

Teaching to Give

November 21, 2007

Dwight Burlingame describes the study of philanthropy at IUPUI

Duration

3:00

Transcript

A lot of people have historically tended to minimize the role that philanthropy has played, mainly because they viewed philanthropy as the rich giving to the poor and that the rich attempted to do this by something called social control, to keep them in their place. That is a very, very narrow understanding of philanthropy, and one that, if you go back historically to the Greek and Roman societies, you will know that the definition of the word itself means love of humankind.

The major involvement really in philanthropy is smaller organizations in your local church, through participation as a volunteer. We have some hundred-million volunteers in this country. And, all of that is contributing to the role that philanthropy plays. I think it's important to remember that we all are philanthropists. And, we do this in different scale, of course.

The model that we have developed here is based upon an understanding of the role that philanthropy plays in society, and why we have it. Why do we have non-profit organizations in our traditions? And, one of the best places to prepare people to think about that is in the liberal arts. Contributions that sociology, history, psychology, religious studies, philosophy can make to our understanding of "why philanthropy", and answering those questions, is really important. And, then, matching that with the non-profit management program in the School of Public & Environmental Affairs, which will provide that avenue.

We have a major research department now, and the signature research project that they are involved in is the studying of the volunteering and giving, something we call COPS which is the Center on Philanthropy Panel Study, which is connected to the ongoing PSID study at the University of Michigan, which is initially set up to study the issue of poverty and unemployment. So, having the questions on giving and volunteering on this panel study is really significant, because it allows us to explore new ground in the reasons of why people give and what are the results. So, if a family member leaves a household, we can track if they've had a family which has been philanthropically oriented. We will be able to see what happens to the children, compared to those who don't.