

The Bonner Program: Proven Impacts

Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

Bonner Scholar and Leader Programs are hosted by 65 colleges and universities across 23 states. Each year, these programs enroll more than 3,000 students in a four-year developmental program of experiential, civic learning and engagement. Students work in collaboration with local, state, and national nonprofits and government organizations to address pressing community issues. Students participate in a developmental progression of leadership roles, training, education, and reflection. This document describes findings from the Bonner Student Impact Survey completed by first year and senior students in spring 2019. It incorporates related research on the powerful impacts of community engagement on students.

Introduction	2
Who Are Bonners? Today's Diverse Students	4
Enriching the First Year	6
Empowering Leaders	8
Growing Civic Minded Graduates.....	10
Engaging in Politics	12
Developing Identity and Values.....	14
Providing High-Impact Experiences.....	16
Connecting Civic and Academic Learning.....	18
Capstones and Signature Work	20
Retention & Completion	22
Post-Graduate Success	24
Citations and Where to Learn More	26





THE CORELLA & BERTRAM F.
BONNER FOUNDATION

Introduction

This report showcases the findings from the 2018-2019 implementation of the Bonner Student Impact Survey across a national network of 65 institutions. Since 1990, the Bonner Program has provided colleges and institutions with a viable model for supporting college access for diverse, low-income students. Integrated into the work-study and scholarship of their financial aid packages, this cohort-based program enables Bonner students to participate in a rigorous, developmental progression of community engagement which is reinforced with regular training, education, and reflection. The Bonner Program has also helped campuses integrate community engagement campus-wide by providing a variety of models for scaffolded learning in both curricular and co-curricular student life, with student leadership as a core feature.

Between 2000 and 2010, the Bonner Foundation carried out its first longitudinal Student Impact Survey and Bonner Alumni Survey. Guided by the expertise of researchers Cheryl and Jim Keen, and later Kelly Hall, Julie Hatcher, and Dan Richard, the Bonner Foundation confirmed that the four-year Bonner Scholars Program model had significant positive impacts on student development and learning during college, as well as for our alumni's post-graduate success and well-being. Between 2000-2008, Bonner Student Impact Surveys were implemented during the first year, mid-point, and senior year across 25 institutions who collectively enrolled 1,500 Bonner Scholars annually. In 2010, in light of the program's 20th Anniversary, more than 3,500 alumni participated in the Alumni Survey. These assessments pointed to key findings, instructive for the Foundation and continuous improvement:

- The four-year co-curricular program enhances student success in college, student leadership development, and lifelong civic responsibility. The four-year program structure, cohorts, "dialogue across difference," campus diversity (the more diverse, the stronger impact), and mentoring are key factors in the program's success.
- Alumni often stayed civically involved. Many alumni had pursued a year of full-time service after graduation, working with AmeriCorps programs (like City Year or Teach for America) or faith-based programs (like Jesuit Volunteer Corps). A remarkable 31% worked in the government sector, and another 34% had chosen nonprofit sector jobs. Nearly a quarter were teachers. One third of alumni believe that Bonner Program gave them advantage in finding a career. Additionally, 90% of alumni had voted in the prior November election, much higher than the national average for their age group.

- Students' college experiences in community engagement impacted their post-graduate career and vocational choices. Analysis of alumni surveyed using Steinberg, Hatcher, and Bringle's "Civic Minded Graduate" scale demonstrated that graduates show markedly higher "civic professionalism," which means that they continued to act in civic ways (Richard et al. 2011). Additionally, program participation enhanced alumni's well-being, or *equanimity*, in ways that graduates sustained their civic involvement and reported a sense of meaning in their personal lives.

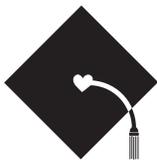
Related findings are integrated throughout this brief. In the past decade, the Bonner Program and the field of campus-community engagement have grown and matured. New research has: a) linked community engagement with effective teaching and learning; b) pointed to its effects on students political and democratic engagement; and c) linked engagement with psychosocial well-being. With this learning in mind, the Bonner Foundation set out to redesign its Student Impact Survey and carry out smaller studies, such as one on retention and persistence.

In collaboration with Raymond Barclay, a Senior Research Fellow at the Bonner Foundation with deep knowledge in institutional research and psychometric survey design, Ariane Hoy and Rachayita Shaw of the Bonner Foundation have created, piloted, and tested a survey that examines other dimensions of the program's impact. In Spring 2019, first year and senior students across the national network participated. These briefs, designed to make the findings accessible to a wide audience, describe what we have learned to date.

Three findings from our research highlight the value of the Bonner Program and community engagement for key issues in higher education today:

- **Between the first and senior year, being in the Bonner Program has statistically significant positive impact on key educational outcomes for students**, including their campus belonging and community connectedness, civic engagement, political engagement, identity development around issues of diversity, democratic values, and thriving. Civic engagement experiences, including leadership and project roles that students take with community partners, are positively correlated with their learning.
- **Being in the Bonner Program positively impacts students' academic experiences and success.** Students seek courses that improve their understanding of community issues and can improve their effectiveness in applying learning to real-world issues. A majority of students are now completing higher level capacity-building projects, including as academic capstones. Many are taking on research, program development, social action, and other problem solving.
- **Being in the Bonner Program improves students' retention, persistence, and graduation rates.** With a majority of students are of color, low-income, and often first generation – the population that many institutions seek to successfully support today – the Bonner Program model offers higher education many replicable lessons.

Who Are Bonners?



The Bonner Program: Proven Impact

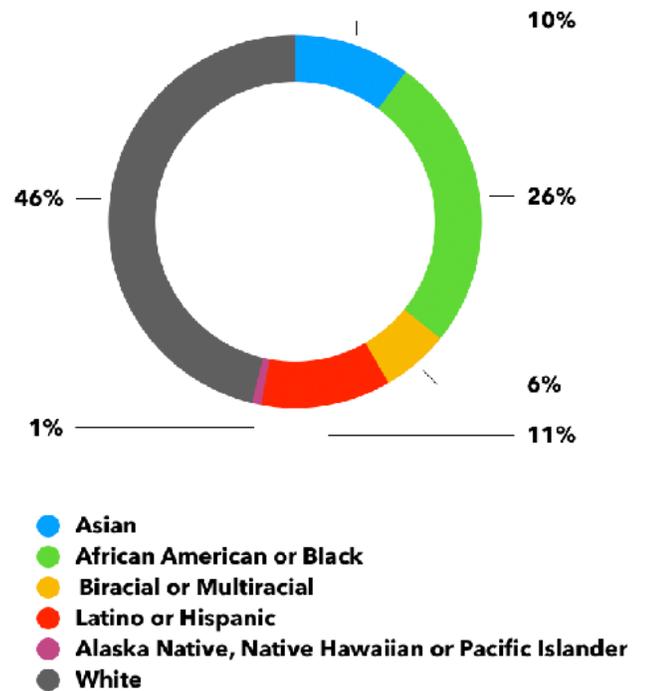
Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

Created in 1990 at Berea College, the Bonner Program has sought to provide “access to education and opportunity to serve” to diverse low-income students. Today, Bonner Scholar and Bonner Leader Programs are hosted by 65 colleges and universities across 23 states. Each year, these programs enroll more than 3,000 students in a four-year developmental program of experiential, civic learning and engagement. Students work in collaboration with local, state, and national nonprofits to address pressing community issues like education, environment, health, hunger, and poverty. Committing 8-10 hours each week, these engaged students build community capacity while they learn and apply their talents.

This series of briefs describes the impact that participating in the Bonner Program has for students. It draws on an annual Student Impact Survey of first year students and senior students, completed in the spring. In 2019, 515 freshmen and 286 seniors completed the survey. These briefs share insights about the positive impact that the program has on students’ academic learning, civic identity and engagement, abilities to work with diverse individuals and groups, skills in navigating complex systems to achieve change, and post-graduate success.

