

**Report
to the Bonner Foundation**

**Evaluation of Responses
to the
1999 Incoming Bonner Scholar Survey**

April, 2000

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*"I have been directly involved with the Bonner Scholars for about six days
and already I can tell that this experience will mean a lot to me
and I will carry it with me always.
I felt instantly bonded to my fellow Bonners and our advisors are great."*

a Bonner freshman

THIS SURVEY IS PART OF AN ONGOING STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF THE BSP

This past fall, as part of an ongoing effort to understand the impact of the Bonner Scholars Program on its scholarship recipients, we surveyed incoming Bonner Scholars for the first time. This reading on their initial impressions, hopes and experiences will enable us to follow this class and future classes for the purpose of establishing a clearer understanding of the impact of various aspects of the BSP program.¹

Incoming Bonner Scholars (most of whom are incoming first year students and about 10% of whom are replacement Bonners) will be surveyed again at the midpoint of their college career (except in the few cases of third year entrants), at graduation, and as alumni. For the purposes of this report we will distinguish between incoming first year students and replacement Bonners only when their responses to survey questions differ significantly or when it is clear that a question was directed toward one group or the other. Otherwise we will refer to both groups together as "incoming Bonners."

While we hope that Bonner Scholars at all levels do not weary of these surveys, we seem to be getting off to a good start. No complaints were recorded on the incoming Bonner Scholar surveys, and we received the following notes of encouragement:

"Surveys are great ways to better know your students. Thanks for showing interest in us!"

"I think the survey was very helpful to me because it forced me to think more about the Bonner program and what I want to do during this year and the years ahead."

"I appreciate the concern of the program for the Bonner Scholars' input."

¹ We thank Tom Plaut and the Center for Assessment and Research Alliances at Mars Hill College for their preparation of the data.

“I enjoyed filling out the survey. It made me reflect and think of my priorities.”

It is reasonable to assume that we are seeing greater receptivity to separate surveys (with questions tailored to particular points in scholars' progression through the program) than we saw with previous omnibus surveys in which students at all levels were asked the same questions, only some of which fit well with each cohort.

WHY DO THEY WANT TO BE BONNER SCHOLARS?

Scholars were given a chance to indicate which, among a list of 22 motivations, were most important to them in deciding to apply to become Bonner Scholars. The most frequent response was “to do community service instead of earning money” (88.5% of the first year students, 73.8% of the replacement Bonners.) In response to an open-ended question about their motivations, the same response was most frequent. In their own words:

“I was interested in doing community service and this program helps pay for tuition.”

I enjoy helping others in any way that I can. I was afraid that trying to juggle work-sturdy, school, and the volunteer activities that I wanted to partake in would cause me to drop volunteering activities. The scholarship gave me a chance to volunteer and not worry about juggling a job to help pay for my college experiences.”

“I really enjoy being a volunteer. When I heard I could receive tuition aid for volunteer services, I was extremely interested.”

“The money honestly. I do enjoy doing community service though, so Bonner was a good way for me to earn money doing something I enjoy.”

“I liked volunteering and needed to money. “

“I can help people out in my town and still go to school because I feel a passion for helping others. “

“”The money is great. It beats a job in the school kitchen and true community service will keep me humble during my college experience.”

“I would not have the time to be able to volunteer ten hours a week. I would have to have a work-study job and this enables me to receive more experience.”

Not only did the Bonner Scholarship enable them to do service instead of other work-study jobs, but first year students reported that the Bonner scholarship enabled 63.5% of them to attend their particular college, 34.5% to attend college at all, and 16.3% to avoid postponing college.

82% of incoming Bonner Scholars indicated that “an opportunity work with people” motivated

them to become Bonner Scholars:

“I wanted to be a part of a group which shares similar values and desires as I do. It is refreshing to have the opportunity to grow within a supportive network.”

“I enjoy seeing a smile on a person’s face after I have helped reach them in a certain way.”

“I felt it would be a good opportunity to work with others.”

“I have been directly involved with the Bonner Scholars for about six days and already I can tell that this experience will mean a lot to me and I will carry it with me always. I felt instantly bonded to my fellow Bonners and our advisors are great.”

“I love the warm, fuzzy feeling I get in knowing that help others. “

78.2% of the first year students stressed the importance of doing service apart from the value of the financial aid.

“ I thought the BSP would facilitate my community pursuits.”

