

# **BONNER SCHOLAR STUDENT IMPACT RESEARCH**

## **Memorandum on Graduating Senior Survey (GSS) Administered Spring 2000**

*Submitted to the Bonner Foundation in August, 2000  
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### **BACKGROUND ON THE RESEARCH EFFORT**

In 1997, we began work with the Bonner Foundation which was aimed at yielding a comprehensive portrait of the impact of the Bonner Scholars Program on its student participants. Our initial work focused on revising, implementing, and interpreting an omnibus Student Impact Survey (SIS) which had been in previous use by the Foundation. Our findings from the 1997-1998 administration of that survey are contained in our December, 1998 report to the Foundation, "Evaluation of Responses by 929 Bonner Scholars to the Bonner Scholar Student Impact Survey and Related Interviews and Focus Groups."

While data generated by the SIS provided valuable insights into the Bonner Scholar Program (BSP) and useful comparisons with other larger scale studies, the omnibus nature of the SIS meant that we were asking the same questions of first through fourth year students. This produced a mismatch between freshman respondents and questions best answered by seniors and vice versa. Moreover, we were concerned that repeating the same omnibus survey year after year would produce significant survey fatigue which could compromise our abilities to get full participation and high quality data.

Hence in 1998 we embarked on the process of designing and implementing the yearly administration and analysis of three more finely targeted surveys:

1. **An Incoming Student Survey (ISS)** which seeks to clarify the profiles of incoming students on each campus, attending to demographic questions, past service experience, areas in which the BSP aims to engender growth, and the outlook and expectations students bring with them into the BSP. It provides a useful point of reference for measuring the growth of Bonner Scholars over the course of their years in the BSP. The second use of this survey will be made in September, 2000.
2. **A Mid-Point Impact Survey (MPIS)** will be administered to all continuing Bonner Scholars at the beginning of their **junior year**, starting in the fall of 2000. This survey will gauge impact of the first two years of Bonner participation while yielding a view of the program from those who are in the midst of their Bonner involvement. This first use of the survey will place special focus on the summer of service experience.
3. **The Graduating Student Impact Survey (GSIS)** gathers data on the full four-year impact of the program. This survey focuses both on impact and introduces questions regarding outlook and plans beyond college. This report addresses the second administration of this survey in the spring of 2000 and is our first chance to compare students' responses to the previous year.

This more targeted, three-survey approach helps us gauge the fullest measure of impact by gathering data pertinent to the points at which Bonner Scholars enter and graduate from the BSP as well from the midpoint of the program. The combination of three surveys yields a more developmental account of BSP impact - we can regard cohorts of scholars at the outset, in the middle of the experience and at its

conclusion. In addition, each survey is administered at its most strategically advantageous moment. For example, the incoming survey comes before program activities have begun. Moreover, by moving from four administrations of the same survey to three surveys over four years and by having sleeker surveys tailored to the groups to whom they are administered, a significant reduction in survey fatigue is achieved, which helps to improve the numbers of completed surveys and increases our confidence in the quality of the data.

A fourth survey, the Bonner Alumni Survey is also on the drawing board. At the Bonner alumni gathering in June at Berry College, we conducted a series of focus groups with alumni aimed at generating a set of questions grounded in alumni experience. To these questions will be added basic demographic questions as well as questions suggested by the Foundation. A number of details regarding how to administer such a survey, how to get wide participation in responding to it and the most appropriate length are still under consideration. Our goal will be to have the first administration of this survey take place in the Spring of 2001.

This memorandum addresses in particular the results of the second administration of the Graduating Students Impact Survey. We have analyzed data from 270 Bonner scholars who responded to the Spring 2000 graduating senior survey, a higher response rate than last year at 93% instead of 89.3%. It is noteworthy that this response rate compares favorably with that of 69.8% on the 1998 omnibus survey, which means that we have already closed the response gap by three quarters.

The comparison of results from the 2000 GSIS with those from the 1999 GSIS will help us to gain a clearer picture as we begin to distinguish between response patterns that remain constant over several years and those which appear to reflect cohort differences and ephemeral issues in particular programs.

