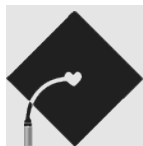


# STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONAL

Bonner Scholars Program Coordinator  
at Berry College



**Michael Zirkel**

Stetson University, Class of 2013

## **Describe your current position**

In my current role, I serve as the Bonner Scholars Program coordinator at Berry College. My major responsibility is directing eighty students through the Bonner leadership development model and assisting them with the identification, coordination, and monitoring of their community work during both the academic year and summer. Through this work, I also help nurture campus and community partnerships by connecting students in service work with local nonprofits.

## **What does an average work day and year look like for you?**

Even in the summer, which are the quieter months, it is never the same day twice. More specifically, during the summer I work on projects that I have put off throughout the year like more efficient budgeting strategies. Throughout the year, my time is spent going to different meetings that the students are putting on around campus. My other day-to-day work includes providing academic support to students who are maybe struggling with their coursework.

## **What was the biggest factor in landing the job that you have now?**

In college, I was a Bonner Scholar and eventual Bonner Coordinator at Stetson University before taking this current role. Those experiences definitely made the learning curve easier for me to overcome in taking on this position. That fact, coupled with the meaningful interactions I had with students during my interview probably helped me land this job.

## **What are the best and worst things about working in your current role?**

The students that I get to meet and the stories I get to hear make this work worthwhile for me. Seeing some of the students that I advise do their service and school work with a smile on their face, despite adversities they may be overcoming, is admirable and that inspires me to do more. I also have several opportunities for professional development, such as having my graduate school education fully covered by Berry College.

The only bad thing about my job is that it is easy to lose focus in administrative matters. At times, I may be engulfed by institutional politics around budgeting or program organizations and forget about all the great things and people around me. This trend is prevalent in every job sector but especially so in students affairs since this is emotional work.



**If you had to name one decision, positive or negative, that has shaped your path, what was it?**

My decision to not stay at home for college and live on campus even though Stetson University was relatively close. This made it easier for me to put myself through college without any help from home and that was best decision I have ever made, as it helped make me a more independent person.

**How would you recommend students get involved in this field? What resources or opportunities can you share?**

If there is a particular position that a student is interested in pursuing, he or she should talk with the person on their campus who is currently serving in that role. Ask them the hard questions. What do you find difficult about this work? What factors lead you to pursue this career path? I also advise students to get their feet wet in whatever student affairs positions are available to them, whether they be in residence life or admissions or any other department. The bottom line is that once your within the gates of an institution you can start climbing the ladder to get to where you want to end up.

**What's your dream job? What's next?**

My future is up in the air at this point in time. I hope once I finish my master's degree in business administration at Berry College that I will be more marketable. I would, however, like to go into corporate level merchandizing at a large department store in the future.