“I want to be involved as much and as quickly as possible in the community. The end of knowledge is service, but one doesn’t need to wait till the end of college.”

“I was interested in doing community service with kids and older adults.”

“To try to make a significant difference in at least one person’s life.”

The fourth most important motivation for the first year students was the opportunity to develop new skills. (mentioned by 78.1% of the first year students and 76.2% of the replacement Bonners.)

“I wanted to help others and to be more ready for the call on my life.”

“...the opportunity to better myself by helping people in the situations I grew up in.”

The fifth most important motivation, mentioned by 76.2% of the replacement Bonners and 70.1% of the first year students, was “the opportunity to connect community service interests to academic interests.” It makes sense that upperclass students would mention this most often, yet the written indications of this motivation demonstrate only a vague sense of how this learning will happen.

“I think the need of feeling closer to humanity and knowing the problems better will help make me a truly educated and intellectual person.”

“I have learned so much from volunteering in the past and I think it is something I want in my life.”

“I saw it as an opportunity to expand my horizons in service: it was a chance to give and learn at the

same time.”

“Because of my desire to learn how to best serve the world and people around me now and throughout my life.”

The 22 possible motivations for becoming a Bonner that were offered in the survey are listed below in the order in which the incoming 1999 Bonner Scholars ranked them. For comparison, we have included the 1999 seniors’ responses to a similar questions. (Because the five point scales were worded somewhat differently, it more useful to compare the way seniors and first year students ranked their motivations, rather than strictly comparing percentage points.)

The most important motivations for becoming a Bonner Scholar: (%= Very important or most important)

	‘99 first years	‘99 replacement Bonners	‘99 graduating seniors
to do CS instead of earning money in another job (this was a yes/no question)	88.5%	73.8%	-
opportunity to work with people (develop personal relationships through service)	81.2	81.0	- 77%
opportunity for community service	78.8	76.2	86.2%
opportunity to develop new skills	78.1	76.2	78.2%
opportunity connect community service interests to academic interests	70.3	76.2%	76%
opportunity to help a community address its challenges and needs (improving the community)	66.2 -	58.5 -	- 86.6%
opportunity for leadership development	63.7	76.2	61.3%
opportunity to explore career options	59.5	59.1	64%
oppor. to work with peers who are different from me	58.6	54.7	-
opportunity to address financial need	55.9	56.1	-
opportunity for social life and friendships	49.1	50.0	-
opportunity to work for social justice	49.6	50.0	-
the honor of being a Bonner Scholar	44.1	33.3	-
opportunity to follow through on faith commitments	42.6	50.0	-
excitement upon learning about the BSP	40.7	38.0	-
opportunity to serve my country	37.4	35.7	-
opportunity to satisfy personal needs	36.4	50.0	-
enhance resume	36.1	38.1	-
opportunity to be in a prestigious program	35.7	31.0	-
opportunity for political activism	31.0	26.2	-
opportunity for reflection and dialogue	31.5	38.1	-
family encouraged me to apply	27.1	26.1	-

If more than one third of incoming Bonners do not look forward to the BSP as a context for leadership development - what does this suggest about the fit between the four year leadership model and the scholars we select? It could be that the best way to increase leadership development within the program would be to make interest in this area a more important entrance criterion than it may currently be. We should also note that the seniors entered before the Foundation began placing as much emphasis on leadership development, and they don't all value it highly, with only 61.3% saying it was a most or very important aspect of their Bonner experience.

Note that the seniors' responses are different from those of the first year Bonners, with seniors ranking most highly the opportunity to do service and the opportunity to help a community meet its needs. The opportunity for personal relationships is less important for seniors possibly because they are reflecting back on what they've experienced rather than looking ahead to what they hope they may experience.

Less often mentioned, but still important for some, were such as the following:

"The program seemed like a good way to get involved in a radical, activist oriented program and social circle."

"I also thought it would help me in post-graduation job interviews."

"...the mission of the Foundation and the commitment the Bonner Foundation has to the community."

"I have a STW (save the world) complex...volunteering is like my medication."

WHO ARE THESE STUDENTS?

SIZE OF GROUP: 409 responded to the survey, ranging from 6-24 scholars on each of 24 campuses.

GENDER: There is a 60/40 female/male balance among the first years. The replacement Bonners are 55% male, 45% female.²

AGE: Most students are traditionally-aged freshmen. 7.2% of them either took a year off before entering college or transferred to their current college. Only 7 of the students are nontraditional students, entering several years after their teens.

