



**RHODE ISLAND CAMPUS
COMPACT SCHOLARSHIPS
FOR SERVICE AMERICORPS
PROGRAM:**

*College Student Volunteerism
Linked to Success*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rhode Island Campus Compact (RICC) strives to strengthen the collective commitment and capacity of colleges and universities in Rhode Island to advance civic and community engagement in order to fulfill the public purpose of higher education. RICC is a coalition of 11 college and university presidents in RI dedicated to helping campus-based community initiatives coordinate, organize and deepen their individual and collective work, in order to create significant, positive impacts on student learning and the quality of life in the state of Rhode Island. One of the organization's largest, most successful initiatives is the Scholarships for Service AmeriCorps program. This report highlights the benefits of the Scholarships for Service (SFS) program for both its participants and the broader Rhode Island community. This report also emphasizes that student involvement in the Scholarships for Service program not only provides them with effective on-site experiential learning, vocational and leadership training, but also increases student retention, graduation rates and job readiness.

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The Scholarships for Service program began in Rhode Island in 2008 and is currently embarking on its sixth and final year. In 2012-2013, the last program year from which all data has been collected, the SFS program enrolled 103 students from eight colleges and universities across the state including: Providence College, University of Rhode Island, Salve Regina University, Rhode Island College, Community College of Rhode Island, Johnson & Wales University and New England Institute of Technology. These students were placed at 45 non-profit organizations in Rhode Island.

Scholarships for Service is a 100-member AmeriCorps Education Award only program. The program engages college students at Rhode Island Campus Compact (RICC) member institutions in serving their community for a minimum of 300 hours at non-profit organizations during the academic year. In exchange for their service, SFS members receive a \$1,175 Segal Education Award. Rhode Island Campus Compact receives financial support from Serve Rhode Island and the Corporation for National and Community Service to administer the Scholarships for Service program.

The Scholarships for Service Program seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- Volunteer Recruitment - Each of the 100 SFS members will recruit at least 10 non-AmeriCorps volunteers annually
- Increase College Success - 100% of SFS students will be enrolled in college during their service term; data will demonstrate that the SFS members achieve a higher retention rate in comparison with their non-participating peers
- Increase Non-Profit Capacity - 100 SFS members will contribute 150 volunteer hours to non-profit agencies, resulting in 15,000 hours of dedicated volunteer service

As part of the program requirements, Scholarships for Service members perform 150 of their 300 service hours at a primary non-profit site. The remaining 150 hours can be spent at one-time service events, attending trainings or meetings or working regularly at a non-profit site other than their primary site. The program also requires that its SFS members recruit 10 volunteers to attend one-time service events, recurring service events or to visit their primary volunteer site with them.

Each campus host site holds monthly training meetings for its members. These meetings help instill a sense of community among Scholarships for Service members by providing them time to reflect upon and discuss their service, as well as providing them with valuable information, skills, and knowledge related to the program goals. SFS members are also required to attend a day-long student service summit organized by Rhode Island Campus Compact. The spring 2013 Rhode Island Student Service Summit's theme was "Re-Imagining Citizenship." Scholarship for Service members, as well as other students from member institutions not enrolled in the SFS program, attended workshops on topics that included: public service for professional growth, realizing student impact, social entrepreneurship, healthy communities and children in service. Students also attended other training events hosted by Serve Rhode Island and their respective campuses.

The value and benefits of the Scholarships for Service program extend past performing volunteer work and connecting with the community. The SFS program also helps to bridge the gaps in finances, retention, graduation, job readiness and engagement of traditional and non-traditional students alike. Current data indicates that Rhode Island faces many problems when it comes to access to and success within the state's higher education system and that there is a need for initiatives that target college success, retention and graduation in Rhode Island.

Although the state's high school graduation rate falls just 0.2% below the national average of 75.5%¹, only 44.3% of high school graduates continue on to college in Rhode Island, ranking the state 37th out of the nation.² Of those who do attend college or university, the amount that return to school after their freshmen year places Rhode Island's retention rate among the bottom five states in the United States; tuition prices and student loan rates prove to be contributing factors to this low rate of return³. Additionally, it has been projected that 61% of Rhode Island's jobs will require post-secondary education by 2018.⁴ With one of the highest unemployment rates in the United States⁵, this indicates that career training and college degrees are of the utmost importance at this time in Rhode Island.⁶ The Scholarships for Service program and the opportunities it provides for students is an effective way to mitigate these many challenges.

METHODOLOGY

Upon successful completion of the program, SFS students are required to complete a 53-question survey administered through Survey Monkey©. The survey asks a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions. Students are required to respond to detailed questions about their educational background, academic future, service site and experience participating in the Scholarships for Service program. This assessment of the SFS program, and its intrinsic value to college/university retention and graduation rates, utilizes the exit survey from the 2012-2013 programmatic year. Sixty-three of the 96 students, or about 71% of Scholarships for Service members, have completed the program and have also completed the survey.

