



THE CORELLA & BERTRAM F.
BONNER FOUNDATION



Bonner Community Engagement Framework

The Bonner Program rests on a number of developmental models, including for students, partnerships, and even faculty engagement. At the risk of oversimplifying things, the chart below provides a framework that explains how we view campus community engagement and how it has evolved over the years, and where we find our next challenges and opportunities. We then describe the components of the framework with a historical lens.

Bonner Community Engagement Framework



Partners (Focus)	Service Provider (Individuals)		Collaborative (Systems)	Campaign (Policies)
Student Roles	Client Service	Program Coordinator	Organization Capacity Building	Advocacy
Tasks	e.g., tutoring, serving soup, etc.	Recruiting, training, and supervising volunteers	1) Volunteer Management 2) Program Development 3) Fundraising 4) Communication 5) Research: CBR & Policy Options	e.g., letter writing, community organizing, etc.
Program Structures	Clearinghouse/Directory Listing of Opportunities (online database)			
	Site/Issue-Based Teams			
	Bonner Program (four year training & increased roles culminating in capstone project)			
Academic Structures	Service-Learning & Community-Based Research Courses			
	Issue-Based Academic Pathways (courses, service internships, CBR, and capstone project)			
	Competency-based Certificates / Fellowships (courses, service internships, and client-defined projects)			
Staffing Structures	Campus-Wide Center			
	Student-Led Coalition of Projects			
	Issue- and Competency-Based Programs or Pathways Housed in Departments, Centers, or Hubs			

The Developmental Model and Rising Expectations

The Bonner Program is built along a four-year developmental model for students. This model translates into a scaffolded set of expectations and experiences, both in the context of community service and engagement and within students' academic and co-curricular learning. At the core of this model is the opportunity for students to work intensively over each semester in the academic year, and often supplemented by full-time summer internships as well. A student can even stay with the same partner – typically a school, nonprofit organization, or government agency– over multiple years, taking on increased leadership, program, and management roles. Even when a student moves to different sites, s/he is expected to grow. Through intensive training, reflection, and advising, students develop and refine their "Community Learning Agreements" and positions each year.

From the perspective of the community partner, this means that these entities can count on having dedicated time from trained and skilled student volunteers. These students can begin to lead other volunteers or coordinate programs. Over time, they can take on projects that build the capacity of the agency – developing or expanding programs, recruiting or managing other people, writing grants or raising funds, building websites or social media campaigns, doing marketing, planning and running events, and even doing needed research. With the help of campus staff and faculty, any of these roles might be tied to academic study, coursework, and credit.

Additionally, from the perspective of the partner, a connection with a Bonner Program and/or center means that the agency might have a team of campus volunteers, including a mix of underclass and upperclass students, as well as a faculty partner. Hence, as depicted in the graphic above, the site might have a few volunteers (freshmen and sophomores) engaging in direct client service, and coordinated by an experienced student volunteer. Other veteran students might be doing both direct work with clients and capacity building projects. Still others might be doing research and public education. Back on campus, this work might be linked to an entire department or to an interdisciplinary team of faculty.

This structure thus provides an opportunity for innovation in the curriculum itself in ways that position the faculty and institution as long-term sustained collaborators with external partners. To support students to learn and successfully carry out capacity building and research projects, faculty may need to build this work into course assignments or academic pathways. This might involve the development of sequenced coursework (or independent study or theses). Faculty themselves might also link it to their research agendas and teaching, becoming engaged public scholars. In so doing, they can collaborate with partners to seek and secure grants and funding.

This is the vision for integrated community engagement, teaching, and learning inherent in the Bonner Program model. The Foundation and network supports those involved with building the infrastructure, approaches, and know-how to make this vision a reality.

1) COOL focus on mobilizing student movement led by students

When we started COOL (the Campus Outreach Opportunity League) way back in 1984, very few campuses had anything more than a directory of volunteer service opportunities. This “clearinghouse model” was usually staffed part-time by a staff member housed in student affairs or a campus chaplain’s office. The first stages of the work were about creating a visible student-led infrastructure for sustained engagement. Our core strategy at COOL was to get students who were doing service to form a coalition of projects and then combine forces to recruit and place students in site- or issue-based service projects through a coalition of projects model, while also advocating resources (program funding, vans, space, and a recent grad staff position we called a “Green Dean”). We saw our work as reviving a student movement that had flourished at the turn of the 20th century when there were 700 campus YMCAs across the country whose primary focus was service. Our argument was that contrary to the reputation of being the “me generation,” students are idealistic and want to serve. What was missing were the structures to support that service. This holds true to this day. This pattern of growth and change is reflected in the field of civic engagement scholarship and practice across hundreds of campuses.