GPA: 52.3% of the first years had a high school GPA of 3.7 or better. and 80% had a GPA of 3.3 or

² There are 42 "replacement Bonners" among the 409 students. These students replaced positions vacated by Bonner Scholars. Fifty percent of them are sophomores, 21% are freshmen, and 28% are juniors. As stated earlier, we distinguish between incoming first year students and replacement Bonners only when their responses to survey questions differ significantly or when it is clear that a particular question was directed primarily towards one group or the other.

better.

“RACE”: 25.9% of the first year Bonners are African American, 3.9% are Hispanic , 3.1% Asian-American, 1.1% American Indian, and 65.9% are Caucasian. (3.6% didn’t respond or marked in “other.”)

FAMILY EDUCATION LEVEL: 62.8% of their mothers attended some college and 56.1% of their fathers did.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION: 74.2 % of the freshman are religiously affiliated, with 17.2% identifying themselves as spiritual but not affiliated and 7.5% as not affiliated. Of those affiliated, the largest group are Christians other than Catholic (80.7% with 14.5% being Catholic. 2.2% indicated they were Jewish, 1.5% Muslim, 1% Hindu. Some scholars didn’t respond to this question.

In comparison, Fewer of last year’s seniors were religiously affiliated (64%), more of the seniors were identified as spiritual but not affiliated (20.6%), and 3% more said they were not affiliated. Among the replacement Bonners, about the same number are affiliated but more than twice as many are nonaffiliated and half as many describe themselves as “spiritual, but not affiliated”.

HOW MUCH COMMUNITY SERVICE HAVE THEY DONE?

Given our scholarship criteria, it is not surprising that 94.5% of the entering Bonner Scholars had already participated in *organized or formal* volunteer service experiences and 99% had been involved in *informal* service within the context of their family, school church or community, with the replacement Bonners being somewhat more involved than the incoming first year Bonners. In comparison, the rate of community service in the senior year of high school reported by more than a quarter million freshman surveyed by the Higher Education Research Institute was 75.3%.

Rates of Service in Last Year of High School for First Years

	informal service	formal service
once a week or more	36.9%	36.5%
monthly	30.3%	24.9%
every couple of months	21.3%	19.1%

yearly 10.7% 13.5%

In responding to a related question, 100% of incoming scholars claimed they performed at least 2 hours a week of service during senior year in high school.³ With very little difference between the freshman and replacement Bonners, 76.4% indicated that they spent at least three or more hours *weekly* doing community service. The summary of their reported responses regarding weekly community service is as follows:

Hours Spent in Service Weekly in Last Year of High School

2 hours or less	23.6%
3-5 hours	35.1%
6-10 hours	26.4%
11-15 hours	12.0%
16+ hours	2.9%

WHAT ARE THE OTHER DEMANDS ON THEIR TIME?

In the open-ended section of the survey, a few scholars worried that the program's demand on their time would be too much. Given how they report they spent their time last year, it is clear that they must already have good time management skills. They report spending more hours in many areas of activity than does the typical first year student.

