The Bonner Network’s
Graduate School Partner Handbook

A Guide for Graduate Schools to Partner with the Bonner Foundation and Network

“Access to Education, Opportunity to Serve”
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Dear Potential Bonner Graduate School Partner:

We are delighted by the possibility of you partnering with us to further our civic mission for higher education. As a Bonner graduate school partner, you join a prestigious consortium of over 30 graduate schools across the nation committed to supporting diverse, low-income, first-generation students. Our graduate school partners span a diverse array of academic disciplines and professional studies, from law to public health. Through mutually beneficial relationships between partner organizations and our network, we provide greater opportunity for social mobility to deserving students throughout the nation.

Since 1990, the Bonner Program has provided students with “Access to Education and Opportunity to Serve.” The program model gives campuses a way to strengthen their culture and infrastructure for community-engaged learning, as well as their approach to promoting access and diversity. With a program that emphasizes student leadership at the core, campuses in the network have expanded and deepened staffing levels, faculty engagement, and other characteristics of engaged campuses.

As a graduate school partner, you gain access to our diverse network of schools and provide post-graduate options to our talented alumni. The Bonner Network is made up of dedicated, generous people across 65+ institutions who openly share their wisdom and experience. To date, Bonner Programs across the United States have graduated more than about 18,000 alumni, graduates who now live and work around the world. Our four-year developmental approach prepares graduates for college and lifelong success. More than a third of alumni work for non-profits; a third work in government; and a third work in the for-profit sector. Though they may differ in their specific career pathways, all share a commitment of continuing to serve their communities.

You may be interested in connecting with Bonner alumni, who consistently demonstrate a high level of post-graduate attainment of leadership skills, civic involvement, and interest in contributing to the communities in which they live and study. These graduates, who often are first in their families to go to college and are highly diverse (in terms of race, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds) are very interested in pursuing graduate study and careers in which they can make a difference. In fact, 47 percent of our alumni have received Master’s Degrees and 17 percent hold a terminal degree, with many planning for a terminal degree.

Throughout the next few pages of this handbook, we’ll introduce the frameworks and best practices of the Bonner Program model and (hopefully) demonstrate why Bonner alumni are the type of students you want at your institution.

We cannot thank you enough for your support to our cause! By forging a partnership between your institution and our network, we hope that thousands of service-minded, civically, engaged, low-income students have the opportunity to continue their higher education beyond undergrad whilst maintaining their commitment to community engagement.

- The Bonner Foundation Staff
About Us

Our Mission

Through sustained partnerships with colleges and congregations, the Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation seeks to improve the lives of individuals and communities by helping meet the basic needs of nutrition and educational opportunity.

Our Approach

While we are a small family funded foundation and nonprofit organization, our work and approach are not conventional. Rather than focus on short-term initiatives and grants for individual projects, we work as a national network and community of practice to advance higher education through its engagement within communities. Since 1990, we have built and sustained partnerships with colleges and universities to foster the deep integration of college access, diversity and inclusion, and student success with community engagement and learning. We help develop and grow research the civic engagement field, in ways that promote its depth, sustainability, and value to colleges and communities. We do this by supporting and educating outstanding civic leaders.

The Bonner Program (our signature program) provides colleges and universities with a model for college access that leverages best practices for student success. Our network focuses on supporting low-income, first generation, and underrepresented students - including students of color and from both rural and urban environments. With student leadership at the core, the program improves the lives of people and communities through sustained partnerships involving colleges and universities in service, community engaged learning, and civic engagement.

Matthew Morton, PhD
Stetson University, 2006
University of Oxford (PhD), 2011
Research Fellow at Chaplain Hall at the University of Chicago

Tracie Johnson, JD
Ursinus College, 2013
Temple University School of Law, 2018
Equal Justice Works Fellow at Community Legal Practices

Class of 2021 Bonners at the 2019 New Jersey Bonner Sophomore Exchange
Our Beliefs and Values

BELIEFS
The Bonner Foundation:
- Believes that colleges and congregations have vital roles to play in society in nurturing and mobilizing thoughtful, caring, and diverse leadership dedicated to community service;
- Recognizes that often the best way to help someone is to give them the opportunity to help themselves, and that the people best able to address a problem are the people whom it most directly affects;
- Recognizes that effective community service programs involve all stakeholders in their leadership; and
- Creates innovative programs that have the potential to serve as models for the field.

CORE VALUES
Additionally, a number of core values have been at the basis of the Bonner Scholar and Leader Program model and other initiatives since its 1990 founding and remain today, even as our programs/agendas for campus and community have become more complex.