2) Campus Compact focus on service-learning and campus-wide centers

Beginning in 1985, Campus Compact began leveraging presidential leadership to build on and expand the experiential service learning work that was being led at that time by the National Society of Internships and Experiential Education. We viewed this as a top-down, faculty-centric strategy with a focus on service learning pedagogy that dominated the field for the next 20+ years. Such an approach was helpful in providing senior leader support for the value of service and community engagement, linking it to institutional mission. The first sign I heard of a shift in approach was at an American Association of Higher Education conference where Liz Hollander and John Saltmarsh openly asked the question: “service learning for what?” That’s when I first began hearing the term civic engagement and a greater focus on other ways of addressing community issues and a recognition by national leaders of the limits of service learning as pedagogy.

3) Bonner Program as a four-year service-based scholarship and student development program

COOL went to a Foundation when Wayne Meisel, COOL’s founding director, became the founding president at the Bonner Foundation in 1989. Neither Mr. or Mrs. Bonner were able to complete college and so had an interest in funding college scholarships for high need students. Wayne was able to persuade them to structure the Bonner Scholarship so that these funds replaced the work-study line item in a student’s financial aid package so they could afford to spend 10 hours a week engaged in community service work and pursue summer service internships for two or three summers. The 60+ campuses with Bonner Programs provide funding to a cohort of between 10 to 40 students per year, or 40-160 per campus. These 3,000 students nationally, in turn, have become a catalyst for changing the culture of service on their campuses. At schools which lacked a student-led coalition of projects, the Bonners helped form that student

leadership infrastructure that mobilizes other students. Their questions and insights in classrooms continue to inspire faculty to consider how they can incorporate community service placements and projects into their courses. And, equally important to us, the consistent, week after week, semester after semester engagement by Bonner students with local community partner organizations has raised their expectations of what a college student can do to support their programs and operations. We have a lot of resources on the Bonner wiki for schools who have or want to start a Bonner Program. In this current school year have had more than 40 inquiries from schools interested in our model and potentially starting a program. Five schools who will begin their Bonner Programs in Fall 2017: Averett University, Capital University, IUPUI, Kentucky Wesleyan College, and Rutgers University-Newark.

4) Community-Based Research as a form of service-learning

Doing research at the request of community partners wasn't new in 1997. It was being practiced and written about a few faculty leaders, including John Gaventa at UT-Knoxville, Phil Nyden at University of Loyola-Chicago, Dick Couto at the University of Richmond, and faculty at Cornell University. But it wasn't emphasized in the literature or training by groups like Campus Compact or NSIEE. So, after a failed CBR funding proposal to Learn & Serve America in 1994, we tried again and received our first of three 3-year grants (note: after revising our language in the 1997-2000 grant cycle to emphasize that CBR was a form of service learning, which shows how unfamiliar the approach was back then).

Our first grant supported a diverse group of 15 public and private colleges and universities — a community college, a number of small liberal arts colleges, a few research 1s and an ivy league school — which received mini-grant and gathered regularly to figure out how to incorporate community-driven research into courses. The lessons learned from this initial grant were eventually shared in 2003 in a special edition of the Michigan Journal and a book titled CBR and Higher Education: Principles and Practices. The second 2000-03 grant spread this model through local and regional community-campus partnerships involving multiple campuses and community partners in each location. [I'll talk about more about this below since this approach seems the most similar to your Community Solutions Lab idea.] The third 2006-09 grant spread CBR to new regions of the country and funded new approaches. These innovation included two related efforts in public policy CBR: PolicyOptions Issue Briefs and the State of the State of Latinos in Washington State. To find community groups interested in public policy required reaching out to collaboratives of various kinds (i.e., alliances, coalitions, commissions, networks) that were engaged in network-based system change and therefore wanted to learn about what was working in other communities (model programs or evidence-based practices) and the public policies that impacted their work. Another book, Community-Based Research: Teaching for Community Impact, grew out of this third grant.