#### **A COMPARISON TO THE NATIONAL LEARN AND SERVE RESULTS**

Our BSP results compare very favorably to the RAND report on the Learn and Serve grantees' students. The Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA (HERI) has been asking a stable set of questions for years about students' values in relation to civic responsibility and was commissioned by RAND to do a similar survey with Learn and Serve college students. We asked similar questions to those in the Rand Learn and Serve study and find very favorable results. It was in the 1960s that college students valued highly "developing a meaningful philosophy of life." Yet in 1999, this question got the strongest response of the set six civic responsibility questions we asked graduating seniors, demonstrating what a unique group the Bonner Scholars are. This past spring, this value lagged behind "raising a family" 5 percentage points. While all of the more "socially responsible" values are higher than they typically are for college students, they have all dropped compared to last year's seniors and the two more individually focused values have increased ("raising a family" and "being very well off financially.") Given the size of this drop from 1999 to 2000, it will be interesting to see what outcomes emerge on future surveys.

#### **COMPARING DATA FROM THE 1999 AND 2000 GRADUATING SENIOR SURVEYS**

The balance of this memorandum reviews the results of the GSIS 2000 survey and compares data from the 1999 and 2000 Graduating Senior Surveys.

In 2000, 270 graduating Bonner Scholars completed this survey. 53.3% of respondents were female and 44.8% were male. 61.5% as Caucasian, 24.6% identified themselves as African-American /black, 9.3% as Spanish/Hispanic/Latino and 3.0% Asian-American.

84.5% are positive or very **positive about the BSP**, similar to last year. 12.6% are neutral and .4% ( a drop from 4% last year) report a negative attitude toward the program.

54.8% identified themselves as "**religiously affiliated**", a rather significant drop from 64% last

year, explained largely by a shift towards being “spiritual, but not affiliated, a phenomena common to other age groups across the country. For some scholars, their faith is deeply embedded in their service work:

*“The most meaningful service I participated in was at two nursing homes. I learned to let go of stress and distractions in order to be real and truly be with these people as Jesus was when he was on earth as a man.”*

Among those who listed their religious affiliation, we found 47 Baptists, 20 Catholics, 12 Presbyterians, 25 Pentecostal, 8 Quakers, 4 Church of God, 3 Episcopal, 3 Church of Christ, 2 Assemblies of God, 2 Unitarians, 2 Eastern Orthodox, 2 Methodists, and one each of the following : Rastafarian, Seventh Day Adventist, Nazarene, Mormon, Bahai, Jewish, Lutheran, Brethren, Mennonite, and Islam. 28.6% said that they were “spiritual but not affiliated” (an increase from 20.6% over last year.) 4.8% indicated that their affiliation had changed during college (several to a different Christian faith, 4 from Baptist to nondenominational, 3 from Christianity to agnostic, 1 from Catholic to “spiritual,” and one from Hindu to Christian.)

**Graduates report gains in skills and leadership, while putting academics first**

An increasing number of seniors held **campus leadership** outside the BSP - 80% over last year’s 74.5%. And 72.5% felt they were able to strengthen service in other campus organizations, demonstrating some success of developmental model of the BSP. Many expressed pride in having helped expand service on their campuses.

*“The BSP has a great effect on our college. Bonner scholars are able to try new sites and their knowledge is extensive. Thus when other students ask, they can help. Also we often take our friends to our sites...they BSP gets a lot more people involved than just its members, which has a positive effect on the college and community.”*

Almost everyone reports **doing well academically**, similarly to last year.

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |                         |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| 2.4%        | 3.0%        | GPA of less than 2.5    |
| 21.5%       | 18.9%       | GPA 2.5-2.9             |
| 27.5%       | 27.4%       | GPA 3.0-3.2             |
| 34.4%       | 31.1%       | GPA between 3.3 and 3.6 |
| 13%         | 18%         | GPA above 3.7           |

While one might be tempted to read any of the increases reported here as reflecting the development of the BSP, such increases could be cohort-based and therefore turn out to be ephemeral. On the other hand, should the figures continue to increase, that would lend credibility to claims of programmatic improvement. That is to say, a clearer interpretation of the data should become possible when we can see changes and trends as they occur over a larger span of, say, five or more years at which point items of stability and trends will be more easily distinguishable from peaks and valleys associated with particular cohorts.

Nevertheless, we can begin to share some gratification that for two years in a row Bonner seniors are in such unity in their appreciation of key aspects of the program. For instance, graduating senior Bonner Scholars for two years have reported that their Bonner participation has had a strong impact on the development of **interpersonal skills** and communication skills.

