

**BONNER FOUNDATION
STUDENT IMPACT RESEARCH**

MEMORANDUM ON MID-POINT IMPACT SURVEY (MIS)
2000-2001

Submitted June, 2001 by Cheryl and Jim Keen

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 four 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, 2001.

2. **A Midpoint Impact Survey (MIS)** was administered for the first time this year to all continuing Bonner Scholars at the beginning of their junior year. This survey gauges impact of the first two years of Bonner participation, including the summer of service experience, while yielding a view of the program from those who are in the midst of their Bonner involvement.

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.

4. The Bonner Alumni Survey will be made available to alumni on the Bonner web site in the fall of 2001. All alumni will receive a postcard urging them to complete the survey on line or to request that a survey be mailed to them. At the Bonner alumni gathering in June, 2000 at Berry College, we conducted a series of focus groups with alumni aimed at generating a set of survey questions grounded in alumni experience.

RESULTS OF THE FIRST MIDPOINT IMPACT SURVEY (MIS)

For this report we have analyzed data from the completed surveys of 289 Bonner scholars with third year (Junior) status at their undergraduate institutions. The report is divided into the following sections:

- Kinds of Service Involvement
- Summer of Service
- Commitment to Service and the BSP
- Academic and Co-Curricular Gains
- Personal Gains Resulting from Participation in the BSP
- Priorities During College
- Caveats

Unlike the Incoming Student Survey and the Graduating Student Impact Survey, this survey does not need to be administered at the beginning or at the end of a semester. We were able to allow for greater flexibility regarding administration dates without adversely affecting the quality of the resulting data. Therefore, while most surveys were completed in November and December of 2000 (during the first semester or quarter of the junior year) some surveys were completed as late as January 2001. This flexibility permitted us to include respondents who were away from campus in the fall in circumstances such as semester abroad programs or co-op and internship placements. Even with these accommodations, the overall response rate of 81% (289 respondents out of 355) is lower than we had hoped for, and is lower than response rates to the ISS (92%) and to the GSIS 2000 (93%). Nevertheless, the response rate is high enough to be valid for comparison purposes. On the other hand, we hope the rate will improve in future years.

The balance of this memorandum reviews the results of the Midpoint Impact Survey and draws selective comparisons of these results with data from the 1999 and 2000 Graduating Senior Surveys and the 1999 and 2000 Incoming Student Surveys. (The students completing this Midpoint survey would have been entering students in 1998, before we had begun administering an entering student survey, which means that all comparisons are with other cohorts of students.)

Of the 289 graduating Bonner Scholars who completed this survey, 58.5% of respondents identified themselves as female and 40.5% as male. 66.9% identified themselves as Caucasian, 25.5% as African-American /black, 4.0% as Spanish/Hispanic/Latino and 3.6% Asian-American.

74% of them entered the BSP as freshmen, 15.6% as sophomores, and 8.3% as juniors. The responses of the juniors who had entered the program just a few months earlier are rarely distinguishable from those who have been in the program for one or two years, therefore we haven't reported their answers separately. It seems that just a few months in the program leads the recent replacement Bonners to have opinions about the impact of the program which are similar to those of students with a larger span of involvement. We had anticipated that the largest implication for late entries would have been in not having had a chance to do a summer of service. Yet, it turns out that 58.3% of the 24 most recent replacement Bonners had already done a summer of service, compared to 94.8% of those who entered as freshmen and 81.3% of those who entered as sophomores. The strongest differences in these late entries, differences that are still small, are that replacement Bonners tend to find studying to be more important and spend more hours studying and slightly fewer hours doing service. Those who have done a summer of service (more often those in program for longer time), are more likely to feel "very positive" about the BSP overall (53.1% vs. 43.3%). A notably high percentage of juniors, 60.6%, voted in the last election.

93.4% reported a major or intended field of study, which broke down as follows:
 33.2% pre-professional
 29.9% social sciences
 13.8% sciences
 12.1% humanities
 4.5% arts

Kinds of Service Involvement

Bonner Scholars are often involved in more than one kind of service and their service projects often span several areas of public need. When asked what was the focus of any community service they had done in the last year, they reported:

Working with Children	90%
Tutoring	71.3%
Health	38.8%
Environmental Work	35.3%
Working with Elderly	31.8%
Public Safety	18.7%
Other	73.3%

Because the "other" category turned out to be so high, we intend to ask students who mark "other" on next year's survey to indicate specifics in order to determine which other kinds of service should be added to the list above.