Our approach to civic learning and community engagement is inclusive and integrative. At the core, we believe in educating the whole person, and that learning occurs in multiple contexts and developmentally over time. Learning doesn’t stop at graduation, and neither does our work. Our Common Commitments express values we explore and share as an organization, national network, and community of practice:

- Civic Engagement: exploring and participating intentionally in multiple forms and dimensions of engagement including service, political engagement, social action, and public policy;
- Community Building: creating and sustaining a vibrant community of place, personal relationships, and shared interests
- Diversity: respecting the many different dimensions of personal and group identities and creating opportunities to dialogue and learn across them
- International Perspective: developing international and global understanding that enable individuals to participate successfully in an increasingly interconnected world, appreciate and transcend national boundaries
- Social Justice: understand and advocate for fairness, impartiality, and equity in addressing systemic social and environmental issues
- Spiritual Exploration: reflect on and explore personal beliefs while respecting the spiritual and ethical practices and values of others

Students graduate with knowledge and skills in these and other critical competencies, like communication and leadership.
Our Expectations

We have defined core expectations for every Bonner Program. These hold true for endowed Bonner Scholar Programs and non-endowed Bonner Leader Programs. They represent the best practices in the program that are common across all campuses with Bonner Programs.

CORE EXPECTATIONS

Every Bonner Program provides students with an intensive experience where they complete college and engage:

1. Each Bonner Program is cohort based, with between 40 to 160 students engaged over four years.
2. Every Bonner Scholar or Leader is involved in an intensive (8-10 hours per week) service program over four years (often complemented by full-time summer internships)
3. Campus representatives (and National Partners) attend national Bonner meetings, including:
   • Fall Directors'/Coordinators' Meeting (held at a conference center)
   • Fall Student Congress Meeting (hosted by a different campus in Bonner Network each year)
   • Summer Leadership Institute (hosted by a different campus in Bonner Network each year)
   • New Directors' and Coordinators' Orientation (in Princeton, New Jersey)

INTENSIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

For the purposes of the Bonner Program, “community service” is defined as service provided to individuals or communities to meet social, educational, or environmental needs. Students engage with local, national, and even international non-profit organizations or government agencies, learning how to improve communities and make positive social change.

Essentially, this service can be seen as a series of school-year and summer internships. Research demonstrates that such engagement are “high-impact educational practices,” which are linked with greater levels of college attainment and completion, especially for students from underrepresented backgrounds.

PROVEN RESULTS

A ten-year longitudinal study of the impact of the Bonner Program on participating students across 25 institutions found proven gains for students, supporting (1) students’ success in college, (2) development of leadership skills, and (3) lifelong civic responsibility. Key factors for the program’s impact are its four-year structure, cohorts, “dialogue across difference,” campus diversity (the more diverse, the stronger impact), and mentoring.

A 2010 large scale survey of Bonner Alumni (with more than 3,500 respondents) suggested that graduates benefit in other notable ways. For one, their experiences in service and community engagement have deep effects on their career and vocational choices. They find meaning and equanimity, becoming “Civic Minded Graduates” who want to pursue meaningful careers and civic involvement. For many, graduate studies are an important stepping stone to their vocational aspirations.
PIVOTAL CORNERSTONE EXPERIENCES:

Students also engage in a number of cohort and program-based activities that prepare them for successful engagement in communities and in continued learning experiences, like those in graduate school.

- **Bonner Orientation**: a special retreat and introduction often includes intensive training around identity development, communication, diversity, community building, and engaging in the world around you.
- **First-Year and Other Immersion Trips**: students travel in cohorts to participate in service, learning, and cultural immersion experiences in places that are different from their home or campus environments. Through this, they develop strong critical thinking, reflection, and other skills.
- **Second-Year Exchange and National Events**: students meet up with peers from other institutions for special planned projects, regional and national conferences. Through this, they develop a strong sense of civic identity and perspectives about critical issues (like education, poverty, and the environment) they address everyday.
- **Junior-Senior Capstone**: students complete a semester or year-long project that challenges them to integrate their academics with their service and personal values. These projects also build the capacity-building of a specific community partner through program development, research, marketing, fundraising, and other work.
- **Reflective Senior Presentations of Learning**: students culminate their four-year journeys with a deep reflective experience, where they articulate (in public speaking to a broader audience) the impact that being in the Bonner Program has had on their learning and growth.

Because of these students, retention and completion for students in the Bonner Program is higher than that of peers at their institutions at every school. These students bring great aptitude for graduate studies.

