

Service Project Coordinator

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Purpose

- Provides a Bonner scholar with leadership experience while working in the three-year position of service project coordinator. The position's responsibilities include organizing almost all of the Bonner Scholars Program's service projects.

Background

All Bonners at College of the Ozarks are required to participate in two community service projects outside of their regularly scheduled service site. The Bonner Scholars director designed the service project coordinator position so that a student would have the opportunity to assist her with these events.

How It Works

Responsibilities

The service project coordinator is responsible for helping to organize monthly community service projects, reminding Bonners who have signed up for these projects, tracking whether Bonners have met their service project requirements, and generating a report to be included in both the midterm and annual Bonner Foundation reports.

Service Project Planning

The service project coordinator has the opportunity to see all aspects of service project development, implementation, evaluation, and documentation. For example, the coordinator plans one nursing home dance per semester. Two or three weeks before the event, the coordinator discusses the budget with the Bonner director and submits a monetary request either verbally or in writing. The coordinator orders the refreshments, decorations, and plans the music. During the service project meeting, the coordinator describes upcoming events and students sign up. One week before the event, the coordinator reminds the Bonners who signed up about the event. The coordinator picks up the refreshments or delegates this responsibility to another Bonner. He takes attendance, and afterwards evaluates the event with the director.

Four-Year Cycle

The position is part of a four-year cycle that begins during a student's first year in the Bonner program, when she is in the "expectation" stage. During pre-semester training, all freshmen receive a list of service project times and dates. During the third week of school, they must sign up to participate in at least two service projects.

At the end of the first year, the director and current service project coordinator identify a rising sophomore Bonner who exhibits a desire to become more involved with the Bonner program. They look for someone who is organized, detail-oriented, independent, and articulate.

During the second year, the incoming service project coordinator is mentored by the outgoing fourth-year service project coordinator. Still in the "exploration" stage, the student learns about her responsibilities and cochairs several service projects, learning how to report participation. The sophomore Bonner spends approximately five to eight hours in the office during the fall semester and eight to ten hours in the office during the spring semester. As a work school, College of the Ozarks requires its Bonners to serve 15 hours per week. Therefore, the service project coordinator can still perform at least five hours of direct service in the community.

During the third year of the cycle there is only one service project coordinator, who fulfills all duties by herself, serving 10–12 hours per week in the office. During the third year, the coordinator is in the “experience/example” stage of the student developmental model. At the end of this year, she helps the director select an incoming service project coordinator.

During the fourth year, the outgoing service project coordinator mentors her successor and serves as an example to peers. At this point, the coordinator should be in the “excellence” stage of the student developmental model. During the fall semester, the outgoing service project coordinator serves 10 hours a week in the office and reduces that time to five to ten hours in the spring.

Training and Collaboration

At the end of each semester, the director has a two-hour planning meeting with the service project coordinator. They also meet twice a week for ten minutes throughout the semester and at the beginning of every month for thirty minutes.

The director is very clear with the service project coordinator when assigning his duties, helping him develop timelines and a list of things to do. The service project coordinator’s performance and the projects must also be evaluated regularly. Some develop skills and knowledge very quickly and work almost entirely on their own, especially during the fourth year when working with a sophomore trainee. Others need more encouragement and assistance.

Service Project Coordinator and the Leadership Structure

The College of the Ozarks service project coordinator is an integral member of the Bonner leadership team, which consists of ten students. Each semester, all members of the leadership team are assigned at least one new Bonner to mentor. This group meets once a month to plan meetings and address Bonner concerns. The group is also assigned at least six students to encourage through prayer, notes, and e-mail.

What Makes The Project Unique

Service project coordinators have the unique opportunity to experience all four levels of the student developmental model while serving in this position. Most leadership positions at Bonner schools are only a year long. A three-year position gives students greater opportunity to develop as leaders and to build their critical thinking skills while participating in long-term planning and mentoring others.

Benefits

The Bonner director has assistance with service projects and is rewarded by mentoring students one-on-one and watching them grow as a result of their experiences.

Timeline

The service project coordinator position works as part of a four-year cycle:

First Year

At the end of the year, the director and current service project coordinator select a new coordinator from the rising sophomore class.

Second Year

The incoming service project coordinator is mentored by the outgoing senior coordinator.

Third Year

There is only one service project coordinator. At the end of the year, he assists the director in selecting an incoming service project coordinator.

Fourth Year

The outgoing service project coordinator mentors the incoming service project coordinator. The cycle begins again.

Resources And Partners

- Community partners that host service projects include:
- Point Lookout Nursing Home
- The Gift of Green
- American Red Cross
- Community Blood Center of the Ozarks

Overcoming Challenges

It is difficult to choose a student for a three-year commitment. The Bonner director has overcome this challenge by telling new service project coordinators that they will ideally serve more than one year, but that the partnership will be reevaluated at the end of each semester. This gives the student and the director a way to end the partnership or to formally evaluate the job description and the student's performance and make adjustments as needed.

It is also a challenge to make sure that the lines of communication are open between the service project coordinator and the director. Usually when the coordinator fails to achieve the director's expectations it is because she did not understand them. The director works with the service project coordinator to create detailed files on what needs to be done for each event, making sure that the coordinator's responsibilities are clear. The director rewards the coordinator for good work and discusses performance gaps as soon as they occur.

Evidence of Success

Each year, Bonners complete a satisfaction survey. Before the service project coordinator position was implemented, students indicated that they did not feel well informed about service projects, and there was a much higher level of absenteeism. Since then, however, service project absenteeism seldom occurs, and students no longer complain that they do not know what is going on.

The position has allowed for more service events, which have had a powerful impact on the community. One example is the Totally Kids Kare, a child wellness fair that provides local children with free eye, ear, nose, throat, height, weight, and dental screenings. In 2002, it was so successful that over 600 hundred people attended.

How to Make it Grow

More than one student could serve in this position if there were more office space and service projects to keep the coordinators busy.