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COLLABORATION FOR THE COMMON GOOD: EXAMINING AMERICORPS
PROGRAMS SPONSORED BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

COLLABORATION FOR THE COMMON GOOD: EXAMINING AMERICORPS PROGRAMS SPONSORED BY INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

By Erin-Marie Burke Brown, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

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The report, *A Crucible Moment*, published in 2012 by the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement described a crisis in higher education surrounding the lack of civic learning and engagement opportunities for students. This crisis has led to decreased political participation and a general lack of knowledge in civics education (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Educating students for citizenship in America's colleges and universities will assist with sustaining the country's democracy by engendering a sense of civic responsibility in young adults that will last throughout their lifetime. This qualitative case study examined the relationship between two institutions of higher education (IHEs) and AmeriCorps programs to determine how the partnerships operated and whether they addressed the recommendations for higher education cited in *A Crucible Moment*.

IHEs are using *A Crucible Moment* as a guiding document to think about civic learning and democratic engagement. While many are in the process of creating new initiatives and programs to address those issues, this study focuses on two existing programs that may provide a framework for strategically integrating civic engagement into higher education using a readily available government resource—AmeriCorps. With recent budget cuts impacting education, it is difficult for many IHEs to obtain additional funding to support initiatives directly related to student learning. As a result, finding resources to implement civic learning and democratic engagement opportunities that are often perceived as tangential to the education process is nearly impossible. AmeriCorps, now in its 20th year of implementation, has had a steady stream of funding and bipartisan support from the government over the years. IHEs that sponsor an AmeriCorps program have the potential to civically engage students and promote mutually beneficial community partnerships.

Using inteorganizational collaboration theory as a framework, I examined two different models of IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships. Based on the levels of collaboration, I was able to assess the degree to which these types of partnerships could be feasible at distinctly different IHEs given their organizational structure and resources. Although the findings of this research are not generalizable, they provide insights into how IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships operate and demonstrate that, in the cases examined, they do implement the key recommendations of *A Crucible Moment*. As a result, an IHE-AmeriCorps partnership could be an effective and relatively inexpensive way for an IHE to enhance their civic engagement opportunities.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The 20th anniversary of the AmeriCorps program has brought about a renewed interest in national service policy in the United States. The program was designed to engage young adults in service to their country in an effort to promote civic engagement, community uplift, and higher education. It has had bipartisan support to continue its implementation since its inception in 1993 under the Clinton administration. Despite the continued government support of these programs and others like them, civic engagement continues to decline among young adults as noted in the published report, *A Crucible Moment*, commissioned by the Department of Education (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). The report counts service-learning, deliberative dialogue, and civic problem solving as a few methods to increase engagement in college-aged adults. AmeriCorps, although not mentioned in *A Crucible Moment*, is a highly visible example of a government-funded initiative aimed at promoting social awareness and community engagement in the same population.

A Crucible Moment examines the continued decline in civic learning and democratic engagement in higher education and the potentially detrimental impacts it may have on the future of America's democracy (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). In addition to providing a picture of the current dire state of civic engagement in higher education, *A Crucible Moment*, provides stakeholders with strategies to increase engagement in young adults attending institutions of higher education (IHEs). The authors conclude that without immediate action by IHE stakeholders, the future of democracy will be in jeopardy. The

document provides five essential actions to assist with increasing civic engagement of college students and improve the civic health of the nation in the long-term. These actions include (a) investing in civic education, (b) enlarging the current narrative that erases civic aims, (c) advancing contemporary frameworks for civic learning, (d) providing opportunities to become engaged in the community in both K-12 and higher education, and (e) expanding community partnerships (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). The report's detailed analysis and strategic recommendations could shape the policies of higher education as they relate to civic engagement and learning for years to come.

While *A Crucible Moment* represents the findings of a diverse group of stakeholders in education, their recommendations are not new directives. Instead, they are a more recent interpretation and reminder of what has been known for some time—(a) civic knowledge and engagement is decreasing in the United States when it comes to areas like voting, passage of civic literacy exams, and organization participation and (b) focusing on integrating civic education and opportunities into the educational system may counteract this decrease (Galston, 2001; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Putnam, 1996). The previously highlighted recommended actions of the report may prove difficult for some IHEs that lack the infrastructure or resources to put new initiatives in place. Instead of creating new programs focused on achieving particular outcomes as a first step in the process of increasing engagement, many IHEs will need to begin with a critical examination of initiatives already in place. In particular, placing an emphasis on the administration of those programs and how they are implemented—a step that is often missing in the evaluative process—may be helpful in understanding if they are working.

There are numerous colleges and universities across the nation that are already addressing the issue of improving student engagement by providing students with opportunities to gain

academic, social, and civic skills through collaborative initiatives. Here, I examine two examples of collaboration—AmeriCorps programs sponsored by IHEs—collaborations that are designed to increase civic engagement of young adults while meeting community-identified needs.

Background for the Study

AmeriCorps began as part of the expansion of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, which formed the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The goals of CNCS include increasing civic engagement of Americans, improving communities, and providing opportunities for citizens to obtain career skills and higher education (Kirby, Levine, & Elrod, 2006; Perry, Thomson, Tschirhart, Mesch, & Lee, 1999). Often described as a domestic version of the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps was designed as a part of a national service policy aimed at using citizen volunteers to form sustained relationships with communities (CNCS, n.d.). AmeriCorps has three main types of programs: state and national, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and National Civilian Community Corps-Federal Emergency Management Corps (NCCC-FEMA). In the state and national programs, participants, known as *members*, have varying time commitments to work with community organizations to meet community-identified needs. VISTA members provide full-time support to bolster organizational infrastructure. NCCC-FEMA members are individuals aged 18 to 24 who give full-time, team-based support to communities (AmeriCorps, n.d.). Organizations that utilize AmeriCorps services include nonprofits, faith-based, and community organizations seeking to improve communities through local initiatives that involve collaborative problem solving. As of 2012, AmeriCorps has partnered with 15,000 organizations including numerous IHEs (AmeriCorps 20th Anniversary, n.d.).

This study explored the administration of IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations to examine how that particular type of partnerships operates. An IHE-AmeriCorps collaboration brings together two highly complex organizations with their own administrative processes and, at times, competing interests to accomplish shared goals—improve the local community and provide opportunities for young adults to be civically engaged. An IHE often engages the community by providing access to resources and the dissemination of knowledge. On the other hand, AmeriCorps programs typically engage in more shoulder-to-shoulder initiatives that involve direct service such as tutoring local school children or building nature trails. Examining how IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships navigate meeting the needs of both of the organizations may provide further insights into the collaborative process. In addition, this study sheds light on whether these existing initiatives address the recommendations suggested by *A Crucible Moment*. Furthermore, providing an in-depth look at *process* rather than just outcomes will serve as an important framework for comprehensively understanding the landscape of program administration as it relates to implementation of national policy at the local level as is done through AmeriCorps programs across the United States.

Rationale for the Study

The decrease of civic engagement in young adults is an issue that higher education has been called upon to tackle in *A Crucible Moment* (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). According to the report, higher education administrators and leaders cannot meet the challenge of increasing the engagement of young adults alone. Rather, it will take the “power of external partners. . .if significant and lasting progress is to be made” (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 49). While there are multiple external partners for IHEs to consider for collaborative purposes, few have the

infrastructure, funding, and resources to serve as partners that will mutually benefit from the relationship (Kezar, 2005). AmeriCorps was developed in 1993 out of the nation's need to have an active citizenry to address community problems. It is a program currently operating in many IHEs that provides an administrative structure and funding for young adults to engage in the community. Although there are numerous successful IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships that have demonstrated impacts in meeting community identified needs, provided students with an outlet for civic engagement, and encouraged students to complete and/or further their education (Checkoway, 1997; Frumkin et al., 2009; Perry et al., 2002), little empirical evidence is available on this type of collaboration that brings together these two complex organizations for a common purpose.

Much of the research on the AmeriCorps program is represented through nationwide programmatic surveys that focus on community influence and/or member development. This may be due, in part, to the nature of AmeriCorps funding from the government that is predicated on programs achieving predetermined program outcomes (Simon & Wang, 2002). As a result, there are limited data specifically detailing the role of public administrators and administration in the implementation of AmeriCorps programs aside from inclusion on larger scale studies as one of several variables. Understanding the process of how outcomes are achieved is not a primary focus of many policymakers who are typically more concerned with the bottom line and the question: Did you do achieve your goals? Perhaps a more compelling question policymakers should be asking in an effort to improve and/or expand on services is: How did you achieve your goals? Implementation of programs is an important aspect of program evaluation that is often overlooked with more emphasis placed on the initial and concluding phases of projects. In many

instances, it is the middle, or implementation phase of a given program or project, that provides the necessary information to understand success or failure.

