficult to know whether the respondents did not have children or that it did not make much difference. Given the range of ages among the respondents, it could be either reason. So, one cannot assess whether they have actually received a better education. What does seem clear is that for the larger share of respondents the scholarship has given them a better life, not only for themselves but for their children as well. This result is important because it underlines the trans-generational social mobility and effect caused by educational opportunity.

This survey did not have a control group to which to compare the experience of the survey respondents, that is, a group of individuals who remained and studied in their home country, in the same age range, worked at the same entity, and at the same level as the scholars. Therefore, to learn how much difference the scholarship made for participants, a survey question asked scholars to rate how much they agreed with the assertion that because of their scholarship, "I have a better job than my colleagues who stayed and studied in my home country." The majority of respondents "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with this assertion (see Figure 7 and Table 5).

**I have a better job than my colleagues who stayed and studied in my home country**

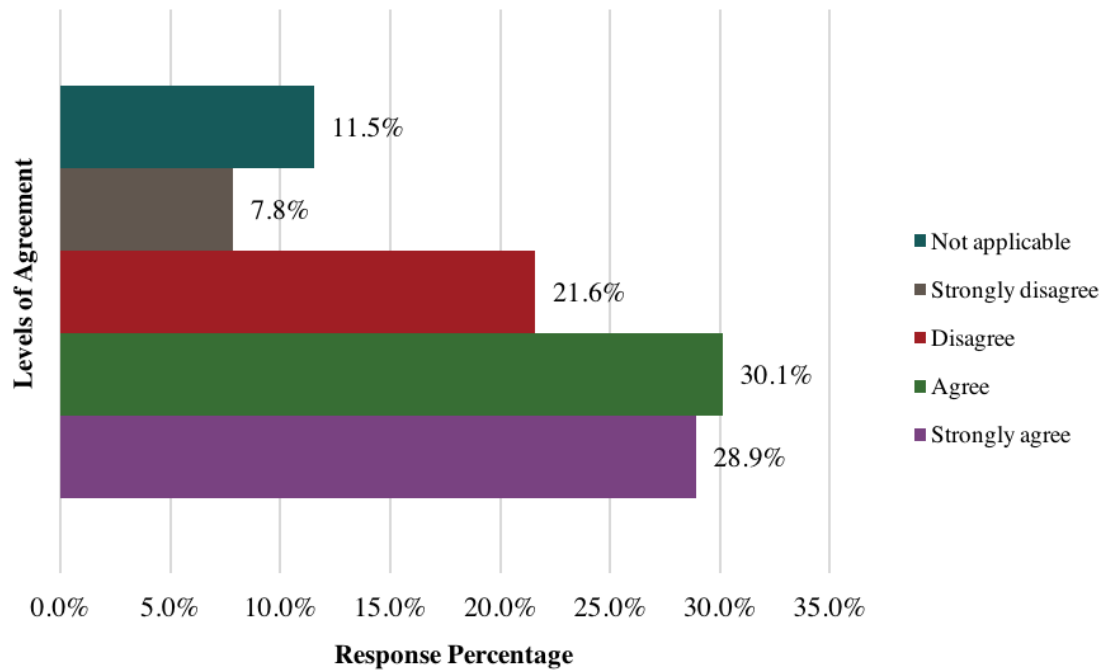


Figure 7. Scholars' Levels of Agreement with Having a Better Job than Colleagues Who Stayed and Studied in Home Country.

*Source: thesis author.*

Table 5. Levels of Agreement with Having a Better Job than Colleagues Who Stayed and Studied in Home Country.

Strongly Agree and Agree	Strongly Disagree and Disagree	Not Applicable
59.1%	29.4%	11.5%
Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents
339	169	66

*Source: thesis author.*

The comparison shows that because of the scholarship, respondents have a better life and a better job than those individuals who did not have access to this academic opportunity. This result supports the core tenet of the hypothesis, that participants believe the scholarship gave them access to a better job, which they would not have had without the scholarship.

#### Access to a Better Life and Professional Recognition

Some dimensions that were assessed under “Impact” are the ways in which an academic program enabled by a scholarship opens doors professionally and the ways the scholars are recognized because of their degrees. In this regard, the results showed that indeed, after concluding their scholarship programs, grantees were being recognized both academically and professionally. The top ways in which the respondents indicated they are being acknowledged were as follows: invitations to participate in decision-making

committees (62.3 percent), increases in salary (53.8 percent), and/or a promotion to a position of increased responsibility (49.6 percent) (see Figure 8).

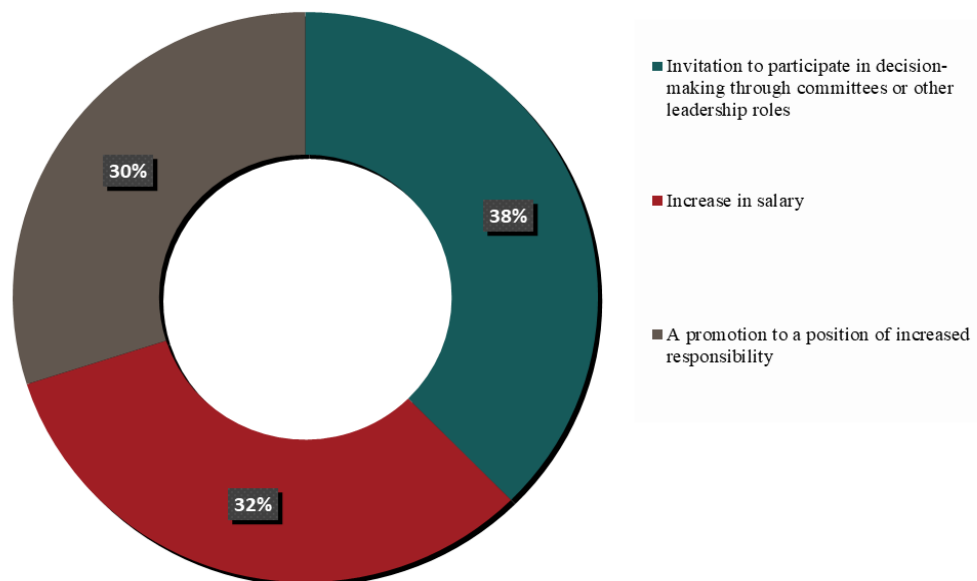


Figure 8. Scholars' Recognition in Their Professional or Academic Life.

*Source: thesis author.*

### Scholarships, Social Mobility, and Access

Another important tenet of this thesis work is whether or not scholarships bring opportunities for social and economic advancement, or if Lasgau-administered scholarships are awarded mainly to individuals who are higher in the social ladder. To address this question, survey participants were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement: "I consider myself to come from a vulnerable or impoverished economic or social background."

The results corresponded to the hypothesis: the majority of scholars who access Lasgau-administered scholarships do not consider themselves to be from vulnerable

social or economic backgrounds. However, another result that was both unforeseen and remarkable—and that counters the hypothesis—is that the percentage of Laspau-administered scholars responding to the survey who said they considered themselves as coming from a vulnerable economic or social background was much higher than expected. A noteworthy, 46.3 percent responded, “Strongly Agree” and “Agree,” and 49.9 percent responded, “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree,” to considering themselves from a vulnerable economic or social background. My expectation was that the percentage difference would be much higher, and that a significant majority of scholarship recipients would not be impoverished or socially vulnerable, hence the relevance of this finding.

The majority of scholarships administered by Laspau do benefit individuals who are not socially or economically vulnerable. Nonetheless, the slim difference in the number of scholars who come from vulnerable backgrounds compared to those who do not showcases that as expected from scholarship programs and academic opportunities, Laspau-administered scholarships benefit a significant number of individuals who received the scholarship. In the last ten years, the scholarships enabled social mobility for 46.3 percent (N=277) of scholars that consider themselves to be socially or economically vulnerable (see Figure 9 and Table 6).

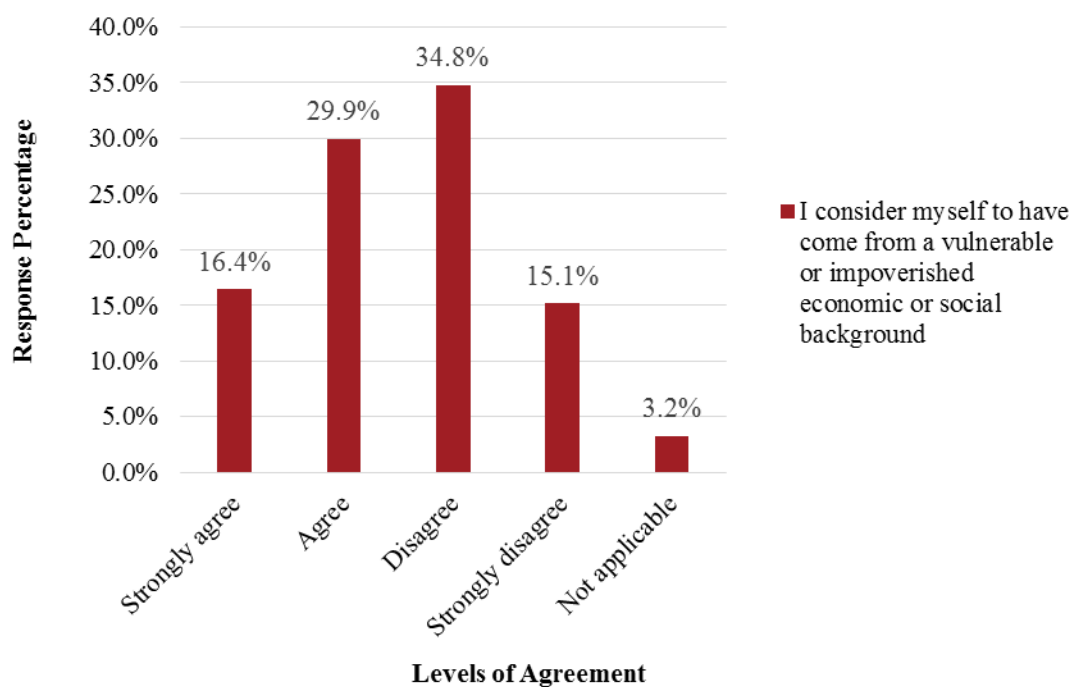


Figure 9. Scholars' Reported Social and Economic Background.

Source: thesis author.

Table 6. Scholars' Levels of Agreement with Being from a Vulnerable Economic or Social Background.