The diverse students in the Bonner Program are representative of today’s undergraduates and a population that institutions of higher education are seeking to support and graduate. This makes the success of the Bonner Program especially interesting to college and universities today, offering lessons that may be replicated across campus.

Diverse Racial and Ethnic Backgrounds

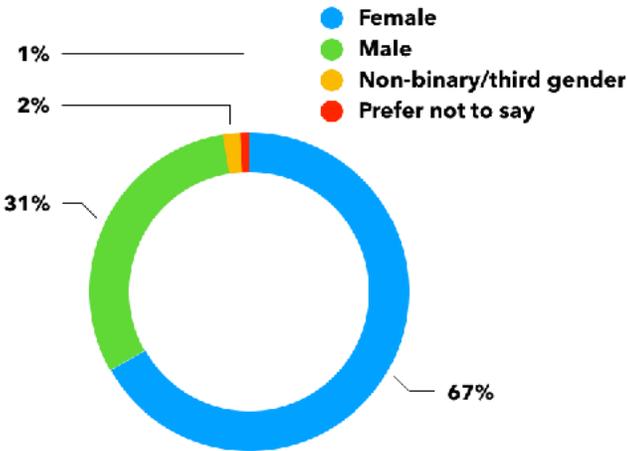


Typically, campuses recruit Bonner students with greater representation of underrepresented ethnic groups than their overall student body. As the chart above suggests, more than half of Bonner students are of color. In 2017, the US undergraduate population was 61 percent white, 18 percent Hispanic, 12.3 percent black, 5.7 percent Asian, 1.9 percent one or more race, 0.7 percent American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.3 percent Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (AAC&U, 2019). The proportion of White Bonner students is less than the national average. African Americans and Asians are better represented, but Latinx and Hispanic students are less so. Students come from families with lower socio-economic status than are often represented in these institutions. With persistent gaps by income in college completion (Calahan & Perna, 2015), Bonner provides an important intervention.

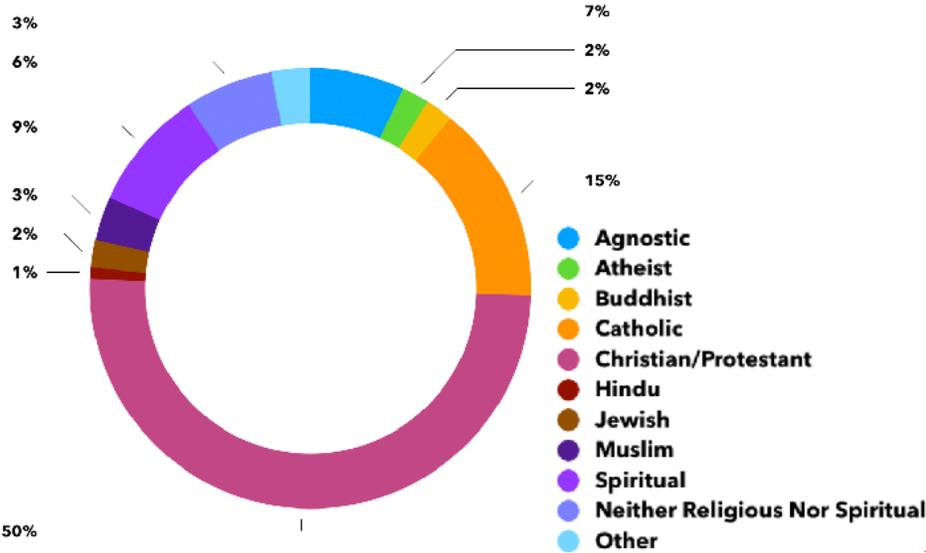
Who Are Bonners?

More Women Than Men

Today's undergraduate population is more female than male, with some students identifying as non-binary or transitioning. The Bonner Seniors who completed the Student Impact Survey also included more women than men, but this may not be fully representative of the program's composition nationally. Community engagement or "service" has historically attracted more women. To promote greater gender balance, Bonner Scholar Programs seek to meet a no greater than 60/40 ratio.



Diverse Faith and Spiritual Beliefs



Bonner students represent diverse faith, religious, and ethical traditions. As shown above, about half identify as Christian or Protestant, and the other half hold a number of different beliefs. With *Spiritual Exploration* as one of seven Bonner Common Commitments, many students share and explore their values throughout the program. Bonners appear to be more faith-oriented than their peers nationally. CIRP data suggests that the number of college students with no religious affiliation has tripled in the last 30 years, from 10 percent in 1986 to 31 percent in 2016 (Downey, 2017).



Enriching the First Year



The Bonner Program: Proven Impact

Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

Supporting Low-Income Students

Bonner Programs generally recruit and select students during the college application process. Each campus program works closely with Admissions, so that qualified students apply both to the college and to the Bonner Program. For Bonner Scholar Programs, 85 percent of students must be from low-income backgrounds, and therefore Pell Grant eligible. For Bonner Leader Programs, which do not receive financial aid support from the Bonner Foundation, guidelines are less stringent, but most programs attempt to recruit and select 75 percent or more low-income students. As such, the Bonner Program supports college access and attainment for historically underrepresented populations.

Addressing Gaps

Institutions often struggle to support students from low-income backgrounds, many of whom are also students of color or the first in their family to attend college. Nationally, low-socioeconomic status students are less likely to complete college. After graduating high school, only 14 percent of low-SES students received a bachelor's or higher degree within eight years compared to 29 percent of middle-income students (Fain, 2019; Calahan & Perna, 2015). National gaps also persist by race and ethnicity. The Bonner Program provides several structures for students that help them to develop a sense of belonging and place in college.

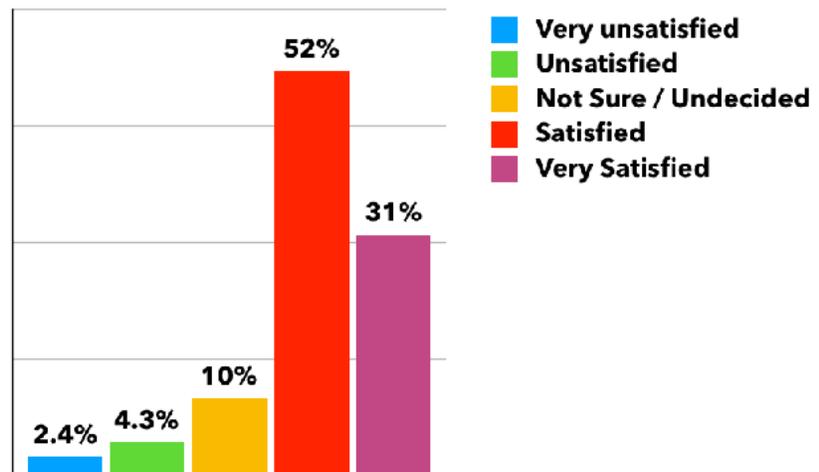
Making College "Student-Ready"

These "high touch" elements include:

- A cohort structure (with 10-40 students in each class)
- A special Bonner Orientation that occurs prior to the campus-wide orientation for freshmen
- Training and reflection in programmatic and academic areas (like writing and reflection)
- Intentional mentoring and support by peers, administrators, and faculty
- Often include other supports like first access to course enrollment or help with choosing courses and activities



These supports contributed to first year students, on average, reporting a strong degree of satisfaction with their college or university experiences, as shown below.