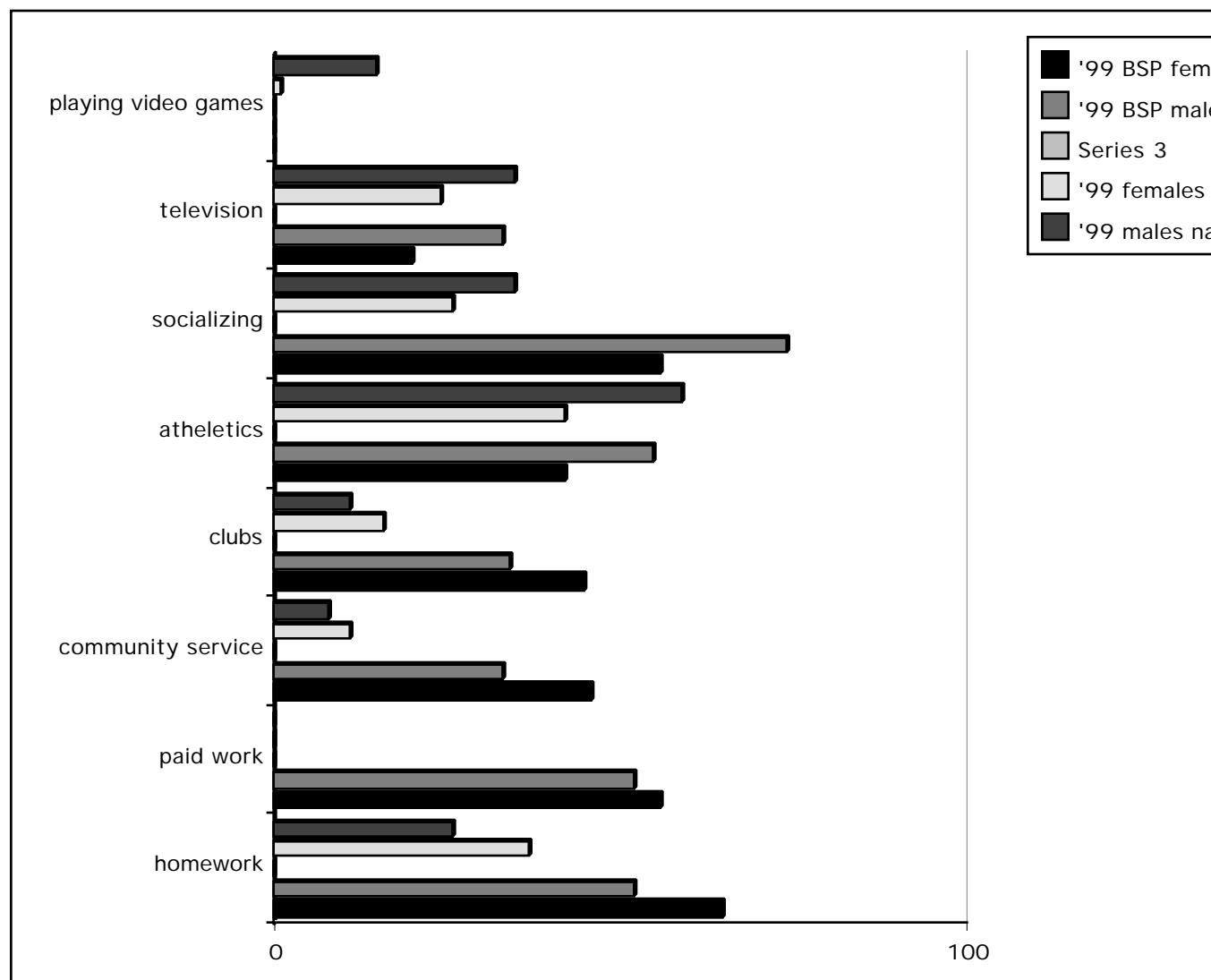
This fall, HERI, the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, announced that a record number of freshman were reporting that they were "overwhelmed by all I have to do", with women reporting, nearly twice as often as men, that they felt that way. The HERI researchers speculate that men are less stressed because they spend more time in stress-reducing activities.⁴ Similarly, incoming Bonner women report less time in stress-reducing activities than incoming Bonner men. This may indicate that we should watch out for the stress levels of our women scholars in particular through their college career.

Our women scholars are more likely to spend 6+ hours in their senior year of high school than

³ Oddly, their report on "hours served" is inflated over their report on whether or not they ever did service or not. Perhaps they are reporting number of hours they served, on the occasions *when* they did service.

⁴ Leo Riesberg, "Student stress is rising, especially among women," Chronicle of Higher Education, January 28, 2000, p. A49.

men on the following activities: homework, clubs, community service, and paid work. Our male students spent more time on athletics, socializing and TV. Both spend about the same amount of time of faith-related activities. Our Bonner Scholars follow the same pattern of time allocation as the average college freshman, except males and females are spending more hours on all activities except TV. Helping students deal with a sense of overwhelming pressure seems to be a priority for this group. graph below allows us to compare first year Bonner Scholars with freshmen entering college nationally this past fall. (Source: "The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 1999". In this study, what we call "socializing" is called "partying." What we call "community service" is called "volunteer work." What we call "homework" is called "studying.")



WHAT DO THEY CARE ABOUT?

We asked the incoming Bonner Scholars to rate the following values, which are drawn from the CIRP survey given to freshman on hundreds of campuses and overseen by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. This allows us to get a sense of how unique these students are. The following are “essential” or “very important” to our incoming first year Bonner Scholars, and are compared in the second column to the responses of last spring’s graduating seniors and in the third column to freshman nationally, as indicated by the HERI survey.

