The mission of the Bonner Scholars Program (BSP) is to provide low-income, under-represented, and first-generation college students the opportunity to attend college while engaging their talents and learning in supporting communities. Bonner Scholars are matched with Richmond-region nonprofits, schools, and government agencies that align with their interests in social issues. For four years, Bonner Scholars spend 8-10 hours a week doing meaningful work to build the capacity of their internship organization while participating in on-campus reflective exercises and educational programming to promote lifelong learning. In partnership with the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, sophomore Bonner Scholars take the Justice and Civil Society course, which provides a strong academic foundation for their community experiences.

Bonner Scholar alumna Hadya Abdul Satar, '13, models the importance of lifelong learning. Drawing upon her experiences as a refugee—her family is originally from Afghanistan and resettled in the United States—she served as an ESL and citizenship teacher at Commonwealth Catholic Charities while a Bonner Scholar. "It's been amazing to see how much my service with refugees has influenced what I study academically," she said. "Recently, I wrote my senior thesis, which indicated a lot of knowledge I have gained as an ESL teacher of refugees." Since graduating, Hadya has worked at the United Nations representing Afghanistan and at Upwardly Global supporting refugees' employment and has enrolled in Georgetown University’s Master of Science in International Development.
"Now, as a senior, I get to watch the freshmen go through this process all over again, getting exposed to these [social] issues for the first time. Looking back at my reflections and my growth, I can see so clearly this work as a Bonner Scholar really matters. The exposure to this conversation and dialogue that Bonner offers changed the way I think."
- Regina Belle Cavada, '16

"I have begun looking at the Highland Park neighborhood in a different way. I am viewing it not simply as a community in need, but as a community with needs... Ultimately, the residents of Highland Park are undeserving of the stereotypes and false assumptions that continue to characterize their communities... Understanding the reasons for holding these assumptions and then working to change these assumptions in others can go a long way in changing how we as a society view and treat each other moving forward."
- Rand Irons, '15

In her Presentation of Learning, Klaren Ng, '16, reflected on how her experience as a Bonner Scholar made her more "reflective, grateful, and vulnerable" and caused her to think deeply about how "[her] work in the community, [her] academics, and [her] personal story" are interconnected. Born in the Philippines and raised in New York City, Ng struggled to thrive on campus because she felt marginalized. Through her service at Church Hill Activities and Tutoring, she began to understand how "much of my personal story has carried over to my service...and how both are inseparable factors that ultimately shape my identity and values."
- Klaren Ng, '16

To learn more about the Bonner Scholars Program visit engage.richmond.edu or call (804) 484-1630.