Summer of Service

This is the first time that we've asked Scholars about the summer of service. All but 8% hadn't done one yet, most likely because they became Bonners during the 3rd year of college. 63.3% had already done two summers of service, while 11.8% had done one following their freshman year and 15.2% had done one following their sophomore year. 63% did one more two summers of service in their home

community, 32.4% did service nationally, 22.8% did service in the community surrounding their campus, 14.4% did service internationally, and 12.7% did service on campus. (Note students checked more than one answer.) When asked if they would like a chance to get to know the community surrounding their college by serving on or near their campus, 17.6% said “a great deal” and 47.1% said “somewhat.”

Although only 22.4% indicated that they got direct help from a Bonner staff person to select their summer of service site, 50.4% indicated that their summer of service grew out of their earlier service work. 11.5% indicated that they received help from a faculty member in determining a service site. 12.2% found the site in a directory of service opportunities and 11.5% found help from a faculty member. 93% report that they might have made use of a directory of national service opportunities if it had been provided by the BSP. 55% felt they would have probably done this summer of service work anyway, even if they hadn’t been a Bonner scholar.

Overall, 71.2% indicated that the summer of service had a greater impact on them, compared to their Bonner service during the school year, with 45% feeling it had a greater positive impact and 26.2% feeling it had a somewhat greater impact. 84% of those who did their service internationally felt it had more impact as compared to 67% of those who did their service in the U.S. When asked to reflect on the impact their summer of service had on the community they were serving, overall 42% felt it has the same impact and 55.6% felt it had somewhat or significantly greater impact. When asked if they would like a chance to get to know the community surrounding their college by serving on or near their campus, 17.6% said “a great deal” and 47.1% said “somewhat.”

<u>location of summer of service</u>	<u>somewhat or significantly greater impact on scholar</u>	<u>greater impact on community</u>
international	84%	68%
national	79%	61%
at college	79%	58%
community around college	75%	60%
home town	65%	50%

We asked the Scholars about what means of reflection had been a meaningful opportunity to integrate what they had learned during the summer into their future plans for service and study. 69% felt that talking with their supervisor at the summer site had been so and a greater number (74.7%) felt that talking with other students or co-workers had done the same. Fewer (50%) felt talking with the Bonner staff had offered such an opportunity. 47.3% felt that writing had afforded such a meaningful opportunity for integration. They rated writing more highly here than they rate the values of “journals” in our list of potential reflective opportunities. The Directors report that the quality of reflective journals after an intensive summer of service was much higher than during the school year. However, 87% said they have not yet had enough time to integrate their summer of service.

23.2% would very much like a chance to do a summer of service with Bonners from their campus and 28.7% would like to do service with Bonners from other campuses. All but 21.1% would like opportunities to tie their summer of service in with their major, suggesting an unfulfilled opportunity for service-learning. And all but 18.7% would welcome an opportunity to tie their summer of service in with

career exploration.

Commitment to Service and the BSP

89.6% are positive or very positive about the BSP, slightly more than last year's graduating seniors. 6.6% are neutral, and 3.8% report a negative attitude toward the program. 92.6% of those who had done a summer of service felt positive or very positive about their experience. 56.1% identify with the program very strongly, 36% identify somewhat with the program, 6.6% very little, and 1% report identifying not at all. (Remember that 8% had just joined the program at the beginning of the semester.)

The financial aspect of the BSP is critical in maintaining their involvement in service. 79.2% report that they would not have participated in as much community service without the BSP. 74.4% indicate that they would have done less service and spent the time earning money and 14.5% would have done no service and spent the time earning money. Only 10.4% indicate that they would have participated in less service and not spent more time earning money.

Academic and Co-Curricular Gains

92.7% of the third year respondents report being involved in other campus organizations, with 75.4% of them holding leadership positions on campus outside of the BSP. This figure on leadership positions is comparable to graduating seniors' responses - 80% in 2000 and 74.5% in 1999. This suggests that Bonner scholars quickly rise to leadership positions on campus, perhaps because of the support and skill development they receive in the BSP.

Almost everyone reports **doing well academically**, with more students at midpoint earning a 3.7% or better than the last two classes of graduating students.