In addition to the survey, Scholarships for Service campus and site supervisors reported on all their members' post-SFS programmatic plans. Each of the eight campus supervisors composed a letter outlining the future plans of their students. Letters highlighted the students who have either graduated from their college or university, who have re-enrolled or who are planning to re-enroll at a college or university in Rhode Island or another state. Each campus supervisor confirmed this information with the Registrar's Office or Student Enrollment Services.

1 "The college completion agenda: Rhode Island". (2011). College Board Advocacy and Policy Center. Retrieved from completionagenda.collegeboard.org

2 "The college completion agenda: Rhode Island". (2011). College Board Advocacy and Policy Center. Retrieved from completionagenda.collegeboard.org

3 Rhode Island State Profile: 2003-2011." (2012). HigherEdInfo.org

4 Carnevale, P et al. "Help wanted: Projections for jobs and education requirements through 2018". (2010) Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

5 Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2013). "Regional and state employment and unemployment summary." Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/laus.nr0.htm>.

6 Carnevale, P et al. "Help wanted: Projections for jobs and education requirements through 2018". (2010) Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

Non-Profit organizations that hosted Scholarships for Service members were also asked to complete a mid-year survey. The survey inquired whether or not the community partners felt the SFS program helped increase their organizational capacity and also asked the partners to provide general feedback on the program.

FINDINGS

The findings reflect the success of the Scholarships for Service program and its ability to engage college students. Data indicated that the SFS program supports the success of its members, encouraging them to pursue academic success and continued volunteerism, as well as preparing them for college graduation and the workplace.

The ages of the Scholarships for Service program cohort from the 2012-2013 programmatic year range from 18 to 31 years old, representing both traditional and non-traditional aged students. Ninety-eight point four percent of SFS members successfully completed the 300-hour requirement. The retention rate for the Scholarships for Service program is high; 71.7% of students reported that they had participated in the program for 2 or more years and 77.5% indicated that they would like to re-enroll in the program in years to come. All students stated that they would recommend the program to their friends.

Additionally, 85.7% of SFS program members recruited at least 10 non-AmeriCorps, non-SFS affiliated volunteers to support community work in Rhode Island. Thirty-three percent of members reported recruiting 6-10 volunteers, while more than a quarter of SFS members (25.9%) reported that they recruited upwards of 20 volunteers; 84.9% of those volunteers recruited were college students. Not only does the Scholarships for Service program engage its members, but it also exponentially affects the community and other college students alike. Of the 63 members reporting, 20.7% are first generation college students and 51.7% receive a federal financial aid package that includes off-campus work-study. Moreover, 59.6% of the members are Rhode Island residents who have remained in Rhode Island to attend college.

Scholarships for Service members study a wide array of academic disciplines. The five most reported majors were sociology, biology, social work, public and community service and education. Thirty-four percent of primary service sites were in the area of human needs; helping to eradicate hunger and homelessness, improve community health, provide job counseling or increase public safety. Forty-nine point one percent of students volunteer in the education sphere; tutoring, helping with after-school programming and mentoring students. Students volunteered at Rhode Island Hospital, Habitat for Humanity of South County, Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, Clinica Esperanza, Providence Children's Museum and the Henry Barnard School Explorations program, among others. Most members reported that they served children and families, while some reported serving high school aged youth, adults and senior citizens. Students reported the total number of people served at their primary service site being upwards of six thousand individuals, with an average of 391 individuals being served at each site.

The survey also investigated the results of the members' service; 91.2% of members reported that they gained a deeper understanding of their role as a citizen, 96.3% of students reported that they had a better understanding of the needs facing their community and 100% of students reported that because of participating in the SFS program, they had a stronger sense of their ability to create positive community change. Lastly, over two-thirds of members (69.8%) reported that they have become interested in serving in a full-time AmeriCorps service program after graduation, such as Peace Corps, Teach for America, City Year, AmeriCorps VISTA or other AmeriCorps programs.

As a result of their participation in the Scholarships for Service program, students reported a number of positive outcomes; 98.1% felt that they have become an active member of their community and are better prepared for the workforce, 90.6% reported that they have gained leadership skills and a stronger sense of personal and professional responsibility, 8% of SFS members reported that their communication skills have improved and 77.4% reported that their interpersonal skills have improved. Moreover, 75.5% of SFS students felt that they have gained a personal and professional support network thanks to the program. All of these statistics are accredited to their participation in the SFS program.

According to Scholarships for Service campus reports, 82 of the 96 SFS students (approximately 85%) continued enrollment in a course or degree program or graduated. Of the 96 total student participants, 12 students (13%) graduated, while 70 (73%) re-enrolled at their current institution or transferred to another institution.

THE VALUE OF THE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SERVICE PROGRAM

The benefits of the Scholarships for Service program lie in the opportunities it provides for both its members and the community alike. The data indicates that the program effectively meets each of its performance objectives: volunteer recruitment, increasing college success for SFS members and increasing non-profit capacity. The SFS program has proven to provide financial incentives for continued education, develops leadership and job-related skills, instills a sense of purpose and responsibility and improves post-graduation job attainment.