This research highlighted two aspects of the literature that, to date, have been explored very little—AmeriCorps administration as it relates to program implementation and AmeriCorps programs sponsored by IHEs as vehicles for implementing civic engagement initiatives in higher education. In particular, this research sheds light on whether these existing collaborations address the recommendations suggested for higher education stakeholders in the Department of Education commissioned report, *A Crucible Moment* (National Task Force on Civil Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012).

Significance of the Study

Understanding the administration of AmeriCorps programs within IHEs and role of collaboration within this process can assist with highlighting practices that promote partnership success and potentially lead to improved program implementation and performance nationwide (Thomson & Perry, 1998, 2006). As a program that impacts communities using government funding as its main source of income, it is increasingly important that there is research detailing the administration of AmeriCorps programs and how goals are being accomplished. The collaborative nature of AmeriCorps' design makes exploring the possibilities for expanding work through collaborations with IHEs a useful research strategy for the long-term continuation and possible expansion of the program. These collaborations may continue to promote local solutions to community issues and develop an engaged citizenry by targeting college students for participation.

This study examined program administration and collaborative partnerships between AmeriCorps and IHEs. The findings of this research will assist higher education administrators,

policymakers, and community leaders in making informed decisions about the potential benefits and challenges of sponsoring an AmeriCorps program within an IHE as it relates to program management and civic engagement. This work will add to the literature on AmeriCorps programs and IHE-community partnerships while providing a foundation for examining the specific characteristics of IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships. In addition, the findings shed light on whether existing programs have the potential to address the suggested recommendations in *A Crucible Moment* thereby impacting the policies related to civic learning and engagement in higher education.

Brief Overview of the Literature

More than 150 years ago, Alexis De Tocqueville (1863) observed the unique phenomenon of American democracy noting that it was the first nation to “maintain the sovereignty of the people” (p. 68). Today, despite having the opportunity to actively participate in the local community socially, professionally, and politically, many Americans choose to forfeit that right. In particular, young adults are now more likely to disengage from traditional community engagement activities. Instead they use Twitter®, Facebook®, and other forms of social media as venues for social outlets rather than joining organizations or having personal interactions (Baumgartner & Morris, 2010; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Brashears, 2006). As institutions that gather together large groups of young adults to learn about the world around them and themselves, IHEs have a unique opportunity to impact the engagement of that group in more traditional methods.

According to Labaree (1997), “The history of American education has been a tale of ambivalent goals and muddled outcomes” (p. 41). IHEs espouse the merits of higher education as a means to obtaining gainful employment *and* as a space for exploration of the world and

one's self through varied learning experiences. These seemingly competing interests—to churn out employable adults with a definitive skill set that will get them a job upon graduation while also cultivating critical thinking, problem solving, and improved communication—can be difficult in an environment fraught with frustration and economic uncertainty (Supiano, 2013). For many IHEs, ideology meets application in the pursuit of the public good. While higher education is not a good that is equally accessible to all citizens in the pure economic sense of the concept, it has provisions such as the dissemination of information, knowledge, and development of skilled professionals that provide a benefit to all of society (Tilak, 2008).

Fretz, Cutforth, Nicotera, and Thompson (2009) assert that failure to “recognize the public mission of higher education and a silent default toward market forces stands to weaken democratic practices within the university and the wider culture” (p. 96). Their assertion harkens back to the sentiments of President Thomas Jefferson who founded the University of Virginia with the intention of “seeing our sons rising under a luminous tuition, to destinies of highest promise” (Jefferson, 1821). Not only did Jefferson see higher education as a means to provide young men with critical knowledge for their future occupations, but as an integral part of shaping the well-being of the country by preparing them for service. IHEs can serve as critical links for young adults to see the connection between civic engagement and improved communities. As such, policymakers recognize IHEs as vital institutions that have the ability to strengthen civic engagement and democracy.

With increasingly limited public funds making their way to IHEs, some administrators recommend reclaiming the civic mission of higher education as an economic strategy (Weerts, 2007). One administrator asserted that, “The engagement model expands traditional university teaching, learning, and scholarly inquiry to include external stakeholders in a community of

learners” (Weerts, 2007, p. 87). As such, this type of collaboration could lead to more recognition, publicity, and support resulting in additional funding. However, many IHEs find this type of collaboration in the community difficult to navigate. Working with external community stakeholders presupposes that the community is a source of knowledge and equal partner in the engagement process. Some IHEs that subscribe to a more traditional approach that places barriers between the local community and university will need to rethink the dynamics of community-university partnerships to reflect a more shared sense of power and agency to use this model (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

While some IHEs may face challenges integrating civic engagement into the academic experience, others have used the sponsorship of AmeriCorps program as a way to simultaneously engage students and help the community. AmeriCorps programs operating within the context of an IHE address both the national call to civic action while serving as a local conduit for providing community services at an institutional and local level. The impacts that AmeriCorps participation has on members has been deemed some of the most conclusive evidence of program success with the most cited of these being increased civic engagement and awareness of members postservice (Simon, 2002; Simon & Wang, 2002); however, the lack of evidence on program implementation and inconclusive evidence on impact call into question the value of AmeriCorps (Perry et al., 1999; Simon & Wang, 2002). This case study of IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations provides a framework for understanding more about AmeriCorps implementation and how it impacts program administration in addition to providing information on how these collaborations effect young adult engagement.

The Theoretical Framework—Interorganizational Collaboration

Interorganizational collaboration occurs when organizations work together to address issues that are too complex for one organization to handle (Gray & Wood, 1991).

Interorganizational collaboration begins with forming relationships between organizations for the purposes of sharing resources such as money, personnel, equipment, or office space with the purpose of maximizing efficiency, coordination, planning, and evaluation (Campbell, 2009; Jaskyte & Lee, 2008; Urwin & Hayes, 1998). Working together towards a common goal can be difficult when multiple stakeholders are involved, as is the case in the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership that impacts not only the IHE and AmeriCorps program but the community partner as well. In addition to including the interests of the university and AmeriCorps organization, the interests of the community must be addressed as well.

A study examining a model for collaboration for social work students asserted that universities often have difficulty collaborating with the local community because of the pervasive notion of the “ivory tower” in which universities view themselves as better than the surrounding community (Urwin & Haynes, 1998). Similar challenges can occur when government agencies work with volunteer agencies on projects without promoting shared power and equity (Redekop, 1986). The key to successful interorganizational collaboration is having a mutually beneficial relationship where organizations are interdependent and have a shared process of reciprocity that is ongoing (Bailey & Koney, 1996). IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships have the potential to succeed where universities working alone have not by developing authentic relationships with the community. Conversely, universities provide infrastructure and resources that many community organizations typically working with AmeriCorps may lack to garner significant outcomes.

While there are challenges associated with interorganizational collaboration, it has become an environmental imperative for organizations to work together in recent years. Lack of resources, government mandates, and political shifts have all created a collaborative urgency that has tied funding to collaborative work in the private, public and nonprofit sectors (Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, Fahrbach, 2001). IHEs are not immune to the new emphasis on collaboration as they have also been given the challenge to work across disciplines and in the community to receive government funding, grant, and research opportunities (Kezar, 2005). As such, interorganizational collaboration theory can provide an interesting lens for examining the relationships between IHEs and AmeriCorps programs. In particular, it is a useful framework for understanding the relationship factors that contribute to the success of these collaborations while providing insight into challenges that can occur. With this information both universities and AmeriCorps programs will have knowledge at their disposal to strategically guide partnership decision making in IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations.

Before putting resources into forming more IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations or eliminating current programs, it will be important to take a closer look at those already in existence. Additionally, rather than focus research efforts on what has already been found on the AmeriCorps program regarding members and community outcomes, it is important in the coming years to explore program administration. Studying how things are done, rather than focusing solely on what is done, leads to deepened understanding of why things may not be happening as program stakeholders believe they should. Exploring the administration of an AmeriCorps program in the context of an IHE setting as an interorganizational collaboration provides insights into the feasibility of expanding this type of partnership in other institutions across the country.