	<u>Essential or Very Important Values Held by Groups</u>		
	Freshman '99	Seniors '99	Nation's 98 Frosh
raising a family	62.4%	66.8%	70.1%
develop a meaningful philosophy of life	59.7%	70.8%	49.9%('99 data)
helping promote racial understanding	55.4%	69.2%	28.4%('99 data)
influencing social values	53.5%	63.2%	35.8%
Being well off financially	34.1%	31.6%	65.3%
Influencing the political structure	27.3%	44.3%	18.4%

“Being well off financially” drew the largest negative response for the incoming first year Bonners, with 14.7% saying this was “not important.” It will be interesting to see how these values develop with the same age cohort over four years. Note that all these values were of more importance to the seniors, except for “being well off financially”. “Helping to promote racial understanding” reveals a significant increase for seniors at almost 15 percentage points, but “influencing the political structure” marks an even larger difference of 17 percentage points, which is particularly notable since this is the least favored motivation for this incoming first year class of Bonners. Assuming that the character of the incoming students has been consistent over the past five years, it appears that in the course of the four years Bonners become substantially more systemic in their thinking about change. The increase of nearly 60% (from 27.3% to 44.3%) represents a much larger increase than is registered on any other item, which, in turn, indicates the possibility of significant Bonner Program impact in this area. If the incoming '99 freshmen, when they are seniors in 2003, respond similarly or more strongly than did this year’s seniors, it will provide substantial evidence of how Bonner positively affects students, and doubly so because this data can be compared to national data, where rates typically drop.

For a majority of these entering students, their thoughts about their future careers are similar to their service interests or commitments, with 27.4% claiming they are “very similar” and 32.9% saying they are “somewhat similar”. Only 22.6% say they don’t know and only 10.6% say they are different. Of course many incoming first year students have not yet chosen a major, or, if they have, will change that choice by the third year. We expect to generate clearer data on major choice in the midpoint survey and on career choice on the graduating senior and alumni surveys.

THEY ARE HOPEFUL AND CONCERNED

Incoming Bonner Scholars are hopeful about their future, with 57.5% feeling very hopeful and 32.7% feeling “hopeful”, totalling 90.2%. Only 6 of them are fearful about their own personal futures. This is very similar to the responses of last year’s seniors, with only 6% fewer of the seniors, or 84%, feeling hopeful or very hopeful about their own future. In general, the freshman are more hopeful about their own future than are the replacement Bonners. It seems that worries about the one’s future begin to loom as one’s college career unfolds.

But the older, replacement Bonners are more hopeful about the future of society than are the first year students. Eighty-nine of the first year students, or 21.4%, of them are fearful or very fearful about the future of society and only 36.2% feel hopeful or very hopeful about the future of society. The seniors’ response to this question indicate more hope. 43.5% are hopeful or very hopeful about the future of the society while 16.2% are fearful or very fearful. Responses to this question can be highly influenced both by individual developmental process as well as national and world events that have occurred during a student’s lifetime.

As is to be expected, the first year students perceive the people closest to them to be most concerned about people in need. They perceive the following groups to hold high or very high levels of concern:

	<u>Perception of High Levels of Concern for People in Need</u>	
	'99 freshman	'99 seniors
the general public	33.3%	22.1%
high school students	41.8%	-
college students	47.8%	16.2%
myself	68.2%	80.4%

While our Bonner graduates see themselves as more concerned about people in need than do the freshman, they are more cynical about the level of concern held by their fellow college students or the general public.

HOW DID THEY LEARN ABOUT THE BSP?

They heard about the BSP from a variety of sources:

From a letter inviting them to apply	39.6%
directly from an admissions officer	22.6%
from another Bonner scholar in HS	17.4%
from a recruitment brochure	16.2%
nonrespondents or “other”	10.3%

(several mentioned that they had siblings in the program.)

THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE AND THE BSP:

The transition to college from high school, family life, or work life doesn't seem to be a great challenge for the first year Bonners. Only 2.7% feel poorly prepared or not prepared at all and 66.6% feel well prepared or very well prepared. When asked particularly if they felt prepared to deal with the demands of a full academic schedule and the volunteer and training commitments with the BSP, the confidence dropped only somewhat, with 57.8% feeling well prepared or very well prepared and 6.3% feeling poorly or not prepared.