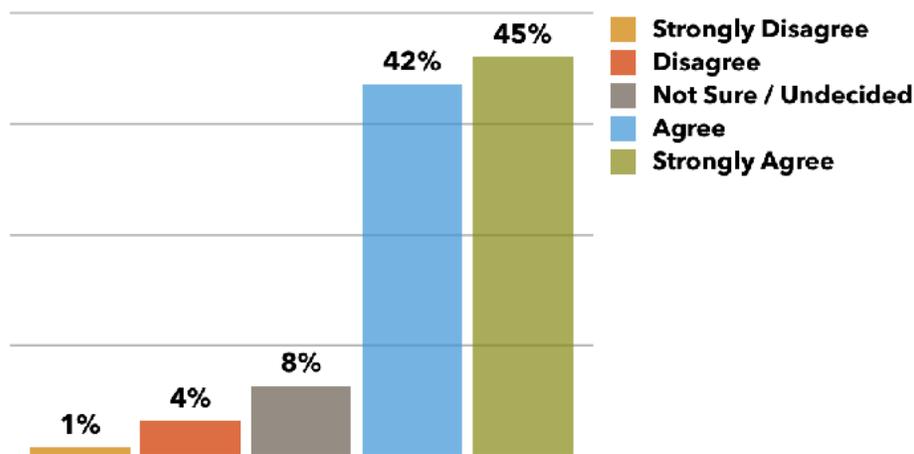


Enriching Students' First Year Experiences

Being in Bonner Builds a Sense of Belonging

First year students reported at the end of their second semester that the Bonner Program positively impacts their satisfaction with the campus experience, as shown at right. Students' satisfaction with their program and campus experience also correlated at significant levels with students' gains on several of the other sub-scales, as shown in the table below.

"The Bonner Program is having a significant role in my satisfaction with my campus experience."



When examining first year satisfaction overall:

- Items related to students' health and wellness factored most strongly into satisfaction with a positive campus experience. In other words, students who struggled with wellness were also less happy with their college experiences.
- Satisfaction with the Bonner Program is most strongly associated with the campus experience being positive.
- Students' perceptions of campus climate (and whether they feel welcomed) affects their satisfaction (often in negative ways).
- Supportive activities such as Orientation, First Year Trip, cohort meetings, and reflection do make a difference. The fewer cornerstone activities a student engaged in during their first year, the lower the satisfaction with the college experience.

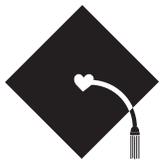
The Student Impact Survey was designed to holistically gauge the impact of the Bonner Program on many dimensions of student learning and success. As presented later in this brief, this allows for an analysis of the impact of the program on students' academic learning and post-graduate skills and views on civic engagement, social justice, career interests, and more.

First Year Bonner Student Responses to Sub-Scales	Correlation with Satisfaction
Self-reported health & wellness	.424**
Bonner community connectedness	.358**
Social integration on campus	.352**
Civic engagement skills	.257**
Academic integration	.257**
Social justice views	.237**
Affiliation and integration with identity groups	.216**
Campus climate	.179**
Impact of community partners on you	.125**

Note: Items on these sub-scales are explained in more depth later in this brief. Asterisked items are significant:

* Significant at the .5 level; **Significant at the .05 level.

Empowering Leaders



The Bonner Program: Proven Impact Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

Preparing Today's Young Leaders

Leadership development is a central principle and feature of the Bonner Program. During their four years of involvement, students develop leadership skills through a variety of roles and avenues including:

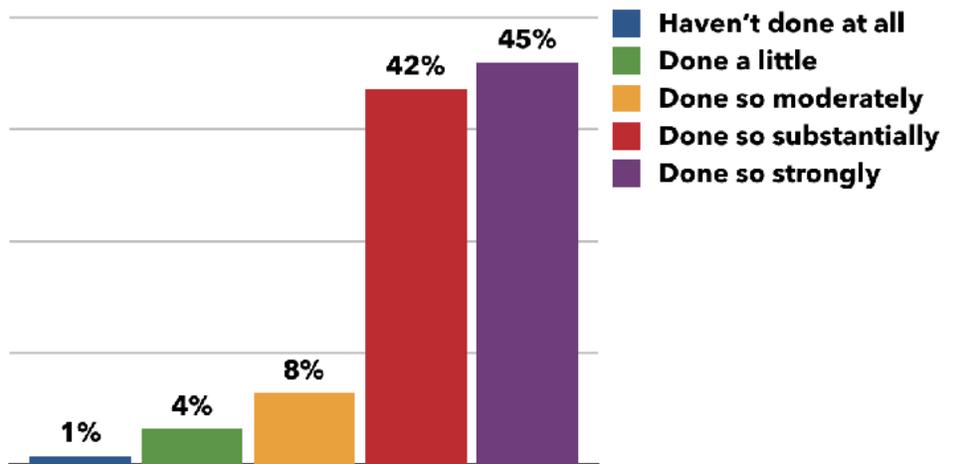
- Mentoring younger peers
- Managing other volunteers for service events or at their partner site
- Planning and leading education and reflection for their cohort or other cohorts as an intern or member of a Bonner Leadership Team
- Taking on specialized leadership roles within their program, center, or campus

Between 2000 and 2010, the Bonner Foundation conducted its first longitudinal Student Impact Survey, examining gains by students across 25 institutions.

The study pointed to clear gains by students in skills of leadership, which are often tied to other areas of civic knowledge and action. As Keen and Hall (2009) concluded, "This study's findings suggest that the core experience of service is not the service itself but the sustained dialogue across

boundaries of perceived difference that happens during service and in reflection along the way, including with people students serve, with the people they serve alongside of, with their supervisors at the service site, with the college staff, and, centrally, with their peers. Peers may offer the most challenging but supportive company with whom to make sense of pressing moral, economic, social, and political dilemmas." In 2019, senior students again reported high degrees of experience and growth in specific leadership skills and approaches. Roughly 95 percent of seniors have learned how to mobilize people, and they also report stronger self-awareness about their actions.

"I have learned how to mobilize or organize people to work on a project."