Strongly Agree and Agree	Strongly Disagree and Disagree	Not Applicable
46.3%	49.9%	3.2%
Number of Responses	Number of Responses	Number of Responses
257	277	18

Source: thesis author.

It is important to note that this thesis hypothesizes that scholarships were more apt to be awarded to individuals who are not from vulnerable populations, but rather to individuals higher in the social ladder. This hypothesis has its roots in the common belief that individuals who speak English tend to have a better education. Better education in LAC is available in private schools. Thus, individuals who speak English and can apply for scholarships tend to be from a privileged economic and social background.

To assess the economic and social profile of respondents, surveyed scholars were asked about their experience when applying for the scholarship program. In order to apply for a scholarship to study in the United States, an individual needs to speak English, and be financially able to take costly standardized tests such as the GRE, GMAT, or TOEFL. The cost of taking these tests can amount to more than US\$300.<sup>10</sup> For an applicant from a vulnerable economic or social background in LAC, this is a significant amount of money. In order to determine if the cost of standardized tests is a barrier when applying to scholarships, as well as to assess the degree of vulnerability of scholars who applied to the programs in the last ten years, participants were asked this question: “Please tell us if you agree with the following statement regarding the challenges and success enablers for access to a scholarship: The cost of standardized exams was a financial strain when applying to the scholarship.” The results can be seen in Figure 10.

---

<sup>10</sup> “How Much Does the TOEFL Cost?” English is Simple website, accessed March 28, 2018, <http://englishsimple.org/about-the-toefl/toefl-cost/>.

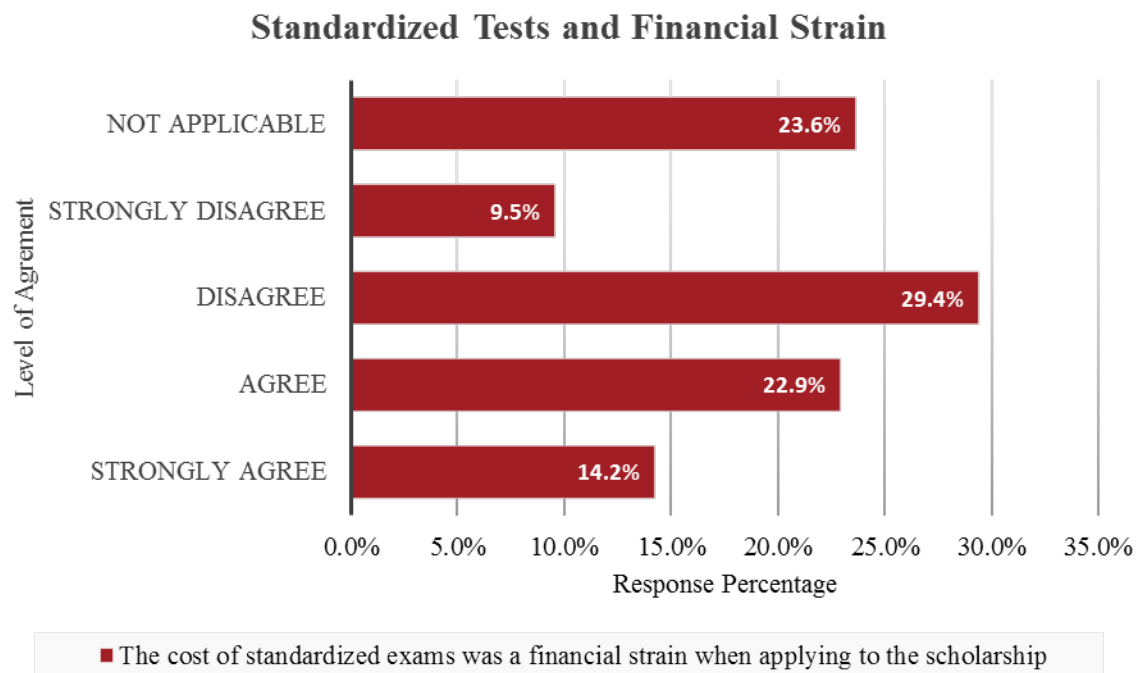


Figure 10. Scholars' Level of Agreement with the Cost of Standardized Exams Being a Financial Strain When Applying for a Scholarship.

*Source: thesis author.*

These results were not anticipated. The sums of percentages of agreement and disagreement were very close. This means that for a large share of scholars US\$300 is a significant sum. From this, I inferred that scholars were not from an affluent economic background. It confirms that about half of the scholars consider themselves to be from vulnerable economic backgrounds.

Still, it is important to ponder what access and mobility really mean. Just because scholarships are not solely, mainly, or in higher percentage benefitting those considered to be from vulnerable populations, it does not mean that they are not enabling talented individuals who otherwise would not be able to access an education of the quality and



caliber that Laspau scholarships afford. Potential economic and social leaders in LAC might otherwise not have the latitude of influence that they have right now. Rather, impact should be measured by access to opportunities that create mobility at any point along the social ladder.

The academic access that Laspau-administered scholarships create is evident. One of the highest percentages was the response to this question: “I would have not been able to afford the cost of my academic program if it were not for the scholarship I received.” Among respondents, 83 percent answered “Strongly Agree.” Thus, if the scholarships did not exist, these students—some from more vulnerable social and economic backgrounds, others who do not consider themselves to be, but all whom have a profile of academic excellence—would have not had access to academic programs because of their inability to pay for it. Without scholarships, the Laspau-administered students would have not been able to acquire the knowledge and academic level they have now.

**I would have not been able to afford the cost of my academic program if it were not for the scholarship I received**

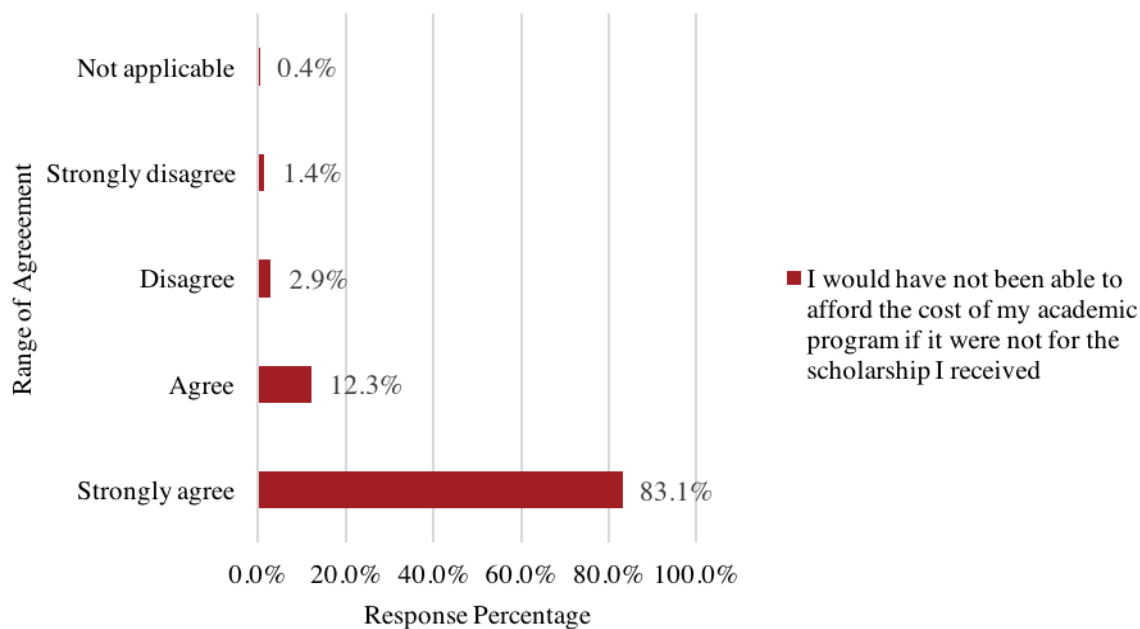


Figure 11. Scholars' Level of Agreement with Not Being Able to Afford the Cost of the Academic Program if it were not for the Scholarship.

*Source: thesis author.*

### Access for Women

Another indicator of mobility is the particular difference the scholarships have made for female grantees. To assess this aspect, part of the survey was only for female participants who were asked the following questions (preceded by "as a woman"): "I continued working after getting married," "I found it easy to continue working after having children," "I do not feel discriminated against in my professional environment," and "I feel like I am empowered to be promoted and have leadership positions in my

organization.” The respondents had the option to respond on a scale between “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree.”

Their responses were unforeseen. It is a common assumption that females, particularly in LAC, suffer from gender discrimination and thus find it more difficult to have thriving professional careers and professional advancement.<sup>11</sup>

Among all female respondents, 50.9 percent reported “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” to the question about continuing to work after getting married, 7.4 percent reported “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree,” and 48.4 percent reported “Not Applicable.” It would be necessary to conduct further research to define whether the segment of participants that responded “Not Applicable” do so because they do not work but instead volunteer, for instance. Alternatively, it may be that this question does not apply because the majority of respondents are not married. However, the data does not support this. Participants reported they “found it easy to return to work after having children,” with 20.8 percent choosing “Strongly Agree” and “Agree,” 16.3 percent choosing “Strongly Disagreeing” and “Disagreeing,” and “Not Applicable” at a 62.5 percent.

Another relevant result is that most of the female respondents “do not feel discriminated against in their professional environment,” with 51.9 percent responding, “Strongly Agree” and “Agree,” 41.6 percent “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree,” and 2.1 percent stating that the question was “Not Applicable.”

Lastly and remarkably, when asked, “As I woman, I feel like I am empowered to get promoted and have leadership positions in my organization,” survey respondents

---

<sup>11</sup> “The Cost of Sexism: Girl Power,” Economist Online, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/news/americas/21661804-gender-equality-good-economic-growth-girl-power>.

answered positively and categorically: 76 percent “Strongly Agree” or “Agree” with the assertion, 21.9 percent “Strongly Disagree” or “Disagree,” and 1.8 percent said the question was “Not Applicable.” Figure 12 illustrate these results.