Research Questions

1. How do AmeriCorps programs operate within the context of an IHE-AmeriCorps partnership?
 - a. What role does interorganizational collaboration play in the implementation of an IHE-AmeriCorps partnership?
2. Do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations address the key recommendations for higher education for increasing civic learning and democratic engagement set forth by *A Crucible Moment*?

Method

The study was a qualitative case study using process evaluation to examine two IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships. Due to the lack of data on IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships and AmeriCorps program administration, an exploratory framework was used to allow for flexibility and openness of research design. Data were collected from administrators of two AmeriCorps programs sponsored by IHEs located in a mid-Atlantic state that were active during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 service years. Document analysis, observations, and interviews were used to find common and contrasting trends among the IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships using qualitative best practices, as outlined by Stake (1995, 2006) and Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), in addition to evaluation practices found in Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004).

Definition of Terms

Institution of higher education (IHE): An institution that awards a bachelor's degree or not less than a 2-year program that provides credit towards a degree gainful employment, or is vocational. IHEs admit as regular students persons with a high school diploma or equivalent,

can be public, private, or nonprofit, and accredited or pre-accredited and authorized to operate in that state (National Resource Center for Youth Development, 2013).

AmeriCorps state and national: AmeriCorps programs that support local service initiatives through providing local and national organizations and agencies with funding to address community needs in education, public safety, health, and the environment. Agencies are charged with using funding to recruit, place, and supervise members nationwide (National and Community Service, n.d.).

Interorganizational collaboration: Multiple organizations coming together to address complex issues that cannot be resolved using the resources of one organization (Gray & Wood, 1991).

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Interorganizational Collaboration Theory

In a 1965 article of *Management Science*, William Evan proposed the adoption of a theory of interorganizational relations. During a time when most research focused on intra-organizational relationships, his work stood out as a call to action for researchers to look beyond the boundaries of individual organizations to explore how multiple organizations interact with one another (Evan, 1965). According to Evan, much of the neglect of interorganizational relations by researchers was due, in part, to the enormity of the issues that emerge when complex organizations are looked at simultaneously. He believed the development of a theory of interorganizational relations had the potential for “bridging the gap between the microscopic *organizational* and the macroscopic *institutional* levels of analysis” (Evan, 1965, p. B-229).

More than 25 years after Evan asserted the need for a theory of interorganizational relations, Gray and Wood (1991) echoed his sentiments citing that there was not an adequate theoretical framework to explain collaboration. While case research had shed light on the types of collaborative alliances taking place, there had been little attention paid to capturing the essence of those alliances in a theoretical framework. According to Gray and Wood (1991), the development of a theory of collaboration is heavily dependent on (a) knowing the preconditions for collaboration, (b) the definition of collaboration and how it occurs, (c) and outcomes of collaboration. Resource dependency theory, strategic management theory, and even political theory provide some insights into collaborative alliances, but fail to hit upon the three areas that

Gray and Wood cite as most relevant for developing a theory of collaboration across organizations (Gray and Wood, 1991).

In the same year, Peterson (1991) examined the role of interagency collaboration in an infant/toddler intervention. The intervention, which mandated collaboration among agencies to serve children, was a product of the increasing trend in government to promote and require coordination among agencies addressing similar needs. Peterson (1991) writes, “To engage in true collaboration requires that some agency autonomy be relinquished in the interests of accomplishing identified interagency objectives (p. 91). This task can be difficult when there is not enough time or direction provided by policymakers to cultivate a shared culture and vision among agencies. Peterson (1991) finds five cornerstones that significantly impact interagency collaboration that need to be considered. They are establishment of a leadership style and procedures that promote collaboration, establishment of mechanisms to operationalize interagency work, development of functional systems that provide structure, development of personnel policies across agencies, and formulation of interagency agreements.

The work of Gray and Wood (1991) and Peterson (1991), like Evan (1965) provide critical elements in the process of building a theoretical framework for interorganizational collaboration. Future researchers can build upon the theoretical framework they developed to examine and explain how agencies come together to address problems that are too complex to be solved by one organization (Gray and Wood, 1991). This basic definition will serve as a guiding principle for developing and expanding the theoretical framework of interorganizational collaboration as examined in this study.

Bailey and Koney (1996) view interorganizational collaboration as a method to combat government decentralization by strategically providing resources to community organizations

and agencies that are able to fulfill social service initiatives. In particular, they view interorganizational collaboration as a way for professionals in the field of social work to promote strategic networking and increase advocacy across agencies. While many see inherent challenges in giving more power to states to control social welfare initiatives, such as Medicaid and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Bailey and Koney (1996) ask for social workers to view the change in the policy process as an opportunity to promote *quality* service. In essence, “competition for funding allows agencies who provide the ‘best’ services to survive while those providing inferior services to fail” (Bailey & Koney, 1996, p. 603). In order for organizations to lead the way in determining what it means to be the ‘best’ they must work collaboratively to effectively implement and manage evaluation practices that encourage working together for the benefit of all agencies to ensure that quality and not quantity remains the focus of services.

Bailey and Koney (1996) provide a perspective that can help explain the development of a program like AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps provides funding to organizations and institutions to address issues at the local level allowing these entities to become partners with CNCS in a collaborative effort to address social issues. Funding is attached to government oversight through CNCS, but programs are expected to operate at a grassroots level to accomplish goals. This process of providing more attention and collaborative opportunities at the local level, at least theoretically, allows for critical involvement and feedback from citizens most impacted by the initiatives being put in place.

Gajda (2004) looks at collaboration from the perspective of evaluation. She provides the strategic alliance formative assessment rubric (SAFAR) as a tool that can be used in evaluating strategic alliances. The SAFAR relies on the levels of integration of networking, cooperating, partnering, merging, and unifying as indicators of success. Implementation of the SAFAR

evaluation model requires convening alliance leadership, assessing a baseline for levels of integration, creating a collaboration baseline data report, and assessing growth in the collaboration. Gadja's (2004) work adds a critical element to the theory of collaboration by providing an evaluation tool to examine the depth and breadth of collaboration among agencies.

Thomson and Perry (2006) provide insights into achieving effective collaborative processes. They call for a look into the "black box" of collaboration by public administrators to determine what collaboration is and the ingredients necessary for success. Thomson and Perry describe five dimensions that are necessary for effective collaboration. They are (a) governance, (b) administration, (c) organizational autonomy, (d) mutuality, and (e) norms of trust and reciprocity. The dimensions are systemic and require collaborators to mutually embrace their independence and interdependence. Like Gray and Wood (1991), Thomson and Perry understand interorganizational collaboration as a form of working together for the common good knowing the results could not be achieved by one organization alone.

Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, and Tollefson (2006) provide a detailed look at several theories of collaboration in an effort to find tangible ways to measure collaboration. Like other researchers, they assert the need for collaboration as a mechanism to support shared goals and resources. According to Frey et al. (2006), much of the research on collaboration is focused on stages and/or levels of collaboration. While the names of the stages and/or levels vary in the research, there is much overlap and several themes emerge demonstrating the similarities that exist. In their stage models of collaboration, Frey et al. (2006), take the work of several researchers to illustrate the similarities among collaboration models, and provide a unified framework for examining the levels of collaboration from no collaboration at all (coexistence) to complete collaboration at every level (coadunation). The seven themes identified by Frey et al. (2006)

from a myriad of research on collaboration demonstrates the overlap in this area and provides a comprehensive framework for thinking about how organizations work together using a variety of perspectives.

Interorganizational collaboration is an important framework for examining IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships for a number of reasons. First, it provides an opportunity to explore how the organizations work together to achieve common goals. Additionally, it has explanatory power to assess the level of collaboration between IHEs and AmeriCorps. Finally, interorganizational collaboration addresses why organizations choose to partner in the first place. This particular theory serves as an important linkage in understanding programs like AmeriCorps that implement national policies at the local level through coordination with community organizations.

