

Life After Bonner: Finding Your Pathway

Theme 7.4 Part 4 of "Leaving a Legacy"

Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum: The 8 Themes Curriculum

BWBR Description: This workshop guides participants through reflection on life post-graduation, provides the opportunity to hear from current alumni and read alumni profiles, and provides a framework to consider next steps for opportunities after graduation.

Overview: This workshop provides students with a chance for reflection on their Bonner journeys. Students will reflect on profiles and perspectives from Bonner Alumni, who have pursued careers across all sectors yet stayed civically engaged. Students will brainstorm potential pathways for post-graduate opportunities like employment, year of service programs, and graduate school. **This workshop requires coordinating a Bonner alumni panel.**

Key Words: Community building; civic professional; relationship building; self-efficacy

8 Themes: Forth Year - Semester 7



Bonner Developmental

Connections:

This workshop is designed for the final year and should be offered to students as they are preparing to find opportunities post graduation. It is part of the 8 Themes Curriculum for the fall.

Bonner/VALUE Rubric Outcomes:

This workshop will help students develop their Civic Identity by asking them to reflect on their aspirations for life post graduation. Additionally, it can promote their Communication Skills by allowing them to engage with Bonner alumni to ask the difficult questions about how to prepare for life after college.

Workshop Learning Outcomes:

- Participants will learn how to process some of their emotions and questions regarding transitioning from senior to alum.
- Participants will practice how to utilize the Bonner Network's resources for the transition after graduation.
- Participants will take away practical tools for navigating the changes, challenges, and choices ahead.

Materials:

- Emotional flash cards
- Continuum of preparedness (created in advance)
- Post-It notes
- Pens/pencils/sharpies
- Cards/clipboard to capture contact info
- Access to laptops/smart phones

How to Prepare:

Read the workshop carefully and prep all worksheets and activity materials. **This workshop requires coordinating an alumni panel**, preferably recent Bonner alumni. Send questions to your panelists in advance. Remind them that not every person needs to answer every question.

In addition, you may want to print out an adequate amount of the faces illustrated on **page 7**. Cut out the images to form a set of cards. For extra durability you can laminate

the cards. Alternatively the faces can be reduced in size and put onto one sheet to form a worksheet of emotions, in which participants can circle their feeling. Reach out to the Alumni Network Manager at the Foundation to make sure your participants will be granted access to Bonner Connect before the workshop. You can send the Alumni Network Manager a list of participants' name and email addresses or have participants sign up for Bonner Connect prior to the date of the workshop.

Brief Outline:

This workshop creates a space for participants to think about the transition ahead of them after college. Participants will start to process some of their emotions in the first activity by doing the flash cards exercise. Then, they will reflect on their level of preparedness for the transition ahead. Following the reflection activity, participants will gain practical tools for navigating the changes, challenges, and choices they will encounter post college through an interactive panel discussion. The workshop ends with participants using Bonner alumni profiles and considering pathways to achieve their intended post-graduation outcomes.

The outline has the following parts (modify to cover number):

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1) Emotion Flash Cards Exercise | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 2) Continuum of Preparedness | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 3) Panel Discussion with Recent Alumni | suggested time 30 minutes |
| 4) Pathways | suggested time 10 minutes |
| 5) Alumni Profiles | suggested time 15 minutes |

Part 1) Emotional Flash Cards Exercise

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Before students arrive, place flash cards (picture side up) on a table. As students arrive, invite participants to select the card that best represents how they are feeling about graduation. Break participants into groups of 2-3 and ask them to share why they picked that card. They can also share one thing they are hoping to learn from the workshop. Once all students have shared in small groups, you can ask the whole group if anyone wants to share what they discussed in their small groups (either what they shared or what someone else shared).

Tell participants that transition is multi-faceted and it's normal to have mixed emotions. Also, every person transitions differently; it's okay for you to have different emotions and experiences than your peers.