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |   |
|-------------|-------------|---|
| 95.4%       | 90.0%       | report strong impact on listening carefully to others |
| 88.1%       | 91.5%       | interpersonal communication                           |
| 86.1%       | 89.3%       | understanding a person of a different background      |
| 79.9%       | 78.9%       | helping groups overcome differences of opinion        |

Looking at the skill set outlined above from the viewpoint of **civil discourse**, one might make a case as well that Bonner Scholars make significant gains in core skills of citizenship. But they are more prone to express how much they value the ways in which the development of skills has led to important relationships.

*“ I am leaving with a great confidence in myself and my abilities in dealing with others.”*

*“My young “buddy” Wendell has gained a sense of confidence and worth from our 4-year friendship. He has no doubt felt loved and accepted by me.”*

*“I left a legacy of community - a long term friend too man who thought no friend would stick with him, a listener to a frustrated middle school teacher of special ed, a friend to a 96 year old woman with few visitors.”*

Furthermore, these substantial gains scholars don't come at a cost to academic pursuits. While we have heard occasional anecdotal complaints about negative impact of service hours on academic achievement, this doesn't appear to be a universal problem for either of the last two classes of seniors.

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |   |
|-------------|-------------|---|
| 20.2%       | 21.5%       | Bonner participation has negatively affected GPAs |
| 15.5%       | 17.4%       | Bonner participation had a positive effect on GPA |
| 64.3%       | 61.1%       | no effect in regard to GPA                        |

Managing time seems to be one of the skills scholars gained that enabled them to maintain a life of service and academic study. One said, “I made an honest effort toward service and being committed to a service site along with carrying 18 credits, an internship, and 2 jobs. If I can do it anyone can.”

When asked to rate the relative importance of various aspects of college life, this year the seniors rate **studying and doing homework** as more important than doing service. Last year community service ranked evenly with academic pursuits as most important for graduating Bonners. In both years, studying and doing homework and community service ranked above social life and extracurricular activities.

We also note a drop in the desire to see a greater connection between their Bonner work and their course work. In 1999, 76% of the respondents asked for this connection, while in 2000 only 59.3% did so. Either there was a sudden administrative and curricular response to this desire and more students are now satisfied with the extent of the connection between their service and their course work, or they are satisfied with the informal dialogue with those they serve and with their fellow Bonners to help them make this connection. In addition, we find that this year's seniors report less connection between their academic work and their service work. In 2000 55.6% had taken an academic course that required service and 71.1% had written about a Bonner service experience in a course. (We did not ask these two questions in 1999.) 92.5%, do report valuing having gained new skills through the BSP to do effective community service though.

This year's graduating seniors have high aspirations regarding graduate school. 86.7% of graduating Bonners plan to pursue a doctorate or advanced professional degree, an increase over 81.4% reported last year. This is more than twice the rate reported in the 1997 RAND study of participants (including all undergraduate levels) in service-learning courses, and higher still compared to national

averages. On the other hand, only 27.0% were planning to start work on advanced degrees in the fall of 2000, a figure very similar to last year. While the reasons for this discrepancy are not yet fully clear, preliminary focus groups conducted with Bonner alumni indicate that debt burden may play a significant role in postponement of graduate school aspirations for Bonner graduates.

**Plans after graduation include community service**

Graduates' plans for the first year after graduation include:

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |  |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| 41.5%       | 43.3%       | full time employment on chosen career path |
| 28.9%       | 27.0%       | graduate school                            |
| 15.0%       | 13.0%       | employment outside preferred career path   |
| 5.9%        | 4.8%        | travel                                     |
| 4.7%        | 4.8%        | full or part-time service                  |
| 4%          | 7.1%        | don't know or options don't apply          |

98.1% expect to be at least somewhat **active in community service following graduation**, with 70.7% saying they would be active or very active and 30.4% saying they would be very active, up from 26.9% last year. A less strong response, almost identical to last year, came to the question about involvement in social justice issues after graduation, with 46.3% saying they would be active or very active (and 22.2% saying they would be very active). Only 13.7% said they would not be active at all in social justice issues after graduate school. More expect to be involved in social justice issues than with BSP alumni activities, with 18.1% saying they would not be at all active in alumni issues.