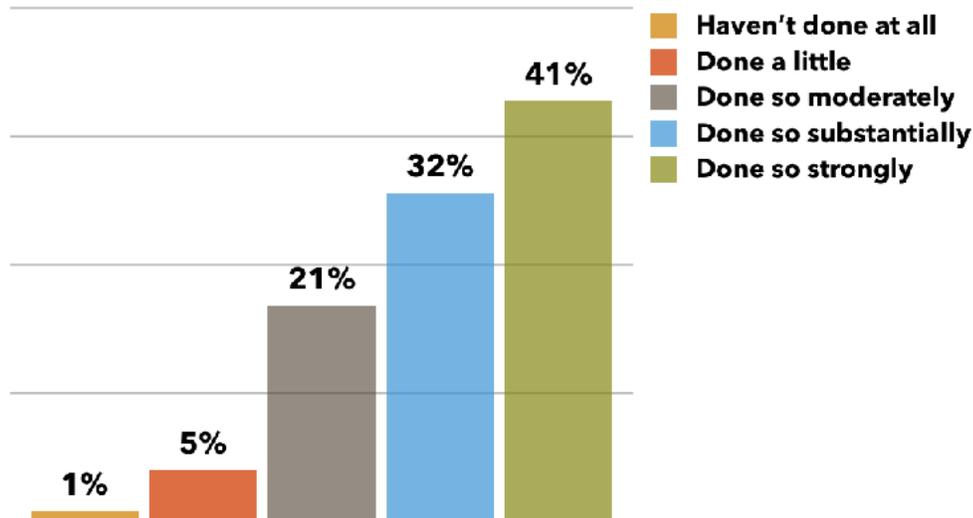


Empowering Talented, Skillful Leaders

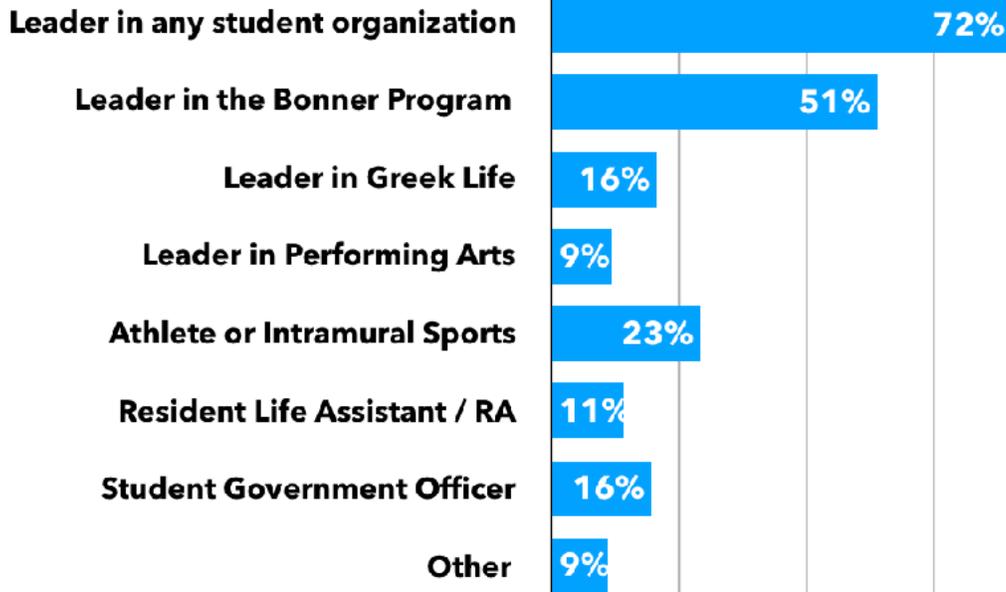
Students Take Campus-Wide Leadership Roles

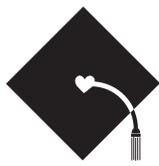
Many Bonner Program staff report that students often take major leadership roles in clubs, organizations, athletics, residence life, and other venues - even though they are busy with the Bonner Program. Data from the Student Impact Survey affirmed these students' leadership roles, with 72 percent of Bonner Seniors reporting that they have been a leader in student organizations. Roughly 17 percent of seniors reported being elected officers in student government.

"I have become more self aware and thoughtful about how I express my values and viewpoints."



Leadership roles Bonners take on in the Bonner Program, on campus, and at their sites....





The Bonner Program: Proven Impact

Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

Graduating Agents of Change

Every U.S. college or university has a public purpose within its mission. At its core, community and civic engagement during college helps prepare undergraduates for critical roles in their families, workplace, communities, and society. With its four-year developmental model and intensity of community engagement, as well as leadership orientation, the Bonner Program is especially designed to cultivate civic identity and agency. The first ten-year study of the Bonner Program pointed clearly to the many strong positive impacts that the program has on students' lifelong civic identity, agency, and involvement. The 2010 Survey of Bonner Alumni reaffirmed these impacts, pointing to the high degree of "civic mindedness" of graduates (Richard et. al, 2017) . Nearly 78% had volunteered in the 12 months before the survey. They reported seeking careers and opportunities to remain civically involved, with 31% working in government and 34% in the nonprofit sector. Nearly a quarter were teachers (Keen & Hatcher, 2010).

Data from the 2019 Student Impact Survey underscored these findings. Questions included a comprehensive battery of items to assess students civic skills and actions, including in complex democratic and political engagement. The survey also asked students to reflect on how their service experiences with community partners contributed to their learning and development. Overall, **civic engagement was one of the highest areas of gains between the first and senior year**, second only to academic integration. Roughly 85 percent of Bonner Seniors plan to use knowledge they gained to solve community problems after college.

Highlighted Civic Experiences

- 93 percent of Senior Bonners reported becoming moderately to significantly **aware of pressing community issues** that need to be addressed.
- 96 percent of Senior Bonners reported learning (to a moderate or significant levels) about a social issue and being **able to identify ways to make a positive impact** on that issue.
- 73 percent of Senior Bonners reported having generally or often buying **products that reflect a social justice or political commitment** (i.e., fair trade, etc.).
- 94 percent of Senior Bonners reported understanding significantly more about the **history, traditions, and challenges confronting the community** surrounding the college.
- Nearly 60 percent of Senior Bonners have **developed an interest in serving in public office** (school board, city council, congress, etc.).
- 93 percent have realized that it is important for them to **vote and be politically involved** (with 57 percent of those students identifying it as critical).
- 92 percent of Senior Bonners have developed an interest in **finding a career path where they can contribute to the wellbeing of society**.

Growing Civic Minded Graduates

Learning from Service and Community Partners

The effectiveness of service-learning as a teaching strategy that can enhance student learning is well established in literature. Empirical evidence shows significant links between experiential engagement and learning for college student development. Since the 1990s, large-scale surveys and studies across hundreds of campuses, such as those developed by Alexander Astin and Vincent Tinto, affirmed that engagement is critical to students’

growth and learning, and that the broader culture and environment matters (Astin, 1977, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1987; Kuh, 2008). The impact of community partners on students, however, is discussed much less. The Bonner Student Impact Survey points to clear impacts of experiences with partners on student learning, as described in the table below and regression analysis of gains.

Experiences	Did not do (or no impact)	Had a little impact	Had moderate impact	Had a strong impact
Learning from Site Supervisors or Staff	4%	12%	37%	47%
Guidance from other Student Leaders	3%	14%	42%	41%
Being a Site Leader	22%	7%	31%	40%
Learning from the people I serve	1%	3%	26%	70%
Working on program development	8%	8%	33%	52%
Fundraising or resource development	32%	17%	27%	25%
Doing research or analysis	20%	16%	27%	38%
Getting involved in social action or advocacy	11%	11%	32%	46%
Addressing challenges or problems	3%	8%	33%	57%

Civic Engagement Impacts a Range of Areas

Further analysis revealed that students’ civic engagement significantly correlated with their political engagement, community engagement, Bonner connectedness, academic integration, and social integration at significant levels:

- Political Engagement ($p < .602^{**}$)
- Community Partner Impact on Participant ($p < .492^{**}$)
- Bonner Community Connectedness ($p < .459^{**}$)
- Academic Integration ($p < .443^{**}$)
- Social Integration ($p < .404^{**}$)
- Harmonious Passion ($p < .403^{**}$), which consists of items related to students’ hope, motivation, and accountability.



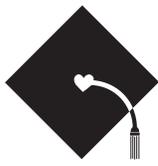
"Being a Bonner is the single most impactful thing I have done. Working with Clinica Esperanza/Hope Clinic has been transformative."

BASHAR ZAIDAT '21
BONNER COMMUNITY FELLOW



Students, like the one above, often report that their service experience itself has been transformational.

Engaging in Politics



The Bonner Program: Proven Impact Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

Do Students Engage in Politics?

Civic engagement is another Bonner Common Commitment. It can be defined, as Thomas Ehrlich did in *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, as: "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes" (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi). To support students to acquire civic knowledge and the skills of political engagement, many programs provide training in topics like understanding public policy, voter education, and social action. In their weekly engagement with community partners, most students focus on meeting the needs of people, communities, and the environment. Working on policy or with government partners is less common but may occur developmentally or through summer internships.

Earlier research suggests that students' interest and awareness of politics is increasing through service, education, and reflection. Studies in the field more broadly, such as a twelve campus study by Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, and Stephens (2003) have found that community-engaged programs with a social justice orientation do increase students' democratic knowledge and participation. Here, the Student Impact Survey sought to understand the way in which students' political engagement is being shaped by the combination of their Bonner Program and campus experiences.

Highlighted Political Experiences

Given some programs' funding (i.e., especially those that receive government grants) and campus restrictions on engaging students in politics, programmatic involvement in political engagement is not as widespread across the network. Still, when asked about how their Bonner Program helped them to learn and engage politically:

- 64 percent of Senior Bonners reported that the Bonner Program involved helping them maintain an awareness of local, national and/or global current events and political news. Another 26 percent report doing this on their own.

