



## THE BONNER SCHOLARS PROGRAM

### A FOUR YEAR COMMUNITY SERVICE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM MODEL

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## I. Introduction

The goal of the Bonner Scholars Program is to give young people an *access to education* and an *opportunity to serve*. It seeks to identify students who have both a high financial need and a desire to continue their service while in college. The Bonner Scholarship is a leading example of a new breed of scholarship — *a community service scholarship* — which helps students help themselves by helping others.

The Bonner Scholars Program grew out of the recent rebirth of student interest and activism in community service and social justice. With notable exceptions, most of the students who have taken on leadership roles in this movement have been able to make significant commitments of time and energy to service because they did not have to work to put themselves through college. Students who receive financial aid have been handicapped in pursuing their passion to serve because their financial packages require that they work on a regular basis during the school year (approximately ten hours per week) *and* save at least \$1,000 from summer earnings.

Bonner Scholars are selected based on their financial need, their academic abilities, and the commitments they have made in their communities and at home. The majority of the Bonner Scholars come from the lowest 20% of the economic spectrum. Many of these students, based on the financial aid formula established by the Department of Education, have “zero parental contribution,” meaning that their family has absolutely no financial means to pay for their schooling. Fully a third of the 1500 Bonner Scholars are the first in their family to attend college. Many Bonner Scholars would not be attending college were it not for the scholarship.

But, for all Bonner Scholars, their lives as students are different from others who have come before them. In the past, low income students entered college with a desperate need to earn money for school and often times had to send funds back home. As a result, while students of means are able to rush to campus activities and social events, many of these lower income students are required to find jobs, work twenty hours a week, and serve wealthier students as cafeteria workers, dorm crew, handing out towels at the gym, or checking out library books. In contrast, as Bonner Scholars students can enter into the collegiate life with recognition, support, and purpose. There is an irony in the complaints logged by the wealthier students when they claim that it is not fair that they cannot be Bonner Scholars because their parents make too much money. In these ways, this group of low income students, many of whom have never

been recognized for their commitments or achievements, come to the campus not as marginalized students, but as honored scholars who have the immediate attention of the faculty, administration, other students, and local community leaders.

The original Bonner Scholars colleges were small, mostly private, liberal arts colleges in the Appalachian region. This is a region of the country that has experienced a variety of people reaching out to it in an attempt to address its needs. Outside agents of change are an important resource for this region, but there is only so much that an outsider can accomplish. The Bonner Scholars Program was designed, in part, to identify, support, and encourage indigenous leadership in this part of the country. Rather than encouraging outsiders to come in to help, the Foundation has tried to encourage and uphold student leadership to serve and lead in their own communities. Service and leadership by these students has an authority, sensitivity, and ability that is unique, powerful, and transformational.

After each institution was invited to be considered for the program, Foundation staff made a formal presentation of the newly developed Bonner Scholars Program not only to the college presidents and development offices, but also to current students, faculty, administrators and community leaders who would be central to the program's success. This strategy was central to our approach because the Bonner Scholars Program is based on a transformational model for the student, the campus and the community, and therefore it is necessary to have the different groups not only supportive but involved. Our hope was that by reaching out to each of these groups, they would feel the kind of ownership necessary to keep them engaged and understand their leadership role within the program.

The Bonner Scholars Program has a broad and liberating *reinterpretation* of what constitutes service by applicants to the program. We ask the colleges to not only look at applicants participation in the community service clubs or volunteer at the local community service agency, but also what responsibilities they have had at home as the primary child care provider, caregiver to a grandparent or other elderly relative, or breadwinner to help put food on the table. While students who have assumed these responsibilities may not traditionally have considered themselves as "volunteers," they have indeed demonstrated a clear commitment of service to others in the spirit of the Bonner Scholars Program.