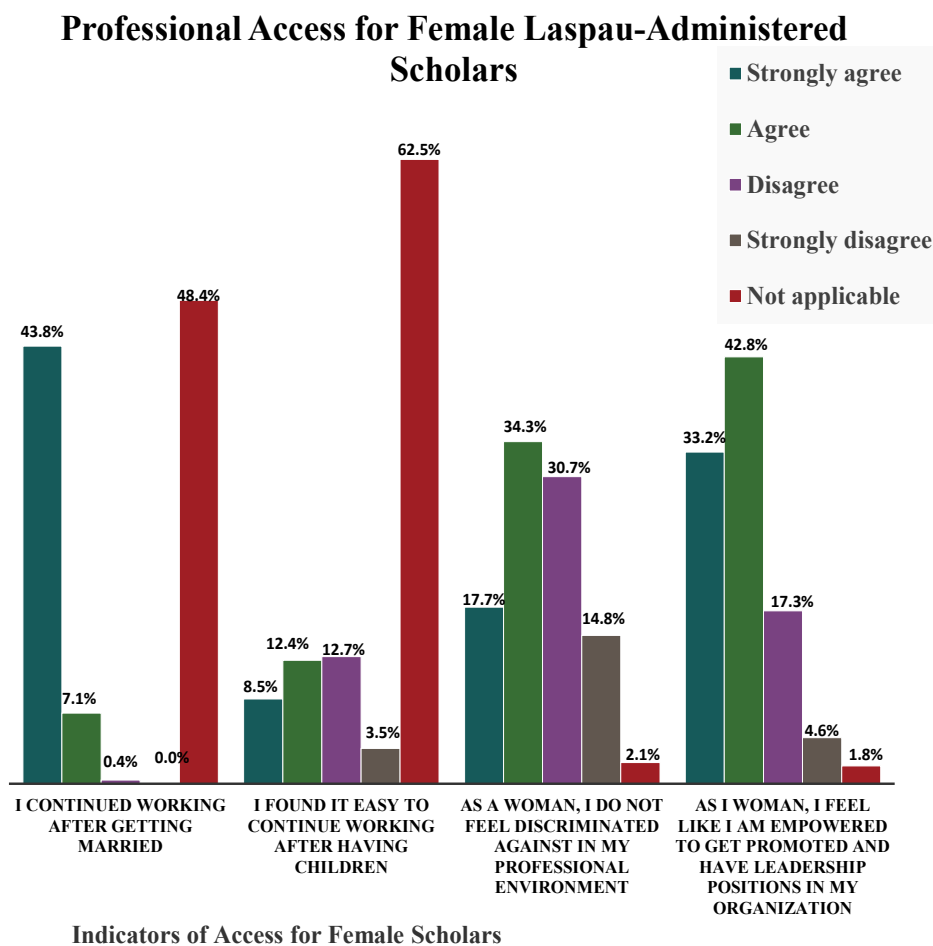


Figure 12. Female Scholars’ Levels of Agreement with Indicators of Professional Access.

*Source: thesis author.*

These results regarding female access correspond to the general results of the survey and with the common expectation that Laspau-administered scholarships create

access to professional advancement, leadership positions and an overall better professional life, regardless of the scholar's gender. However, these results also underline that Laspau-administered female scholars believe they can climb the professional ladder at much higher rates than, say, American females. A 2018 Pew Research Center study reported that 1 in 10 women were passed on a promotion because of their gender.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Kim Parker and Cary Funk, "Gender Discrimination Comes in Many Forms for Today's Working Women," Pew Research Center Online, December 14, 2017, accessed March 25, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/12/14/gender-discrimination-comes-in-many-forms-for-todays-working-women/>.

## Chapter VI

### Scholars as Leaders and Agents of Change

For the purposes of this thesis, *leadership* is defined as the ability to make decisions and implement change.<sup>13</sup> Thus leadership levels were measured in the survey as an indicator of access. The common expectation is that an individual with a higher-education degree will be offered roles that have some level of leadership. The notion explored in the survey is that an education, combined with the knowledge and experience acquired as part of a higher-degree program, enables leadership.

#### Individual Impact: Leadership Levels

To measure this domain, respondents were asked, “What percentage of your current job involves leadership responsibilities?” The options for answering ranged from 10 percent to a 100 percent level of leadership responsibility.

The reported levels of leadership correspond to what is speculated in the hypothesis, that is, participants feel they are leaders in their jobs. Of the survey participants, 50 percent responded that half of their jobs involved leadership responsibilities. The second largest group, 25.7 percent, reported that 75 percent of their jobs involved leadership responsibilities, and 20.2 percent reported that 100 percent of their jobs involved leadership responsibilities.

---

<sup>13</sup> “What it Takes to Lead,” *Harvard Gazette* (February 2011), accessed February 28, 2018. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/02/what-it-takes-to-lead/>.

Given that the median age of scholars who responded the survey is 37.6, it is likely that most of them are currently in middle management, and the rest are in higher-ranking positions with more responsibility and leadership. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents feels that at a minimum, half of their job involves some level of leadership. The percentages correspond to the hypothesis: Laspau-administered scholars who responded to the survey have leadership responsibilities in their current jobs.

### Institutional Impact

It is necessary to define the levels and scope of influence that Laspau-administered scholars have in their jobs, cities, home countries and LAC. To assess their impact at an institutional level, respondents were asked to choose the ways in which they feel they could implement change in their organizations. The question was, “I feel I am able to implement changes in my organization/institution in the following ways.” Respondents provided 18 different answers to how they implement changes in their current place of work. The top five responses are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Ways in Which Scholars Implement Change in Their Organizations.

Ways in Which Respondents Implement Change in Their Current Organizations/Institutions	Percentage	Number of Respondents
By promoting networking/partnership building	61.0%	321
By implementing an effective strategy	55.1%	290
Through the vision and mission	42.2%	222
Through my management style	38.2%	201
By enabling employee productivity	35.0%	184

*Source: thesis author.*

When surveyed scholars were asked, “Changes I implement in my organization/ institution affect approximately these many individuals . . .,” a wide range of institutional impacts were reported. Scholars responded that they positively affect thousands of individuals—an estimated 11,371, a ratio of 1 to 32— with the changes they implement in their workplaces, highlighting the significant multiplier effect of the scholarships.

Respondents have an impact right from the individual level beginning with their closest point of influence, i.e., their workplaces. They implement strategy, promote partnership building, and enable productivity, all of which demonstrate their engagement in their professional lives and how they are transforming companies, universities, and organizations throughout the LAC region.

#### Impact in Communities, Cities, Home Countries, and the LAC Region

The common expectation is that scholars positively affect their communities, cities, countries, and the LAC region. To assess the impact of scholars and their commitment to different levels of society, participants were asked, “Because of my scholarship, I feel a deeper commitment to my. . . .” Scholars were able to select multiple dimensions of commitment including their community, city, country, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Respondents were also given the option of choosing, “I do not feel a deeper commitment, either at a local or at a regional level.” The answer to this question is critical, as it is specifically seeking to determine if the scholarship experience created more engagement between the scholar and different societal layers, or if the scholarship did not have an effect on the scholars’ commitment to their society. Indeed, the survey



responses established that because of their scholarship respondents felt more committed to their countries, communities, and the LAC region. Only 7.2 percent reported not feeling a stronger commitment at all following completion of their scholarship program (see Table 8 and Figure 13).

Table 8. Scholars' Level of Commitment by Location.

Level of Commitment to . . .	Percentage	Number of Responses
Country	77.7%	419
Latin America and the Caribbean	54.0%	291
Community	50.6%	273
City	30.2%	163
I do not feel a deeper commitment, either at a local or a regional level	7.2%	39

*Source: thesis author.*

Table 8 is interesting because the scholars' commitment to their countries garners the highest response, followed by their commitment to the LAC region. It is natural to be committed to one's own country but is remarkable in these results that the second-highest response is commitment to LAC—even higher than commitment to city or community. These results correspond to what is hypothesized and to what is expected when awarding a scholarship, namely, that the benefit of access to quality higher education will be multiplied across societal layers, and scholars' engagement will not be only with their home countries but as agents of change for the LAC region.

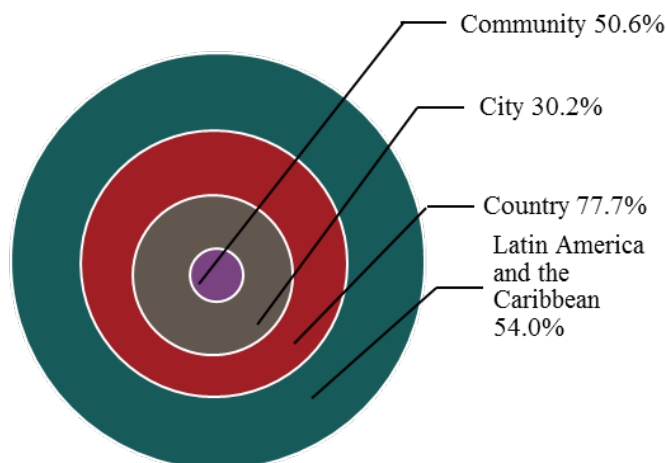


Figure 13. Scholars' Reported Level of Commitment by Location.

*Source: thesis author.*

To determine if feelings of commitment have materialized into actions in favor of the LAC region, participants were asked, “My work promotes and benefits the social, political, and economic development of . . . .” The options for answering were, “My community,” “My city,” “My country,” “Latin America and the Caribbean,” or “My work does not promote or benefit social, political, or economic development at any level.” The scholars that responded said that after completing their scholarship program, the work they were doing benefited different levels of society. Their feelings of commitment to their communities, cities, countries, and the LAC region closely reflect the level of impact they are having through their work, as described in Table 9 below.

Table 9. Scholars' Scope of Work Benefiting Different Levels, by Location.

Work Promotes and Benefits the Social, Political, and Economic Development in . . .	Percentage	Number of Responses
My community	47.7%	256
My city	41.5%	223
My country	77.8%	418
Latin America and the Caribbean	41.9%	225
My work does not promote or benefit social, political, or economic development at any level	7.4%	40

*Source: thesis author.*

Respondents not only feel committed to their country and region, but they actually contribute to their social, political, and economic development in active ways. Figure 14 below compares the perception of commitment with the perception of social, political, and economic advances achieved through the respondents' work.

