

Community Responsibility Scholars

by Cheryl Keen, Bonner Scholars Director

Purpose

- Replicates the Bonner Scholars Program for 95 percent of the entering class of 2006.
- Honors Antioch's commitment to community by establishing merit-based scholarships that recognize community responsibility as a cornerstone of the College's educational model.

Background

The College has been offering this scholarship to a quarter of each class since 1999. It was originally modeled after the Bonner Scholars Program and was supported by a Bonner Foundation enrichment grant. A consultant suggested that the College reduce tuition to increase enrollment, and the Antioch College Board of Trustees decided to do so by growing the scholarship program. Of the 2002 entering class, 95 percent were offered the scholarship. It is expected that about 75 percent of the 2003 entering class will be awarded the scholarship.

How It Works

Scholarship Types

This four-year scholarship program, a replication of the Bonner Scholar Program's student developmental model, offers challenge, support, and training for involvement in service. The Community Responsibility Scholarships (CRS) come in three different forms:

- The Jewel Graham scholarship awards \$10,000 per year and requires 70 hours of service during each four-month term.
- The Algo Henderson scholarship awards \$7,500 per year and requires 60 hours of service during each four-month term.
- The Olympia Brown scholarship awards \$5,000 per year and requires 50 hours of service during each four-month term.

Awarding the Scholarship

The scholarships are awarded to students based on the admissions office's overall rating of their college applications. No additional application is necessary, but students are asked to sign a contract agreeing to the expectations of the program.

Off-Campus Service

About two-fifths of the students at Antioch meet their scholarship expectations in neighboring communities. Getting outside the Antioch bubble is a critical experience for these students, because it causes them to become aware of the economic, social, racial, gender, environmental, and cultural experiences and concerns of the people in the surrounding communities as well as the world at large.

On-Campus Service

About three-fifths of Antioch students meet the expectations of the scholarship on campus, and they learn to take responsibility for the place where they live. More faculty members are adding service-learning components to their classes, and students can count these hours towards their CRS responsibilities.

Service Site Criteria

The CRS staff and advisory committees have endorsed a list of on-campus committees and sites, Federal Work-Study Program positions (FWSP), and off-campus sites that meet the CRS service criteria. If a student does not find a compelling opportunity on the list, she or he is urged to talk to the CRS

coordinator. The office maintains flexibility and creativity in meeting the needs of the community. Each service site must fulfill the following criteria:

- Service must build relationships and a culture of service at the site.
- Service must be an active, not passive, assignment.
- The project must have a service intent. For example, if the job is research-oriented, the service must contribute to the community need and not be intended for pure research.
- Repeated service at the same site must promote personal or professional growth.
- If the job is on campus, it cannot be clerical and must contribute to the community and democratic processes on campus.
- If the job is off campus, the service must meet the needs expressed by nonprofit agencies and fit AmeriCorps categories.

Commitment to Community Partners

The members of the Center for Community Learning, which oversees the Community Scholarship Program office, seeks to build and maintain stable relationships over time with community partners. Staff therefore recommend that the students' community involvement be continual and have an element of accountability. 70 percent of a student's hours each semester are required to be served at one site. The remaining hours can be in the form of short-term projects and/or training as approved by the department.

Supervision

Every project must have a supervisor or sponsor. This person must serve as a dialogue partner for the student throughout the semester and comment on involvement and commitment as part of the evaluation process. Site supervisors are responsible for training students as they begin service at the site, overseeing a student's work and ensuring it is meaningful, answering questions, and signing monthly report forms. At the beginning of every term, community partners attend a service fair where they can recruit students to work at their site. If the project is independent, someone within the Center for Community Learning office may be able to sponsor the student.

Student Coordinators

In 2002, the CRS office selected ten students to serve as student-coordinators. Each is responsible for about five sites and twenty-five CRS scholars who are grouped according to residence halls. They make sure their twenty-five students have chosen a service site, submit their monthly time sheets and written reflections, and reflect on their service in two or three meetings each term. They also stay in touch with the site supervisors at about five sites and are ready to resolve any problems that surface there. The hope is that this staffing model will keep students more deeply engaged in their service, prevent students from slipping through the cracks, and give them the sense that the CRS office is more than just a place to submit paperwork.

What Makes The Project Unique

In 2002, the scholarship was offered to virtually the entire entering class. As a result, students in this large cohort meet regularly to discuss their service projects. This assists the development of an ethic and culture of service that permeates the entire fabric of the Antioch community, enriching the liberal arts program and the mission of the College.

Resources And Partners

Bonner Foundation

- Funds the halftime position of Community Responsibility Scholarship coordinator and one VISTA volunteer.

Ohio Campus Compact

- Sponsors two additional VISTA positions.

Community Members

- Serve as site supervisors for Antioch student volunteers.

Overcoming Challenges

Providing effective supervision for 250 students has been the greatest challenge. To address this need, the ten student-coordinator positions have been created. The College is also beginning to raise funds for this ever-growing program and is considering creating a new staff position.

Another challenge has been dealing with students who are failing to fulfill their service hour obligation or complete required paperwork. If the students' scholarships are revoked, the College runs the risk of losing them if they cannot afford the additional tuition costs.

Evidence of Success

In one four-month term during the fall of 2002, the 250 CRS scholars completed almost 20,000 hours of service. This term's final self-evaluations demonstrated the powerful effect of the CRS program on the students. Their monthly reflections fell into the following themes: responsibility, community, social justice, self-discovery, personal growth and fulfillment, and self-expression. Students seem to be growing and using service as a good preparation for their upcoming coop experience. Virtually every student at Antioch does at least one four-month community service-oriented coop. Each student at Antioch must do five four-month-long work experiences, which alternate with study terms. Students' CRS experiences during the study term often lead to ideas for the kind of coop work experience that they would like or the kind of community need that they would like to address during that coop. They also get insight into the kind of skills they think a coop job could give them that would be useful for future community service. All in all, the CRS experience is part of Antioch's commitment to the value of experiential learning.

How to Make it Grow

The project will grow for the next three years as future classes receive this scholarship. Sustaining a quality program will require more staffing and additional service sites. The CRS staff is writing grant proposals to fund different aspects of the program.