Bonner Center for Civic Engagement

ANNUAL REPORT

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Collaboration | Lifelong Learning | Full Participation | Intentionality
Collaboration

We value collaboration as a process of co-creation that enhances the communities of which we are a part.

Collaboration is at the heart of the CCE’s programs and partnerships.

Archiving Richmond

With support from the CCE, American Studies professor Laura Browder and theatre professor Patricia Herrera built multiple community-based components into “Archiving Richmond: A Documentary Project About Church Hill.” The majority of class meetings were held in Church Hill, often in conjunction with collaborators such as Church Hill Academy, the Valentine, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Fourth Baptist Church. Students in the class worked with youth at Church Hill Activities and Tutoring to conduct community interviews, collect neighborhood memorabilia, and create a dramatic narrative about the Church Hill community. The class resulted in the Made In Church Hill exhibit at the Valentine, featuring the faces and voices of Church Hill residents talking about their neighborhood.

Painting The Cary Street Wall

This year, the CCE continued our collaboration on programing for the nearly 300-foot wall around the old GRTC bus depot on Cary Street. In the fall of 2014, a collaborative effort across several groups, organizations, and departments set out to repaint the wall with a new mural — this time to express Richmond’s relationship with the James River.

Students in Dr. Emily Boone’s Environmental Studies class, Dr. Todd Lookingbill’s Landscape Ecology class, and Dr. Andy Litteral’s Statistics class investigated the James River from multiple perspectives. They shared their findings with students in the spring 2015 American Studies class, Public Art and Social Change in the River City, taught by Dr. Sylvia Gale, Alexandra Byrum, and Grace Leonard, of the CCE.

Collaboration with the James River Park System, James River Association, visiting landscape artists The Mobile Studio, consultant Heidi Trepanier, and many volunteer painters helped make the project possible. GIS Technician Chris Brown created a distinctive map of the James River watershed that fills a large niche along the wall. With so many people and groups involved from start to finish, the Cary Street wall project demonstrates how co-creation can enhance the communities of which we are a part.
LIFELONG LEARNING

We value lifelong learning that is enriched by reflection and grounded in context.

Sharing different perspectives and engaging in critical reflection lie at the heart of the CCE’s approach to transformational learning. Programs such as Take 30, the Brown Bag Discussion Series, Community Dinners, Faculty Excursions, and this past year’s CCE Summit all exemplify the center’s dedication to lifelong learning.

Educational Events

Our educational series address social justice issues affecting the Richmond region:

• **Community Dinners** at UR Downtown brought staff, faculty, students, and community members together to discuss a specific issue over dinner, led by a facilitator.

• **Take 30s** at UR Downtown featured 9 speakers this year, each giving TED style talks at UR Downtown on topics ranging from poverty and healthcare to religious literacy.

• **Brown Bag Discussions** on campus featured panels of speakers, drawing 42 people on average to learn about a range of topics. Notable presentations this year include “Migration, Border, and Human Rights” with Leadership Studies professor Javier Hidalgo and “Everyday Counts: The Importance of Student Attendance” with staff from Richmond Public Schools.

Faculty Excursions

Faculty lead colleagues from across the University in focused exploration of a theme in Richmond in collaboration with the CCE. This year’s excursion, led by Dean Croushore, former Federal Reserve Economist and professor in the Robins School of Business, and Bob Kenzer, professor of history, explored the question, “Why is there a Federal Reserve Bank in Richmond?”

SPCS & IOP

The Institute on Philanthropy (IOP), part of UR’s School of Professional and Continuing Studies, generously granted fellowship money to staff or active volunteers working with organizations who have been partners with the CCE for two years or more, to be used towards any IOP class or program. The IOP offers classes on board development, fundraising and development, grant-writing and management, nonprofit marketing, and planned giving. In 2014-2015, the CCE awarded three Institute on Philanthropy Fellowships to staff at Peter Paul Development Center and St. Joseph’s Villa, both partners in the CCE’s Richmond Families Initiative (RFI).

CCE Summit

The CCE Summit marked the CCE’s 10th anniversary by bringing together students, faculty, staff, and community members. Participants gained a deeper understanding of complex social problems and community-oriented solutions, built relationships with UR peers and Richmonders, and considered how they might contribute to their own communities. The day included a keynote from Jason Roberts of Build a Better Block and sessions on a variety of social issues, featuring change makers like Tina Griego of the Washington Post, Don Coleman of the Richmond Public School Board, Emily Smith of 1708 Gallery, and Jonathan Zur of Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities.

Over 3,600 People Attended CCE-led Events in 2014-15

Jason Roberts from Build a Better Block Speaks about Community Improvement Through Small-Scale Urban Planning at the CCE Summit

“MY WORK AND INTERACTION DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS WITH THE BONNER SCHOLARS HAS ENRICHED ME PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY; IT HAS ALSO ENABLED ME TO HAVE A PRACTITIONER’S EXPERIENCE WITH PERCEPTION AND EMPATHY.”

