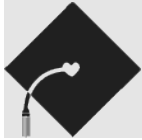


Civic Engagement Professional

Assistant Director of the Shepherd Program at Washington and Lee University



Marisa Charley
Allegheny College, Class of 2010



Describe your current position.

When I started, I was coordinating the Bonner program and community-based research, particularly by helping community partners to identify needs that could be translated into academically relevant projects and then finding faculty and students with the skills and interests to partner with the agency to address that need. I've also started teaching two sections of Poverty 102 and we are currently working strategies to deepen that learning through a second academic experience later in the students' developmental trajectory.

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

A lot of emails! I do a lot of work with faculty through community engaged research. I teach two sections one day a week, which includes working on the syllabus, managing student reflection opportunities, and placements in the service learning course. I work a *ton* with community partners, both through the Bonner Program and teaching. For the Bonner Program, it's about supporting the whole person. It's about getting to know the students who need the program as much as the program needs them. It's about loving them well, which looks different every day and every year.

What was the most important factor in landing the job you have now?

Honestly, just a ton of support from the Bonner Network.

What are the two best and two worst things about working in your current role or sector?

The two best things are feeling like I'm planting sequoias and working with really, really awesome people. All of my students and colleagues I seriously consider as part of my family. The two worst things are feeling like you're treading water in terms of impacts. It's really great to work in a field where you are totally invested in terms of yourself and your ethic, but it's also really devastating because a professional failure for me is a personal failure for me. I'm shattered when something goes wrong at work. Logistics are hard too—like the fact that we have to cut the red tape and do legal stuff.

Do you feel like you have to financially sacrifice to be in your field? Are you happy with the pay?

I feel like working in higher education gives me the opportunity to be taken care of financially to a degree—more than, for example, a start-up or grassroots non-profit may be able to. I own home, I drive a safe car, I have two kids that I take care of. I'm okay. That's all that I could really ask for.

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

Every great thing that has happened in my life has been because I was a Bonner. Every single thing. That was the first best decision. The second best decision was not to give up when it got tough. That includes like when things got tough financially when I was a VISTA and when things got tough emotionally when I was trying to figure out how to contend with the complexities of this world. It was not giving up and having the people who helped me not give up.