A Look at Interorganizational Collaboration in Action

Human service agencies are often confronted with the challenge of too much to do in too little time. In this respect, interorganizational collaboration can be an effective and efficient method to combine resources to meet community needs. Einbinder, Robertson, Garcia, Vuckovic, and Patti (2000) examined the interorganizational collaboration of one collaborative in eight California counties representing 33 agencies within the counties. They specifically sampled agencies dealing with issues related to child welfare. The intensive case study included attendance at collaborative meetings with partners, completion of surveys by agency representatives, and focus groups with collaborative representatives. The survey focused on the prerequisites for effective collaboration—incentive, willingness, ability, and capacity. The regression analysis of the questionnaire demonstrates that all of the prerequisites were significant based on the sample. The data suggest that successful interorganizational collaboration relies on

the presence of all of the listed prerequisites with incentive serving as the most highly significant factor in interorganizational collaboration. This study provides foundational information that is useful for thinking about interorganizational collaboration and the considerations that potential partners need to assess prior to forming a partnership. Organizations contemplating collaboration want to get something out of the partnership, have an equitable relationship, trust their collaborators, and feel a sense of shared values (Einbinder et al., 2000). While interorganizational collaboration may serve as a strategic method of decreasing costs and increasing results for service agencies, it may prove an impediment to progress if the collaborators do not share the same expectations and goals for the partnership.

Rodriguez, Langley, Beland, and Denis' (2007) in-depth, comparative, longitudinal, qualitative, multiple case studies explored mandated interorganizational collaboration within health agencies. Rodriguez et al. (2007) focused on mandated collaboration to shed light on a phenomenon that is becoming more widespread in light of economic constraints—forced resource sharing. Voluntarily entering into collaboration is typically one of the markers of a successful partnership. As such, mandating a relationship may serve as an unintentional method of derailing collaboration before it even begins. Politics are often the impetus for mandated collaborations that are driven by formal rules and regulations that are then monitored for adherence. Rodriguez et al (2007) looked at mandated collaborations of two groups during two stages, the implementation phase and operationalization phase. Data collection included 94 interviews with hospital staff and administrators and numerous on-site observations over a 4-year period. They found that three different perspectives may explain the process of mandated collaboration. They are (a) managerialist, (b) symbolic, and (c) systemic web of power relationships. The perspectives look at collaboration as a process made most effective by

definitive management, shared values, and shared power, respectively. Rodriguez et al. (2007) found that doctors, board members, and hospital administrators all viewed collaboration differently. Their research demonstrates that perspective often shifts based on the stakeholder's role in the collaboration. This finding is important to note when assessing interorganizational collaboration and its impact on the organizations involved in the process.

Nowell (2009) explored stakeholder relationships in interorganizational collaboratives. She hypothesized that (a) cooperative stakeholder relationships would be positively related to coordination effectiveness, (b) cooperative stakeholder relationships would be positively related to systems change effectiveness and (c) strong stakeholder relationships would be more important to systems change outcomes relative to coordination outcomes. The study surveyed 48 Midwestern collaboratives focused on domestic violence issues. Data came from 642 organizations participating in the collaboratives. The study utilized social network analysis to determine stakeholder relationships. Significance was found for all three hypotheses providing evidence that relationships are an important aspect of interorganizational collaboration. Findings suggest that collaborations rely on frequent interaction among members in various ways and shared philosophy helps strengthen relationships within the collaborative.

While there are many definitions of interorganizational collaboration they all assert the idea of joint ownership within a relationship to produce mutually beneficial outcomes. Today there are few organizations that exist that do not rely on some form of collaboration to achieve their mission. Yet many organizations loathe the process of collaboration that often calls for compromise that reflects an understanding of issue beyond one's own organizational needs. As resources become scarce and financial constraints limit the ability of organizations to achieve maximum results, interorganizational collaboration will continue to be a strategy for addressing

issues. Based on the empirical evidence, interorganizational collaboration is most effective when partners begin with a common assessment of the problem they are addressing and a shared understanding of how to go about solving it. CNCS has a lofty goal to improve communities; however, this is exceedingly difficult to do from a national level with impact on local communities. AmeriCorps programs at the local level, including IHE-AmeriCorps collaborative partnerships, may have the ability to work with CNCS to realize their goal.

Civic Engagement and the National Call to Service

The United States was founded on the ideals of liberty and justice espoused by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. As such, individual freedom to live as one chooses is a fundamental tenet of what it means to be an American. This includes holding tightly to the notion of the American dream where phrases such as “self-made man” and “pulling yourself up by your bootstraps” are commonplace. While the American ethos of independence and self-reliance harken to a time in history when citizens had the ability to literally place their stake in the ground and build a life, it fails to recognize the increasingly complex and connected world of today that necessitates collaboration and working together for the general uplift of mankind.

In the mid-late 1990s, Robert Putnam (1996) foreshadowed the disappearance of civic America most notably marked by the lack of connections between people and their community. According to Putnam, in the 1960s people began to spend less time engaging in social activities such as club/organization membership, political participation, and volunteering. He asserts that a myriad of issues led to the decline of civic engagement, including, but not limited to busy schedules, mobility, women entering the workforce and the growth of technology. In addition, education during the adolescent years plays a major factor in the development of a civic ethos.

The lack of participation and communication among individuals at a young age can eventually lead to an overall decline in social capital that can cripple communities (Putnam, 1996).

In 2009, years after Putnam's (1996) work, the national service policy, The National and Community Service Act, originally drafted in 1990 by President George H. W. Bush was reauthorized by President Barack Obama. Currently known as the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, the reauthorization served as an acknowledgement of the importance of working together to address the issues that impact communities. During the signing of the act, President Obama gave a call to service stating:

What this legislation does, then, is to help harness this patriotism and connect deeds to needs. It creates opportunities to serve for students, seniors, and everyone in between. It supports innovation and strengthens the nonprofit sector. And it is just the beginning of a sustained, collaborative and focused effort to involve our greatest resource—our citizens—in the work of remaking this nation (Lee, 2009).

The President's emphasis on collaboration as a means to strengthen society demonstrates a shift in thinking about organizational work that promotes working together to maximize resources as opposed to competing for them. This shift is important because it both symbolically and literally emphasized the increased need for interorganizational collaboration in the United States to address community needs.

A History of National Service

In 1960, President John F. Kennedy set forth a call to action for college students to join a new program, the Peace Corps, that would provide them with an opportunity to serve the United States by assisting developing countries in their efforts to improve lives (Peace Corps, 2013). As the name implies, a major aspect of the Peace Corps was to promote peaceful collaboration

between the United States and other countries using America's best and brightest young adults as advocates for and models of citizenship. During the 1960s other programs calling older Americans to action would emerge that benefitted the United States. These included Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Foster Grandparent, and Senior Companion Program.

The creation of the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) program in 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson served as a strategy to combat the War on Poverty in the United States. Eventually all of the agencies committed to service domestically and abroad would come together as a part of the Action Agency with domestically focused programs eventually being authorized by the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973. It states:

The purpose of this Act is to foster and expand voluntary citizen service in communities throughout the Nation in activities designed to help the poor, the disadvantaged, the vulnerable, and the elderly. In carrying out this purpose, the Commission on National and Community Service shall utilize to the fullest extends the program authorized under this Act, coordinate with other Federal, State and local agencies, expand relationships with, and support for, the efforts of civic, community, and educational organizations, and utilize the energy, innovative spirit, experience, and skills of all Americans (Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973, p. 5-6).

The development of such an Act demonstrated a desire on the part of the government to strengthen both the civic and economic health of the country through the strategic use of citizens as problem solvers rather than pushing for government involvement at the local level.

In 1990, President Bush signed the National and Community Service Act authorizing the creation of Learn and Serve America to promote service in schools. It was followed by the establishment of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in 1993 by

President Clinton (National Service, n.d.). The goals of CNCS include increasing civic engagement of Americans, improving communities, and providing opportunities for citizens to obtain career skills and higher education (Kirby et al., 2006; Perry et al., 1999). Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America have been the three major programs under CNCS through which these goals have been implemented (CNCS, n.d.). Learn and Serve came to an end in September 2013. A program operating nationwide on a relatively thin budget of \$40 million to do a variety of community projects, was ended not for lack of outcomes as much as being the easiest item within CNCS to cut without fundamentally altering program services (Parker, 2012). The loss of Learn and Serve left the remaining programs, Senior Corps and AmeriCorps, under increasing pressure to show measurable outcomes that demonstrate the programs' effectiveness on a large scale.