Part 2) Continuum of Preparedness

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Create a continuum of preparedness where students can place themselves on one of the five points on the continuum as they consider how prepared they are to graduate. You can create this using butcher paper and images/numbers or by using large posters and placing them on easels at five points around the room. The continuum should progress from “Not Prepared” (1) to “Fully Prepared” (5) in this order:

1. Wait, I’m graduating?!
2. I won’t think about it today, I’ll think about it tomorrow. Hey, at least it’s crossed my mind.
3. I’m on the fence; I’m sort of ready, sort of not.
4. It’s a long haul; I’m pretty sure I’ll be prepared when I get there.
5. Real world here I come! Bring it on, I’m totally ready!

Ask students: *“How prepared are you to graduate from college?” Invite them to place themselves on the continuum (or next to the poster) that best represents their answer. Before they disperse for the activity, tell them that once they place themselves on the continuum they should turn to two other people (or the group around them) and discuss why they placed themselves where they did. Ask: How are you feeling about this upcoming year? Why or why don’t you feel prepared to graduate?*

If possible, you/your team should facilitate these small-group discussions. Often students feel prepared when they have a job/fellowship and do not feel as prepared when they’re still waiting for that offer. It can be helpful for you/a team member to push the conversation deeper with comments/questions like,

I noticed all of you talked about the job/fellowship, but I’m wondering how you’re feeling about leaving your friends, dealing with finances, and/or loan payments.

Ask students to return to their seats. Invite large-group discussion by asking if anyone wants to share with the whole group why they placed themselves where they did or if anything noteworthy came up in their group discussion.

Conclusion: The point of this exercise is to help students gauge their own preparedness, but also to show that this transition is multi-faceted; there are many reasons (beyond the job/graduate program) why students may or may not feel prepared (or actually be prepared!).

Part 3) Panel Discussion with Bonner Alumni

Suggested time: 30

Seniors love hearing the struggle and success stories of former students! It normalizes their own transition, helps set realistic expectations and encourages them that there is life after college. The key to having a great panel discussion is found in selecting great panelists, preparing them, and facilitating well.

Send questions to your panelists in advance. Remind them that not every person needs to answer every question. You may also caution them from “giving advice” on the panel. We’ve found that panelists sometimes need to be coached to share their experience rather than spout advice.

Here are some possible questions you could ask. (Or you could invite students to submit questions they would like to ask alumni before the workshop):

- Describe your transition from college to the next phase, especially the first year out.
- What are/were some of the most challenging aspects of life post-grad? What are/were some of the best parts?
- Who/what was most helpful in overcoming challenges? If you experienced successes, who/what contributed to that?
- Did you feel prepared for the transition? Why or why not?
- Was your transition experience common to the experiences of your friends/peers who graduated with you? Why or why not?
- What’s one thing you wish you knew before graduating?
- Share factors that promote or hinder your ability to stay engaged post-graduation.

Conclusion: After you close the panel discussion, ask the students to pair up and answer this question: “What stood out to you from the panel? What idea, insight, or story sticks with you?” This can help students process what they’re hearing and learning.

Part 3) Pathways

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Consider the following pathways for post-graduation.

Graduate School

- Level (Masters, doctorate)

- Program
- Location
- Funding

Fellowships (i.e. Emerson National Hunger Fellows, Newman's Own Foundation Fellowship)

- Stipend/salary
- Location
- Connection to future aspirations

Year of Service Programs (i.e. VISTA, PeaceCorps)

- International or domestic
- Stipend/housing
- Connection to future aspirations

Jobs (Bonner Coordinator, teacher, office assistant)

- Salary/benefits
- Location
- Opportunity for upward mobility

Ask participants to list their top three options for post-graduation. Be as specific as possible. For example, do not write "graduate school," describe aspects such as, program/locations/etc.

For example, 1. UNC Chapel Hill - doctorate, Sociology, 3 hours from home, fully funded

Consider the following questions as you list your opportunities.

- What are the driving force(s) behind your next steps? (location, family/relationship commitments, career opportunity, finances, flexibility)
- Are your top three options in the same category of pathway?
- What other pathways could you consider?