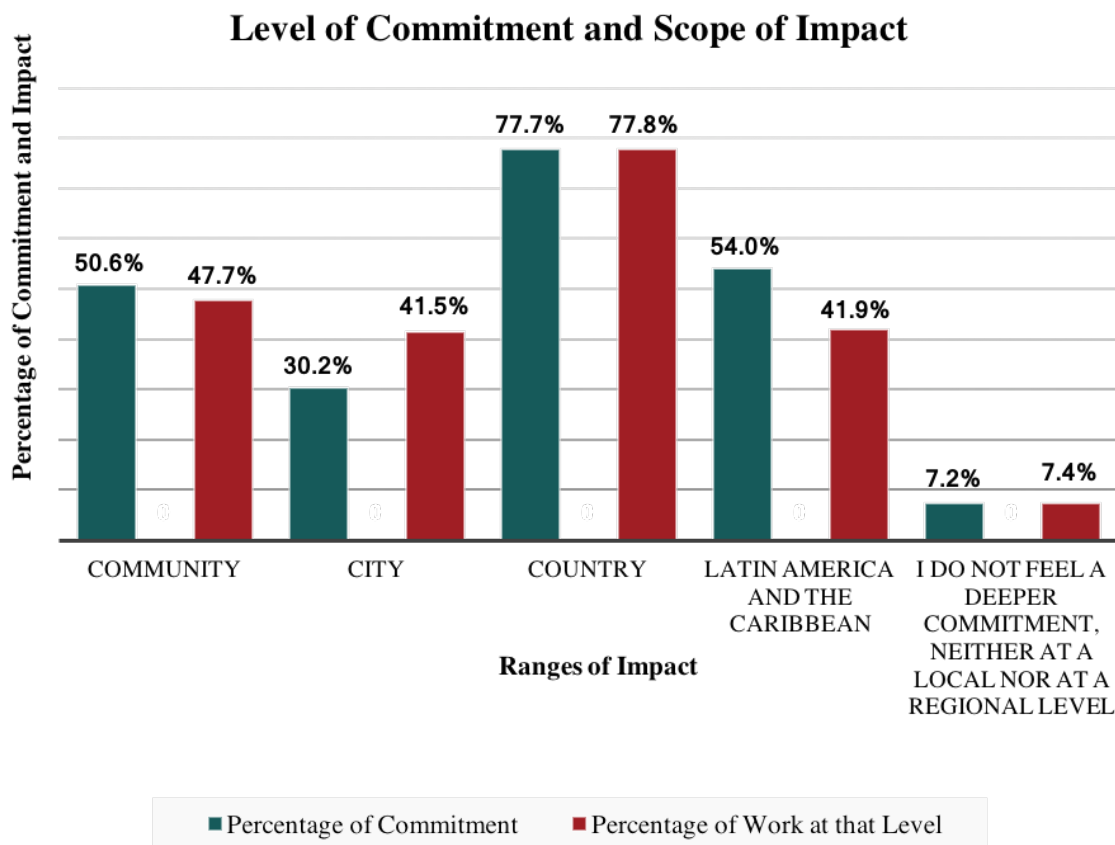


Figure 14. Comparison of Scholars' Level of Commitment and Work at Different Impact Locations

*Source: thesis author.*

A percentage of respondents (7.2 percent) said they “do not feel a deeper commitment, either at a local or at a regional level,” and a similar percentage of respondents (7.4 percent) said their “work does not promote or benefit social, political, or economic development at any level.” There is not sufficient evidence to conclude that one rate is related to the other, or that one causes the other, but it is worth noting that these two results only vary by 0.02 percent. Further research could be done to determine if these percentages reflect that scholars who do not feel engaged with either country or

region are also not working for their advancement either, or if there are any other connections in the data related to disengagement.

The thesis hypothesis contends that Laspau-administered scholarships have helped to produce well-educated social, political, and academic leaders. To measure this domain, the survey asked, “Please tell us if you agree with the following statement: My participation in the scholarship program makes me want to enable younger generations to have access to a scholarship opportunity.”

The positive response to this question was the second-highest percentage of the survey, with 91.6 percent of scholars choosing “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” with the assertion that because of the scholarship program they want to enable younger generations to access a scholarship (see Table 10 and Figure 15). This result illustrates the respondents’ commitment to helping future scholars. Hence, we can infer that at a minimum, the survey respondents valued their scholarship opportunity, and therefore want to help others have access to similar opportunities as well.

Table 10. Scholars’ Agreement with Wanting Open Access to Scholarships for Future Generations.

Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Not applicable	
%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
64.1%	368	27.5%	158	2.8%	No. 16	1.6%	9	3.8%	22

*Source: thesis author.*

### Opening Scholarship Opportunities for Future Generations

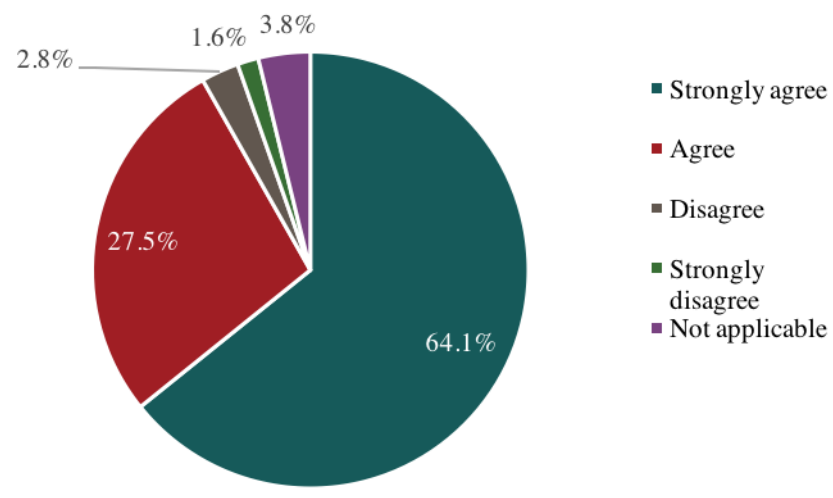


Figure 15. Scholars' Level of Agreement with Wanting Open Access to Scholarships for Future Generations.

Source: thesis author.

This result accentuates the respondents' social commitment. It is a common expectation that individuals who have privileged access to higher education will reciprocate by opening similar opportunities for others thus showing their social commitment and leadership.

## Chapter VII

### Laspau Scholars and Harvard Alumni: Leadership in Three Indicators

To assess Laspau’s level of impact, Laspau’s survey results were compared to a similar alumni survey conducted in 2016 by Harvard University. The comparison looks in particular at three indicators that were addressed in both surveys – alumni participation in boards of directors, volunteerism, and entrepreneurship. When comparing responses from the two surveys, it is evident that Laspau scholars show leadership and give their time, knowledge, and skills in ways that are similar to Harvard alumni. Like Laspau, Harvard tries to create access to higher education and to form future leaders. Hence, as a Harvard affiliate, Laspau can use the impact of the university’s efforts to benchmark its own.<sup>14</sup>

#### Participation in Boards of Directors

In terms of service on boards of directors, participants in the Laspau-administered scholars’ survey reported the following engagement (see Table 11).

---

<sup>14</sup> “Harvard Impact Study: Global Economic and Social Impact of Alumni,” Harvard University, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://impact.community.harvard.edu/alumniimpact/>.

Table 11. Scholars' Service on Boards of Directors.

Laspau-Administered Scholars' Service on Boards of Directors	Percentage	Number of Respondents
For a non-profit organization	11.3%	63
For a company in the private sector	3.9%	22
In a university	8.4%	47
Other type of institution	4.7%	26
I do not serve on a Board	71.7%	401

*Source: thesis author.*

A majority of participants (71.7 percent) do not volunteer on boards of directors or engage in this type of leadership role. However, those who do largely serve as board members (75.8 percent). Among the respondents, 11.3 percent serve on boards for non-profit organizations, while 8.4 percent serve on university boards. These numbers highlight that although participation is not high, Laspau-administered scholars do engage in a type of service that is not prevalent in LAC, and those who do participate can have significant influence on the direction of universities, non-profit organizations, and companies.<sup>15</sup> Figures 16 and 17 illustrate the survey results for this question.

---

<sup>15</sup> "Harvard Impact Study: Global Economic and Social Impact of Alumni Volunteerism," Harvard University, accessed February 28, 2018, <http://impact.community.harvard.edu/alumniimpact/#Volunteerism>.



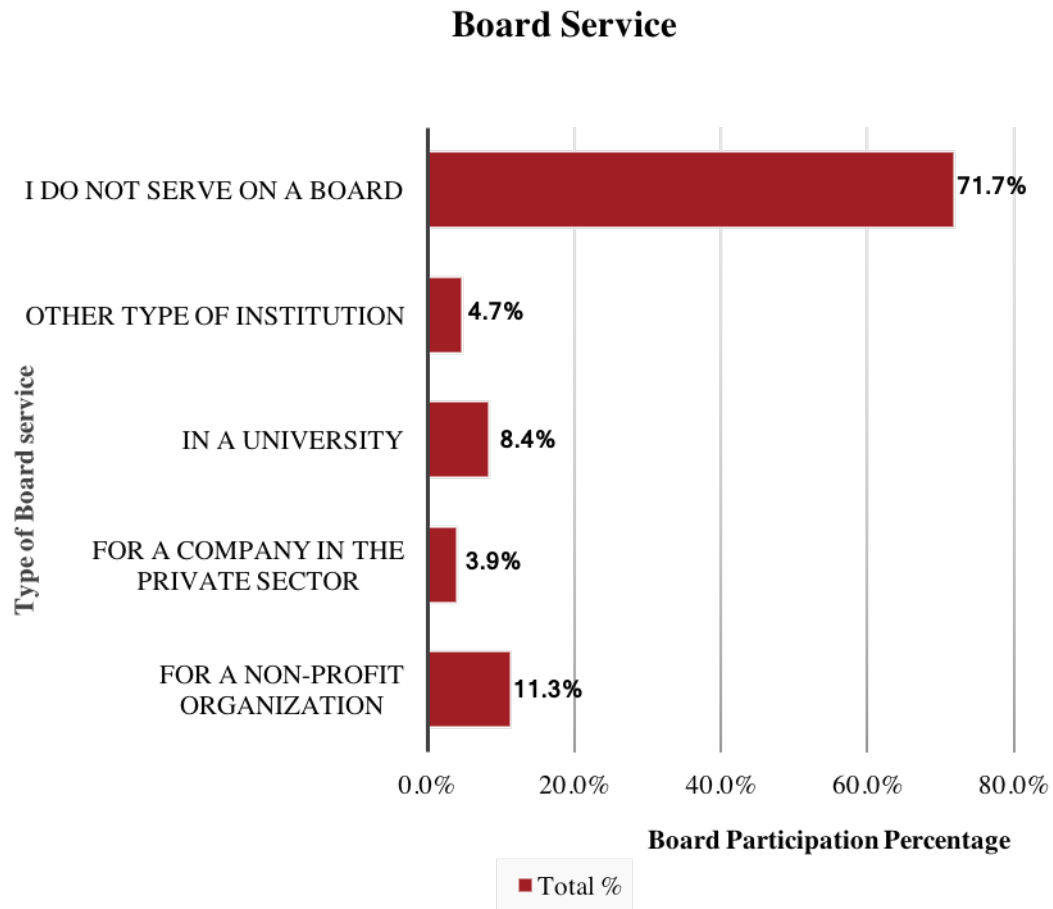


Figure 16. Scholars' Service on Boards of Directors.