<u>GPA</u>	<u>Midpoint 2000</u>	<u>Graduating 1999</u>	<u>Graduating 2000</u>
less than 2.5	5.5%	2.4%	3.0%
2.5-2.9	20.1%	21.5%	18.9%
3.0-3.2	23.9%	27.5%	27.4%
3.3- 3.6	29.1%	34.4%	31.1%
3.7+	20.4%	13%	18%

Students at both midpoint and graduation report that their Bonner participation has positively or very positively affected their development of **interpersonal skills** and communication skills.

	<u>Midpoint 2000</u>	<u>Graduating 1999</u>	<u>Graduating 2000</u>
listening carefully to others	94.1%	95.4%	90.0%
interpersonal communication	86.8%	88.1%	91.5%
understanding a person of a different background	84.5%	86.1%	89.3%
helping groups overcome differences of opinion	67.5%	79.9%	78.9%
skills needed to do effective service	88.6%	-	-

Looking at the skill set outlined above from the viewpoint of **civil discourse**, one might make a case as well that by their third year Bonner Scholars attribute significant gains in core skills of citizenship to the BSP. Skills that seem to be more firmly consolidated over the junior and senior year are the ability

to listen carefully to others and to understand of a person of a different background.

Furthermore, these substantial gains don't seem to 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 scholars. Here's what the scholars report about the impact of the BSP on their GPA.

	<u>Midpoint 2000</u>	<u>Graduating 1999</u>	<u>Graduating 2000</u>
negatively affected GPA	24.5%	20.2%	21.5%
positive effect on GPA	24.9%	15.5%	17.4%
no effect in regard to GPA	60.6%	64.3%	61.1%

When asked to rate the relative importance of various aspects of college life, The students at the midpoint rate **studying and doing homework** as more important than doing service. (88.3% feel studying and doing homework is "very" or "most important" compared to 75% who rate community service that way.) Last spring's seniors also rated studying and doing homework as more important than doing service while the seniors in 1999 ranked community service evenly with academic pursuits as most important. In all years, studying and doing homework and community service rank above social life and extracurricular activities.

We continue to see that a majority of the Bonner Scholars desire greater connection between Bonner service and course work. 63% of the juniors share this desire, compared to 76% of the 1999 graduating seniors and 59.3% of the 2000 graduating seniors. 63% reported that the BSP overall has increased their self confidence as student. 54% reported that the BSP overall provoked thought about course material in a class not directly related to the BSP and 41.5% reported that the BSP increased their participation in class discussion. 64.3% feel that the BSP overall affected their ability to manage time better.

Personal Gains Resulting from Participation in the BSP

Graduating senior Bonner Scholars and Scholars in their junior year indicate that the BSP positively or very positively affected their personal development. Many of these gains seem to have already come by the junior year.

	<u>Mid. 2000</u>	<u>Sr.1999</u>	<u>Sr.2000</u>
sense that you can make a difference	89.3%	89.7%	91.9%
appreciation of own relative good fortune in life	85.5%	87.4%	90.7%
sense of meaning and purpose for your life	83.8%	77.1%	82.6%
work and travel experience deepened learning	*	75.9%	82.8%
ability to manage time better	64.3%	71.9%	78.9%
provoked through about course material	54%	61.3%	60.7%
increased self confidence as student	64%	59.7%	68.8%
increased your participation in class discussions	41.5%	47.1%	51.8%

* didn't ask question in that year

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

	<u>Midpoint 2000</u>	<u>SR1999</u>	<u>SR 2000</u>
opportunity. to serve people from different different cultural, racial, ability,language or socioeconomic backgrounds	90.7%	90.5%	93%
opportunity to work at service sites with staff from different cultural, racial, ability, language or socioeconomic backgrounds	85.1%	75.1%	84.5%
understanding of community surrounding your college	83.8%	87.0 %	90%
good orientation to community service opportunities	75.8%	*	*
good orientation for new students to program requirements	75.5%	*	*
access to support back on campus	74.1%	*	*
opportunity within BSP meetings and retreats to gain new und. across boundariesof culture,race,class & gender	67.5%	72.7%	80%
opportunity to understand root causes of social justice issues	64%	69.5%	77.8%
support at your site	63%	*	*

* didn't ask question in that year

Once again, opportunities to work across differences are viewed by scholars as the most significant opportunities provided scholars by the BSP.

Priorities During College

When asked to evaluate the importance of aspects of the college experience for them personally, the following were identified by juniors, listed in order of priority as “very important” or “most important”. The results from the last two senior surveys are included for comparison.