Below we outline the Foundation's vision for how the Bonner Scholars Program operates as a four year program to transform the lives of individual students. In Part II below, we outline a developmental process beginning with

*Preparation*, followed by *Action*, *Reflection*, *Discussion*, and finally back at the beginning with *Renewed Action*. In the Part III, we outline how this process can be integrated into a four year program which corresponds to the academic life-cycle of a college student: Freshman Year - *Exploration*; Sophomore Year - *Excellence*; Junior Year - *Example*; Senior Year - *Expertise*. In both parts, we include program implementation strategies designed to maximize the transformational potential of the program for each student.

While the description below does not reflect any single campus program nor is it necessarily appropriate for every student, it draws from our experience with all 22 campuses over the past five years, as well as the our involvement in campus community service organizing over the past nearly two decades. Our hope is that it provides a useful framework and basis of comparison as you evaluate and plan for your program's future.

## **II. The Bonner Scholars Program as a Developmental Process**

### **A. Preparation**

#### *Recruitment*

In this day and age, colleges tend to recruit two types of students: those whose parents can fully pay their way and those who have excelled either academically or athletically. The Bonner Scholars Program has added a new criteria to the recruitment process at participating colleges. Admissions offices are encouraged to work with the Bonner Scholars Program on their campus to help identify and recruit students, especially low income students, who have taken on service leadership roles at home or in the community. In fact, the colleges have taken this recruitment message beyond just a presentation of the Bonner Scholars Program, but instead advertise to all potential applicants of the full range of service opportunities available on their campus.

Some institutions have instituted a number of creative ways to reach out to potential Bonner Scholars. Several institutions require that students return to their high school and at least one other youth organization (such as church youth group, Girl Scouts, YMCA) to present their experience about the Bonner Scholars Program and recruit other high school students to apply to the college with support from the program. One institutions has developed a service award from their Bonner Scholars Program to give out to local high school students in recognition of their service activities. Further, other institutions make sure that at award day in the local high school, someone from the institution attends the

event and recognizes the incoming Bonner Scholar by making a presentation of the scholarship at that ceremony. Almost all programs have a brochure describing the program which is included in recruitment material sent to prospective students.

### *Application*

Because the application to the Bonner Scholars Program is one of the first things a student sees, it makes a significant impression on the potential student and sends a message to the student as to what is valued and important in the program. With this in mind, the Bonner Scholar application has been designed to draw out the different roles and responsibilities that students have assumed in high school. In addition, we try to uncover where students' passions are and how they see these passions playing out in their lives. We ask the student to answer the following questions:

- In your lifetime what kind of changes do you want to see in the world?
- In your lifetime what will you do to make these changes come about?
- As a Bonner Scholar, how will you during your college career, work address these issues?

The goal here is not only to gain a sense of how they respond to a broad challenge, but also to begin the process of helping the students discover how what they do now has an impact on the meaning and direction of their life. The other goal here is to remind students that they, as entering college freshman, have the ability and responsibility to be active and committed citizens. Our message to these students, beginning with the application questions, is that societies have always depended upon the energy, boldness, creativity, and impatience of youth and that they are being both summoned and supported to act, not just at a later date, but now. The slogan that we continually present to them is *"Youth is the leadership of tomorrow... only if... you wait."*

### *Selection*

If the most important part of developing and establishing a Bonner Scholars Program is recruitment, not far behind is the selection process. Again, what initially may be perceived as a mechanical exercise, is a critical part of the success of the program and the impact that it will have on the individual student, the campus, and the community. Each institution is required to develop a selection committee. Clear instructions have been made to the institutions that this committee should be made up of students, administrators, faculty members,

and community leaders. Again this ensures buy-in and input on the part of the four main groups involved in the program. A student committee is formed to contact and interview each of the students that have applied. This not only offers a chance for the students to get information about the applicant, but also gives the students a chance to tell the applicant about the college and specifically about the Bonner Scholars Program and other service organizations on campus. This is a critical moment for a student. The lines of communication are opened so that students at the deciding moment have a connection not only with a person, but also with a concept of how service may fit into their college career. A student will ask, "Why am I going to college?" Our hope is that the selection and recruitment process helps a student gain some perspective as to who they are, what is valuable and what is valued.