"Working at my state representative's office during my second summer...motivated me to pursue a career in law." - Bonner Senior

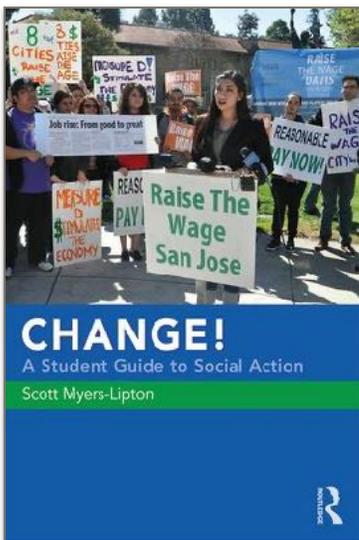
- 44 percent of Senior Bonners reported that the Bonner Program helped them promote initiatives (advocacy, fundraising, volunteer programs, etc) that directly support political agenda(s) that I believe promote social justice (e.g., racial, environmental, economic, etc.). Another 18 percent report doing this on their own.
- 44 percent of Senior Bonners reported that the Bonner Program helped them learn how local and government offices are organized in order to help community residents access support and services. Another 17 percent report doing this on their own.

Political Engagement

Activities That Promote Democratic Engagement

Within many Bonner Programs, structured activities provide students with opportunities to learn about and become more engaged in democratic and political engagement. Seniors completing the survey reported that:

- 28% of seniors had participated in advocacy or campaign events, such as a lobbying day or social action course;
- 72% of seniors had participated in training or courses led by Bonner Administrators (staff and/or faculty).



Between first year and senior year, the Student Impact Survey found statistically significant gains in students' political awareness and engagement. The items for Political Engagement were most strongly associated with those for Civic Engagement, followed by Bonner Community Connectedness and Academic Integration.

Some campuses offer courses on social action, modeled after one at San José State University.

Activities like advocacy or campaign events (.365**); courses on issues and solutions (.190**); and trainings or courses led by Bonner administrators (.181**) were also found to be significantly correlated with gains in political participation.

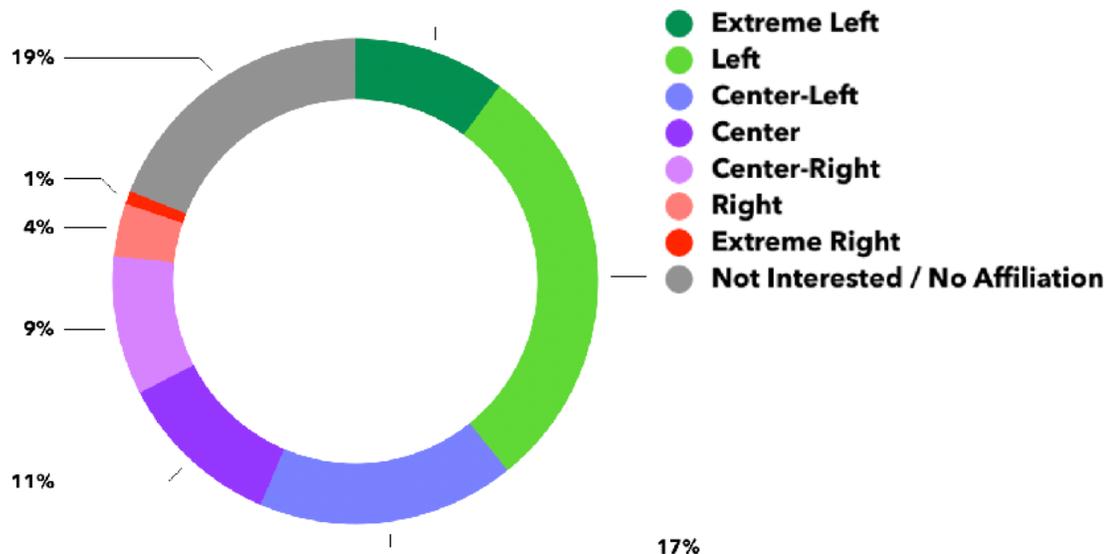
Views Are Reflective of Generation Z

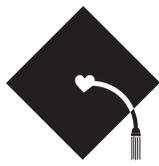
Current research about youth between 7-22 years finds that they are more politically progressive and liberal in their views, especially social views. Pew Research Center finds that youth born after 1996:

- 70% believe that the government should do more to solve problems;
- 62% believe that increasing racial and ethnic diversity is good for society;
- 35% say they personally know someone who prefers that others refer to them using gender-neutral pronouns (compared to 25% of Millennials and 16% of Gen Xers);
- And 43% of Gen Z Republicans and 82% of Gen Z Democrats say that Blacks are not treated fairly (Pew, 2019).

When asking Bonner seniors about their political views, 58% identified as Democrats; 15% as Independents, 11% as Republican, 2% as Green, and 13% with no affiliation. The chart below captures how students identified their political preferences.

Bonner Seniors' Political Preferences





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Developing Identity

Student Development Around Identity and Difference

The first Bonner Student Impact Survey (2000-2010) pointed to "dialogue across difference" as a key component of the program's positive impact (Keen & Hall, 2010). Diversity itself, of the program and campus, was found to be positive factor for students' learning. With this in mind, the Student Impact Survey sought to understand students' perceptions around aspects of their identity - such as around race, ethnicity, religion, etc. The table below captures aspects of what students said. They point to ways that the Bonner Program is providing diverse students with a welcoming climate, one in which they can explore their identities. Starting as early as the first year, students' perceptions of the campus climate has a strong effect on their own sense of belonging and community connectedness.

Analysis of student responses to these and other items within this sub-scale found that the higher the student rated the campus climate, the stronger were their own ratings on the specific items. This finding echoes other studies in the field. For instance, in a paper entitled *Full Participation*, Saltmarsh, Sturm, Eatman, and Bush (2011) suggest that diversity is needed across the student body, faculty, and staff for students' civic learning to flourish. Campus climate is important for students' development, with recent research pointing to connections between how students perceive the institution's values and their willingness to be civically engaged, which in turn affects their own mental health and resilience (Mitchell, Reason, Hemer, & Finley, 2016).

Affiliation and Integration with Other Identity Groups						
	Not at All	Slightly	A Little	Moderately	Mostly	Exactly
I feel I am allowed to explore different aspects of my identity and culture in the Bonner Program.	3%	2%	5%	36%	36%	36%
I often feel like I should play down an important part of my culture or identity within Bonner.	46%	15%	8%	13%	10%	9%
My culture and/or identities are welcomed within the Bonner Program .	2%	1%	4%	7%	32%	53%
My culture and/or identities are welcomed within the broader campus community .	1%	2%	5%	15%	41%	46%

“Without Bonner, I am not sure that I would have been able to make the connections that I have throughout my four years here. I am thankful and encourage prospective students to apply to the program. It's more than just service, it's heart and character building.” - Bonner Senior

Clarifying Values

Commitment to Social Change and Justice

The Bonner Program, like many campuses, aims to help students develop a commitment to values and practices like equity and social justice. Related to their views on social justice:

- 96% of seniors report they are able to respect and appreciate people’s diverse social identities.
- 96% of seniors believe it is important to support community organizations and institutions that help individuals and groups achieve their goals within their communities.
- 97% of seniors believe it is important to provide opportunities for individuals and groups to describe their challenges, problems, experiences, and goals in their own terms.
- 97% believe that they can have a positive impact within their communities.

Between the first and senior year, students' views about achieving social justice and solving entrenched problems continue to evolve through experience.

