

Joseph McKeen Center for the Common Good 2015-2016 Year in Review

Dear Bowdoin students, faculty, staff, and community partners,

We often talk about how integral community engagement is to the Bowdoin experience. Recently we did some tallying of actual student participation numbers, and these numbers provide powerful evidence of the commitment of Bowdoin students to the common good, and of the impact that this work has on the Bowdoin educational experience as well as the larger community.

More than 550 Bowdoin students engaged in ongoing volunteer commitments during the past academic year. More than 300 students completed community-engaged courses and independent studies in the departments of Latin American Studies, Spanish, Environmental Studies, Earth and Oceanographic Studies, Economics, Government and Legal Studies, Education, Visual Arts, Theater, Sociology, and Psychology. Over 200 students participated in community immersion orientation and alternative break trips, visiting, serving in and learning about communities throughout Maine, including Houlton, Presque Isle, Indian Township, Pleasant Point, Lubec, Wiscasset, the Bethel area, Portland, the Brunswick area, and the island communities of North Haven and Vinalhaven, as well as New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, upstate New York, Immokalee, Florida, Tucson, Arizona and Nogales, Mexico. Another 24 students worked full-time over the summer of 2015 through McKeen Center-sponsored nonprofit fellowships. Several of these students built on their experiences through related independent studies in the fall in disciplines such as film, visual arts, and history. And on a single day in September – Common Good Day – 550 students, faculty and staff spread out over central and southern Maine to volunteer at 50 local nonprofits.

All of that adds up to over 55,000 hours of direct service provided by our students last year. The financial benefit is even more eye-opening: our students provided the equivalent of over \$836,000 in service to communities in Maine, throughout the U.S., and around the world.

Numbers of course don't tell the full story of the importance of this work to the communities served, and to the lives of the students performing the work themselves. Community engagement continues to be a vital part of Bowdoin students' educational and social experience; for many students, it is a defining part of their lives here on campus and beyond, and our community partners are their co-educators.

In very real ways, our students are drivers of their own experiences, and vocal leaders who set the direction of the McKeen Center's programming. For instance, last year our students led new and innovative programs on topics such as immigration policy, disability rights, and human trafficking. Students were instrumental in our new *What Matters* dialogue series, which provided space to discuss issues of campus and public concern, such as anonymous speech, the Syrian refugee crisis, affirmative action, and the presidential primary race. These events included an interview-style conversation with activist DeRay McKesson '07, a debrief dialogue on the *Intersections* teach-in, and a collaboration with the Museum of Art.

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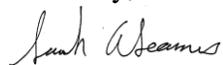
One program, the Common Good Grant program, is of particular note for the leadership of students it involves, and for the impact it has on those students, on our local community and even on McKeen Center alumni. Through that program, a committee of students distributed over \$21,000 in grants to local community nonprofits; over half of the grant money was raised by the students themselves. Nearly half of the donors to the program were young alumni who had participated in the Common Good Grant program when they were students at Bowdoin, ranging in class year from 2007 to 2015. Their participation speaks to the power of this program to instill values of philanthropy, and to keep alumni strongly connected to the College. Common Good Grant recipients included the Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative, College Guild, Friends of Casco Bay, Maine Boys to Men, Marine Mammals of Maine, Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program, Riding to the Top Therapeutic Riding Center, Seeds of Independence and Wolfe's Neck Farm's Teen Agriculture: Raising Farmers, Feeding Maine program.

The McKeen Center is not only a clearinghouse for service and community engagement, it is a place where the values underlying these practices are lifted up and celebrated. Over the last year, we presented seven awards to deserving students, faculty, staff and members of the community. Award winners included:

- Juliet Eyraud '16 for her support of Cambodian students on campus and in Cambodia;
- Tom Farrell, Director of the Brunswick Parks and Recreation Department, for his personal efforts to support local youth and seniors;
- Associate Professor Abigail Killeen for her community-engaged teaching, which connects Acting students with community members, and for her support of Bowdoin students exploring issues of race and identity through theater;
- Sarah Chingos, Field Placement and Outreach Coordinator in Education, for her role in helping to create the Brunswick Community Education Foundation, which provides funding to Brunswick public schools to enhance curricular and extracurricular programming;
- Rubi Duran '16 for overcoming a significant personal loss in her first year at Bowdoin and going on to serve local and international communities by coordinating Common Good Day, leading an Alternative Spring Break trip, and working to improve nutrition with an indigenous community in Peru;
- Apekshya Prasai '16 for her essay on public service which examined the tensions between direct and indirect service, and for her work with disadvantaged groups in her home country of Nepal; and
- The faculty, student and staff coordinators of the *Intersections: People, Planet and Power* teach-in, for their work to engage the Bowdoin community in conversations about issues of public concern.

The McKeen Center, and the plentiful community engagement opportunities we foster, are woven into the fabric of the Bowdoin experience. For many students, service is who they are; for the College as a whole, community engagement is a significant part of who we are.

Sincerely,



Sarah Seames
Director