Once students have been accepted into the program, Bonner Scholars will then call the students again to ask if they have any questions and to encourage them to think about attending the school and taking them up on the offer of being a Bonner Scholar.

#### *Summer Preparation*

Once a student accepts a Bonner Scholarship, a current Bonner Scholar is assigned to correspond with that student during the course of the summer. An effort is made to actually have the students meet and, if possible, have the Bonner Scholar make a visit to campus. Incoming Bonner Scholars are also given a packet of information including articles to read and a description of the service sites located near the campus.

The coordinator or the assistant coordinator will also contact the incoming Bonner Scholar sometime during the summer to check up on them and make sure that everything is proceeding well. This is particularly important with first generation college students who, even after they have been accepted into college and received large amounts of financial aid and honors, sometimes have a tendency to get intimidated and not show up to orientation.

#### *Orientation*

Think back on the first day you started college. Who was the first person you met? Interesting enough, while most of us forget what we learned in many of our courses, we more than likely remember the first person who we met when we walked arrived on campus for freshman orientation.

The first week of college for an incoming student is one of the defining moments of their college years. It sets the pattern. It will often decide who your

friends are, what your interests become, what job you take, what courses you sign up for. It also has a lot to do with defining one's attitude. Will a incoming student be encouraged and directed, or will they discover that the cool thing to do is to drink beer, stay out late, and disengage?

Most every college has an orientation for their incoming students. The Bonner Scholars Program has one too, scheduled prior to the regular freshman orientation. The expectation is that this Bonner orientation last anywhere from two to five days. This is too important a moment to assume or hope that a two hour session sandwiched in to the larger orientation is sufficient to prepare Bonner Scholars for their experience in the program. For the most part, incoming students love the idea of arriving at college early, even if it is the week before the rest of their classmates. Who doesn't remember the apprehension and anticipation about who one would meet, where they would live, and what they would do?

The Bonner Scholar Orientation reiterates the importance of the students role as a Bonner Scholar and the gifts and commitments that they have made. The orientation focuses on *identity, community building and service*. *Identity*: because this is the first event of their college career, it takes on an importance and makes the service piece a priority. *Community Building*:: students, like most of us, are starving for community. When students enter college, they are often wondering if they will make friends and connect with others. Many of the activities that are planned at an orientation have to do with socialization and building relationships. Yet this is not a keg party in front of a fraternity. Instead this is a planned gathering of students from varied backgrounds who are coming together around the common ground of service and justice. *Service Focus*: students are introduced to concepts and ideas behind community service and social justice issues. Students watch movies relating to different topics, hold discussions, and learn from older Bonner Scholars about their experience. Events like tours of the town and interview's with community leaders and clients of service agencies are also held.

## **B. Exploration**

Beginning with the orientation and then going on throughout the first semester, Bonner Scholars explore different service opportunities. While some students are directed to a certain area of service even before they get to college, many students are not clear and/or want to explore different opportunities out there for them to serve. There is also a need for students to identify their talents and passions, and in the context of their service, how these match the needs and

wants of a community. Too often students will develop a program that they want to see in a community only to find that no one in the community is interested in it. Therefore, this time of exploration is important both for the student and the community.

Students are encouraged to take as long as the entire first semester to explore the different needs and opportunities that a community has before they decide to make along term commitment to that agency, program or cause. This, however, does not mean that students are not taking their service seriously. Instead this time of exploration offers a student with the following:

*Introduction:* Students are introduced to the community leaders and the agencies that provide service in the area. They learn not only where these organizations are, but also the type of demands and style the community leaders possess.

*Exposure:* Students get a chance to see how their interests and skills can be tapped and channeled in any number of different areas. Often times students do not realize that they have skills and abilities that can be used in any myriad of distinct service activities. In addition, many students have not been educated about the root causes and issues that effect certain people or issues. In many cases, a students eyes are opened, a bias revealed, and an opportunity for reconciliation and service is created.

*Discernment:* Students are asked throughout the first part of their freshman year to take the time to be thoughtful about their choice. While students can switch service projects during their college career, many of the service placements require a high level of training, accountability, and commitment. Students are asked to sort through all the opportunities and emotions that they are experiencing and come up with a decision about where they want to focus their energies.