As with the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps administrators targeted young adults for membership in the CNCS-sponsored program. Recruitment activities touted government-provided incentives that included a living allowance, an education award upon completion of the program, and opportunities to gain professional skills and experience (CNCS, n.d.). Although rooted in concepts of altruism and service, some opponents of AmeriCorps have cited that it is a "perversion of volunteerism" (Thomson & Perry, 1998, p. 399) because members receive tangible incentives for their service, a concept that seemingly goes against the traditional notion of volunteerism. To date, several studies have focused on the AmeriCorps program and its impact on members, communities, and economic development. While much of the data shows positive results, there is still an alarming number of inconclusive findings regarding the overall effectiveness of AmeriCorps programs nationwide. Due to the programs reliance on federal

funding, these inconclusive evaluation and program outcomes make sustaining the program a constant challenge.

President Obama's reauthorization of the national service policy as the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act in 2009, while providing support for the concept of a national service policy, including an increase in funding for AmeriCorps, has not lessened the probability of funding cuts and dwindling program resources in difficult economic times (Cohen, 2013). Like many government-funded agencies, a visit to the CNCS website during the October government shutdown of 2013 provided users with an inactive page, a tacit reminder of the important role that government fiscal support plays in the day-to-day management of such programs.

AmeriCorps recently celebrated its 20th anniversary on September 12, 2014 with a nationwide celebration that included a ceremony and swearing in of the new corps on the White House lawn that included speeches from Presidents Obama and Clinton and a taped message from President George W. Bush. AmeriCorps programs from across the nation joined in a live feed from the White House to hear the presidents, former members, and new inductees discuss the impact of AmeriCorps in the last 20 years (CNCS, 2014a). Both Presidents Obama and Clinton spoke of the importance of AmeriCorps to the nation and its ability to address issues in the community using the skills of citizens, largely comprised of young adults, to make sustainable changes where government could not.

During the celebration, President Obama launched Employers of National Service, an initiative that connects alumni of national service to potential employers (CNCS, 2014b). This initiative is designed to simultaneously recognize national service alumni and participating employers by demonstrating and promoting a national commitment to civic engagement in the

United States. Employers demonstrate their vested interest in helping to improve communities while AmeriCorps alumni gain access to job opportunities based on their service experience. This new initiative may contribute to an increase in applications to AmeriCorps from perspective members seeking out the program as a bridge to future employers and provide participating employers with an increased network of qualified candidates.

Examining the Impact of AmeriCorps—What the Research Says

An article in Forbes magazine highlighting the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps entitled, “AmeriCorps: 20 Years, 800K Volunteers, 1B Hours of Service” (Ehrlich & Fu, 2013), provided some basic statistics on the program, namely the amount of hours and members that have served in the program. In addition, it also provided insights into the experience of two former AmeriCorps members, Abby Flottesmesch and Charles Barrett Adams, both of whom used their participation in the program as a springboard to successful careers serving the community (Ehrlich & Fu, 2013). The experience of Abby and Charles illustrate the impact of AmeriCorps on individuals that helps put the number of volunteers and hours into context as a way of understanding how the program operates in communities. The 20th anniversary served not only as a celebratory event to share the success of the program, but as a critical juncture to step back and assess the outcomes and impact that the program has had on the country. Below is a synopsis of several studies conducted on the AmeriCorps program in the past 20 years.

In 1998, just 5 years after its establishment, Thomson and Perry conducted a study focusing on the impact that AmeriCorps programs had on communities. In particular, they examined whether there were changes in the capacity of organizations served by AmeriCorps, fostering of interorganizational cooperation to achieve community goals and positive institutionalized changes. This qualitative research study of five programs examined

AmeriCorps program documents, conducted field observations, and interviewed over 100 directors, partner organization administrators, members, residents, and community leaders during the 1996-1997 service year. The findings demonstrated that the programs studied did not institutionalize positive effects or build interorganizational capacity. This inability to promote collaboration appears to stem from the perception by host programs that AmeriCorps members are an additional resource to support the individual organization mission and goals rather than meet larger community goals. As a result, the ability of AmeriCorps to build communities is not as prominent as the potential for the program to build individual organizations that, in turn, may meet a specific community need. This conflict between the national goals of the program to build and sustain communities with the reality of how programs operate at the local level demonstrates the need for there to be more communication between the national, state, local, and programmatic levels to ensure programs are implemented to support the larger mission.

Perry et al. (1999) conducted another early assessment of AmeriCorps that likens the program to a Swiss Army knife that can perform several functions while being cost-effective and efficient. The study identified five AmeriCorps goals that would serve as the lens through which to view program impact. They were (a) satisfying unmet social needs, (b) developing corps members, (c) enhancing the civic ethic, (d) invigorating lethargic bureaucracies, and (e) bridging race and class. For each of these goals, Perry and his colleagues reviewed a myriad of annual accomplishment reports, other research studies, qualitative and quantitative surveys of members and staff, attrition rates, education award usage rates, and program evaluations. While many of the findings showed progress being made in certain areas, the varied nature of communities served, program activities, and evaluation techniques makes it exceedingly difficult to complete a comprehensive assessment of AmeriCorps; hence, the comparison to a Swiss Army knife.

Perry et al. (1999) clearly demonstrate that AmeriCorps is getting things done as the program motto suggests; however, there is some confusion as to how programs are doing things and whether the outcomes are appropriate that need further examination.

Simon and Wang (2002) analyzed the impact of AmeriCorps on members to see if they became more active citizens, specifically, whether the program builds social capital. The researchers used a pre and postdesign to survey members in four Western states over a 2-year period from 1997-1999 with the program administrators facilitating the process of getting the surveys to the members. The research findings support the claims that AmeriCorps does instill a sense of community engagement beyond the service period; members were more active in their communities postservice. On the other hand, it was found that members do not become more confident in public institutions or have systemic changes in optimism, civic attitudes, or social trust (Simon & Wang, 2002). These conclusions are important in the larger narrative of national service because they reflect the difficulty for individuals to see beyond their individual activism to a larger societal shift in thinking about civic engagement. As a result, AmeriCorps seems to serve as a tool to promote personal growth rather than wider institutional change, a result also noted in Thomson and Perry's 1998 study. While personal development may indeed be a positive by-product of program participation for members, it is not necessarily aligned with the larger programmatic goals of improving communities. As a result, the use of member development as definitive evidence of program success by AmeriCorps advocates is flawed in its inability to address the larger goals of the program set forth by CNCS.

Much of the criticism of the AmeriCorps program and legislation of a national service policy stems from the belief that such initiatives serve as methods of indoctrinating participants into a particular political ideology. In particular, conservatives have taken issue with the

program as pushing a liberal agenda. Simon's (2002) research seeks an answer to the conservative question of political bias by again examining AmeriCorps programs in four Western states. This time, however, the principle research question was to determine if the programmatic goal of being politically neutral is maintained. The study consisted of pre and postsurveys of members participating in 56 different programs across the Pacific Northwest. This research tested two hypotheses—AmeriCorps will have a significant positive impact on participants' civic activity regardless of race and gender, and AmeriCorps is biased towards liberal participants that will become more politically liberal upon completion of the program. While the research failed to reject the first hypothesis regarding civic activity, the second hypothesis concerning political philosophy was rejected with a *t*-test comparison showing that a participants' political ideology does not appear to change upon program completion (Simon, 2002). The claim that AmeriCorps is a politically neutral program supported by Simon's research counteracts conservative claims of the opposite being true while also strengthening the case for proponents of national service. This research also supports the literature linking AmeriCorps participation to increased social capital demonstrating that members are more active in their communities regardless of race, gender, and politics. This finding is particularly important as a case is made for more opportunities to civically engage young adults in an increasingly disengaged society.

Frumkin et al. (2009) examined the short- and long-term impact of AmeriCorps participation on civic engagement, education, employment and life skills. Over 2,000 AmeriCorps members from state and national and National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) completed surveys. A comparison group of 2,000 nonmembers also took surveys to determine if AmeriCorps participation had an impact on the members' attitudes in relation to the previously

mentioned areas. The researchers collected data both the beginning of service and end of service for AmeriCorps members and at similar times for nonmembers during the 1999-2000 service year. To assess long-term attitudes a final survey was given in 2007 to both groups. Findings demonstrated that there were positive impacts on community engagement, connection to community, knowledge of community issues, and participation; however, little evidence supported that there were education benefits, despite the education award members receive upon completion of service. One of the most cited benefits of AmeriCorps has been the education award participants receive at the completion of their service. It provides educational access to Americans of all incomes. The findings of Frumkin et al. (2009) demonstrate that this benefit is going unused by many AmeriCorps participants. With millions of unused education award dollars, opponents of the AmeriCorps could use that as evidence that the program should be decreased or discontinued. It is important to note that the response rate to the final survey was far less than the baseline sample, a telling sign that could symbolize a literal disengagement of members' postservice. Therefore the results of the findings have far less implicative power for future policy than if they had a larger sample.