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |   |
|-------------|-------------|---|
| 98.4%       | 98.1%       | expect to be at least somewhat active in community service after graduation       |
| 26.9%       | 30.4%       | expect to be very active in community service                                     |
| 90.1%       | 86.3%       | expect to be at least somewhat involved in social justice issues after graduation |

48.9% said that their college significantly or very significantly provided structured opportunities to explore how their commitments related to their **career choices**, identical to last year. Most (93.7%) took at least some advantage of their college's resources for career exploration and placement. They say: "The program has helped me decide what I want to do posts-graduation - namely working with a non-profit organization." "I just love children. Had it not been for the being a Bonner and volunteering at the local daycare, I would not have been offered my job for after graduation working with children with mental disabilities." "Working as a volunteer educator at a zoo made me realize how good I would be as a teacher and gave me the chance to positively impacts hundreds of lives and hopefully enlighten them about environmental affairs."

53.7% reported that the BSP significantly or very significantly helped them explore how their "service" commitments related to their career choices, compared to 58.4% in 1999. And more than a majority of them (62.8%) reported that the BSP significantly or very significantly helped them explore how to continue to act upon their service commitments after college, compared to 58.8% in 1999.

They reported on the degree to which their career pursuits were the same as their service interests or commitments, half reporting that they were somewhat similar.

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |                  |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| 31.6%       | 30.0%       | the same         |
| 41.9%       | 49.3%       | somewhat similar |
| 24.0%       | 17.8%       | very different   |

This increasing difference in career pursuits and service interests since 1999 might explain why students valued less the opportunity to connect their service work with their academic pursuits.

67.8% felt the Bonner program helped them with the transition from college life to work life, as compared to 62.8% in 1999 but 55.9% in 2000 and 56.2% in 1999 wished the BSP would develop more transition programming to assist with this transition.

### New questions regarding careers and social justice concerns

When asked in a new set of questions on the recent survey about how the BSP has impacted career plans (not asked in 1999), the 2000 graduating seniors indicated the following:

|       |                  |
|-------|------------------|
| 32.2% | hasn't impacted  |
| 7.8%  | confirmed major  |
| 37.4% | confirmed career |
| 21.5% | changed career   |

Not all changes in career plans can be attributed to the BSP. When asked in another new set of questions to what extent their career plans were the same as they were when they entered to BSP, about half indicate that their plans hadn't changed.

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 24.8% | career plans now very different from when they entered |
| 28.1% | somewhat the same                                      |
| 20.0% | very similar   |
| 25.2% | exactly the same                                       |

The intended careers of the graduates of 2000 fall roughly into the following areas:

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| 21.1% | business                                   |
| 20.4% | education                                  |
| 16.3% | civil service, government, law or military |
| 14.1% | non profits                                |
| 27%   | other (including health and medicine)      |

We gave respondents in 2000 a chance on the survey to write in their intended area of graduate study. Those who responded indicate the following:

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 14 | business and finance  |
| 10 | medicine  |
| 9  | sociology   |
| 8  | religion  |
| 3  | social work   |
| 3  | biology   |
| 2  | communications, finance, public administration, computers   |
| 1  | performance studies, mathematics, studio art, social sciences, psychology, African American studies, chemistry, literature. |

When we asked them what social justice issues they intend to be active in after graduation, we heard the following: (# of respondents in parentheses)

|                        |
|------------------------|
| children's issues (12) |
| poverty (11)           |

racial justice (10)  
 homelessness (10)  
 environmental issues (9)  
 education (8)  
 health care (7)  
 domestic violence (5)  
 hunger, women's issues (4)  
 teen pregnancy, pro life, public law (2 each)  
 labor movement, drug addiction, elderly care, peace, recreation, international human rights, NGOs, urban issue, and gun laws. (1 each)

**Personal gains resulting from participation in the BSP**

Graduating senior Bonner Scholars indicated that the BSP positively affected their **personal development**. The open-ended questions at the end of the survey often elicited responses supporting the survey finding that "a sense of you can make a difference" is the key personal gain of the program. They say: "You do not have to get recognition for your efforts to be doing good work. I left a legacy of sacrificial giving - work hard, serve well, love people." "Don't settle for leaving things the way they are - if you have a dream of how to make the world a better place the least you can do is to try it." "Receiving a \$10,000 to start a service project put my college and the BSP on the map. But more importantly I have advised other young Bonners on how to take initiative to make something better."