THE INCOMING STUDENT SURVEY IS PART OF A LARGER RESEARCH EFFORT

In 1997 we began a research process which aims at yielding a comprehensive portrait of the impact of the Bonner Scholars Program on its student participants. This approach began by gathering interview data in the service of refining an omnibus student impact survey that had previously been piloted by the Foundation .

We reported on the findings of the omnibus survey in a presentation to the 1998 June gathering held at DePauw University and in a subsequently written report entitled, “Evaluation of Responses by 929 Bonner Scholars to the Bonner Scholar Student Impact Survey and Related Interviews and Focus Groups.”

In that report we recommended that the omnibus Student Impact Survey be replaced by a series of four surveys addressing particular groups of Bonner Scholars at critical points in their matriculation through the program:

1. **the Incoming Student Survey (ISS)** , the subject of this report, which seeks to clarify the profiles of incoming students on each campus, attending to their motivations for becoming a Bonner scholar, 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. This survey provides a very useful point of reference for measuring the growth of Bonner Scholars over the course of their years in the BSP. This survey has already been edited for its second administration in the Fall of 2000.

2. **A Mid-Point Impact Survey (MPIS)** which will be administered to all continuing Bonner Scholars at the beginning of their **junior year**. 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. The first administration of this survey is scheduled for Fall of 2000.

3. **The Graduating Senior 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 survey yields clearer information about the impact of the BSP on career plans, majors, scholarly interest and leadership activities. In the long run, we anticipate that GSIS results, when compared to the results of the first two surveys from the same Scholars, will yield clearer focus on areas related to intellectual development, such as the growth of systemic and critical thinking. In October, 1999 Jim Keen reported on data from 1999 GSIS at the Foundation Summit at The University of Richmond. Details are found in our October, 1999 memorandum on the GSIS. In November, 1999 at the Bonner retreat at Montreat, Cheryl Keen met individually with a number of campuses program directors to discuss ways in which the GSIS data for their particular campus varies from the whole. Such variations may indicate campus uniqueness as well as strengths and challenges posed by that uniqueness. Other directors have been contacted subsequently by phone and by mail. The second administration of the graduating senior survey took place in Spring 2000.

4. A **Bonner Alumni Survey (BAS)** is on the drawing board. In the context of the Bonner alumni gathering this coming June at Berry College, we will conduct a series of focus groups with alumni aimed at generating a set of questions grounded in alumni experience. Several preliminary focus groups have already been conducted. To these questions will be added basic demographic questions as well as questions suggested by the Foundation. Our goal will be to have this Alumni Survey ready to be sent to all alumni in the network in the Fall of 2000.

Note to readers: we did not compare these incoming students results with the “freshman “ results of the 1988 Omnibus Survey because that survey was administered in the spring, after the freshman had had almost a whole year of college.

BOBBY,
here's something else for your perusal. I can't think how to make these more exciting!

TALKING POINTS 1999 INCOMING STUDENT SURVEY

1. At the most basic level, we are recruiting the right students for the BSP. While they hold multiple motivations for joining the BSP, their most important reason for applying to the BSP is that it will allow them to do service instead of just earn money.
2. The incoming Bonner Scholars are very social people. Building personal relationships through service is their second most important motivation for being a scholar and they are therefore probably predisposed to enjoy the group aspect of the program.
3. Their strong motivation to develop new skills and connect their service to their academic interests suggests that we are moving in the right direction with the developmental aspect of the BSP and the new efforts to link with academics and community-based research efforts.
4. This group of incoming Bonner Scholars are a remarkable group. In comparison to national averages, they spent more time last year on community service, homework, clubs, and paid work, especially the women. We expect they will maintain these high levels of activity, but we might do well to offer skills for time management and stress reduction.
5. Once again, our freshmen far outstrip national norms regarding how importantly they hold the following values: developing a meaningful philosophy of life, helping to promote racial understanding, influencing social values, and influencing the political structure.
6. These social values are buoyed by their hope for the future of society and for their own future. While only a third of them consider it important to be well off financially in the future, 90.2% of them are hopeful about their future.
7. If this group of first year students matures into the high levels of campus leadership involvement that our previous scholars have, they are happily carrying with them an arsenal of hope, concern for the other, and desire to work with others.