McBride and Lee (2012) took a more recent look at an issue that is critical to the success of the AmeriCorps program—member retention. The success of individual AmeriCorps programs, member and community transformations, are contingent upon the completion of members' commitment to the program. A quasi-experimental, longitudinal examination of 107 AmeriCorps state and national programs was completed using data from surveys administered in an earlier study of 2,200 AmeriCorps members and a similar sized nonmember comparison group. The findings demonstrated that several institutional factors impact member retention. These include member participation in planning activities, matching service to their career

interest, developing relationships with mentors, and facilitated reflection—things not required by AmeriCorps legislation (McBride & Lee, 2012). The focus on institutional factors related to orientation, training, and supervision is an acknowledgement of the integral role that program administrators have on member retention and the importance of individual programs illustrating that *how* things get done is also an important factor in program effectiveness. McBride and Lee's (2012) research bridges the gap between findings that focus on overall program outcomes and those that focus on member outcomes by illustrating the vital role that implementation has in each program.

The varied findings regarding AmeriCorps illustrate the complexity of the program and the many factors that need to be considered before rendering it a success, failure, or something in-between. AmeriCorps serves multiple purposes in a variety of settings and is not easily assessed using one standard; however, empirical evidence of success is an important piece of demonstrating effectiveness and garnering government funding. Given the inconclusive findings on AmeriCorps and increasing competition for federal dollars, the future of the program is dependent upon finding its connection to larger policy issues that impact all Americans. The collaborative nature of AmeriCorps lends itself to this kind of problem solving and linkages that could prove beneficial for the continuation of the program and serve the common good.

Determining the Role of Higher Education

Several studies have been conducted that examine how higher education is viewed by its stakeholders and their perceptions of its responsibility to the public. While there are mixed views on whether IHEs have an ultimate social responsibility to better society and serve the public interest, there has been a shift in recent years to reclaim the mission of higher education through increased civic engagement initiatives. The first step in this process of reclamation has

been studying how IHEs relate to the concept of the public good. The studies examined below detail what researchers have found regarding the role of higher education in society.

Labaree (1997) explores the three alternative models for higher education: democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility. The democratic equality perspective views education as a public good that everyone should be able to access. The social efficiency method also views education as a public good, but focuses on its responsibility to prepare the youth for the workforce. On the other hand, the social mobility perspective takes the view that higher education is a private good that should be used by some individuals as a way to gain status. All three perspectives are politically motivated and provide little clarity in the larger discussion on the role of education. For Labaree this argument comes down to looking at the history of American education and deciding if the fundamental role of schools is to shape the individual or society. Higher education will continue to “be defined as an arena that simultaneously promotes equality and adapts to inequality” until more critical reflection on it’s role in society takes place (Labaree, 1997, p. 41).

In a 2008 qualitative study, Chambers and Gopaul completed a content analysis of two programs focusing on the responsibility of IHEs to serve the public good. The responses of 217 participants in the Leadership Dialogue Series and Rising Scholars Award were analyzed looking at data from interviews, observations, and written documents using a phenomenological constructivist framework. Data were coded to find trends and themes across participants. Multiple themes emerged that looked at the relationship between IHEs and society, knowledge, community, the nature of higher education, and IHEs themselves. The overarching theme connecting the various discussions was an understanding of the importance of social, political, economic, historic, and institutional factors in impacting the role of IHEs in various contexts

(Chambers & Gopaul, 2008). This suggests that leaders are in agreement that IHEs play a fundamental role in shaping society; however, that role may change over time.

Fretz et al. (2009) completed a qualitative case study of institutional visioning at the University of Denver that delved into the development of the school's vision statement setting forth the mission of becoming "a great private university dedicated to the public good" (p. 87). The study included examining a series of discussions that took place at the 2007 Public Good Conference that brought together 150 faculty members, staff, students, and community leaders to discuss the intersection of IHEs, communities, and the concept of the public good. Conversations resulted in the development of five tasks to assist the University of Denver with accomplishing its mission statement. These tasks included (a) clarifying the vision, (b) reforming the budget, (c) creating mechanisms to coordinate and sustain initiatives, (d) expanding promotion and tenure to recognize community work, and (e) developing an institutional culture of collaboration. The conversation and its findings served as recognition that IHEs have a responsibility to serve the public mission of higher education to strengthen the democratic practices within the university and in larger society. While the findings demonstrate a need for more commitment to civic engagement in higher education, the case study model coupled with Denver's private status make it more of an exception as opposed to a relatable model for other IHEs to follow.

In a 2010 qualitative study, Pasque and Rex explored the concept of higher education for the public good or what the authors refer to as HPEG. During a series of three conferences the researchers looked at the policy discussions of 150 higher education leaders, community partners, and legislators. Using a critical discursive psychology and narrative inquiry they looked at how language and interactions impacted the participants' thoughts on HPEG. They

found that perceptions of HPEG varied among participants depending on their actualization of the IHE as a task or process-oriented entity and on their own perception of their relationship to the university as external or internal. The difference in opinions stemming from how one interacts with the university is important to understand and recognize as universities strive towards being stewards of the public good.

In a move strongly affirming the public good mission of higher education the state of Missouri passed a Senate Bill declaring a public affairs mission of Missouri State University (Levesque-Bristol & Cornelius-White, 2011). This mandate caused university faculty and staff to delve into what it means to be an engaged university. They clarified the university's mission into three areas: (a) ethical leadership, (b) cultural competence, and (c) community engagement. The development of clear definitions for engagement, and the establishment of high-level positions dedicated to public affairs marked the beginning of the university's transition into an IHE committed to serving the public good. The university developed the Public Affairs Scale to measure the three areas they identified as most important to the public affairs mission. An online survey instrument was provided to 255 undergraduate and graduate students in 2008-2009. Initial findings showed that students were participating in activities related to all three pillars of public affairs, a demonstration that the university was achieving its goals. While more research needs to be completed using the Public Affairs Scale, Missouri State University's desire to measure student engagement and produce an instrument that can be used by other universities demonstrates a shift in thinking from engagement as something that is supplemental to higher education to a critical component of the collegiate experience.

Boyd and Brackman (2012) assert that colleges have a moral imperative to develop the personal and social responsibility of students. They examine methods for institutionally

promoting civic engagement in higher education. They believe that the focus on defining civic engagement is taking away emphasis from the most important aspect of incorporating personal and social responsibility in higher education, connecting learning outcomes to civic activities. Some strategies they highlight are creating campus culture as community, having structured civic discourse dialogue, providing on-campus opportunities for civic engagement, and promoting student political engagement. While Boyd and Brackman do not have empirical evidence or research studies to support their suggestions, they provide insights into methods that IHEs can use to institutionalize civic engagement.

Civic Engagement and Higher Education

The 1970s through 1990s had a marked decline in civic engagement among young adults followed by a new resurgence in engagement in the 2000s (“All Together Now,” 2013; Putnam, 1996). While there has been an increase in civic participation among young adults in recent years, this varies based on class. Young adults from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are less likely to be engaged as well as individuals that do not attend college (“All Together Now,” 2013). As a result, college serves as foundational institution for many young adults that sets the stage for lifelong civic engagement. Opportunities to engage within IHEs include organized volunteering through clubs and organizations, community-based research, service-learning and political awareness activities such as voting. These institutionalized opportunities for engagement promote opportunities for young adults to get involved in the community while expanding students’ worldview.

Perry and Katula’s (2001) study provides empirical evidence demonstrating that civic engagement influences college students. They reviewed 37 empirical studies that looked at the relationship between service and citizenship to determine the nature of their relationship. After

close scrutiny of the studies they came to the conclusion that service influences citizenship-related cognitive understanding positively, service and volunteering positively influence later giving and volunteering, and that service learning produces the most consistent positive results. Their research, although consisting of secondary data analysis is useful because it serves as a critical synthesis of the known studies on service and citizenship. In particular, it provides compelling evidence based on numerous studies to support service as a way of creating civic-minded individuals that will contribute to society throughout their life.