|   | <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| sense that you can make a difference                          | 89.7%       | 91.9%       |
| appreciation of own relative good fortune in life             | 87.4%       | 90.7%       |
| sense of compassion   | 87.3%       | *           |
| sense that the world can change                               | 79.2%       | *           |
| sense of meaning and purpose for your life                    | 77.1%       | 82.6%       |
| allowed for work and travel experience that deepened learning | 75.9%       | 82.8%       |
| understanding of political and social justice issues          | 73.1%       | *           |
| ability to manage time better                                 | 71.9%       | 78.9%       |
| provoked through about course material                        | 61.3%       | 60.7%       |
| increased self confidence as student                          | 59.7%       | 68.8%       |
| increased your participation in class discussions             | 47.1%       | 51.8%       |

\*didn't ask question on 2000 survey

The following percentages of students agreed that the BSP has provided them with the following:

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |  |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| 90.5%       | 93%         | - opportunity. to serve people from different different cultural, racial, ability, language or socioeconomic backgrounds         |
| 87.0 %      | 90%         | - understanding of community surrounding your college  |
| 83.8%       | 87.8%       | - opportunity for exercising and developing leadership   |
| 75.1%       | 84.5%       | -opportunity to work at service sites with staff from different cultural, racial, ability, language or socioeconomic backgrounds |
| 77.1%       | 81.9%       | -flexibility in the face of individual needs without sacrificing standards   |
| 72.7%       | 80.0%       | - opportunity within BSP meetings and retreats to gain new understanding across boundaries of culture, race, class and gender    |
| 86.2 %      | 78.6%       | - support for the initiation of new service projects   |
| 76.8%       | 78.5%       | -support for involving students in program development and governance*   |
| 69.5%       | 77.8%       | - opportunity to understand root causes of social justice issues   |
| 67.5%       | 77.3%       | -training, supervision and support by service site staff   |
| 76.3%       | 73.1%       | -realistic minimum performance standards and enforced them   |

|       |       |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| 76.3% | 73.1% | -realistic minimum performance standards and enforced them        |
| 69.5% | 77.8% | - opportunity to understand root causes of social justice issues* |
| 67.5% | 77.3% | - training, supervision and support by service site staff         |

(\*Wording changed slightly in 2000)

Connecting across differences happened in a variety of ways. “During my summer service trip to Jamaica I was working with people who were so different economically, racially, socially, but so similar in the greater sense of humanity. I learned a lot from my experience there and grew a lot.” “Perhaps being a tutor and mentor was most important to me. During this time I have met some of the most important people in my life and half of them are shorter than me and half my age.”

This year’s survey elicited stronger responses to all but two of 13 aspects presented above that are intended to gauge successful programs and effective staff. In the area of “support for the initiation of new service projects,” the decline may reflect growing strength and stability of placements that one would expect from mature programs, or, as stated earlier, it may prove ephemeral when compared to data from subsequent years. Maybe fewer students experienced support for the development of new projects because previously graduated Bonners left strong projects in place. Given the power of being in deeply engaging relationships across differences, it is particularly hopeful to see that even more of this group of graduating seniors is carrying forward this foundation for a lifelong commitment to working on behalf of the needs of others. (see similar findings in Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World, Daloz, Keen, Keen, Parks, Beacon Press, 1996.)

This year’s graduates value more highly than last year’s the opportunity provided by the Bonner program to understand the community better. In getting to know the community, 22.6% this year’s graduates perceive a great deal of town/gown conflict in their community (37% said “some and 17.8% said “not much”) and 21.9% perceive that they positively affected the town/gown conflict “a great deal” and 46.7% thought they affected it some.

### **Graduates prioritize aspects of the college experience and the BSP**

When asked to evaluate the **importance of aspects of the college experience** for them personally the following were identified as very important or most important at the following percentages:

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |  |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| 98.8%       | 86.3%       | studying and doing homework                |
| 98.4%       | 80.0%       | community service within and outside BSP   |
| 89.8%       | 62.3%       | social life                                |
| 74.8%       | 58.5%       | faith development and religious activities |
| 82.4%       | 55.6%       | campus activities, clubs and groups        |
| 67.5%       | 43.3%       | on campus and off campus jobs (not BSP)    |
| 78.3%       | 40.4%       | athletics or exercising                    |
| *           | 29.6%       | using the internet                         |
| 26.9%       | 10.0%       | watching TV                                |

\*question not asked in 1999

The 1999 cohort displayed greater consensus than the 2000 cohort regarding what is most important to them. We might find significant campus variations on this dimension, and if not, it might suggest some major shifts in priorities between these yearly cohorts. While studying and doing service are still the two most important activities of this group, they have fallen significantly from their nearly unanimously position as most or very important to 98% of the 1999 seniors. We know from responses to other questions on the survey that Scholars’ priorities do not focus as much on finding a well-paying job, as other data suggests of a typical college graduate. It is also interesting to note that faith development activities are more important to the 2000 graduates than are campus activities, even though 16% fewer 2000 grads rank them as



most or very important as did 1999 grads. This shift in priorities can't be explained by the amount of time they spent on other college life activities.