Part 4) Stay Connected on Bonner Alumni Platform

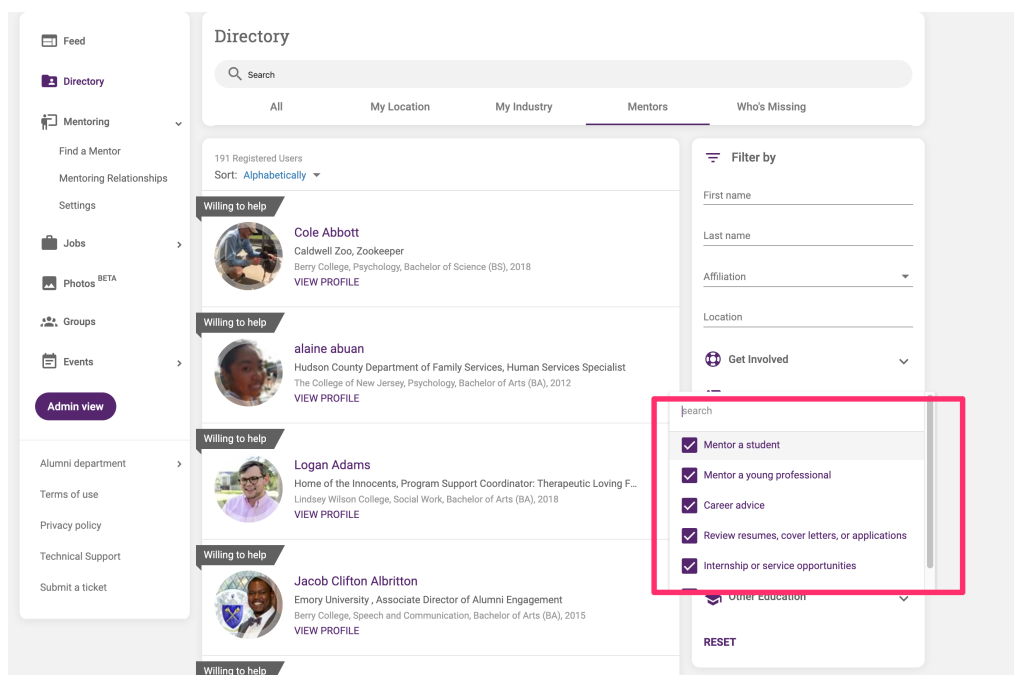
Suggested time: 15 minutes

Using a laptop or smartphone, tell participants to go to <https://bonnerconnect.org>. Have participant sign up for the platform if they have yet to register on Bonner Connect. Once participants log in, they should click on the **Directory icon** option on

the left of the page. Ask participants to browse through the directory and pick **five alumni profiles** to view. Participant can click the “Filter by” on the right of the page and type in the filter field the information for the individuals they are seeking. For example, First Name, Last Name, Affiliation, Bonner Foundation (select Bonner Program School Field of Study in the drop down list) or Location.

Let participants know they can search by industry by clicking the down arrow beside “Work Experience” and select the down arrow beside industry or job functions, which would allow them to select the the type of industries of job functions for the individuals they are seeking. They can click “Reset” at the bottom of the filter options at any time.

Ask participants to click on the **Mentoring icon** option on the left of the page right below the **Directory icon** to find **three alumni** to send a mentoring request to. Participants can connect with the suggested mentors automated by the platform or they can choose to find mentors by company and or industry. Participants can also use the **Find your own Mentor** search options to find someone who is offering to be a mentor.