Flanagan and Levine (2010) contend that the civic engagement of young adults is “important to the health and performance of democracy” (p. 160). Civic engagement as a young adult acts as a grounding mechanism during the tumultuous college-aged years that can prepare individuals for the more routine and stable aspects of older adulthood. Taking on responsibilities that revolve around helping with others, getting involved in the community, and voicing concerns on a public issue are all methods of engagement that serve as opportunities for young adults to become more aware of their identity and place in society.

Fitzgerald, Bruns, Sonka, Furco, and Swanson (2012) posit a framework that calls for IHEs, particularly, public and land-grant universities, to look at how the academy impacts society rather than focusing solely on production of graduates. In particular, IHEs have an opportunity to use their position in society to co-create knowledge with community that is shared and benefits everyone. They assert the need for IHEs to look back at the historical context of education as proposed by the Morrill and Hatch Acts of the late 19th century, which supported higher education initiatives that met the needs of society as a whole. The more recent Kellogg Commission echoes the sentiment that IHEs have a responsibility to engage with their community with the goal of being responsive, respectful, neutral, accessible, integrated, and

coordinated while serving as a resource (Byrne, 2006). It is critical that IHE administrators, faculty, staff, and students understand that engagement “is an umbrella that covers every good practice in teaching, research, and service” (Fitzgerald et al., 2012, p. 14). According to Fitzgerald et al. (2012), being an engaged university should be the ultimate goal of all IHEs with quality research, teaching, and learning serving as its natural by-product.

In *A Crucible Moment* (2012), the Association of America’s Colleges and Universities (AACU) and other stakeholders take a definitive stand on the placement of civic engagement. The report states:

Colleges and universities need to expand education for democracy so it reaches all students in ever more changing ways. Campuses can be critical sites for honing students’ civic knowledge, skills, values, and actions, and for preparing them for lives of public purpose as well as employment (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012).

This recent assertion of the importance of civic engagement as a critical component of higher education sets the stage for more intentional and strategic collaboration with the community to increase the reach and impact of IHEs in society while simultaneously providing students with meaningful experiences connecting theory to practice.

A Closer Examination of *A Crucible Moment*

When the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement released *A Crucible Moment* to the public in 2012 it prompted a conversation on the civic decline of the nation and the responsibility of higher education to address that issue. The Task Force consisted of organizations contracted by the U.S. Department of Education—Global Perspective Institute, Inc. and the AACU. Together they assessed the state of education for democracy in higher

education and were called upon to create an action plan for educators to use as a framework for improving the situation. The essential actions for democracy's future were birthed out of a literature review on the issue, several national roundtables, and an initial background paper.

A Crucible Moment uses several terms to describe the decline of civic learning and engagement in the United States—civic anemia, civic malaise, and civic recession are just a few. Each of these terms implies that Americans are not informed on issues related to how government works and are not participating in its implementation. The document further assumes that a lack of civic learning and democratic engagement could negatively impact the United States in years to come. Several indicators are used as evidence of the declining civic engagement and learning of college students—the United States is ranked 139th in voter participation of 172 world democracies in 2007, only 24% of high school seniors scored proficient or advanced in civics in 2010, and half of states no longer require civics education (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 6). While these statistics may seem startling, they are not new developments. Rather they reflect what Putnam (1996) and Galston (2001) already stated in their commentaries on civic engagement, namely that it has been on the decline and could harm the growth of the country.

One indicator, the civic literacy exam developed by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute was given to both freshmen and seniors in college with each group scoring 50% on average. As a comparison group, a similar test was provided to over 2,500 Americans with an average score of 49% for the general public and 55% for college educators. The multiple choice questions included simpler questions like naming the three branches of government to more advanced questions about the political philosophies of Socrates and Plato (Intercollegiate Studies Institute,

n.d.). The poor scores of Americans and college educators indicates that there is a gap in the expectation of civics knowledge and what is actually being transmitted in the classroom.

Some indicators in the report demonstrate that there are IHEs working to provide opportunities for civic learning and engagement. According to the report, one-third of college faculty and students believe their campuses promote active citizenship and one-third of college students strongly agree that their college education resulted in increased civic capacities (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 6). These numbers illustrate that there are initiatives already taking place on campuses that promote civic engagement. Investigation into what these activities are and how they work could be useful for thinking about best practices and strategies to put in place across higher education.

As a country, the United States has a low voting rate compared to other democracies around the world as highlighted by *A Crucible Moment*; however, in the past two elections it has been argued that young adults have had a large impact on the results of the campaigns (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Without the young adult vote, President Obama would have lost the 2008 election (Saad, 2008). The voting rate for young people, ages 18-24, in presidential elections was just over 50% in 1964. In 2008, this percentage was at around 45%, an increase from 2000 and 2004 that dipped down to 38% in the 2012 (File, 2014). These highs and lows when looked at statistically show a decline in engagement, but further analysis shows voting pattern trends that reflect the larger issue of what motivates young people to vote. What is happening in the world and the candidate choices often impact whether young people will go to the polls. Typically, as people age, voting patterns increase (File, 2014). While voting and civic literacy exams can serve as one of many civic

indicators for civic learning and engagement, it may be time to incorporate more indicators that more accurately reflect the methods of engagement used by the current generation.

Although *A Crucible Moment* may not capture the full picture of civic learning and engagement among young adults, it certainly has enough compelling evidence to demonstrate that without action, a further decline could be harmful to America's democracy. The Task Force provides key recommendations to assist stakeholders in higher education with improving civic learning and democratic engagement. These recommendations include (a) fostering a civic ethos across all parts of campus and educational culture, (b) making civic literacy a core expectation for all students, (c) practicing civic inquiry across all fields of study, (d) advancing civic actions through transformative partnerships, at home and abroad (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 31). To assist with making these actions more tangible, several examples of practical application were highlighted in the report including service-learning, deliberative dialogue, and collective and civic problem solving. In addition, several IHEs were highlighted for the work they are doing to promote civic learning and engagement. These engaged institutions included Tulane University, Portland State University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, University of Alabama at Birmingham, California State University Chico, and University of California, Irvine. Both the practical applications and IHE models given provide educators with examples to use as guides when thinking about enhancing civic learning and democratic engagement. The hope of the Task Force is that IHEs "embed questions about civic responsibilities within career preparation" (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 11). This goal is one that IHEs have wrestled with for years and takes deliberative time, funding, and action. A critical first step that is missing from the actions is to assess and evaluate the current policies and programs within

each IHE that focus on the recommendations provided in *A Crucible Moment* to determine how those steps are already being implemented. As such, this study systematically reviews two IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships against each recommended action of *A Crucible Moment*.

AmeriCorps-IHE Partnerships

While there has been research conducted on the individual impacts of AmeriCorps programs and IHEs on society, very little research explores the IHE-AmeriCorps relationships that are formed as strategic partnerships to address critical needs of the local community. In many cases, AmeriCorps programs are sponsored by local nonprofit, faith-based, or state and local government agencies. While IHEs serve as sponsors of many programs, this particular partnership and the specific nature of it has not been fully examined in the research to determine what, if anything, makes it unique among AmeriCorps partnerships.

The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor was one of the first adopters of AmeriCorps launching a program in 1995 (Checkoway, 1997). The director of the university's Center for Learning through Community Service, Barry Checkoway, summarized the activities of the collaborative partnership between five graduate professional schools at the university, 12 community-based organizations, and the neighborhood coalition in Detroit. He cited the development of clinics, academic centers, tutoring programs, business collaborations, and community health campaigns as evidence not only of program success, but of institutionalized changes within the university to promote engaged work. Checkoway attributes student learning to real-world situations that are often guided or framed by participating faculty that, in turn, have made institutional impacts. He writes: "AmeriCorps has helped the university strengthen its social responsibility by making knowledge more accessible, improving communications with constituencies, and building support for educational programs that contribute to university-

community collaboration” (Checkoway, 1997, p. 78). Like many early assessments of AmeriCorps, Checkoway’s (1997) insights are based on a myriad of sources ranging from student member surveys, program reports, and community feedback rather than an intentional methodology geared at finding out the answer to preconceived research questions. As such, Checkoway’s article speaks to the lack of rigorous analysis on AmeriCorps during its early years while shedding light on the ability for exploratory research grounded in case study analysis to provide valuable insights into the ability for AmeriCorps programs to be effective change agents in communities.