The following percentages of senior Bonners estimated they spent more than **16 hours per week** on the following aspects of college life:

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |   |
|-------------|-------------|---|
| 27.3%       | 28.5%       | studying                                    |
| 21.3%       | 19.4%       | on campus or off campus jobs                |
| 8.7%        | 9.7%        | social life on campus                       |
| 8.3%        | 10.0%       | community service within and outside Bonner |
| *           | 4.1%        | using the internet                          |

The following percentages of senior Bonners estimated they spent at least **10-15 hours per week** on the following aspects of college life:

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |  |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| 54.6%       | 55.2%       | studying   |
| 48.6%       | 39.8%       | community service  |
| 33.3%       | 36.9%       | work   |
| 23.3%       | 6.7%        | watching TV (an alarming rate, compared to "social life")  |
| 22.1%       | 23.9%       | social life  |
| 6.7%        | 7.8%        | faith development and religious activities (these are "very important" to scholars but it isn't reflected in the amount of time devoted) |
|             | 17.8%       | campus activities  |
| *           | 10.4%       | using the internet   |

When asked to indicate the **importance of various aspects of the BSP**, the graduating seniors identified the following as important or very or most important. The opportunity to work with people, to do community service, and to address their own financial need are clustered tightly as the three most important aspects of the BSP for this group of seniors. These were also high priorities for last year's seniors. Gaining new skills is more important to this group than leadership development is. We changed the rating system and changed the wording of many of the questions since 1999, so the data can't be compared directly. Yet, it appears that enhancing one's resume, while still a low priority, has gained in importance with the group, as has addressing financial need. The importance of leadership development seems to have dropped, while exploring career options has increased.

| <u>2000</u> |  |
|-------------|--|
| 92.2%       | opportunity to work with people                      |
| 90.3%       | opportunity to address financial need                |
| 89.1%       | opportunity for community service                    |
| 85.9%       | developing new skills                                |
| 84.0%       | addressing the needs and challenges of the community |
| 81.9%       | personal satisfaction                                |
| 78.1%       | opportunity for leadership development               |
| 68.8%       | opportunity to work for social justice               |
| 77.8%       | explore career options                               |
| 74.8%       | working with peers who are different from you        |
| 61.5%       | enhancing your resume                                |
| 59.6%       | opportunity to connect service to my academic work   |
| 55.0%       | opportunity to follow through on faith commitments.  |

- 55.3% opportunity for reflection and dialogue
- 55.2% prestige of program

(Please note that in this case the percentages quoted above represent three positions on a five-point scale rather than the two positions characteristic of most of the data in this report.)

This year we asked a new set of questions regarding which reflection activities helped them more deeply understand their Bonner experiences. The following percentage of the seniors agreed or strongly agreed that these aspects of their college experiences helped them understand their service experiences:

- 2000
- 90% dialogue with people they served
- 83.7% informal discussions with other Bonners
- 75.2% informal discussions with other students
- 74.5% one-on-ones with community service site supervisor or staff
- 64.6% one-on-ones with Bonner staff
- 57.8% discussions with faculty
- 51.9% organized Bonner meetings
- 50.3% organized Bonner retreats
- 42.9% chance to write about Bonner work in academic courses
- 41.4% Bonner journals

The strongest response was to the power of dialogue with people they served, confirming again the Common Fire findings that engaging deeply with people across lines of difference has a powerful, maturational effect. Secondly we can note that 83.7% of them value the informal discussions they have with other Bonners, supporting the notion of designing communities of dialogue among students who serve, a basic premise of the FIPSE replication project.

### Changing values

When asked to indicate how important different **values** were to them (drawing on the same questions that the Higher Education Research Institute survey has used for over 20 years), the following list ranks the values that were considered ‘essential’ or ‘very important.’