*Placement:* The second phase of exploration is placement. Once students have decided where they want to serve, they must go through an application and interview process with the coordinator of the Bonner Scholars Program, as well as with a community agency leader and, if available, a student volunteer coordinator for that agency. The Bonner Scholar coordinator will focus the discussion on the personal growth of the student, the community leader will emphasize the requirements of the service placement, and the student volunteer coordinator (also known as a project director, team leader, liaison) will articulate how the student fits in with a larger student team working with the agency.



The student volunteer coordinator who works closely with the community agency director fills a critical link in this chain. One of the gaps that often leads to failure in student service programs is the distance between an individual student and a community agency. Students are hard to get a hold of, they can hide, and early on if a student misses an appointment shame and fear set in. Then a student might stop going to their placement altogether, making the situation worse.

With a student volunteer coordinator, there is a bridge between the student and the community. The student coordinator's role is to monitor the situation by talking with both the students and the community leaders. If a community leader cannot get a hold of a student, they can call the student coordinator and they can go fetch the other student out of the library, the fraternity, or the dining hall. The student coordinator also provides support to other student volunteers. Many times students will witness things they do not understand or find difficult when they are serving at a community agency. As a result, they may get confused, frustrated, or angry. The presence of student coordinator can help a volunteer answer questions or help confront a community leader about a situation. Finally, the student coordinator is responsible for bringing students together that work on the same issue or at the same agency. This occurs at least once a month and will include other students besides Bonner Scholars. Students gather to share fellowship, discuss problems, and to learn about events and issues that are coming up related to their service.

Placement is a critical time for a student in their development. One of the reasons it is so important is that it is so often done poorly. Over the years many institutions have created volunteer clearinghouses where people go into a room, look at a computer listing or a book of volunteer opportunities, write down a name and a number of a contact person, and close the door behind them. That is the extent of the activity. When a student is placed in the Bonner Scholars Program the following happens:

Where: Students are taken to the location so that they know where they are suppose to go.

How: Transportation is lined up for the student, whether by public transportation, car pooling or by driving a college vehicle.

Who: Students are encouraged to go back and forth with other students. This promotes attendance, efficiency and safety.

What: Students are given clear tasks as to what they are expected to do when they are on site. Often do students get discouraged when they come

to volunteer and there is nothing to do or there are three volunteers for every child that shows.

### *Training*

Before a student is placed, they are required to go through a training put on by the community agency. Sometimes this training may take a few hours and other times it may take the bulk of the semester for the student to be adequately trained.

While it is important not to over burden an agency with too much work managing their volunteers, it is important that an agency take the time and develop adequate support for students. Bonner Scholars make at least a ten hour commitment a week and can provide critical support to an agency. It is, therefore, a requirement that any agency that works with Bonner Scholars have thoughtful and meaningful training that prepares the student, and in some cases prepares the local community for the service they will engage in. It is unacceptable for a community to recruit students and then have them do nothing more than push paper and hang around and do what no one else wants to do.

Often times community agencies will have to adapt their training so that it complies with the needs and limitations of a student. This may require an agency to have night orientation when students can come or it may mean changing a requirement due to the fact that students will be unavailable during college vacations and exam periods. The goal here is to make sure that expectations and responsibilities are clear and that people follow through on what they are expected to do. To make sure that this happens, the student, the college, and the community need to be in constant contact and continually revamping things to meet new challenges.

### **C. Reflection**

There is so much to do out in the world that it is easy to think that we just have to go out there and do more and more and more. Yet, our community service is not the only thing that is required of us. We are challenged to live in relationship with the people we serve, with others, and with ourselves. Just doing is not enough. While the actual service is critical, so is the time to be quiet, reflect, and contemplate the issues and meaning of what you are doing. With this in mind the Bonner Scholars Program has implemented an extensive reflection component into its curriculum, mainly revolving around journal writing. While writing in a journal doesn't guarantee thoughtful reflection, it does create a space

where individuals can discover something that they no doubt might have missed while they were running around, dealing with crisis, or recovering from a painful experience.