Volunteer Recruitment in Rhode Island

To date, Scholarships for Service members have recruited 1,085 volunteers who actively participated in activities at non-profit organizations or one-time service events. The SFS program's volunteers accounted for more than .05% of Rhode Island's annual volunteers.⁷ This figure demonstrates the impact and ability that the program has to mobilize volunteers and increase volunteer recruitment across the state.

⁷ "Volunteering and Civic Life in America." (2011). *The Corporation for National and Community Service and National Conference on Citizenship.*

Increasing Nonprofit Capacity

As the volunteer recruitment numbers indicate, the Scholarships for Service program works diligently to increase non-profit capacity across the state. Scholarships for Service members have spent a total of 20,498 hours working at Rhode Island's non-profit organizations. To date, SFS members have dedicated over 13,541 hours at their primary sites. Members also spent a total 1,488 hours doing one-time service events or volunteering at organizations other than their primary sites. Non-profit organizations served by Scholarships for Service members reported that they benefit from having a consistent, reliable and free workforce, which, in turn, increases their capacity to serve. The community partner survey drew the following conclusions: 100% of the respondents felt that the community served by their organization benefited from SFS members and 87.5% of community partners responded that their organization's participation in the Scholarships for Service program helped to increase the organization's capacity to serve community needs. All of the organizations also indicated that they would like to partner with Rhode Island Campus Compact and the Scholarships for Service program in the future.

Increasing College Success

Students enrolled in the Scholarships for Service program have higher college retention and graduation rates than their peers, both in Rhode Island and across the country. Whereas only 23% of the Providence Public School class of 2004-2006 earned an associates or bachelor's degree within six years⁸ and the 2007 national six-year completion rate for enrolled college students under 20 years old is 59.7%,⁹ the rate of persistence and graduation of SFS members is 85%.

Developing Leadership and Career-Related Skills

Rhode Island does not have an alignment between high school graduation requirements and college workplace expectations.¹⁰ The Scholarship for Service program trainings and experiential learning provide students with a better understanding of expectations in the workplace and also help members to develop professional skills. The SFS program is instrumental not only in helping Rhode Island's college and university students obtain degrees, but also in their acquiring the skills required to be a successful employee after graduation.

Improving Job Attainment

The Scholarships for Service program provides its members with experiential learning and an investment in their social capital that will not only help them learn and develop as students and citizens, but will also help increase future job attainment. The report, "Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment: Does Volunteering Increase Odds of Finding a Job for the Out of Work?" finds that unemployed individuals who volunteer over the next year have 27% higher odds of achieving employment at the end of the

⁸ National Student Clearing house, August 2012 report

⁹ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Signature Report December 2013

¹⁰ "The college completion agenda: Rhode Island". (2011). College Board Advocacy and Policy Center. Retrieved from completionagenda.collegeboard.org

year than do non-volunteers.¹¹ Likewise, prior research has shown that volunteering can increase a person's social capital (social connections and professional contacts) and human capital (skills and experiences). These two factors are positively related to employment outcomes.¹² Therefore, participation in the Scholarships for Service program will help members both now and in the future.

Providing Financial Incentives

The Scholarships for Service program provides its members with a \$1,175 Segal AmeriCorps Education Award upon successful completion of the program. Many of the schools that participate in SFS program offer their students a match scholarship, equal in amount to the education award. Rhode Island private and public universities have some of the highest tuition prices in the nation, close to two times above the national average of \$13,564 per year.¹³ The Scholarships for Service AmeriCorps program helps provide financial incentive to students who may need a small amount of financial assistance to support college completion.

CONCLUSION

As one of Rhode Island Campus Compact's largest initiatives, Scholarships for Service emphasizes leadership, service and student success in college while focusing on Rhode Island's greatest needs in the community. This report emphasizes that student involvement in the Scholarships for Service program not only provides the participants with effective on-site experiential learning and vocational and leadership training, but also increases student retention, graduation rates and job readiness. Consequentially, the Scholarships for Service program benefits both its participants and the broader Rhode Island community, including education and employment. Through the creation of collective commitment to the Scholarships for Service program and volunteerism, Rhode Island Campus Compact is building the capacity of our higher education system and non-profit organizations.

¹¹ Spera, C et al. (2013). "Volunteering as a pathway to employment: Does volunteering increase odds of finding a job for the out of work?". The Corporation for National and Community Service. Retrieved from http://www.nationalservice.gov/sites/default/files/upload/employment_research_report.pdf

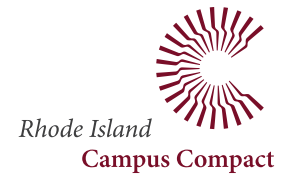
¹² Warfield, Samantha Jo. "Volunteers more likely to land jobs, study finds". June 18, 2013. The Corporation for National and Community Service.

¹³ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). Digest of Education Statistics, 2011 (NCES 2012-001), Table 349.

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