



Bonner Leaders Program

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The mission of the Bonner Scholars and Bonner Leaders Program is to transform the lives of students and members, the life of their campuses, their local communities, and the world through the service and leadership. To achieve this vision, the Bonner Foundation provides service-scholarships to approximately 1,600 members annually. The Bonner Scholarship is designed to heighten the overall education students and members receive by asking them to engage in ongoing service work and helping them develop the tools and knowledge necessary to make that work meaningful and lasting.

In 1997, the Bonner Foundation began an effort to expand the Bonner Scholars Program model of service-based scholarships. Through several grants the Foundation partnered with institutions who were interested in expanding the Bonner Scholars Program or in creating a service-based scholarship program on their campus. Together, we learned to use funds from federal work-study, AmeriCorps education awards, AmeriCorps stipends and individual institutions to create scholarship stipends for students who complete community service each week during their term of service.

Today, the Foundation currently works with more than 40 institutions who have created what we call the Bonner Leaders Programs. The Bonner Foundation's seeks to expand the Bonner Leaders Program on individual campuses and through local, state, or regional campus consortiums.

Each of these campuses has a core group of 5-30 student members who commit to completing the required hours of community service during their term. The Bonner Leaders work on issues such as improving educational opportunities and fighting hunger through community programs that focus on literacy issues, mentoring and nutrition/anti-hunger initiatives. These students/members also participate in regular training and reflection activities sponsored by their campuses, their community partners, and the Bonner Foundation.

The Bonner Foundation, the Bonner Scholars Program and the Bonner Leaders Program hold these Common Commitments:

- Social Justice
- Civic Engagement
- Spiritual Exploration
- Diversity
- International Perspective
- Community Building



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Background

Millions of dollars are raised each year for academic and athletic scholarships. The Bonner Foundation believes that a third type of merit scholarship, based on community engagement, should be available at all colleges and universities.

The Bonner Scholars Program offers one of the largest, oldest, and most successful models for this type of scholarship initiative. Started in 1990, the Bonner Scholars Program supports individuals who otherwise could not afford to attend college because of financial need. The Bonner Foundation works with participating colleges selected by the Foundation and supports approximately 1,500 students at 25 institutions. The Foundation provides up to \$4,000 per student annually to supplement the financial aid package provided by the school. In return for the financial support, the Bonner Scholars are expected to engage in 10 hours a week

of community service during the school year and 240 hours in the summer.

Though the Foundation is unable to expand the number of Bonner Scholar schools we support financially, the Foundation is extremely committed to exploring ways to partner with new schools who are dedicated to creating service scholarships on their campuses. This commitment inspired the Foundation to write a variety of grants to assist us in learning how to create service based scholarship programs at additional campuses. This initiative resulted in the creation of the Bonner Leaders Program.

History

In 1997, the Bonner Foundation became a partner with the AmeriCorps education award only program, a sub-division of the Corporation for National Service. This grant awards the Foundation a number of AmeriCorps “slots” or positions each year, which we can then distribute to our individual campus partners.
Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education

In 1998, the Foundation received a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) that allowed us to begin partnering with six new schools interested in offering service scholarships on their campuses. Together, we explored new ways of creating service scholarship opportunities for students who would not receive direct funding from the Foundation. Through our partnerships with Allegheny College, Bluefield State College, Centre College, LaGrange College, Southwest Virginia Community College, and Warren Wilson College we learned to use a combination of federal work-study funding, AmeriCorps education awards, and institutional funding to create one, two, and four year service scholarship opportunities for students.

The lessons learned from these grants and start-up schools helped the Bonner Foundation establish the core elements and best practices for modeling a successful campus-based service scholarship program. Since our original start-up schools began two years ago, the Foundation has been able to expand it’s Bonner Leader Program in several important ways.

Specifically, there are two main ways schools can become involved in the Bonner Program. First, a school can apply directly to the Bonner Foundation as an individual campus interested in creating a service scholarship program. Second, a school can join a consortium of schools interested in creating service scholarship programs and thereby apply for funding as a group. The Bonner Foundation is currently involved in the creation of new Bonner Leaders Programs with both individual and consortiums. Two new initiatives include:

1) Five individual schools started Bonner Leaders Programs in Fall 2001. They include:

Pfeiffer University Misenheimer, NC
St. Mary’s College of CA Moraga, CA
Tusculum College Greeneville, TN
Washington & Lee University Lexington, VA
Wheeling Jesuit University Wheeling, WV

2) The Bonner Foundation received a grant from the New Jersey State Commission on National and Community Service to create a consortium of AmeriCorps Bonner Leaders Programs in New Jersey. The grant provides funding for 51 part-time corpsmembers and 8 fulltime corpsmembers. The fulltime members are placed at a variety of community agencies throughout New Jersey, and the part-time members primarily come from six primary colleges across the state that include:

Mercer County Community College Trenton, NJ
Middlesex County College Edison, NJ
Princeton University Princeton, NJ
Rider University Lawrenceville, NJ
Rutgers University New Brunswick, NJ
The College of New Jersey Ewing, NJ