While different coordinators use different approaches when working with students in their journals, students are generally asked the following questions

- *How do I feel? Is there experience what I thought it would be?, or have I been surprised?* The goal here is to get students to open up and to take their involvement beyond the feet and the hands and move it to the heart, head and the spirit.
- *What questions do I have?* This creates an opportunity for students to think through issues, questions, and problems they might have experienced in their service. When the coordinator looks through the journal, they can see where the student is struggling. Often a student will discover a question and then, in thinking it through, answer it themselves through this process.
- *What changes has this experience had on me?* Usually students come in thinking one thing about what they will experience, only to have their images shattered when they come face to face with real issues and live people. Oftentimes this is where students discuss issues of race, class, and culture. Because so much of what the student is faced with when involved in their placements has to do with these issues, it is critical that they begin to see how these issues come to light and how they play out. Through this personal reflection, it will make it easier for the student to join discussions, training, and education around these controversial topics. So, for example, a student might say "Why do I need to go to a training on race? I am not prejudiced." Yet a student might discover during his reflection time that race may play a part in why people live the way they do or how they are treated. They may also come to terms with some of their own prejudices.

### **C. Discussion**

While we need to be reflective with ourselves, we are also called to be in community with others. Therefore, while Bonner Scholars are asked to write in journals, they are also asked to attend regular meetings to discuss both successes and challenges related to their service, and to gain strength and insight from each other.

Discussions will happen a number of different ways:

*Coordinator discussion:* At least once a semester, students are expected to meet individually with the coordinator to discuss how things are going and where the student is going with their service and leadership. These one-on-one discussions are one of the most influential influences on whether a student, excels in the program, makes appropriate strides in their personal and intellectual development, and sometimes whether or not a student sticks with the program or even college. These meetings provide a way for a coordinator to check in before a student checks out.

The end of the year discussion with the coordinator is especially important. During that time, a student is asked to evaluate their performance and decide whether or not they want to remain in the program. At the same time, the coordinator makes a recommendation as to whether or not the student should continue and what type of things need strengthening and rewarding. The coordinator can help affirm a student who is going in the right direction, give direction to a student who is wavering, or give an opportunity for a student who wants out an honorable way to exit.

*Small group discussion:* Students will gather as frequently as once a week to share in fellowship and to discuss volunteer opportunities, to ask for each others support, and to ask for clarification about an idea or a problem. Peer discussions offer a way for students to talk through an issue more freely than if a coordinator or a community leader were present. Discussion leaders use articles, quotes, and stories that pertain to the community issues and where they are developmentally to reflect on and discuss with their group.

*Group discussions:* Each month all Bonner Scholars convene for an evening to reconnect as a group and to discuss issues that affect the group. Often a guest speaker will come in and speak to a particular issue such as the environment, race in America, or faith and its relationship to service. Students then break into smaller groups (usually by class) in their next small group meetings and are handed a list of discussion questions relating to the speaker's presentation.

## **D. Education**

Much talk has gone on in the past few year about the notion of service learning. The essence of service learning is that for any service to be well done it has to have a learning component added to it to be of value. Unfortunately, many advocates of service learning feel that the only way to effectively support service learning is through wide-scale, broad sweeping curriculum reform. Our belief that learning goes on in every aspect of student life, not just the classroom. Therefore, while we encourage colleges to develop classes where students are

able to connect their service with their academic requirements, we also look to a number of different avenues to encourage learning to accompany their service.

In the academic realm, professors are encouraged, often with the assistance of student leadership and support, to develop courses that have service as part of the requirement. In some cases a student might volunteer a number of hours and write about that experience in lieu of a term paper or a mid term exam. In other cases, a professor might teach a course about local community development or about such things as community leadership and volunteering. By doing this professors are able to introduce an academic component to service without having to fight the faculty to accept service as an integral part of a course.

Some of our colleges have developed a freshman seminar for all Bonner Scholars where they receive partial or whole course credit. This gives the students a chance to read such books as "A Call to Service" by Dr. Robert Coles in which service, faith, and social justice are all connected.