Students Learn to Thrive – and Contribute

Wellness and thriving are key themes within higher education for students today. According to the American Psychological Association (2013), anxiety is major concern among college students (41.6%), followed by depression (36.4%) and relationship problems (35.8%).

In 2019, Student Impact Survey findings again pointed to clear gains in sub-scales for students’ hope, accountability, and tenacity between the first and senior year. Students’ scores in wellness also increased significantly. When asked about specific challenges, these students reported fewer incidences of them. For instance, less than 2% answered frequently to the statement, “I have considered leaving this institution or quitting school,” and nearly 60% said they had never considered quitting. Additionally, fewer than 2% answered frequently to “I have regretted my decision to enroll in college at this institution” and 59% also stated they had never felt that way.

“I have learned how interconnected and complex are the problems facing our communities. For example, I cannot have a singular focus on improving education, but must also be concerned with socioeconomic and health factors that impact how students perform in schools.” - Bonner Senior



Students are part of a community that supports holistic growth and learning, such as at Bonner Orientation at Montclair State University. Students read *The Hate You Give*.



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Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

A High-Impact Experience

More than two decades of research conducted as part of the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative has pointed to particular experiences that have the strongest impacts on student learning, particularly for historically underserved students (Kuh, 2010; Finley & McNair, 2013). Several of these High-Impact Practices are built into the four-year Bonner Program model including:

- Structured First Year Experiences
- Diversity & Global Learning
- Internships
- Service-Learning Coursework
- Capstones

Further research has suggested that the implementation of such HIPs must include certain characteristics to be effective, including:

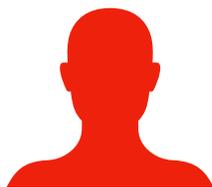
- Involving effort or intensity
- Mentoring relationships
- Continual feedback
- Inquiry (Kinzie, Hoy, & Weight, 2013).

Unfortunately, most undergraduates are not engaging in these experiences in college. A 2014 Gallup study of more than 30,000 U.S. graduates found only 3 percent had the six most powerful experiences linked with post-graduate success and well-being:

THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE: SUPPORT AND EXPERIENTIAL AND DEEP LEARNING	% STRONGLY AGREE
I had at least one professor at [College] who made me excited about learning.	63%
My professors at [College] cared about me as a person.	27%
I had a mentor who encouraged me to pursue my goals and dreams.	22%
All three	14%
I worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete.	32%
I had an internship or job that allowed me to apply what I was learning in the classroom.	29%
I was extremely active in extracurricular activities and organizations while attending [College].	20%
All three	6%
All six	3%

With this in mind, the Bonner Student Impact Survey took a close look at what experiences students are having that are aligning with these practices, and we found great results.

83% of Bonner Seniors reported having a mentor, with many students having more than one. The mean score for mentoring increased in a significant way from first year to senior year.



55% said the Bonner Director or Coordinator was a mentor.



51% had a faculty mentor.



45% had a community partner mentor.



42% had a peer mentor.

Providing High-Impact Experiences

Mentoring also correlated positively with gains students made in other areas, including civic engagement, political engagement, social justice views, and community integration. Though they

were lower in number, students with partner or other administrator mentors showed significant gains, marked below.

Mentoring: Senior Year in College Mean Scores by Sub-scale						
Do you feel that you have developed or are developing a relationship with a mentor through the Bonner Program? Who is (or are) the mentor(s)?	% of Responding Seniors	Civic Engagement	Impact of Partners	Political Engagement	Community Integration	Social Justice Views
Another administrator is or was a mentor to me.	18%	54.06*	42.10	14.19*	41.08	33.12*
A staff member or person at my community partner site is or was a mentor to me.	35%	52.96	43.04*	13.39	41.24*	33.10

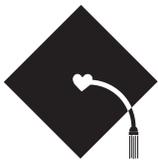
78% of Bonner Seniors reported having completed at least one full-time summer internship.

Other High-Impact Experiences

Bonner Scholars complete at least two funded full-time summer internships, working full-time with nonprofits or government agencies. Most Bonner Leaders also complete internships. The Student

Impact Survey pointed to the link of these signature experiences to gains in civic and political engagement, as well as the impact of partners on students' learning and post-graduate preparation.

Other Signature Experiences and Correlations with Gains		
Signature Activity	% of Seniors	Significant Correlation with Other Gains
I completed one or more full-time summer internship.	78%	Civic Engagement (.176**) Political Engagement (.161**)
I attended a course or trainings led by a Bonner administrator.	72%	Civic Engagement (.170**) Political Engagement (.181**)
I did a significant project in my junior or senior year that connected my service and learning.	60%	Civic Engagement (.137**) Impact of Partners (.138**)
I did a required capstone in my major that was connected to my service.	45%	Civic Engagement (.227**) Political Engagement (.224**)
I completed an international service/study trip	37%	Political Engagement (.163**) Impact of Partners (.202**)
I engaged in a social advocacy or campaign experience.	28%	Civic Engagement (.225**) Political Engagement (.338**)



The Bonner Program: Proven Impact

Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

Connecting Academics

Connecting Civic with Academics

The Bonner Program engages students with broad and diverse academic interests. Each program provides students with opportunities to explore different issue areas and types of engagement. Indeed, the broad range of student future career interests is shown in the table at the right. Of the seniors who completed the 2019 survey, they listed more than 80 distinct majors. The largest majors were in Biology, Business, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology.

Students often share how their service has helped them to clarify their majors and academic interests (and their futures). Data from the Student Impact Survey affirmed this observation. Below are a few narrative comments from seniors about how Bonner shaped and connected with their academic study and learning.

Post-Graduate Interests

Sector	%
Nonprofit	40
Social work, psychology, or human services	30
Business, economics, or finance	27
Higher Education	27
Civic service, government, policy	27
Pre-school & K-12 Education	25
Law or criminal justice	22
Healthcare or medicine	22
Environmental Issues	18
Arts	14
Social enterprise	14
Other	11
Religion	9
Military	3
Not sure	2

"My work at the University Farm through Bonner gave me a place to explore the act of creating life...To address the issue of food waste rotting in landfills, I began working with the Farm Manager to engineer a waste management system that is sustainable."

"I had major issues with the university and Biotech degree. Bonner was what kept me enjoying my studies. I would have transferred many times if it was not for Bonner."

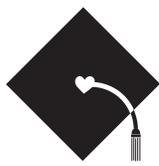
"Before starting at the university, the only thing I knew I didn't want to be was a teacher. In my first semester, I began working on an SAT tutoring program at a local high school, from which I developed an interest in education inequality and a curiosity about early literacy. Ever since, I have found myself continually returning to questions and work in early education."

Connecting Civic with Academics

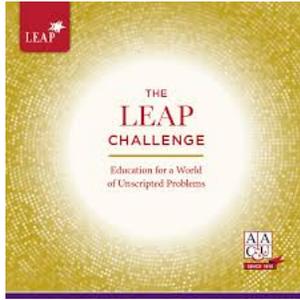
In the past few decades, copious studies of community engagement and community-engaged learning have pointed to its potential positive impacts on dependent measures including academic (GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills), values (commitment to activism and racial understanding), self-efficacy, leadership (activities, self-rated ability, interpersonal skills), career plans, and post-graduate civic involvement plans. Course based service-learning can positively influence student retention and students' plans to continue with studies. More recently, extensive studies such as through the Bringing Theory to Practice network have connected it to students' flourishing and well-being (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin et al., 2000; Finley, 2011; Furco & Root, 2010; Gallini & Moely, 2003; Mitchel et al., 2016).

Are positive academic outcomes happening for Bonners? The Student Impact Survey asked students to reflect on their program and college experiences to shed light on the degree of academic integration. As the table below shows, students are integrating civic and academic experiences through seeking out courses, projects, and faculty advising. This underscores the value of integrating civic learning and engagement with curriculum. Integrative experiences, however, are not widespread for all students. One third of students found it somewhat or very hard to find formal opportunities to integrate service and academic work. Roughly 31 percent of students found it hard to connect their major. The Foundation is working on strategies to address these gaps.