*Source: thesis author.*

## Role in Board Participation

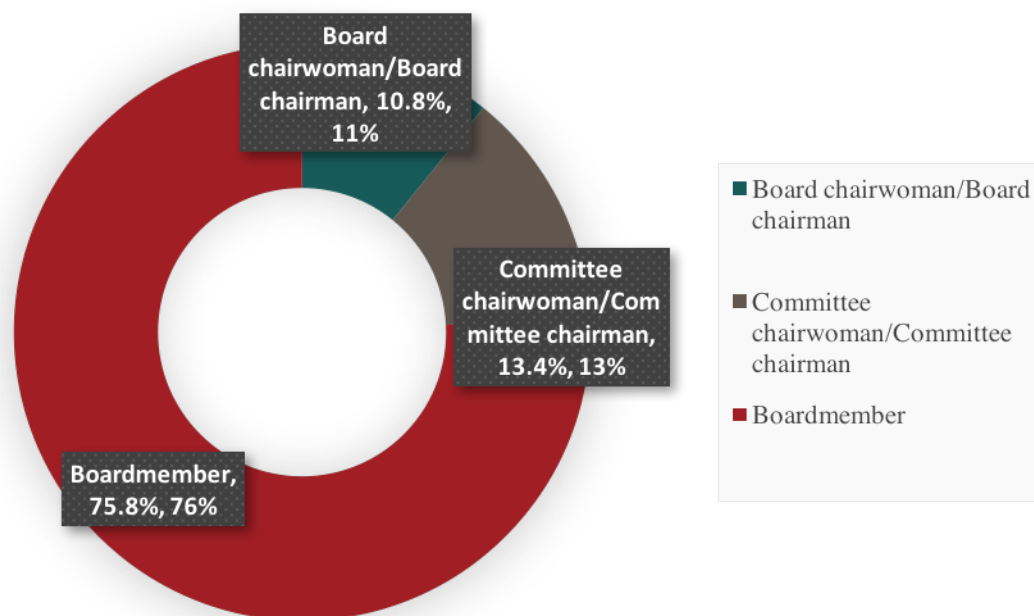


Figure 17. Scholars' Roles in Boards of Directors.

*Source: thesis author.*

### Participation as Volunteers

The survey question, "I volunteer on a regular basis," yielded a higher level of grantee engagement. Even though most of the participants responded that they do not volunteer, the distribution was more even: 52.4 percent do not volunteer, while 47.6 percent do (see Table 12).

Table 12. Scholars' Rates of Volunteering.

I Volunteer on a Regular Basis	Percentage	Number of Responses
Yes	47.6%	272
No	52.4%	299

*Source: thesis author.*

Table 13 and Figure 18 show that the largest share of scholars (47.8 percent) volunteer one to five hours a month, followed by a smaller group (26.8 percent) that volunteer between six and ten hours a month. The results of the number of hours that the respondents volunteer paints a picture of strong social engagement through volunteering.

Table 13. Scholars' Number of Hours Spent Volunteering (per month).

Number of Volunteer Hours	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Less than 1 hour	6.3%	17
1-5	47.8%	130
6-10	26.8%	73
11-15	10.3%	28
16-20	3.3%	9
More than 21	5.5%	15

*Source: thesis author.*

### Volunteering Percentage of Number of Hours Per Month

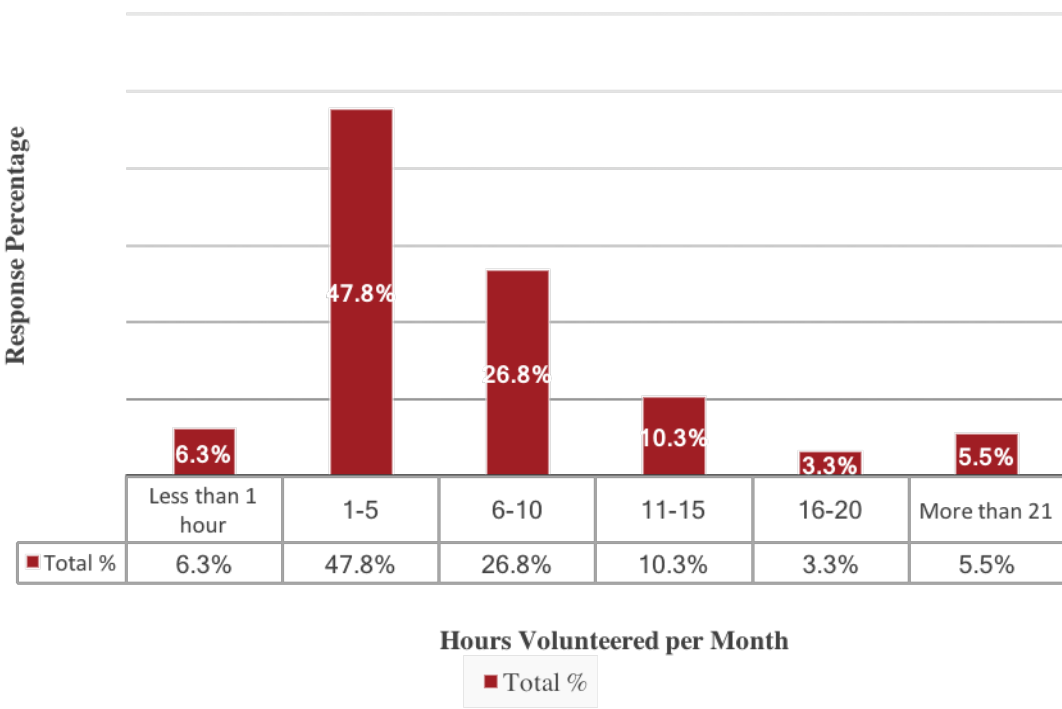


Figure 18. Scholars’ Number of Hours Spent Volunteering (per month).

Source: thesis author.

These numbers confirm the hypothesis that respondents demonstrate a strong level of social engagement and thus are making a difference in their communities. This is apparent in Table 14 and Figure 19, each of which illustrates the breakdown of volunteer work by sector.

Table 14. Scholars' Volunteering by Sector.

Volunteering by Sector	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Education	73.3%	200
Public governance/public service	21.2%	58
Medicine/public health	10.3%	28
Human spirituality/religion	19.4%	53
Human rights/civil rights	18.7%	51
International humanitarian aid	8.8%	24

Source: thesis author.

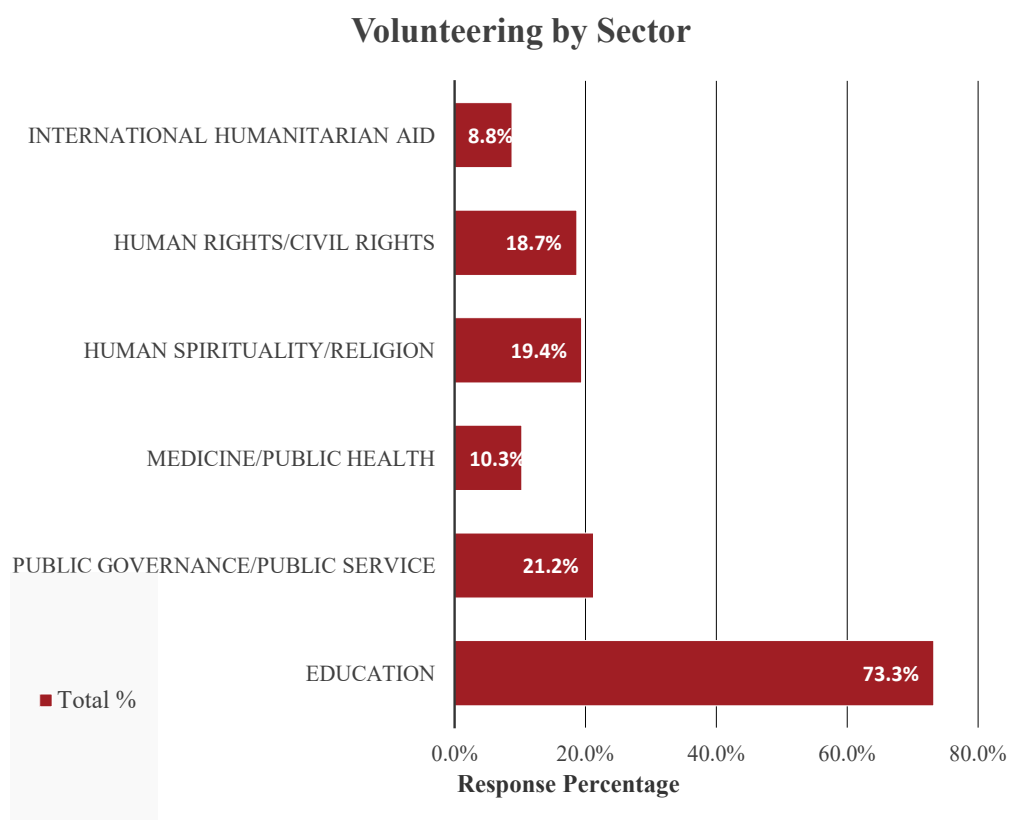


Figure 19. Scholars' Volunteering by Sector.

Source: thesis author.

The highest-ranking segment in which scholars volunteer is education, 73.3 percent. It suggests that because of their scholarship and participation in higher education training, respondents know the value of education and invest their volunteer time in this area. It also may reflect that most of the respondents work in universities as professors, which may result in extra time and volunteer work to benefit their institutions and students.

A common expectation is that investment in a scholarship is made with the hope that the impact will be wide, not only positively affecting the scholars' communities and countries, but extending to influence the LAC region. Confirming this supposition, respondents reported a significant level of volunteer work at the national level (82.7 percent) and international level (29.3 percent) (see Figure 20).