Faculty are also encouraged to develop independent studies and junior and senior seminars for Bonner Scholars and other students as they advance in their service and academic careers. As will be discussed later, students are expected to grow and develop expertise in a specific area and with an identified organization.

Yet, as mentioned above, not all education takes place in a classroom. A number of colleges have a one month winter quarter or January term where service and academics are integrated for a concentrated period, often taking place away from campus in another community setting. In addition, Student Life and the Chaplains Office are encouraged to explore ways to connect their mission with the service direction that students are taking. Student Life can help organize service projects through dorms, plan activities that encourage service, and bring in speakers and organizations that educate and advocate for service. The chaplain is encouraged to plan mission trips during Spring Break and at other times.

## **E. Renewed Action**

Now what? This process begins all over again, every day and with the beginning of every new week, new term, and new college year. The hope is that through preparation, action, reflection, discussion, and education, that the student will move forward with what we call "renewed action," an action that has an added sensitivity, knowledge, confidence, purpose, and connection to the spirit and direction the student has discovered for themselves. If a student

doesn't find that direction the first year, hopefully they will the next year. And if it doesn't happen by the end of the college education, well perhaps the training and the exposure that they have received will lead them to continued exploration throughout their lives.

### **III. A Four Year Model**

A major struggle that the service movement has faced is that there is not a clearly defined age appropriate understanding of service. Students who serve as a candy striper their freshman year may do the same thing for all four years. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this, it doesn't meet the challenge presented by the Bonner Scholars Program. Our goal is to encourage students to develop a servant leadership role that takes on new dimensions, awareness, and responsibility as they move on in their education. Just as it is not appropriate to take Freshman English all four years, neither is it appropriate for a Bonner Scholar to do the same service activity for their entire college career.

To give direction to the student and to clarify expectations to the leadership of the Bonner Scholars Program, we have developed a four year model which creates benchmarks and expectations to which students should aspire. It should be noted that these benchmarks are loosely defined and should be applied on an individualized basis. The goal here is not to make everyone the same. Instead the hope is to encourage students to move along, to develop their own leadership style, and to come out of the four year experience with a strong sense of who they are and where they are going.

Each year has been assigned a concept and a strategy.

- Freshman Year *Exploration / experience*
- Sophomore Year *Excellence*
- Junior Year *Example / leadership*
- Senior Year *Expertise*

#### **A. Freshman Year — Exploration/Experience**

While some students arrive at college with a clear understanding of what type of service they want to be involved in, many want to use this time as a chance to explore and experience any number of different opportunities.

As described above, the primary goal for the first year is to help a student explore their passions, interests, and talents. Many Bonner Scholars have not had extensive volunteer work, thus the first year offers them a chance to explore a variety of interests. Does the issue of hunger affect them keenly, or perhaps the environment? Or maybe a student wants to combine a passion for children with the issue of housing; the end result being a team of children working on a Habitat for Humanity home?

This is also a time for students to begin discovering their strengths and weaknesses. Maybe students will discover that they have abilities they never knew they had. Maybe they will learn that they like to organize, or raise money, or that public speaking is not worse than death, and that while they might not make the varsity soccer team, they can coach in a youth soccer league.

Another important part of the exploration piece for the first year student is exploring the vision of the Bonner Scholars Program as well as their own vision for the world and their own activism. This was touched upon during the application process. It must continue in order for students to be taken fully into the experience of being one of 1,500 students involved in the Bonner Scholars Program. This will ensure that the Bonner Scholars Program is not just another scholarship program with 1,500 individuals but rather a collective effort that draws strength from itself and that shares in a common commitment. Activities planned and sponsored by the Foundation encourage students, especially freshman to understand the founding vision of the Bonner Scholars Program as well as give them an opportunity to shape and own the future vision of the program.

As part of the exploration process, students are expected to look at the larger issues of race, class, gender, and cultural differences that bring some people together and keep others apart, and these issues have both a direct and indirect affect on the communities where they serve as well as on themselves. This is accomplished through the reflection, discussion, and education steps described above.