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≈1,960 hours in 4 years!
National Bonner Network
(Schools that host a Bonner Program on their campus)

ALABAMA
• Athens State University (Athens)
• Birmingham Southern College (Birmingham)

COLORADO
• Colorado College (Colorado Springs)
• Rollins College (Winter Park)
• Stetson University (Deland)
• University of Tampa (Tampa)

FLORIDA
• Augsburg College (Minneapolis)

GEORGIA
• Berry College (Rome)
• Clark Atlanta University (Atlanta)
• Emory University (Atlanta)
• Morehouse College (Atlanta)
• Spelman College (Atlanta)

HAWAII
• University of Hawaii at Hilo (Hilo)

INDIANA
• DePauw University (Greencastle)
• Earlham College (Richmond)
• IUPUI (Indianapolis)

KANSAS
• Washburn University (Topeka)

KENTUCKY
• Bellarmine University (Louisville)
• Berea College (Berea)
• Centre College (Danville)
• Kentucky Wesleyan College (Owensboro)
• Lindsey Wilson College (Columbia)

MAINE
• Bates College (Lewiston)

MARYLAND
• Notre Dame of Maryland University (Baltimore)

MASSACHUSETTES
• Simmons University (Boston)

MICHIGAN
• Albion College (Albion)

MINNESOTA
• Augsburg College (Minneapolis)

MISSISSIPPI
• University of Mississippi (Oxford)

MISSOURI
• Missouri State University (Springfield)

NEVADA
• University of Nevada - Reno

NEW JERSEY
• Middlesex County College (Edison)
• Montclair State University (Montclair)
• Rider University (Lawrenceville)
• Rutgers University - New Brunswick
• Rutgers University - Camden
• Stockton University (Galloway)
• The College of New Jersey (Ewing)

NEW YORK
• Nazareth University (Rochester)
• Siena College (Loudonville)
• Wagner College (Staten Island)

NORTH CAROLINA
• Davidson College (Davidson)
• Guilford College (Greensboro)
• High Point University (High Point)
• Mars Hill University (Mars Hill)
• University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
• University of North Carolina - Wilmington
• Warren Wilson College (Swannanoa)

OHIO
• Capital University (Columbus)
• Oberlin College (Oberlin)

PENNSYLVANIA
• Allegheny College (Meadville)
• Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown)
• Point Park University (Pittsburgh)

RHODE ISLAND
• Brown University (Providence)

SOUTH CAROLINA
• College of Charleston (Charleston)
• Wofford College (Spartanburg)

TENNESSEE
• Carson-Newman University (Jefferson City)
• Maryville College (Maryville)
• Rhodes College (Memphis)
• Sewanee: The University of the South (Sewanee)
• Tusculum University (Greeneville)

TEXAS
• University of Houston

VIRGINIA
• Averett University (Danville)
• Christopher Newport University (Newport News)
• Emory & Henry College (Emory)
• George Mason University (Fairfax)
• University of Lynchburg (Lynchburg)
• University of Richmond (Richmond)
• Washington and Lee University (Lexington)

WISCONSIN
• Edgewood College (Madison)

WEST VIRGINIA
• Concord University (Athens)
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. Through students' sustained involvement over multiple semesters and years, and supported through intentional education and reflection, students develop a range of skills, knowledge areas, and post-graduate outcomes. The student developmental model also provides structural supports for students to grow as community leaders and civic minded professional on and off campus.
Bonner Foundation Staff

The Foundation staff supports Bonner Programs at 65+ colleges and universities that engage 3,000 student annually. To learn more about the work we do and how to build partnerships with us, please contact our Community Engagement Director, Liz Brandt, at liz@bonner.org.

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Tony Richardson, Executive Director, Nord Family Foundation (Amherst, OH)
Partnership Benefits

Our partnerships with schools are mutually beneficial and further the missions of both the schools and the Bonner Foundation.

GRADUATE SCHOOL BENEFITS

Our graduate schools gain access to a talented pool of predominantly low-income, first-generation students who are civically-minded, high-achieving and contribute significantly to their campuses' and communities' culture of service and higher learning. This access can include but not limited to:

- Press release announcement on Bonner website (www.bonner.org) when graduate school partnership is established.
- Partnership information highlighted on Bonner website (http://www.bonner.org/graduate-school-partnerships).
- Access to over 3,000 current Bonner students via weekly newsletter.
- Access to 20,000+ Bonner alumni via BonnerConnect (Bonner alumni platform).
- Opportunity for information shared on Bonner social media accounts, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.
- Access to Bonner students, staff, alumni, faculty, and others involved with the Bonner Network via Bonner Learning Community platform (http://bonner.mn.co).
- Opportunity to host information sessions or other opportunities sought by the graduate program to connect with Bonner students, alumni, and staff.
- Registration fee waived to attend two annual Bonner conferences - Summer Leadership Institute (summer) and Bonner Congress (fall), including representation at a networking fair and opportunities to present workshops. Sometimes housing and meals at conferences are also provided.

BONNER STUDENT AND ALUMNI BENEFITS

In return, Bonner students and alumni receive financial assistance, such as application fee waivers and partial- or full-tuition scholarships to alleviate the economic barriers to pursuing a graduate degree.

The majority of Bonner’s graduate school partners offer an application fee waiver and scholarships ranging from $5,000 to $40,000 annually. For more specifics on Bonner graduate school partnership benefits, please visit: http://www.bonner.org/graduate-school-partnerships.