



# Student-Led Best Practices Submitted by Bonner Congress Representatives

**Name of Best Practice:**

University of Dayton Semester of Service

**College/University Name and Contact Information:**

University of Dayton  
Center for Leadership In Community  
937-229-2042

**Name of Congress Representative(s) Preparing Report:**

Ernesto Romo  
[email: romoernj@notes.udayton.edu](mailto:romoernj@notes.udayton.edu)

**Background:**

The Semester of Service (SOS) was designed to give students the opportunity to dive into a concentrated service experience. This is a best practice because it pulls students into service intensely, often with long-lasting results.

**What Makes This Unique:**

Semester of Service is unique because it allows students to take a semester or summer off from full-time study to experience 450 hours of service in the Dayton community. Students grow through experiential learning, create intentional community, and gain support from local agencies. The program aims to expand the personal worldview of participants and to empower them with experience and knowledge to become life-long advocates for social change.

**How it Works:**

**1. Training:** The semester begins with an orientation focused on the history of the SOS program, the Bonner Foundation, and the city of Dayton. This week also includes training sessions related to youth, drug and alcohol addiction, and other scenarios that one could encounter during their service term.

**2. Placements:** Once the program begins, U. Dayton Bonner Leaders work as an integral part of the full-time staff at the agencies working 36-38 hours

each week providing them the opportunity to experience a social service oriented job. The work of each Bonner Leader range from case manager duties at homeless shelters and half-ways houses to programming summer camps and after-school programs at youth and neighborhood centers.

**3. Academic Connections:** In addition to working full-time at their service sites, students participate in a weekly class that has speakers from different fields in service presenting topics that are relevant to the experience, topics include: poverty, homelessness, race relations in Dayton, systemic issues and their on the city, etc... These class periods are used as a time to discuss assigned readings and reflect and share the students' experiences. During the summer because of the intentional living community there is also a dinner night, which is also used as a reflection night.

**Recommendations:**

- Limit the number of partners, to insure commitment.
- Offer intentional community living during the summer program.
- Develop a course that complements the service as tool for reflection.

**Supplementary Documents:**

To obtain more information on the Semester of Service, please contact [Brother Ed Zamierowski](#) (Phone: 937-229-2042) or [Jana Strom](#) (Phone: 937-229-4699).