

Community Program Coordinator

by Pat Delaney, Bonner Scholars Director

Purpose

- Allows a student leader to facilitate successful service partnerships between community participants and Waynesburg students, faculty, and staff.
- Reinforces the Bonner Scholars Program's four-year leadership model.
- Facilitates smooth communication between service site managers and the Bonner coordinator and director.

Background

Waynesburg's former dean of students, Dr. Jerry Wood, created the community program coordinator position in 1999 as a student leadership position when the college received its first Bonner enrichment grant. The position was intended to facilitate direct contact between community service agencies, students, and faculty, and to allow Bonner Scholars to be involved in the administrative side of the program.

This system of management was installed over a four-year period and has proven to be an invaluable asset to the management of the Center for Service Leadership.

How It Works

The management of service sites is based on top-down authority starting with the director, coordinator, community program coordinator, and the student site managers at over forty agencies. In this model, student site managers report directly to the community program coordinator, who provides a continuous chain of communication to the Bonner coordinator and the director.

Job Description

The community program coordinator, serving during the academic year for two years, visits all community partners twice a year to review and evaluate the sites and determine their effectiveness with student volunteers. The coordinator meets with the Bonner director at least twice a week to discuss any safety issues at sites or concerns about student volunteers. For the placement to be successful for students, service agencies must provide increasing levels of complexity in their service activities, leadership opportunities, and involvement in strategic initiatives.

As the "point person" between students, the College, and community partners, the community program coordinator encourages and reinforces Bonners to strive for a professional leadership model. Because the community program coordinator is a peer, other students feel free to discuss concerns about their site. The community project coordinator assists all students, not just Bonners, with the selection of a service site.

Selection

A candidate for the position is selected from among sophomore and junior Bonners who have demonstrated that they are detail-oriented and possess the leadership skills to manage their peers. Seniors are not selected because they would not be able to serve in the position for two years.

Candidates are interviewed by the Bonner coordinator and director, as well as the Center for Service Leadership staff.

Once a new community program coordinator is selected, they participate in a two- to three-week training session on computer- and web-based reporting.

The Stipend

The Bonner enrichment grant created an annual stipend that provides the community program coordinator with \$4,000, which is divided between the fall and spring semesters. The Bonner enrichment grant has been depleted, and the position will now be covered by Federal Community Work-Study funds.

Benefits

The position has improved the community partners' perception of Waynesburg student volunteers because the community program coordinator has facilitated better communication between the school and the community.

Resources And Partners

- The community partner coordinator works with College faculty and staff as well as over 40 agencies a year, including: Bowlby Library, Adult Basic Education-Community Action Southwest, Ft. Necessity National Park, After Mental Illness Inc., Boy and Girl Scouts, Bridge Street Commons Senior Care Facility, Best Buddies-Waynesburg College Chapter, Greene State Correctional Institution, and Corner Cupboard Food Bank.

Overcoming Challenges

It has been difficult to find the right person for the position and keep him or her for a two-year period. Consistency is the key to success in this position, so seniors are no longer selected.