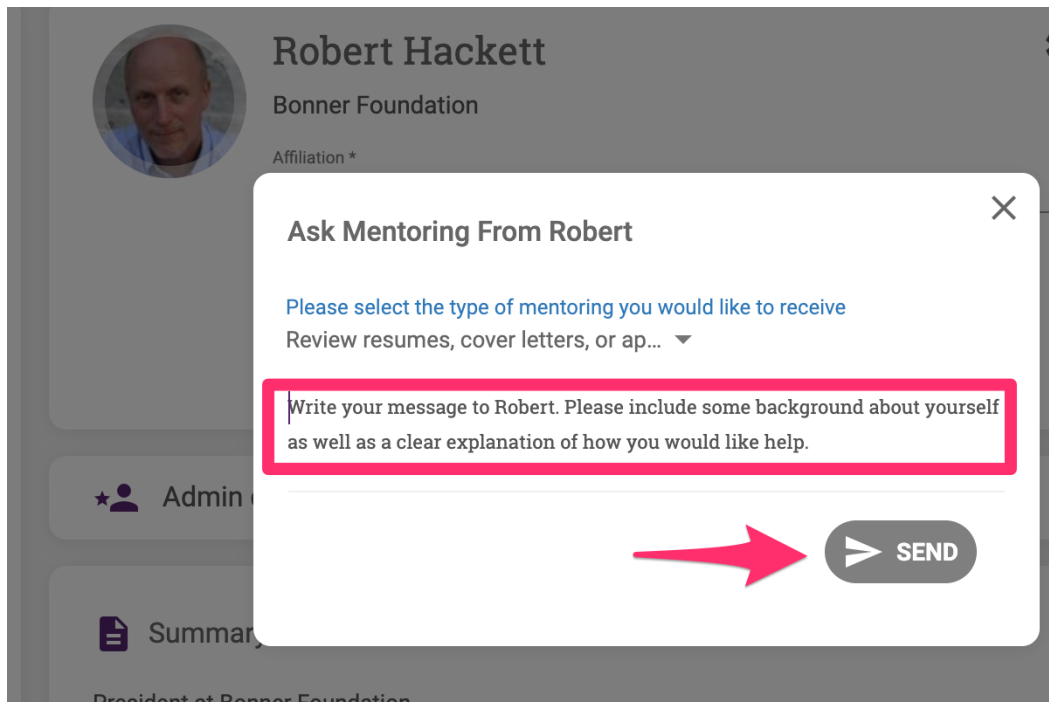
Find someone who is offering help

Next, have participants click through the profile of the potential mentors; then click on the “Request Mentoring” button once they find a fit. If participants would like to mentor younger Bonners in the future they can update their profiles upon

Tell participants to click “Request Mentoring” button

Have participants select the area in which they would like to request mentor

graduation. Encourage participants to write a cover message, including some background information and a clear explanation of how they would like to be helped.

A screenshot of a mentoring request interface. At the top, there is a profile card for Robert Hackett, identified as being from the Bonner Foundation. Below this, a modal window titled "Ask Mentoring From Robert" is open. Inside the modal, there is a dropdown menu with the text "Please select the type of mentoring you would like to receive" and "Review resumes, cover letters, or ap...". Below the dropdown is a text input field with a red border containing the instruction: "Write your message to Robert. Please include some background about yourself as well as a clear explanation of how you would like help." At the bottom right of the modal is a grey button with a right-pointing arrow and the word "SEND". A red arrow points from the text input field towards the "SEND" button.

Participants should click SEND, when they get done writing their message

Note: Tell participants their request will be visible in the pending section of their Mentoring Relationships section.

Participant will receive a notification when the person accepts or declines their mentoring request; the user will then appear in either your Current Mentors or Declined section of Mentoring Relationships. If participants sent a request/offer in error, or the person has not responded and you would like to cancel the request/offer, this can be done from the Mentoring Relationship section.

The point of this activity is to show that there is no "right" decisions or pathway for post-grad life. Some paths are windy and curvy and others are straightforward. No one is able to predict every aspect of their life post-graduation and sometimes, it is tougher than we anticipate. Keep pushing. Know that you are not alone in this journey. Your young adult life is scary and exciting!

Credits:

Developed in 2018 by Arthur Tartee Jr., Bonner Foundation Alumni Network Manager.

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Happy



Sad



Silly



Proud



Annoyed



Surprised



Excited



Angry



Worried



Scared



Love



Sick



Calm



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