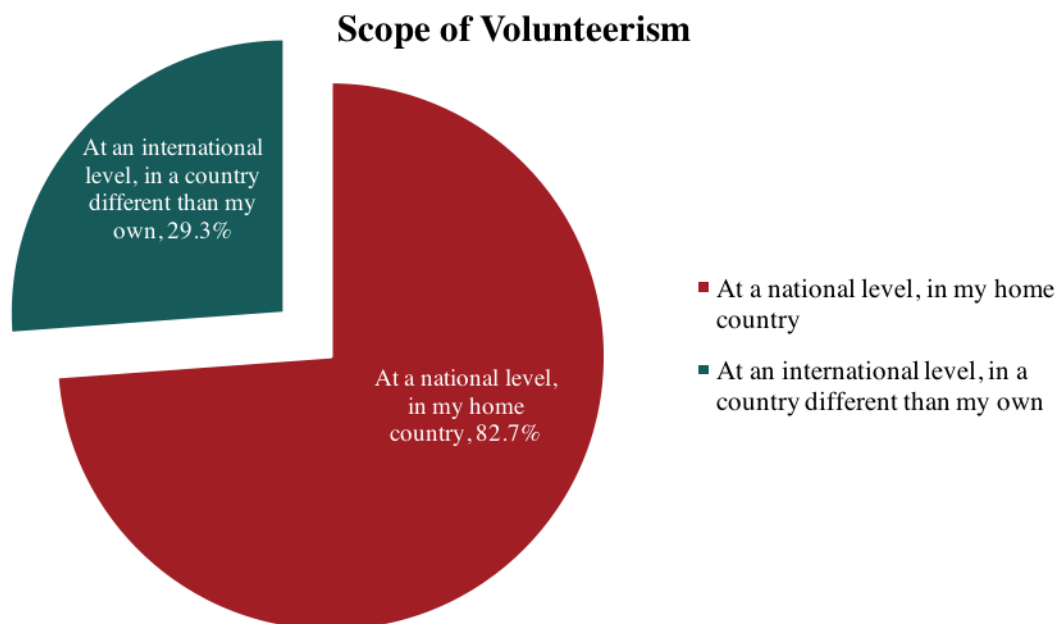


Figure 20. Scholars' Volunteering by Location.

*Source: thesis author.*

### Entrepreneurial Participation

The entrepreneurial drive and initiative of alumni is another element measured by Harvard University in its 2016 alumni survey. This indicator is equally pertinent to this thesis for defining the ways in which Laspau-administered scholars are transforming their home countries' workforce. The survey measured the extent to which Laspau-administered scholars participate in their home countries' innovation systems as well as whether they contribute to creating new jobs in their economies.

The majority of survey respondents reported that the education they received as a result of the Laspau-administered scholarship gave them entrepreneurial skills that they have used professionally. To the question, "My scholarship provided me with entrepreneurial skills that I have been able to use professionally," 62.3 percent responded with "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" (see Figure 21).

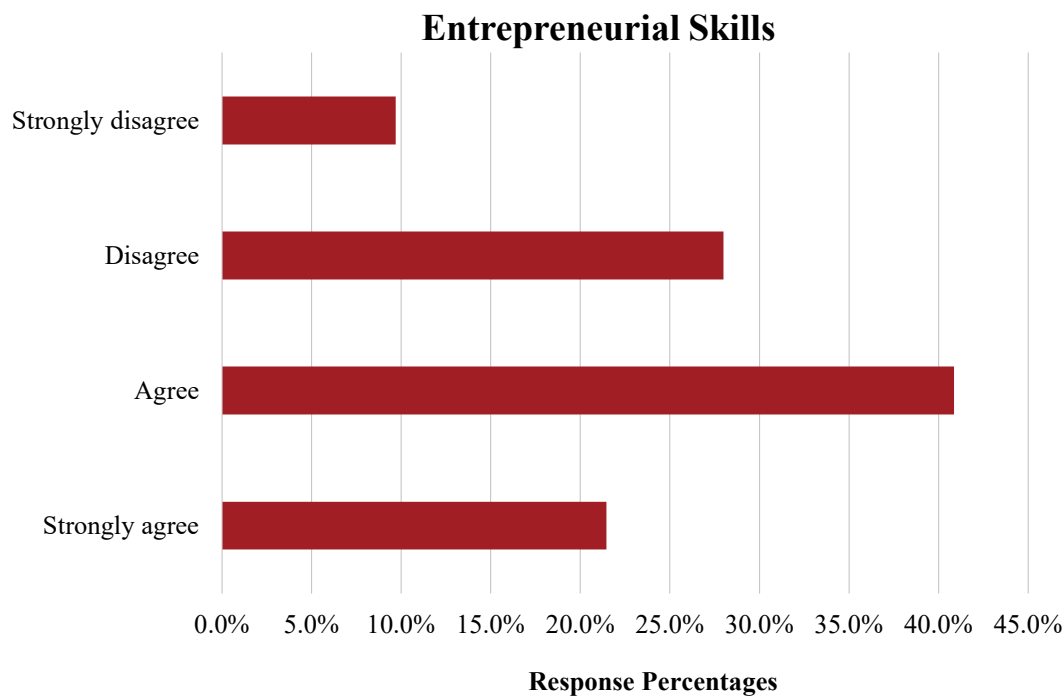


Figure 21. Scholars' Level of Agreement that Scholarships Provide Entrepreneurial Skills.

*Source: thesis author.*

Even though most of the survey respondents felt their scholarship had given them entrepreneurial skills, most (88.5 percent) also reported not starting their own companies after completing their scholarship education. However, 11.5 percent of respondents did start their own ventures that employ a total of approximately 431 individuals in enterprises spearheaded by Laspau-administered scholars. Table 15 shows the rates of startups.



Table 15. Scholars' Rates of Starting Their Own Company/Organization.

After completing my education, I started my own company/organization	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Yes	11.5%	62
No	88.5%	477

*Source: thesis author.*

Respondents have started ventures in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. The for-profit enterprises prevail, with 77 percent of ventures created for-profit businesses (see Table 16 and Figure 22).

Table 16. Type of Company/Organization Started after Scholarship Program.

Type of Venture Profit and Non-Profit	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Non-profit organization	23.0%	14
For-profit business	77.0%	47
Other	4.9%	3

*Source: thesis author.*

### Type of Venture

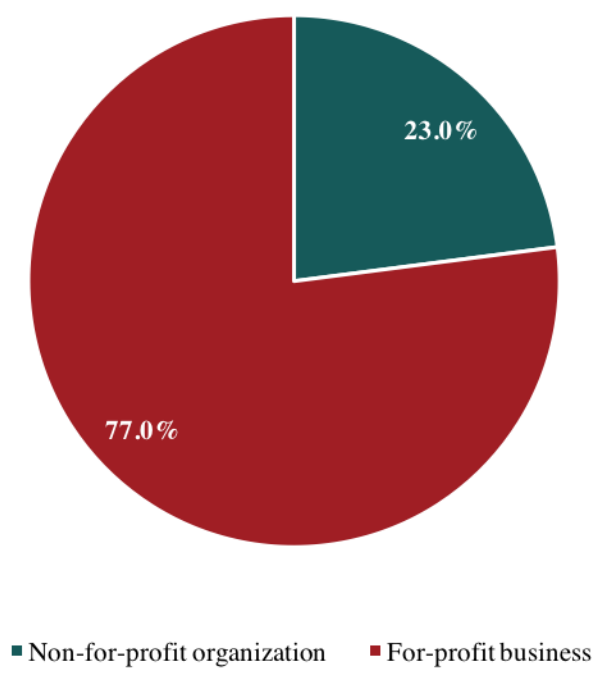


Figure 22. Type of Company/Organization Started After Scholarship Program.

Source: thesis author.

The industry sectors in which survey respondents have started enterprises are mainly in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), with 41 percent of responds indicating startups in these fields. This corresponds to the main areas of study of Laspau-administered scholars over the past ten years, that is, approximately 1,390 scholars (39 percent) among the total number of graduates from 2007 to 2017 studied programs related to STEM academic areas. This response also

corresponds with areas of economic demand in the LAC region.<sup>16</sup> Other responses were: Sales of Goods and Services (31.1 percent), Education (21.3 percent), and projects related to Public Service and Health (3.3 percent) (see Figure 23).

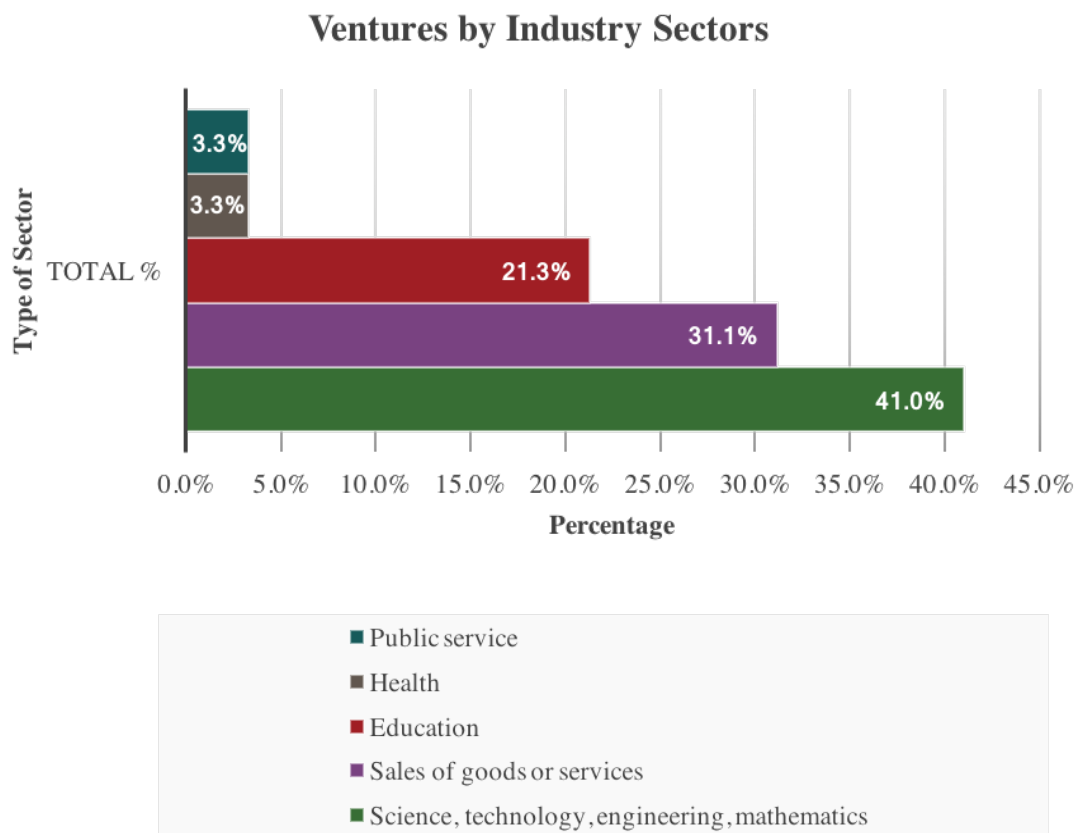


Figure 23. Industry Sectors of Ventures Started after Scholarship Program.

