

WEST VIRGINIA WESLEYAN COLLEGE

Selection Process

By LeeAnn Brown, Bonner Scholars Director

Purpose

- Requires Bonner candidates to participate in an on-campus Bonner Scholar preview day before they are selected.
- Provides the Bonner scholars selection committee with an opportunity to interact with prospective students on a personal basis before they are admitted to the program.

Background

Bonner preview day began after brainstorming with the admissions office on how to improve Bonner recruitment. The selection committee was frustrated because they did not have the opportunity to “see applicants up close.” The committee recognized that some applicants looked good on paper but did not actually have the necessary qualities to be a Bonner.

How It Works

Admissions Staff

In the fall before the start of the selection process, admissions and Bonner staff members review application forms and update them as needed.

Admissions counselors are reminded about the Bonner program so they can be prepared to discuss the program with high school students in the fall and spring. Admissions counselors stress to applicants that to be seriously considered, applicants must be available to attend the Bonner preview day.

Applications

The deadline for the written application is in mid-February. It must be accompanied by two written references and FAFSA information. When all applications are received, the admissions staff distributes copies to the members of the selection committee, which consists of the Bonner director, the dean of student affairs, a Bonner Congress representative, a community agency representative, and admissions staff.

The committee reads and reviews applications and gives special attention to financial need, gender balance, state origin, and ethnic diversity. Selected candidates receive letters inviting them to attend Bonner preview day.

Bonner Preview Day

The event usually occurs in late March or early April, on a Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

About 30 prospective Bonner scholars and their parents begin the day at 8:00 a.m. with a welcome breakfast reception. A Polaroid photo of each applicant is taken, and name tags are given out. Candidates are invited to stay overnight with current Bonners after the preview day but not before, as it is important to avoid favoritism.

Interviews

The day begins with several interviews. There are four to five interview teams, composed of selection committee members and nine members of the Bonner advisory and assessment committees. Applicants are given five to seven minutes to answer four questions on a variety of topics related to service, such as “What motivates you to do service?” “Can you describe a down side of service?” and “Describe a project where you are serving that needs improvement.”

During the interviews, other prospective Bonners wait in an informal setting with upperclass Bonners, who answer questions about college life, majors, and the college search. They do not coach the applicants or allow them to discuss the interview questions. Besides preventing shared answers, this gives the upperclass Bonners an opportunity to mingle and talk with the applicants.

After interviewing six applicants, each interview team has a ten minute break, during which the team ranks each applicant according to their qualifications. Then they interview six more applicants and so on, until the teams have interviewed all the applicants.

Ranking Applicants

During the lunch break, each interview team meets to review the applicants and their rank and devise a list of 15 top Bonner picks. They assign each of the top 15 applicants a score, with No. 1 being their top choice and No. 10 ranking the lowest. In addition, each team chooses two to three alternates. All applicants lunch on site with the helpers while the interview teams are meeting.

Service Activities

After lunch, applicants change into work clothes, and another group of upperclass Bonners takes them to a preassigned service site. In addition to the Bonner work-team leaders, several interview helpers and Bonners who served on the interview teams participate. The projects are set up so that everyone can talk easily and have an opportunity to work together. This allows team leaders to observe how the applicants work together. At the end of the day, the student leaders of the work site meet with the upperclass Bonners, and they rank candidates in the same way as the interview teams (top 15 with two to three alternates). After the service projects, the groups arrive back on campus for dinner.

Final Review

During dinner, the interview team Bonners and the Bonner director meet to discuss the day. They consider the top 15 from all the interview team picks, as well as the top 15 work site picks. They compile a final list of the current Bonner scholars' recommendations.

Reflection

After dinner, applicants meet with a small group of upperclass Bonners for a video and discussion. The movie ends at about 9:00 p.m. and is followed by a brief discussion. All participants then reflect on their day and comment on the shared activities.

Selecting Bonners

Admissions staff and the Bonner director meet the following Monday to compile all scores into a rating system that also takes into account gender breakdowns and financial need. They give serious consideration to the Bonner scholars' recommendations and Bonner Foundation guidelines before they finalize the list of invited people.

Fifteen top-rated applicants receive an acceptance letter from the admissions office with a deadline date by which to reply. If fewer than 15 accept, alternates are chosen.

What Makes The Project Unique

The Bonner selection process is collaborative and includes input from admissions staff, WVWC administrators, community agency representatives, Bonner Congress representatives, and Bonner scholars from across the program.

Benefits

The process gives the selection committee face-to-face interaction with Bonner applicants and allows them to observe applicants in different settings.

The process provides several opportunities to assess the qualities of a Bonner candidates' written application, interview sessions, service work, and discussion after video.

Timeline

Summer

Review Bonner applications and make necessary changes.

Fall and spring

Admission counselors send out Bonner applications.

Fall and early Spring

Finalize interview teams. Revise interview questions. Secure service sites. Notify Bonners of roles available: helpers, interviewers, work team leaders, overnight hosts. Choose video related to service.

Mid-February

Applicants mail in applications with FAFSA information and reference letters.

February–early March

Selection committee reads and selects first pool of applicants.

Mid-March

Letters sent to applicants inviting them to Bonner preview day.

Late March or early April

Bonner preview day.

End of April

Letter of acceptance sent to 15 top candidates.

Summer

Correspondence between Bonner office, current Bonners, and incoming freshmen.

Resources And Partners

Admissions office staff

- Recruits potential Bonners, coordinates all Bonner applications, sets selection committee meeting dates.
- Makes room reservations for interview sessions, morning reception, and video discussion.
- Pays for all food costs: breakfast reception for applicants and parents, lunch and dinner for applicants.

Bonner Scholars

- Bonner advisory and assessment committees participate as interview team members and work-team participants.
- Bonner scholars participate as helpers, work team leaders and participants, and as overnight hosts/hostesses.

Community agencies

- Provide sites for service and provide agency staff to assist at the site on preview day.
- Help with selection committee duties, including reading applications and serving on interview team.

WVWC administration

- Participate in selection committee duties, including reading applications and serving on the interview team.
- Participate in breakfast welcome reception, interview sessions, and lunch work meeting.