Academic Integration: Senior Students' Reflections					
	Strongly Disagree / Not at All	Disagree	Undecided or Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree / Definitely True
The integration of my service experience with my academic experience has supported my growth and learning.	2%	4%	6%	37%	51%
My interest in ideas and intellectual topics (like issues) has increased during my time at this campus.	1%	3%	8%	37%	50%
The opportunity to blend my service experience with my academic work resulted in a deeper understanding of issues that impact the communities where I served.	2%	6%	13%	37%	42%
I felt that most of my professors were interested in helping students make connections between their community service work and academic coursework (courses, research projects/independent study, capstones, etc.).	8%	14%	18%	34%	26%
I had an opportunity to undertake a senior project or thesis that was in service to a community I interacted with during my experience.	19%	12%	16%	25%	28%



The Bonner Program: Proven Impact Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey



Culminating Integrative Experiences for Students

As described here, the Bonner Program involves a series of scaffolded, developmental activities that can contribute positively to students' retention, learning, and post-graduate preparation. Many programs involve a sequence of courses (Hoy & Meisel, 2008). In the senior year, students create a reflective presentation of their four-year experience, itself an exercise that can be a high-impact educational opportunity (Brownell &

Swaner, 2010; Kuh, 2008).

Building on progress across the Bonner Network to link community engagement with coursework and curriculum, the Bonner Program began working in 2015 to integrate a formal community-engaged capstone project as a core expectation for all Bonners. According to NSSE, students with culminating experience were more engaged in purposeful activities and more likely to report gains in job- or work-related knowledge (Hoy, 2016; Kinzie, 2013). Capstones involving a field placement or experience were associated with the greatest number of educational gains, including working effectively with others, acquiring job- or work-related skills, solving complex, real world problems, applying theory, and synthesizing and organizing ideas.

The Bonner Capstone Project is defined as a community-engaged project completed by either an individual or team in their junior and/or senior year. Furthermore, it is an opportunity for students to engage in building the capacity of a nonprofit or government partner or group while also applying their own academic and broader college learning. Students also work with a faculty or staff mentor on these projects, which may be connected with multi-year courses, community-engaged research, and teaching. Common projects completed by Bonners include:

- Program, organizational, and curriculum development
- Community-based humanities and oral history projects
- Needs assessment and data analysis
- Policy briefs
- Communications and technology projects (including marketing)
- Research projects
- Social action campaign to change a policy



Through integrative capstones, students like this senior at Siena College apply their college learning to build the capacity of community partners.

Capstone & Signature Work

As noted earlier, 60 percent of seniors stated they did a significant project in my junior or senior year that connected their service and learning. Additionally, 45 percent reported a required capstone in a major that was connected to service. The Student Impact Survey asked students to share examples in a narrative question. Below is a sampling of seniors' responses.

Students' narrative responses, however, indicate that many of them are interpreting a Senior Presentation of Learning as the same as a formal capstone. This problem has been echoed by Bonner Program staff as they work to integrate

capstones projects, also noting that it is harder for students in some majors and programs (as also reported here).

Nonetheless, the Student Impact Survey pointed to solid gains by students in academic learning. The strongest correlated area for the Academic Integration sub-scale was Civic Engagement ($p < .443^{**}$), followed by Social Integration on Campus ($p < .396^{**}$), Affiliation and Integration with Identity Groups ($p < .383^{**}$), Tenacity ($p < .345^{**}$), Community Partner Impact on Participant ($p < .315^{**}$), and Harmonious Passion ($p < .313^{**}$).

"My capstone was on the physical and mental needs of the women within my city. I was able to observe and collect data from my service site in order to quantify how often women are seen by physicians and health care professionals and for what reasons."

"My Bonner Capstone focused on the creation and development of a men's group for men of color on a predominately white institution. I created a curriculum and handbook on how the the program would be created in order to assist the young men of color on my campus to excel academically, socially, and emotionally."

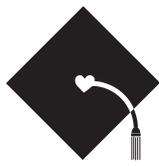
"My project was titled "Education for Liberation: the Mississippi Freedom Schools." This project was a historical research paper on the lasting impact of the Freedom Schools during Freedom Summer in 1964. I also worked with the Underground Railroad History Project to create a curriculum for its summer program that follows the freedom school model."

"For my Bonner Senior Capstone, I did an assessment of food insecurity on college and university campuses using my campus as the basis for my research."

"One of my service sites was tutoring at Carver Middle School, a school that has a lot of students that come from low income households. My project related to this site by [investigating] false confession in the justice system, particularly how [students from] minority groups can be disposed to the injustices of the court system."

"I did a policy brief about making the death with dignity act a law in Pennsylvania."

"I completed a Bonner Capstone looking at the utilization of traditional medicine and biomedicine in the community of Pikine in Senegal, West Africa. I worked directly with the Red Cross. These conversations affirmed a desire to pursue a career in nursing."



The Bonner Program: Proven Impact Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

The Bonner Progression Study: A Pilot Involving Seven Institutions

In 2018, the Bonner Foundation conducted a small progression study, leveraging data that institutions already collect and report (to IPEDS) to conduct analysis about the differences between students involved in the Bonner Program and other students who do not participate in the program. The study sought to understand how Bonners compared to other students on key outcomes such as term-based GPA, attempted and earned hours, and retention. Seven institutions – Berry College, College of Saint Benedict, Guilford College, Stetson University, The College of New Jersey, Ursinus College, and Wofford College – provided data for the pilot.

Examining students' first-term GPA, participation in the Bonner Program (all schools combined) exhibited a marginal significance ($p < .06$) level for first term GPA mean as compared to those not participating. This finding is very significant given 5 of the 7 Bonner programs (the "access" schools) exhibited statistically significant and much lower baseline variances from the non-Bonners:

- Higher financial need as measured by Adjusted Gross Income ("AGI") and Estimated Family Contribution ("EFC")
- subgroup membership (Pell, racial/ethnic minorities) associated with progression risk (5 of 7), and
- lower scores on pre-college measures (SAT, ACT, HSGPA) associated with the effective prediction of progression outcomes (4 of 7 schools).

Another important finding focused on third-term (1st year) retention. The Bonner Program participants exhibited mean overall differences for the variable (i.e., higher overall retention rates) at a high level of significance ($p < .001$) with and without controlling for key covariates (e.g., SAT Composite, ACT). This suggests that students' support (financial, peer, faculty, advising) and academic and social integration likely strengthen their ability to persist above classmates and points to a stronger relationship as measured in correlations and via mean differences. Additionally, Bonner Programs generally exhibited descriptively higher rates for third-term retention for subgroups (such as African-American students, Minority, Pell) as compared to non-Bonner similar subgroups across the campuses.

Finally, in terms of graduation rates, Bonner Program participation exhibited positive and statistically significant correlations and mean differences ($p < .001$) for degree attainment for all schools when the sample was combined. Bonner Program participation in this sample appeared to promote integration with the campus in terms of its progression outcomes related to both term-based and degree GPA, retention, and degree attainment. Bonners performed at levels similar to the general population or some cases (leadership-oriented schools) exceeded these levels with one campus exception (where the program was enrolling students who also faced much higher risks of dropping out of the institution in general).

Retention and Completion

The 2019 Student Impact Survey was not a study of students' retention or completion. However, it did include several questions that shed light on why and how participating in the Bonner Program has positively affected students' persistence. In qualitative questions, many students discussed the ways in which the Bonner Program provided tangible supports that enabled them to succeed in school. As noted throughout this brief, and reflected in the comments below, the Bonner Program provides students with a number of supportive structures and interventions including:

- A stronger sense of belonging on campus and in the broader community
- Peer, staff and faculty mentors
- A cohort-based experience
- Opportunities to make meaning of their academic and other learning
- Education and reflection in specific skills and wellness

Below is a sampling of seniors' comments about their Bonner experiences.

