

Morehouse Alumni Serving Together to Encourage a Responsible Society (MASTERS)

by Courtney Woods, Bonner Scholar Program Coordinator

Purpose

- Encourages the continued commitment of alumni to the mission of the Bonner Scholars Program and the College through direct service, and social reform.
- Provides a support network of service opportunities for graduates, who serve as advocates for current student-led initiatives.

Background

During their exit interviews, many graduating Bonners stated that they wanted to remain connected to the program and to the College. Courtney Woods '02, a Bonner Scholar alumna and Bonner program coordinator, decided to create an organization that keeps alumni connected and encourages them to continue the service they did in the Atlanta community as students.

How It Works

Bonners and other service-minded students are invited to join the MASTERS program after graduation.

Meetings

Meetings are held three times a year, including during homecoming weekend in October, Founders' weekend in February, and commencement weekend in May. At the meetings, members discuss issues affecting the Morehouse community and the global community.

Contact Information

MASTERS members provide contact information and are asked to inform the organization of any changes in address, phone number, e-mail, and job location.

Responsibilities

As members of the MASTERS program, alumni are expected to focus on a five-part framework.

1. Engaging in Direct Service: Being an impetus for positive social change in hometown communities. Participating in Bonner Scholar events and other Morehouse community service events and projects affiliated with the Emma & Joe Adams Public Service Institute (EJAPSI), the division of community service at Morehouse, whenever feasible.
2. Supporting the Morehouse College Alumni Association: Infusing more youth into the local and national chapter(s). Being an agent for change in communities that surround local alumni association chapters.
3. Creating a Support Network for Service Opportunities: Providing Bonner program staff and other Morehouse contacts with notices of service opportunities for current students. Informing students of postgraduate careers and opportunities in the public service sector. Being available as a resource to community service students for advice and information.
4. Promoting Greater Involvement in Public Policy and Social Reform: Being aware of new laws, policies, and other practices that affect community. Assessing the concerns that the communities may have nationally and/or locally and determining which require the support and actions of this

resource.

5. Serving as Advocates for the Sustainability of Student-Lead Initiatives: Staying alert to opportunities for corporate matching. Communicating to EJAPSI about any known grants, programs, or other sources of possible funding.

Benefits

To Students

The MASTERS program keeps the spirit of service alive among Bonner scholar alumni. Current Bonner scholars and other service-oriented students at Morehouse have mentors who share professional goals and an interest in lifelong commitment to service. Connections in the professional world allow them to present funding sources, job opportunities, and other resources.

To Campus Administrators

The MASTERS program eases the load of campus administrators in maintaining contact with graduates.

To the Campus

The MASTERS program helps to establish a “culture of service” at Morehouse that shows students that it is possible to continue to serve their communities well after graduation.

To the Community

MASTERS members who once served as mentors for local schools, organizers for social reform campaigns, volunteers at homeless shelters, and in other capacities return to these community organizations with a greater ability to make long-term changes.

What Makes The Project Unique

Unlike more conventional alumni associations, the MASTERS program fosters the spirit of service and provides more recent graduates with an opportunity to be in positions of leadership. With service-oriented people in the professional fields of education, business, politics, health, religion, and nonprofit management, the potential for realistic and measurable social change through service is boundless.

Timeline

August

Information and an invitation to the MASTERS program is sent to Morehouse graduates who are alumni of the Bonner Scholar Program, Adams Scholars Program, Morehouse Mentoring Program, Revitalization Task Force, EMERGE, or to any others who participated in service during their time as students. Prospective and current members receive an update of the program and a calendar of events for the year.

October

The year’s first MASTERS meeting is held during homecoming weekend—usually the last weekend in October. This meeting serves as an introductory session for new members and allows time to discuss the short- and long-term goals of the MASTERS program.

February

The second MASTERS meeting is scheduled during Founders’ weekend, the second weekend in February.

April

Bonner scholars graduating in May begin the exit interview process. They are given information about the MASTERS program and are asked to consider joining.

May

The third and final MASTERS meeting for the academic year is held during commencement weekend, the third weekend in May. MASTERS members use this meeting to evaluate their work throughout the

year and begin planning for next year.

Resources And Partners

Morehouse Alumni Association Chapters

- All MASTERS members are asked to join the local chapter of the Morehouse Alumni Association. As the MASTERS program develops, it is expected that the Alumni Association will be even more supportive of its ideas and initiatives.

Morehouse-affiliated Businesses and Organizations

- Morehouse Alumni have established strong connections in various professional fields around the world. These organizations can offer financial support, internships, and other resources to the MASTERS program and those they serve.

Overcoming Challenges

It was difficult to determine how often and when alumni should meet. MASTERS program members are located around the world, and it was difficult to determine what would be best for the majority of the members. It was decided that the events would be held during weekends of homecoming, Founders' week, and commencement. As the program grows, more meetings will be held throughout the year, and this will allow more alumni to attend.

Evidence of Success

There were about ten members at the inception of the program, and that number has already grown to over 30. As word spreads about MASTERS, membership is expected to continue to increase significantly.

How to Make it Grow

Effective Communication and Marketing Resources

Information about the MASTERS program and its members must be made readily available to the Morehouse Alumni Association network, divisions of Morehouse College, and communities around the world. Among other communications strategies, a newsletter will be sent to interested individuals.

Getting Morehouse Faculty to Invest in the Program

A few faculty and staff members are in the MASTERS program already, but more would make a greater impact on the campus.