<u>Midpoint2000</u>	<u>Sr.1999</u>	<u>Sr. 2000</u>	
88.3%	98.8%	86.3%	studying and doing homework
75%	98.4%	80.0%	community service w/in & outside BSP
52.9%	82.4%	55.6%	campus activities, clubs and groups
48.5%	89.8%	62.3%	social life
48.5%	74.8%	58.5%	faith dev. and religious activities
38.4%	78.3%	40.4%	athletics or exercising
36%	67.5%	43.3%	on and off campus jobs (not BSP)
28.3%	*	29.6%	using the internet
5.8%	26.9%	10.0%	watching TV

*question not asked in that year

The juniors have similar priorities as the recent graduating class regarding studying, student clubs, service, and using the internet. The juniors consider social life, faith activities, and jobs to be of less importance than the recently graduated seniors. Interestingly, both groups are milder in how they rate many of their priorities in comparison to Bonner Scholars who graduated in 1999.

The following percentages of midway Bonners estimated they spent more than **16 hours per week** on the following aspects of college life. The responses to the senior surveys are included for

week on the following aspects of college life. The responses to the senior surveys are included for comparison. Most notable is that half as many juniors are working at other jobs 16+ hours a week in comparison to the last two classes of seniors.

<u>Midpoint 2000</u>	<u>Sr.1999</u>	<u>Sr. 2000</u>	
26.3%	27.3%	28.5%	studying
9.3%	21.3%	19.4%	on campus or off campus jobs
6.2%	8.7%	9.7%	social life on campus
6.9%	8.3%	10.0%	community service w/in & outside BSP
5.2%	*	4.1%	using the internet
4.5	*	*	athletics or exercising
3.1	*	*	faith activities

*question not asked

The following percentages of midway Bonners estimated they spent **11 hours per week or more** on the following aspects of college life. We see a persistent investment in studying over service and less paid work among the juniors.

<u>Midpoint2000</u>	<u>Sr.1999</u>	<u>Sr.2000</u>	
51.6%	54.6%	55.2%	studying
40.5%	48.6%	39.8%	community service
23.8%	33.3%	36.9%	work
19%	22.1%	23.9%	social life
14.6%	17.8%		campus activities
10.4%	*	10.4%	using the internet
9.7%			athletics or exercise
6.2%	6.7%	7.8%	faith dev.and religious activities
4.1%			preparation and planning for service
2.8%	23.3%	6.7%	watching TV

This year we began asking a new set of questions regarding which reflection activities helped them more deeply understand their Bonner experiences. The following percentage of the Bonners at midpoint and the seniors indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that these aspects of their college experiences helped them understand their service experiences:

<u>2000 midpoint</u>	<u>2000 graduating seniors</u>	
83.4%	90%	dialogue with people they served
78.5%	83.7%	informal discussions with other Bonners
75.5%	75.2%	informal discussions with other students
70.6%	74.5%	one-on-ones with community service site supervisor or staff
67.5%	64.6%	one-on-ones with Bonner staff
46.7%	57.8%	discussions with faculty
56.7%	51.9%	organized Bonner meetings
54.6%	50.3%	organized Bonner retreats
37.4%	42.9%	chance to write about Bonner work in academic courses
38.4%	41.4%	Bonner journals

There is a remarkable similarity in the way the 2000 midpoint and senior scholars rank these 10 means of reflection. The only notable difference is greater importance the graduating seniors attribute to their conversations with faculty. This likely results from the closer relationships that develop with faculty

conversations with faculty. This likely results from the closer relationships that develop with faculty during upper level courses and senior thesis projects. In general, surrounded as they are by the people they serve and other Bonners, they seem to be taking good advantage of these dialogical opportunities.

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 borders of difference has a powerful, maturational effect. Secondly we can note that 83.7% of juniors 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.

Caveats

In looking at this data, it is important to remember that surveys allow us to draw limited conclusions. Because the data is self-reported, 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. In addition, there is confirming triangulation on many questions. When asked related questions on different sections of the survey, they tend to respond similarly.

A key use of such surveys lies in comparing responses over time or between or among groups. The wide difference in responses by students on the 25 different campuses suggest to us that not all of our questions mean the same to students on different campuses. In particular, we note that the BSP appears to have 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. In this survey we used some of these questions, however, the HERI survey is not administered to college juniors, so we don't have a national data set to compare our results to.

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 first completed the ISS in the fall of 1999. This cohort will also have completed the MIS 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 MIS data along with alumni data. 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.