*Source: thesis author.*

Furthermore, the majority of survey respondents (85.9 percent) said the enterprises they started after graduating from their scholarship program continue to

<sup>16</sup> “Solving Latin America’s skills crisis,” Economist Online, accessed February 28, 2018, <https://www.economist.com/news/americas/21727941-many-workers-are-left-human-scrapheap-solving-latin-americas-skills-crisis>.

operate. Clearly, these Laspau-administered scholars continue to make entrepreneurial contributions to their home countries and economies.

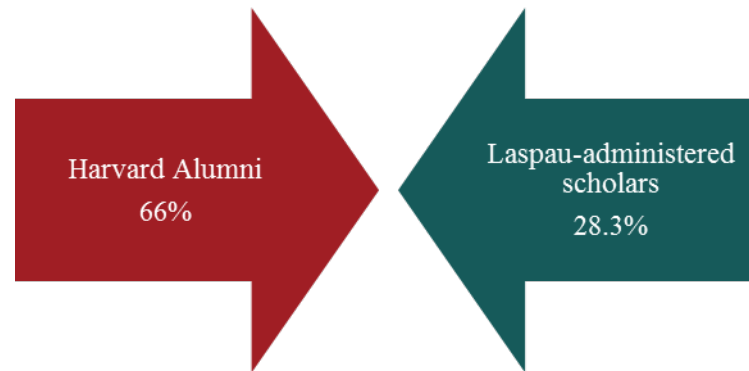
### Harvard and Laspau Survey Comparisons

A direct comparison cannot be made between the results of the Harvard alumni survey and this survey of Laspau's impact because the questions and indicators are quite different from one survey to the other. For example, the Harvard alumni survey is more sophisticated, and has more breadth and depth. The sample of Harvard alumni surveyed is much larger; Harvard sent its survey to all alumni for whom the university had a contact, some 244,835 in total. The questions of the Harvard alumni survey sought to measure more details on the impact that Harvard alumni were having in the aforementioned areas. Despite these differences, some parallels can be drawn. I compare the survey results as a reference point for Laspau's impact relative to how Harvard alumni are influencing societies around the world.<sup>17</sup> The results can be seen in Figures 24, 25, and 26.

---

<sup>17</sup> Harvard University, "Harvard Impact Study: Global Economic and Social Impact of Alumni," accessed February 28, 2018, <http://impact.community.harvard.edu/alumniimpact/>.

### Participation in Boards of Directors



**Harvard University** — 66 percent of all alumni have served on a Board of Directors.

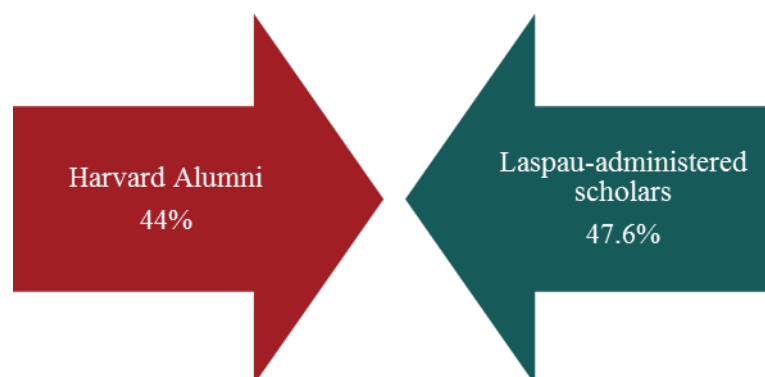
This number includes all Harvard graduates.

**Laspau Scholars**—28.3 percent of Laspau scholars have served on a Board of Directors.

Figure 24. Harvard Alumni Participation in Boards of Directors Compared with Laspau-Administered Scholars' Participation in Boards of Directors.

*Source: thesis author.*

## Volunteering



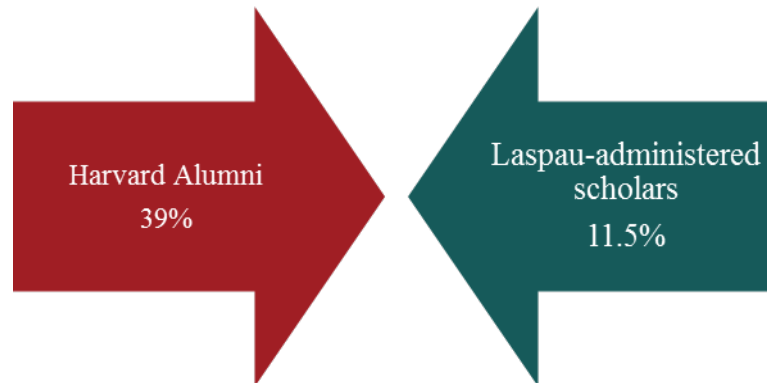
**Harvard University**—44 percent of Harvard University Alumni between the ages of 35 and 44 volunteer. This number includes all Harvard graduates.

**Laspau Scholars**—47.6 percent of Laspau scholars volunteer. The average age of respondents is 37.6 years old.

Figure 25. Harvard Alumni Volunteering Rate Compared with Laspau-Administered Scholars Volunteering Rate.

*Source: thesis author*

## Entrepreneurship



**Harvard University**—39 percent of Harvard alumni have founded a venture. This number includes all Harvard graduates.

**Laspau Scholars**—11.5 percent of Laspau scholars founded a venture after completing their scholarship.

Figure 26. Harvard Alumni Entrepreneurship Rate Compared with Laspau Scholars' Entrepreneurship Rate.

*Source: thesis author*

The survey results show that Laspau scholars are making significant contributions to their societies with their time and knowledge. They are social leaders who collaborate with institutions throughout the region and create new enterprises. It is noteworthy that

Laspau-administered scholars participate as board members even when in Latin America and the Caribbean this type of leadership is not prevalent. It is also notable to evaluate the Laspau scholars' volunteer rate against that of Harvard alumni and observe that the Laspau scholars have a higher rate of participation in this regard—a sign of their commitment that was likely enabled through their Laspau-administered scholarship. The somewhat lower levels of entrepreneurship indicate that the LAC economies are still developing, thus making it harder to establish new ventures. Given the results of these three indicators, I contend that Laspau-administered scholars actively show leadership and have a palpable social impact in the Latin America and Caribbean region.



## Chapter VIII

### Summary, Research Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter presents research conclusions derived from the survey results. It addresses the central hypothesis and core research questions and closes with recommendations for Laspau.

#### Summary

The objective of this thesis is to address whether, by creating access to quality higher education through the design and administration of its scholarship programs, Laspau has created access to quality jobs and to a better life for its scholars. The thesis also explores whether or not a scholarship opportunity creates social, economic, and academic leaders that have brought about change in their institutions, cities, countries, and the LAC region.

The thesis hypothesis explores the limitations of Laspau-administered scholarships as well. It assesses the contention that Laspau scholarships are generally not awarded to individuals from vulnerable social or economic backgrounds, and that the scholarship cycle is not being completed because it is missing a reintegration mechanism that enables the successful return to scholars' home countries and workforce. The hypothesis contends that because of these factors, Laspau-administered scholarships are having a diminished impact.

## Research Conclusions

Both parts of the thesis hypothesis were confirmed. First, Laspau-administered scholarships are indeed having positive and measurable impacts as shown in (1) and (2) below.

*(1) Laspau-administered scholarships create access to better job opportunities and an overall better life for scholars.*

As hypothesized, the scholarships have given students access to better job opportunities and higher salaries. A total of 59.1 percent of surveyed scholars reported that because of their scholarship they have a better job than their peers who remained and studied in their home countries. They also reported that because of the scholarship they had higher salaries (74.2 percent), and that they had acquired entrepreneurial skills that they now use in their professional lives (62.3 percent).

Because of the Laspau-administered scholarship, scholars have been recognized in various professional and academic ways. Some scholars have achieved high-level positions in academia (14.1 percent), others in the private sector (35.6 percent). Scholars have been invited to be part of decision-making groups or roles (62.3 percent), 53.8 percent have seen their salaries increased, and 49.6 percent have been promoted to positions of increased responsibility. The scholarship has afforded Laspau-administered scholars a better professional life.

Likewise, the scholarship impact is creating better lives for the scholars, and it is transcending generations. Over 35 percent of survey respondents stated that because of their scholarship, they are able to give their children a better education.

*(2) Laspau-administered scholarships have an impact at the individual level by developing social leaders, which continues through to the regional level with impacts on the Latin America and Caribbean region.*

Laspau-administered scholarships create benefits that span from the individual scholar to their institutions, communities, cities, countries, and the LAC region. Scholars reported (55.1 percent) that they are influencing their institutions by implementing effective strategies. Furthermore, participants report that after graduating from their scholarship program, they feel a greater sense of commitment to their home countries (77.7 percent) and to the LAC region (54 percent).

Likewise, scholars reported that the work they are doing is having a positive impact on their home countries (41.9 percent) and on LAC (77.8 percent). They are materializing their commitment with actual contributions through their work. Scholars show social leadership and social engagement in their desire to open scholarship access to future generations, with 91.6 percent stating that they are committed ensuring that younger generations have access to this opportunity.

This research determined that Laspau-administered scholarships have educated social, political, and academic leaders. Scholars are serving their communities by volunteering (47.6 percent), becoming members of boards of directors (28.3 percent), and creating employment opportunities by starting new enterprises (11.5 percent).

#### Areas for Improvement

This research identified two areas where Laspau-administered scholarships need improvement in order to realize greater impact. These are outlined in (1) and (2) below.

*(1) Reintegration of scholars into their home countries' workforces and societies is challenging.*

The largest share of respondents (45.2 percent) stated that they found it difficult to reinsert themselves professionally into their home countries' economies. They faced a host of difficulties, as revealed in respondents' answers listing 21 different challenges. The two top issues are lack of employment opportunities (55.3 percent) and lack of resources or equipment to continue their work or research (45.6 percent). These are both important points that will be addressed in the Recommendations.

The scholarship as an academic and economic investment loses one of its prime purposes if a scholar has difficulty reintegrating into his/her country's workforce; it becomes a wasted resource that has great value in a developing country. Scholars find it difficult to reintegrate professionally—no matter whether they come from a vulnerable social or economic status or from a more privileged status. This is the most pressing issue that Laspau should address with its partners. What is missing is a system whereby the scholars are connected with their home countries productive sector, to respond to its specific needs for qualified human capital.