## **B. Freshman Summer — Return Home / Stay in the Region.**

After their freshman year, students are encouraged to return home and serve in their local communities, perhaps at an organization from which they received services when they were younger. So often times students who receive

help, leave and never get a chance to return as a service provider. By returning, students not only get a chance to show what they have learned and how they have matured over the year, but they are able to send a strong message to others about what is possible for an individual to achieve.

The return home for the first summer also serves to reconnect a student with his or her roots. There is a strong force at work that pulls people away from their communities once they have left, especially when they come from poor communities. The tendency is to leave and never look back. Yet, to have a student return with a stronger sense of confidence and purpose, can go along way in strengthening the ties between a student and his self image and between them and their home community. While this may be the last time a student returns home for any length of time, the hope is that the connections that are solidified by a strong service-based summer experience will have a lasting impression on the student.

Another reason for encouraging students to return home after their freshman year is to help recruit new Bonner Scholars. As the student has only recently left the community, he or she no doubt has strong ties with local groups and other college-bound high school students. One cannot underestimate the influence a student can have on a person just a few years younger than them in college. Bonner Scholars are encouraged to make presentations to youth groups around town and to work one on one with interested candidates. The visibility and leadership of the Bonner Scholar goes along way in encouraging other students to follow in their footsteps.

### **C. Sophomore — Excellence**

In the second year, a student is by now expected to have focused their activism and involvement with a particular issue and with a specific organization. The second year is centered around the ideas of focus, commitment, and relationship building.

While some students want to continue to work in a number of agencies, the student is encouraged to focus on a particular project or agency. Thus, a student might work at the boys and girls club organizing a basketball league or teaching a photography class or directing a children's theater company. Another student might work with a citizens group to establish a county-wide recycling program. Yet another student might work for a full year as a teacher's aid in a special education classroom. In every instance the goal is to get a student deeply involved and committed to an idea and an organization, as well as to establish a working relationship and a trust with the community and the clients.



If a student is allowed to continue dabbling in a wide of service activities, the possibility for growth and development is diminished. Too often students are unfocused in our service activities. The greatest potential for growth and meaningful and effective service comes when a student works day in and day out with the same group and the same people. This consistency also enables a student to take on additional responsibility, as well as the agency to depend on that student for meaningful, challenging and innovative work.

Students who at this stage want to create their own programs are supported if they are ready. However, most students are asked to work with existing programs in their sophomore year and to put off starting a new program until their third year. The idea behind this is to make sure a student works to build off existing programs rather than create new initiatives. Any work a student does must have a community sponsor; we have found that projects solely run by students rarely outlast that student and often fail to connect to true community needs.

#### **D. Sophomore Summer — College Placement**

In between their sophomore and junior years students are asked to stay working with the organization or project where they were placed during the school year. This is in part so that the student can have a full-time experience with this organization, but also to prepare the student for a leadership role which will be expected of them in their junior year.

Because students in their junior year are expected to serve in a leadership capacity which will include supervising other students and administering a program, students are able to receive additional training and prepare for the upcoming year. This time of preparation is critical. Effective service initiatives can not be planned a week before the beginning of the year nor can the leadership role be placed solely on paid staff. Instead students are required to take on added and directed responsibilities. Therefore, during the summer the student gets a chance to strengthen the ties with the community leadership, discuss service programs with community leaders and plan and prepare for student participants for when they arrive back at college.

#### **E. Junior Year — Example / Leadership**

Juniors are expected to take on a leadership role by their junior year. For many this will mean taking on the role of student volunteer coordinator with the agency with whom they serve (as described earlier). In this capacity a student is expected to help with every aspect of developing, maintaining, and evaluating a team of students involved in a particular issue area, project, or agency. Such

responsibilities include: recruitment of new student volunteers, placement, orientation, supervision, monitoring and motivating students. Student volunteer coordinators are responsible for arranging transportation, making sure students show up at placements, and communicating with community leaders on a regular basis. They are also responsible for identifying and training their successor for the following year.