- Sreeja Balarajan
  Former ESOL Assistant
  Commonwealth Catholic Charities
We value full participation as an inclusive approach that seeks out and considers diverse perspectives, recognizes participants as whole people, and invites individuals to contribute meaningfully.

The CCE strives for inclusivity on many levels to ensure that everyone feels encouraged to participate fully in the center’s programming. Students identifying as Hispanic, Latino, Asian, Black/African-American, non-US citizens, or the first in their family to attend college all participated with the CCE at higher rates than the UR population at large. The CCE also attracts participation across schools, departments, and programs.

Pathways to a College Experience (PACE) helps to address the critical issues of college access and readiness. In 2014-15, 50 volunteers participated in PACE, working with area youth at either John Marshall High School, Huguenot High School, the Young Adult Police Commission, Higher Achievement-Richmond, or on campus supporting special college access-related events and tours for area schools.

Civic Fellows

The Civic Fellowship Program comprises the Burhans, Marsh, DeBusk, and Ayers Civic Fellowships and is a subset of the larger UR Summer Fellowship Program. In 2015, the program funded 18 students who undertook otherwise unpaid or nominally paid internships in the nonprofit or government sectors and completed complementary academic assignments under the guidance of faculty mentors. The 18 Civic Fellows, the largest cohort yet, are pursuing majors in a variety of disciplines, including English, Spanish, French, biochemistry, biology, chemistry, environmental studies, healthcare and society, American studies, sociology, social entrepreneurship, political science, leadership studies, cross-cultural communications, and PPEL. Seven students interned in Richmond, eight elsewhere in the United States, one in Switzerland, one in Peru, and one in the Cook Islands.

UR Downtown & VITA

UR Downtown operates a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site, offering free tax help to people living on low to moderate incomes. Professor Ray Slaughter incorporated this program into four sections of his accounting classes as a CBL component, adding many volunteers to the program. Volunteers submitted more than 230 returns and processed $225,233 in refunds for Richmond residents.

Additionally, UR Downtown partners with local artists and nonprofits to display their exhibits. Exhibits this year have included the work of local artist John Cannon Sr., and an exhibit for National Crime Victim’s Rights Week. Nonprofits also regularly use UR Downtown’s spaces for meeting and organizing. In 2014-15, UR Downtown hosted 219 University and community-sponsored events.
INTENTIONALITY

We value intentionality as a commitment to making strategic and sustainable choices.

Our goal is to be engaged when, where, and in ways that best allow us to fulfill our mission to catalyze learning and contribute to long-lasting change.

Build It & CBL

Build It, the CCE's neighborhood-based initiative, develops long-term partnerships on Richmond's Northside with public schools and nonprofit organizations to address a variety of issues related to poverty and community development. In 2014-15, 264 students volunteered weekly with Build It's seven community partners in Northside Richmond. Build It staff connected intentionally with CBL classes, leading classroom discussions on topics such as the effects of poverty on public education or the history of Northside Richmond neighborhoods, participating in classroom reflections with CBL students, and leading bus tours of Northside Richmond neighborhoods.

“FOR ME IT’S IMPORTANT THAT IF WE'RE GOING TO LEARN HISTORY, WHY NOT ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY THAT HAS LIVED THAT HISTORY?”
- Patricia Herrera, Associate Professor of Theater

“I LEARNED THAT IN ORDER TO TEACH MORE EFFECTIVELY, I HAD TO FIRST BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH MY STUDENTS.”
- Bill Leach, ‘15, Urban Education Fellow

Reciprocal Partnerships

Growing reciprocal community partnerships is central to the CCE’s mission. Reciprocity includes inviting community organization leaders and members to be co-educators. This year, for example, the Bonner Scholars program intentionally changed its monthly meeting curriculum to incorporate opportunities for city residents and community leaders to teach Bonner Scholars about the city of Richmond’s efforts to alleviate poverty.

Mentoring Initiative

The CCE strategically recruits, trains, and supports students who mentor throughout the greater Richmond community, with the intent of building the capacity of local nonprofit organizations and public schools that directly provide critical mentoring services to youth.

Urban Education Fellows

The Urban Education Fellowship program provides funding for students interested in deepening their understanding of urban public education and working with specific nonprofit partners to provide high-quality learning experiences for middle-school youth in Richmond. In addition to their service with either Higher Achievement or Youth Life, Fellows attend weekly workshops with community leaders, faculty, and staff. Fellows complete 290 hours of service and educational programming. For the summer of 2015, the CCE awarded 7 Urban Education Fellowships to a diverse cohort of students from various majors.

“BY USING THE METHOD OF COMMUNITY BUY-IN, WE DEVELOPED AND MOVED FORWARD PROJECTS THAT BENEFIT LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES.”
- Rand Irons

74 CBL FACULTY FELLOWS SUPPORTED SINCE 2008 ACROSS 22 DEPARTMENTS
49 CCE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
350 UR STUDENTS MENTORED AT 13 PARTNERS
7 URBAN EDUCATION FELLOWSHIPS AWARDED

URBAN EDUCATION FELLOW RESPOND TO A “I USED TO THINK … , NOW I THINK … ” EXERCISE