*(2) The largest number of scholarships are not awarded to students from vulnerable social or financial backgrounds. However, Laspau-administered scholarships do create degrees of social mobility.*

The majority of Laspau-administered scholarships are awarded to individuals who do not consider themselves to be from a vulnerable social or economic background (49.9 percent). This means scholarships are not encouraging social mobility to the fullest extent, even though it is a common expectation for scholarship programs.

However, one of the most relevant findings of this research is that 46.3 percent of scholars from the past ten years reported being from a vulnerable or impoverished background. The percentage between the scholars who are vulnerable and those who are not is very close, a difference of 3.6 percent, which was much closer than anticipated. Thus, Laspau-administered scholarships promote access and social mobility to a wider socioeconomic cross-section of scholars than hypothesized.

The hypothesis contended that fewer scholarships are awarded to individuals who need access but are instead awarded to individuals who are from a higher social and economic standing. Yet the results confirmed that the large majority of participants, a staggering 95.3 percent, stated that without the scholarship they would have not been able to afford the cost of their academic programs. This makes clear that even though the majority of scholars who are awarded scholarships do not consider themselves to be from a low-income background, nevertheless these scholars do not come from the top of the social ladder either. It can be concluded that Laspau-administered scholarships promote degrees of access that in turn promote degrees of social and economic mobility.

Laspau-administered scholarships enable individuals who, were it not for the scholarship program, would not have been able to afford a quality education. This underscores the fact that access not only means helping only or mainly those who are impoverished, but also creating opportunities for access to quality education for any talented individual who needs financial help, period.

## Recommendations

Based upon this thesis research and the conclusions outlined above, I offer two recommendations that I believe will further the impact of Laspau-administered scholarships.

### *(1) Reinsertion Mechanisms*

As reported by participants, reintegration into the professional workforces of their home countries is a challenge. Among 21 reported reasons, the most problematic is that countries lack employment opportunities and up-to-date laboratories and equipment for academic scholars who wish to conduct quality research. Laspau can help maximize the impact of its scholarships by including, as part of their scholarships' cycle, defined processes that enable a successful return for scholars to their home countries.

To address this issue, the design of the scholarship program should include a mechanism that links the LAC countries' workforces with the Laspau-administered scholars. Laspau and the agency sponsoring the scholarship together could require that each scholarship applicant brings a problem or a project that is related to (a) their academic field of interest, (b) the program to which they want to apply, and (c) to the company, government office, or university in their home country. Then if the applicant receives a scholarship, he/she will work with the identified agency on the project and helping to resolve the problem will be the focus of their thesis or dissertation. If there is no thesis or dissertation requirement, the scholar will still have to commit to finding a way to collaborate with the chosen entity. Such collaboration will have defined and expected results, which might also include enabling the scholar to publish their work and, if mutually beneficial, even to return and work in the entity with which they collaborated.

The time period when a student is going through an academic program abroad is unique and privileged, and every advantage must be seized. Students have access to extraordinary resources in the form of professors, an academic community, and experts that are there to support their students' growth and academic endeavors. It is a period dedicated to thinking and creating, ideally harnessed to the objective of solving relevant problems within the LAC region.

This kind of collaboration can have multiple benefits. The scholars will start making contributions to their home countries' workforces while still studying abroad, while the LAC countries can begin to use the knowledge and talent of qualified human capital even before the scholars return. This is an important benefit, but also one of the biggest hesitations among sponsoring agencies that feel they are investing in a scholarship for a graduate program takes two years (if it is a master's) or four or more years (if it is a PhD) before seeing an effect on their countries and societies. By collaborating during the program, the benefits are almost immediate. This collaboration cultivates an active link to the home country, the scholar will have to be at minimum informed about the country's situation, and he/she will cultivate connections and even possibly gain work experience to refer to upon their return home.

Such a project will take planning on Laspau's part. This mechanism will have to be structured efficiently, and the work will involve sharing with sponsoring partners the benefits of this reincorporation mechanism. Nonetheless it is viable, and it could be a pilot in countries such as Colombia or Brazil, both of which are in the midst of a workforce conundrum: needing qualified human capital, while at the same time

struggling to reinsert students who are returning with completed masters and PhDs obtained from universities abroad because there is no established process.<sup>18</sup>

Systemic reintegration that is part of the scholarship design is an initiative that is aligned with Laspau's vision of creating knowledge-based societies. Creating this link will be valuable for scholars, sponsors, and Laspau itself, and it will maximize the impact of scholarships by connecting talent and expertise with the productive sector's need for qualified human capital.

*(2) Widely sharing Laspau's impact and expertise with LAC governments to influence higher education policy and promote further creation of impact-based scholarship programs.*

Laspau has a specific and unique role, that is, connecting access to opportunities for quality higher education with the needs of Latin American and Caribbean countries. Clearly Laspau has a major impact on its scholars through their administered scholarship programs. However, it is also important that Laspau share with governments and key stakeholders in the LAC region the relevance and influence of the scholarship programs as well as the challenges that scholars face upon their return home.

Laspau should share its expertise to promote the creation of impact-based scholarship programs that are awarded in areas of study that are also areas of economic and social growth for the Americas. In doing so:

- Scholars will study topics that are pertinent to the growth of their home countries.

Many scholarships in LAC are awarded based on an individual's merit and

---

<sup>18</sup> "Going North: The Student Mobility Outlook from Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela," *World Education News and Reviews*, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://wenr.wes.org/2017/09/going-north-the-student-mobility-outlook-from-latin-america>.



academic interests, regardless of what the person wants to study or do with their degree. This creates scholarships that do not have institutional or national influence. Instead, scholarships should be designed centered on a national or institutional goal and awarded by areas of study that are key for the social and economic growth of a country and its institutions.

- By being specialized in key areas of growth in the productive sectors, scholars should be able to reinsert professionally more easily, and the productive sector will have the needed human capital.
- Sponsoring agencies—governments, foundations, and universities that Laspau works with—can create scholarships specifically for purposes of greater social mobility and access, thereby even further expanding Laspau’s impact. Currently, not all Laspau-administered scholarships are focused on creating mobility and social access. For instance, some are centered on identifying and educating leaders and individuals of academic excellence. Awarding scholarships for excellence does have a social impact. However, if more scholarships are created with the specific purpose of promoting social and economic mobility in the Americas, Laspau will not only propel the academic talent and the leadership of the region but also influence the social and economic status quo, thus having a wider impact.

### Concluding Remarks

This research can serve as a foundation for further investigation into the retroactive effects of the Laspau-administered scholarships, to determine whether or not

the impact of the last ten years is a representative sample compared to the impact of the other 40 years of Laspau's work. I conclude that for the scholars who graduated in the last ten years between 2007 and 2017, access to Laspau-administered scholarships has meant access to better employment and an overall better life.

After more than 50 years, Laspau continues to be relevant as an organization because it offers access to opportunities for scholars that otherwise might not exist or be out of reach. Laspau-administered scholars are social leaders who are making contributions to the transformation of Latin America and Caribbean, seeking to evolve the countries of the region into knowledge-based societies as professionals who are experts in their fields. If the limitations cited here are addressed, Laspau can continue to be of service in the formation of leaders for years to come.

## Bibliography

### Works Cited

- “The Brain Drain.” *Economist Online*. <https://www.economist.com/node/10766106>.
- “The Cost of Sexism: Girl Power.” *Economist Online*. <https://www.economist.com/news/americas/21661804-gender-equality-good-economic-growth-girl-power>.
- Gertler, Paul. *Impact Evaluation in Practice*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2011.
- “Going North: The Student Mobility Outlook from Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela.” *World Education News and Reviews*. September 2017. <https://wenr.wes.org/2017/09/going-north-the-student-mobility-outlook-from-latin-america>.
- Harvard University. “Harvard Impact Study: Global Economic and Social Impact of Alumni.” <http://impact.community.harvard.edu/alumniimpact/>.
- Harvard University. “Harvard Impact Study: Global Economic and Social Impact of Alumni. Volunteerism.” <http://impact.community.harvard.edu/alumniimpact/#Volunteerism>.
- “How Much Does the TOEFL Cost?” English is Simple. <http://englishsimple.org/about-the-toefl/toefl-cost/>.
- International Institute of Education (IIE). “Social Justice and Sustainable Change: The Impacts of Higher Education: International Institute of Education Online Report.” 2017. <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/IFP-Alumni-Tracking-Study/About>
- Laspau. “Consulting Project for the Strategic Planning of LASPAU. Deliverable #1.” Internal document, unpublished.
- Laspau. “Fulbright Faculty Development, Ecology, and Cost-Share Programs. A Survey of Alumni 1976-2000.” Internal document, unpublished.
- Laspau. “Mission and Vision.” <http://www.laspau.harvard.edu/mission-and-vision>.
- Laspau. Salesforce Report. Internal document, unpublished.

Lasgau. "Understanding the Current Situation. Context for 1992-1993 LASPAU Strategic Planning." Internal document, unpublished.

OECD. *Education at a Glance 2016: OECD Indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2016.

Organization of American States. "Knowledge-based society."  
[http://www.oas.org/en/topics/knowledge\\_society.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/topics/knowledge_society.asp).

Parker, Kim and Cary Funk. "Gender Discrimination Comes in Many Forms for Today's Working Women." Pew Research Center Online. December 14, 2017.  
<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/12/14/gender-discrimination-comes-in-many-forms-for-todays-working-women/>.

"Solving Latin America's Skills Crisis." *Economist Online*. <https://www.economist.com/news/americas/21727941-many-workers-are-left-human-scrapheap-solving-latin-americas-skills-crisis>.

"What it Takes to Lead." *Harvard Gazette*. <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2011/02/what-it-takes-to-lead/>.

World Bank. *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education: Directions in Development*. Washington, D.C: World Bank, 2002.

#### Works Consulted

Castro, Cláudio De Moura, and Daniel C. Levy. *Myth, Reality, and Reform: Higher Education Policy in Latin America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.

Kirkpatrick, Donald L., and James D. Kirkpatrick. *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2006.

Kusek, Jody Zall, and Ray C. Rist. *Ten Steps to a Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation System: A Handbook for Development Practitioners*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004.

Lyons, Thomas S. *Social Entrepreneurship: How Businesses can Transform Society*. Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013.

Martel, Mika, and Rajika Bhandari. *Social Justice and Sustainable Change: The Impacts of Higher Education*. New York: Institute of International Education, 2016. See also: <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/IFP-Report-1>.