- | <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u>                                      |
|-------------|--|
| 66.8%       | 72.2% raising a family                           |
| 70.8%       | 67.4% developing a meaningful philosophy of life |
| 69.2%       | 65.6% helping to promote racial understanding    |
| 63.2%       | 60.7% influencing social values                  |
| 31.6%       | 39.6% being very well off financially            |
| 44.3 %      | 37.4% influencing the political structure        |

It is notable that “raising a family” and “being well off financially” are the only two values that are more important to the 2000 graduates, compared to the 1999 graduates.

This 8% increase in attention to the importance of being well off financially doesn’t translate into a similar increase in fear about their future or the future of society. When asked how **hopeful** they are about **the future**, they indicate the following:

- | <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u>                                   |
|-------------|---|
| 85%         | 84% are hopeful about their future            |
| 43.5%       | 46.7% are hopeful about the future of society |
| 2%          | 3.7% are fearful about their future           |

|       |       |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| 2%    | 3.7%  | are fearful about their future                              |
| 16.2% | 19.3% | are fearful or very fearful about the future of the society |
| 12.6% | 11.5% | are uncertain about their own future                        |
| 39.5% | 33.3% | are uncertain about the future of society.                  |

Expressions of hope were evident in their written comments: “Anything is possible if you put your mind and heart to it...I continuously met challenges and conquered obstacles that were in my path. I stayed prayerful and focused on the goal of obtaining my degree.”

When asked for their perceptions of levels of concern for people in need held by different groups, they responded as follows:

A high or very high level of concern for people in need is held by the following:

| <u>1999</u> | <u>2000</u> |                                |
|-------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 80.3%       | 68.8%       | themselves                     |
| 64.1%       | 59.6%       | other Bonners at my school     |
| 33.9%       | 36%         | other students at their school |
| 22.1%       | 29.6%       | the general public             |
| 16.1%       | 22.6%       | college students in general    |

It was important to several of them to communicate to others that young people did care. “I feel like the people who I was able to work with have a new perception of college students as far as dedication to service and ability to carry through.” “I feel like I’ve proved to community members that not all college students are rich, spoiled, and selfish.” “I left the legacy that young adults do care, that good grades don’t mean much if you’re not a well-rounded person.”

Perhaps their assumptions that the population at large is more concerned than the average college student speaks to the increase in this year’s class concern for being well off financially. Alternatively, they may be feeling less marginal to the general public, closing the gap in their perception of their own and others’ level of concern for people in need.

## CAVEATS

In looking at this data, it is important to remember that surveys allow us to draw limited conclusions. Because the data consist of self-reporting, and because we are not looking for internal inconsistencies in how each individual reports on herself or himself, we are unable to determine how authentically each student responded or ways in which the survey may fail to provide scope for him or her to report on the deeper meanings of the BSP experience. Our concern about this limitation is lessened because the questions on this survey have been informed by in-depth focus groups with students on several campuses and because interpretation of the data will be informed by an ongoing program of focus groups and in-depth interviews which can capture dimensions that survey research may miss.

The clearest usefulness of surveys is in comparing responses over time or between or among groups. The wide difference in campus responses on this and the omnibus survey suggest to us that not all of our questions mean the same to students on different campuses. In particular, we note that the BSP has less impact on students on some campuses because they come from families and communities that have already impressed the same developmental goals upon them.

Some of our questions allow us to compare graduating Bonner Scholars to students surveyed in other survey efforts, such as by the Higher Education Research Institute. However, the bulk of our questions ask

how the BSP affected Bonner Scholars in several dimensions. Most campus surveys ask only about attitudes (not how much one program or another affected them) and look for changes over time. Therefore we intend to look at our freshman survey carefully, and adjust the senior survey to pick up some of these changes apart from students' attributions about what affected them.

We look forward to the Fall of 2003 when the Foundation will be able to track the four-year impact on the student cohort which will have completed the ISS in the fall of 1999. This cohort will also have completed the MPIS in the Fall of 2001, and the GSIS in the spring of 2003. In addition to being able to see a single cohort pass through all three surveys, we will, in 2003, be able to compare five years of the GSIS, four years of ISS data, and three years of MPIS data along with alumni data. By the Fall of 2003 we expect to have available two years' gathering of data from alumni which will extend the scope of the Foundation's documentation of the impact of the BSP. If the data gathered by the Fall of 2003 is consistent with the general findings that have emerged to this point, we will have a reasonably complete portrait of what now looks like a highly successful and exemplary program.