While juniors are encouraged to serve as student volunteer coordinators, this is not the only form of leadership a student can pursue. Other avenues of leadership might include helping to develop a service club for high college students or senior citizens. In still other instances, a student might not want to take a leadership role that is so visible but might take on a role that is more behind the scenes such as serving as an assistant to the director of an agency.

Leadership takes on many forms and it is important to respond in such a way that different people's leadership styles are encouraged. While the options for leadership are broad, the requirement to take on leadership role is essential. Not everyone has to be a "leader," but Bonner Scholars are expected to step out and demonstrate an ability and a courage that will involve, encourage, and support others. The requirement to take on additional responsibilities challenges them to examine, develop, and strengthen their commitments, abilities, and attitudes towards their roles as Bonner Scholars. Ultimately, we believe that students are needed to help operate, lead, and define the culture of service on a campus.

During the course of the year, juniors are offered a number of workshops that deal with everything from recruitment to how to hold a meeting or what to look for in a successor. Juniors are also encouraged to pursue independent studies and to work with faculty to pursue junior seminars that help students explore and develop their own style of leadership.

## **F. Junior Year Summer — Outside the Region**

In the summer prior to their senior year, students are encouraged to find an internship located outside the area where they grew up. They are encouraged to find an agency or organization that works on the issues that they have focused on over the past two or three years. Therefore, students who might have worked with children would be encouraged to go to a national organization in Washington, DC where they could work with some of the country's finest leaders studying the policy issues connected to children's issues. This will help them immeasurably as they enter their senior year by giving them a broader understanding of the causes and potential solutions to the problems they may have encountered in their local communities.

Alternatively, students are encouraged to work with one of the many national student-based organizations that work to get other students involved in service activities. Students might work as interns with such groups as COOL, SCALE, or BreakAway. The goal here is to have students gain exposure with the leading service organizations in the country, while at the same time offering these groups committed and imaginative student leadership. Because Bonner Scholars have received so much experience and support, the intent is that they can share with others to help build service opportunities for students and campuses that have not had the same opportunities.

Another hope for the students during this summer is to gain exposure to agencies and organizations that might be helpful to them after they graduate from college. Summer jobs often have a profound impact on a student's career choice. By supporting students to pursue exciting summer internships that in the past have only been available to those who could afford them, it is our hope that Bonner Scholars will get a head start on thinking about their next steps after college and perhaps find some connections that can help them take them.

Finally, this summer is designed to help a student gain perspective. When a student gets a chance to work with a program like Crossroads Africa where they spend a summer in Africa doing different service projects or working with a church in inner city Detroit, their perspective changes. Our hope is that students will have this life changing experience before they finish college so that it might impact them in their senior year.

### **G. Senior Year — Expertise**

In the senior year, Bonner Scholars are expected to participate in an independent service project which they help design. These projects may include a research or consulting component related to an issue or project in which they have become involved.

In the area of research, students are expected to connect their academic studies and their community work to do some type of research project. Thus, a student will be asked to go beyond the traditional volunteer or leadership positions that students have traditionally held. Instead, students will write grant proposals, research model programs, and participate in other initiatives designed in collaboration with or in response to a request by a community agency. An engineer may design a playground, a computer major a software package to help the flow of traffic in town, or an English major may edit an annual report for a community agency. When a student researches a particular issue such as hunger or housing, the student is expected to not only to share it with a professor but also with the community, other students, and the Bonner Scholar community as a

whole. Using the internet for dissemination and discussion, student research related to their service will be used to help students across the country to think critically about issues and help communities gain access to ideas and resources that they desperately need and that they otherwise might not receive.

Seniors are also expected to translate the expertise they have developed by helping other services institutions including high schools, churches, and other colleges and universities. A student that has developed a program dealing with understanding and providing services for people with HIV / AIDS, might write a booklet on his experience and travel to other colleges and communities to help others start similar programs. Seniors might also work with nearby colleges and universities to help them identify and train a student leadership that is capable of starting a campus wide service initiative.