Throughout all of college, the support I received from Bonner and the program [at my university] has been amazing and honestly made it possible for me to graduate." - Bonner Senior

"The Bonner program made it possible for me to gain a higher education. I have loved having the chance to make an impact in the surrounding community of this campus and making lasting relationships with others." - Bonner Senior

"I just want to thank the Bonner Scholars Program for helping through these last four years; for being a program where I have learned many skills, made memories, but most importantly be able to help others and make a positive impact on not only my campus but world. Thank you for taking a chance on me and believing in me as well as giving me this amazing experience that I am truly truly grateful for!! Thank you so much!." - Bonner Senior

"Bonner has been a truly transformational program for me, and I am a much better and wiser person because of it." - Bonner Senior

"The Bonner Leaders Program was a milestone opportunity that shapes each and every single one of my college experiences. There are experiences I know would have been even more meaningful and impactful on a large scale if we had the capacity and funding to create them, and I hope this program is sustained and continues to have people who represent students' and communities' interests at the forefront of the program." - Bonner Senior

"Bonner has allowed me to express myself in ways I have never imagined. I was able to find myself while also learning about my community and the communities around me. Everything I have learned from Bonner I will be able to utilize in my future endeavors." - Bonner Senior

"I love Bonner because without Bonner I would not still be at [the college]. Bonner made my experience memorable and impactful." - Bonner Senior



The Bonner Program: Proven Impact Findings from the 2019 Bonner Student Impact Survey

Lifelong Impact on Graduates' Careers and Lives

Looking at a longer time horizon, the 2010 ten-year longitudinal Bonner Student Impact Survey and Alumni Survey found that the program had clear positive impacts on graduates long after college.

- Many graduates had completed a year of service program after college: 10% had done a year of service with a faith based group, 8% with AmeriCorps, and 2% with Teach for America.
- Even with high proportions of low-income and first generation students, often less represented at higher levels of educational attainment, 46% had gone on to earn a MS or MAs and 17% had terminal degrees, with many others planning for a terminal degree.
- One third of graduates reported that the Bonner Program gave them advantage in finding a job or influenced the career they chose.
- They remained civically active, with 90% voted in the prior election (much higher than the national average for their age group) and 78% of them volunteering in the year before the survey (Keen & Hatcher, 2010).

Researchers Keen and Hatcher linked graduates' success with a sense of equanimity or well-being. They pointed to Astin, Astin, and Lindholm's research on equanimity in college, which found that "undergraduates show significant growth in their capacity for equanimity during the college years, and practices such as meditation and self-reflection can contribute to that growth. Equanimity has positive effects on a wide range of other college student behaviors, abilities, and feelings:

grade point average, leadership skills, sense of psychological well-being, ability to get along with other races and cultures, and satisfaction with college.

Equanimity among Bonner alumni was strongly correlated with questions about professional identity, using stepwise regression analysis, including "I feel a strong sense of connectedness to others, even if they are quite different from me" ($R=.55$), satisfaction with career ($R=.55$), "I often feel a deep sense of purpose in the work that I do" ($R=.45$), "since college, meditation has been valuable in sharing current goals and professional identity ($R=.40$), faith community has been valuable ($R=.40$). Pearson R correlations between .40 and .44 were found between the equanimity variables and each of six life satisfaction questions and with the extent to which their work allowed them to make a difference in the community and to work to correct social and economic inequalities (Keen & Hatcher, 2010).

While the 2019 Student Impact Survey cannot yet point to longitudinal impacts, it affirmed the ways in which program participation has shaped students' long-term aspirations. For instance: 88% are interested or very interested in staying informed about local, national, or global issues; 83% are interested or very interested in promoting educational opportunity and access; and 82% are interested or very interested in pursuing a career or employment connected with the experiences, issues, and places where they served in college.

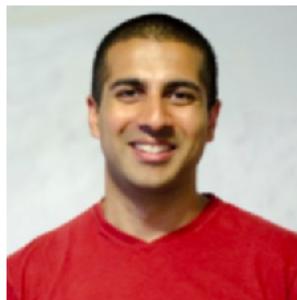
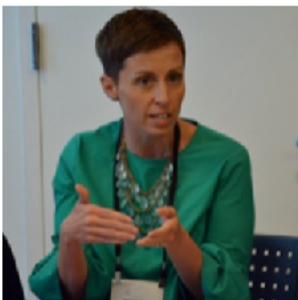
Alumni Profiles

Lifelong Impact on Graduates' Careers and Lives

Bonner Alumni often go on to pursue lives of purpose and commitment to improving people's lives. Through a new platform called Bonner Connect, alumni are networking with each other and current students. Additionally, the Foundation (with the leadership of student summer interns) has

captured some profiles of alumni working in diverse sectors. These alumni profiles, including their stories and job profiles, are found on the Bonner Foundation website, www.bonner.org, under Alumni.

- **J.C. Albitron** - Young Alumni Giving Officer at Milton Academy
- **Eni Algibe** - Program Manager for Public Health in Nigeria
- **Zack Avre** - Fellow with New York City Economic Development Corporation
- **Michael Austerlitz** - Program Assistant for the Claims Conference (Jewish Material Claims)
- **April Backus** - Associate Director, National Assessment of Student Community Engagement
- **Kelly Behrend** - Sustainability and Social Impact Strategist and Founder of Awaken Your Chakras
- **Taylor Brendle** - Civic Engagement Fellow at Davidson College
- **Marisa Charley** - Assistant Director in the Shepherd Program at Washington and Lee University
- **Matt Cheney** - Director of the Bonner Center and Assistant Professor of English at Carson-Newman University
- **Kelsie Cox** - Program Evaluator for Le Bonheur Children's Hospital
- **Debbie Deas** - Associate Director of Student Services, University of California-Washington Center
- **Maria De La Cruz** - Human Service Administrative Manager for Houston Department of Health
- **Elvis Diaz** - Senior Financial Business Analyst at Intel Corporation
- **Curtis Ferguson II** - Associate Director of Admissions at DePauw University
- **Tara Hill** - Senior Program Manager of the Global Development Lab, Higher Education Solutions
- **Jessica Holcomb** - Assistant Property Manager for Housing Authority
- **Tracie Johnson** - Equal Justice Works Fellow at Community Legal Services
- **Mwenda Albert Kazadi Jr.** - Independent Consultant on International Development
- **Lauren Kinser** - Residential Counselor for the Carol Martin Gatton Academy
- **Tim Krumreig** - Assistant Director of Community Service at Northeastern University
- **Karina Lopez** - Counselor at Spelman College and completing Masters in Social Work
- **Shannon Maynard** - Executive Director of the Congressional Hunger Center
- **Matthew Morton** - Researcher for Voices of Youth Count at Chapin Hall
- **José Oliva** - Program Officer and Fellow at the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation
- **Leo Schuchert** - Coordinator of First Year Academic Experiences at Trinity College
- **Aakash Shah** - Doctor at Robert Wood Johnson and Director of New Jersey Reentry Corporation
- **Adam Staland** - Doctoral student in Social Psychology and Public Policy at Duke University
- **Madeline Urbish** - Policy Advisor for New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy
- **Katherine Wood** - Talent Acquisition for RTI's International Development Group
- **Michael Zirkel** - Coordinator of the Bonner Scholars Program at Berry College



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This set of briefs was developed by Foundation staff and consultants including Ariane Hoy, Robert Hackett, Rachayita Shah, and Raymond Barclay. Bonner campuses may reprint it.

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