You can find these and other resources on CBR and PolicyOptions on our wiki. [side note: despite encouragement from Phil Nyden and others who we brought together in 2003 as our second grant was winding down, we chose not to form a national CBR network on the belief that

CBR should and would be incorporated into the portfolio of all the existing national organizations supporting higher education's community engagement. Fortunately, this happened.]

5) Capacity Building and Collaboratives

In 2010, we launched our New Jersey VISTA program that focused on leveraging higher education to support the capacity building needs of local, regional, and statewide anti-poverty groups. This NJ-based program has gone through several phases that have and continue to inform our national Bonner strategies.

One of the goals with our initial VISTA program was to develop local community-information hubs. This approach built on our experience with the Trenton Center for Community-Campus Partnerships and a similar network in Washington, DC (both funded through our second 2000-03 Learn & Serve grant). Our initial approach utilized a database-driven website to power the local PolicyOptions news and information bureaus staffed by student interns. This proved challenging in a number of ways, so we are now in the early stages of modifying our wiki-based platform to share a) issue briefs (which we've had in place since 2007), b) a directory of organizations, c) links to information sources, and d) a meetings calendar.

Another major goal has been to identify and partner with local and regional collaboratives. As we've gained experience in this area over the last few years, we've linked to or begun to develop tools and resources to support campus efforts to link students and faculty to support the capacity building needs of these collaboratives. For instance, we created a general Capacity-Building Opportunities Form to support initial brainstorming with community partners. We are now working on a Capacity-Building Project Request Profile to be used in recruiting faculty and students to take on the projects. We then anticipate creating a generic project management plan tool of some sort. In addition, we found that there are four types of collaboratives, each with a different goal and structure: cooperate, coordinate, collaborate, collective impact. We then adapted a self-assessment instrument that can help assess areas of managing the collaborative that need improving.

In 2013, we took these ideas and the tools and began making a concerted effort to push schools in the national Bonner network to engage in a broader range of capacity-building projects with community partners, and to expand their community partnerships beyond service providers to include collaboratives of various shapes and sizes. This work still is on-going, but one thing has become clear: there's a big difference between placing students in a direct service site and working with a community partner to develop a capacity building project that students can complete alone or in a team in a semester or school year or summer. We've learned how to do this for community-based research projects, so we understood the challenges. But, I now think this will be the biggest challenge as we seek to increase substantially the number of capacity-building projects students complete as part of a course or internship or capstone experience.

6) Issue- and Competency-Based Pathways

In 2002, we began experimenting with how to adapt the four-year Bonner developmental model for community engagement into the academic curriculum. With FIPSE funding, we worked with five campuses to pilot different approaches for integrating service and academics through a multi-year approach. Most of the schools established some form of civic engagement minor or concentration or certificate. The lessons learned were published by AAC&U in [Civic Engagement at the Center: Building Democracy through Integrated Cocurricular and Curricular Experiences](#).

In 2010, we began the [Bonner High Impact Initiative](#) where we brought together teams from campuses in our network for three-years of planning, implementing, and sharing how they could integrate high-impact learning practices with high-impact community partnership practices. We developed guides and shared campus examples links to other resources on our wiki. In addition, in 2013 Ariane Hoy and Mathew Johnson co-edited [Deepening Community Engagement in Higher Education: Forging New Pathways](#). The 19 chapters of this publication covered a wide range of Bonner experiences, lessons learned, and aspirations over the years.

Out of this came one of our current priorities, which is a focus on community-engaged capstone projects and building the academic and co-curricular pathways that lead to them. We worked with AAC&U on the [Fall 2016 edition of the Diversity & Democracy Digest](#) on this topic. In many ways, the intent of this publication was to name the community-engaged version of Signature Work (to use AAC&U's term for capstones) rather than to profile a series of successful models. That's the work ahead of us. What we do see emerging are two approaches: [issue-based and competency-based](#). We share more on this goal and profile specific examples of each approach on our wiki.

One of the most appealing features of these emerging approaches is that students and campuses are able to provide much higher levels of capacity-building support for community partners. By definition, a capstone project is the highest level of service a student could provide. Our hope is that having defined pathways leading to capstone projects in the senior year (and often project-based service in the junior or even sophomore year for some students) will provide community partners with a steady stream of reliable, trained, and well supported student interns taking on critical capacity-building opportunities at their agencies.

At the same time, defining pathways that integrate student coursework, service internships, and capstone projects offers a clearer way to link the disparate and disconnected community engagement efforts on campuses big and small. Some students will want to go deep on a particular issue, learning everything they can and trying different ways to engage on that issue over their college career. These students will gravitate towards the issue-based pathways, which are usually offered in the form of academic concentrations that combine coursework from multiple disciplines related to the issue. Other students won't care so much about a specific issue but want to hone their competencies in a specific area: policy research, non-profit management,

communications, community development, volunteer management and leadership. These pathways are taking the form of fellowships or certificates and are offered by specific departments (though that might necessarily be the case over time for some of the skill areas, such as research).

7) Social action and community organizing

As you know, we have only this year begun to develop a strategy for integrating social and community organizing training into the resources and networking we offer in the Bonner network. We've had workshops and speakers on this topic many times over the years, but did not see a clear path for making it more prominent. I believe the course-based approaches that Scott and others have developed could work on many campuses in our network, though recruiting faculty to teach these courses may be a challenge. Where that is the case, we'll work with schools to develop the co-curricular, fellowship model we found at Northwestern or the hybrid models emerging at Emory & Henry College and Stanford University. You'll see these written up on our [wiki](#), too.

Additional Thoughts to Consider

Here are three additional components of our framework for campus community engagement:

- *Mobilize students to play a central role*

Needless to say, we think campus should create the programs and pathways that will tap and channel students to play a central role in all aspects of what you're proposing. To address the short-term nature of student involvement, the Bonner Program recruits and supports a cohort of 5-40 students per class who participate for four years. The Bonners form a core group of 20-160 student leaders with training and time to take on important tasks as they develop and move through the four-year program. We are working with schools to establish a whole series of issue- and competency-based pathways so other students who find their passion for community engagement can participate in structured, developmental opportunities while receiving academic and internship credit where possible.

- *Community vs Campus Structures*

We are also identifying external structures for educating and engaging students on community-based issues. We recognize the need to identify community-based organizations and collaboratives that working on these same issues so they can provide students with an opportunity to serve at multiple levels while also tapping community partner staff to support students as co-educators. So, students who enroll in a food security minor or concentration (which packages together academic course work, service internships, undergraduate research, and capstone projects on the issue) will have a more educationally and experimentally rich experience if there are connected to a community-based food security collaborative (that

networks the various food-related organizations working collectively to solve food-related challenges).

Therefore, campuses need to identify an array of local service providers, collaboratives, and campaigns working to address the pressing community issues, recognizing that helping build their capacity to accomplish their missions is both a means and end for our community-campus partnership.

- *Local Information Hub*

To be informed and effective, community and campus members working on social change need easy access to the data, information, and knowledge that will inform their understanding of the issues they are facing and that will inform their decisions on how to address them. Every community would benefit from a web-based information hub that answers key questions or links to resources they need to address issues or opportunities in their communities. This includes students who are learning the issue for the first time and need historical and other information to understand the context of the work, as well as local leaders who may know a lot about the issue locally but don't necessarily have the time to keep up with what's other groups are doing locally or what's happening nationally or internationally that may inform their work.

Google searches aren't sufficient. Neither are the local papers. The closest thing I've seen are the local wikis that have been inspired by and supported by the Davis Wiki, especially when considering their grassroots, open source, user-generated approach. This is especially important because we think this will allow such a site to serve both as a source of information but also a vehicle for sharing data, information, and knowledge by community residents, organizations, as well as faculty and students.

Our approach here is to build a platform that help users find information answers the following questions and on a wide range of issues:

- data on the problem: how bad?, trends?
- what's been tried in the past?
- what's being done now? what organizations are operating which programs with whose funding? what policies are in place and which initiatives are underway?
- what works? what are model programs, best practices, and successful policies working elsewhere successfully to address the issue?
- who are the key organizations and individuals? a directory of organizations, programs, and people?
- what's happening? a common calendar of meetings related to non-profit and government organizations in the area
- what are the information sources? we need links to data and other sources of information. We also need a place to share academic and community-based research that is relevant to people working on an issue.

That's the vision behind our PolicyOptions initiative and we hope PolicyOptions wiki will give us the flexibility and ease of user entry/editing/searching to allow the site evolve as an effective community information hub. Other examples include the Buffalo Commons which is a *“repository for action-oriented research created and maintained by Partnership for Public Good and Cornell in Buffalo. This hub of knowledge, ideas, and tools for citizen engagement is a modern expression of a democratic ideal — a shared resource in which every member of the community has an equal interest.”*