Gail Coulter (2004) examined the contribution of the America Reads Program in IHEs. The program, in collaboration with AmeriCorps, was designed to build an “army of tutors” to support schools (p. 202). Her research focuses primarily on the outcomes of an after-school program at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs that served as a hybrid program with student members participating in community work-study (hourly pay), AmeriCorps (stipended volunteer), and a special education licensure program. In a span of 3 years over 600 children were served by the program at 13 locations with an increase in words correct per minute (WCPM) per week of 2.4. Surveys of tutors showed a positive rating of the experience and indicated that participants were more sensitive to the needs of students in low-income schools. While not exclusively examining an AmeriCorps program, Coulter’s research provides evidence that the collaboration of IHEs and AmeriCorps could prove a beneficial partnership for the institution, students, and community.

Summary and Synthesis

From the literature it is evident that IHEs have the potential to impact communities in a myriad of ways such as developing research advances, addressing critical community needs, and

training the next generation of young professionals. In the past, the nation's leaders have called upon young adults to lead the charge in creating and maintaining sustainable solutions to the country's problems. This was most notably done through the development of programs like the Peace Corps and AmeriCorps that provided young adults with opportunities to be change agents in the world.

More recently, IHEs and educators are under increasing pressure to prepare young adults not only for the workforce, but for a life of engagement (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Numerous IHEs around the United States are involved in ongoing efforts to engage students and the community by sponsoring interorganizational collaborations with AmeriCorps programs. These collaborations stem from a desire to improve the local community while providing students with opportunities to grow both personally and professionally. While there is research to support the positive impacts on communities and members involved in AmeriCorps, there is little known about the specific dynamics of IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships.

Prominent researchers in the area of national service, Dr. James Perry and Dr. Christopher Simons along with Acting Director of the Office of Research and Evaluation at CNCS, Mary Hyde, noted a need for more research on AmeriCorps administration and IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations (personal communication, September 20, 2013; personal communication, March 26, 2014, respectively). This research fills the gaps in the literature by exploring the IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships as interorganizational collaborations and their ability to address civic engagement of young adults with an emphasis on program administration. Understanding these collaborations, particularly their ability to implement the recommendations

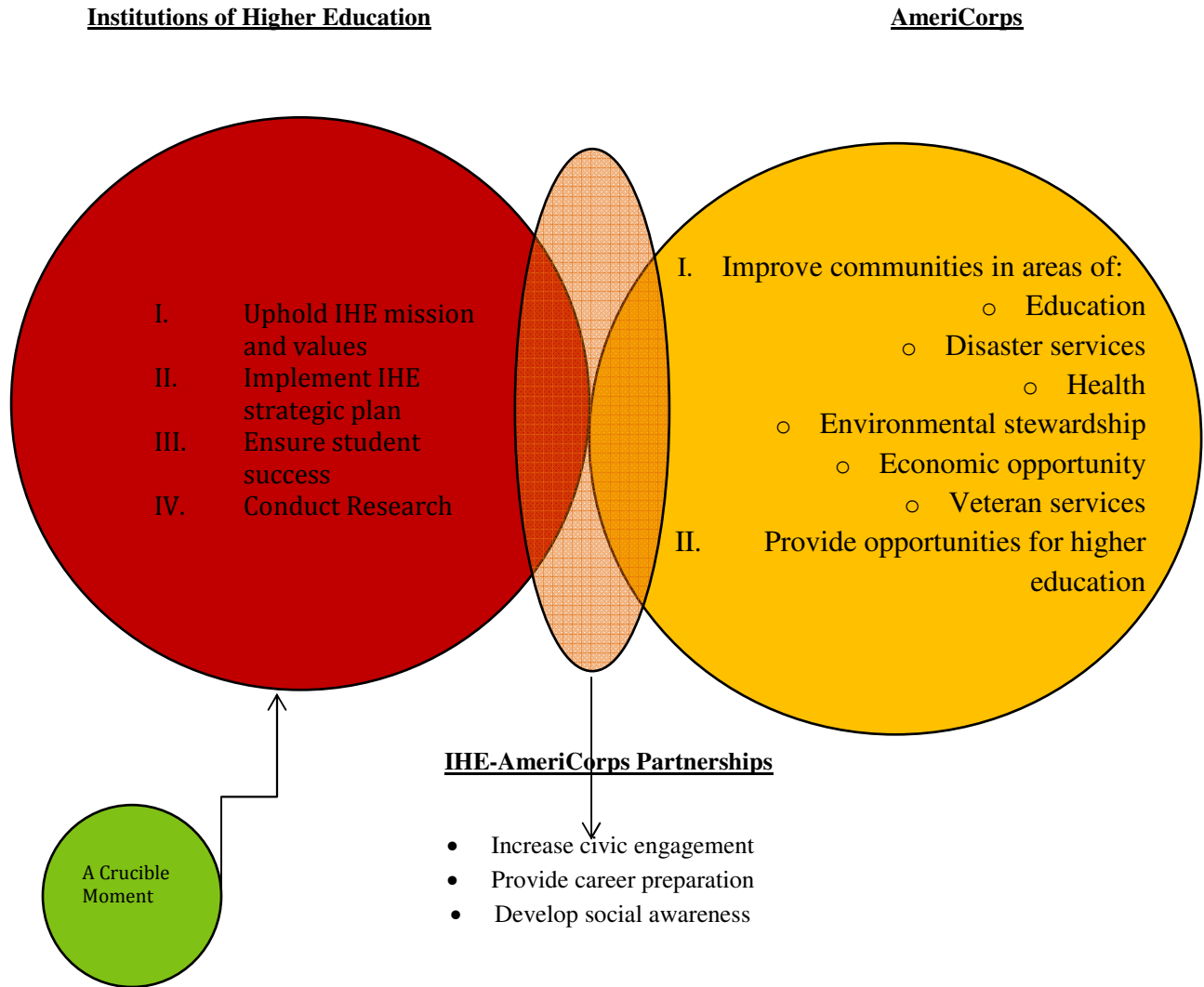
for higher education found in *A Crucible Moment* may have important implications for future policies related to civic learning and engagement in higher education.

CHAPTER 3. METHOD

While there have been several studies that focus on the AmeriCorps program, they often focus on community and/or member impacts with little emphasis on the administration of the programs and the relationship between sponsoring agencies and CNCS. One of the goals of AmeriCorps since its inception has been to motivate and inspire young adults towards careers in services that support the uplift of local communities and, eventually, the nation. Given this large-scale goal of engendering lifelong citizenship, strategic partnerships with IHEs seems like a natural fit for the growth and development of AmeriCorps. Indeed, there are numerous IHEs that sponsor programs that host a variety of services including mentoring, tutoring, and after-school programming. A few programs sponsored by IHEs have noted their accomplishments in journal articles or have been included in more large-scale studies of AmeriCorps, but there has not been an in-depth analysis done that examines how programs operating within IHEs are unique. As a result, this research design was exploratory in nature and designed to provide insights on IHE-AmeriCorps partnership administration using the theoretical lens of interorganizational collaboration.

The conceptual framework assisted with organizing the study (see Figure 1). This design uses a Venn diagram model to represent the collaboration between IHEs and AmeriCorps programs representing their individual and shared goals. The intersection of the shared goals illustrates the interorganizational collaboration that occurs within an IHE-AmeriCorps partnership. Critical to the shared goals of both the IHE and AmeriCorps is civic engagement, a

Conceptual Framework



A Crucible Moment Key Recommendations for Higher Education

1. Foster a civic ethos across all parts of campus and educational culture
2. Make civic literacy a core expectation for all students
3. Practice civic inquiry across all fields of study
4. Advance civic action through transformative partnerships, at home and abroad

Adapted from “A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future,” by The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, p. 31.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for the study.

goal that will be assessed using the key recommendations for higher education found in *A Crucible Moment*. The report is represented by a circle outside of the Venn diagram with a dotted line to the IHE illustrating that it informs, but may not directly impact the IHE goals. The conceptual framework will address the following research questions within the study.

Research Questions

1. What role does interorganizational collaboration play in the implementation of an IHE-AmeriCorps partnership?
2. Do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations address the key recommendations for higher education for increasing civic learning and democratic engagement set forth by *A Crucible Moment*?

Design

This investigation was a qualitative case study using process evaluation to examine two IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations. Due to the limited information on IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships, a qualitative approach was used to generate themes and findings within and across cases. The research lends itself to a qualitative method for several reasons. These included the ability for qualitative research to aid with (a) understanding meaning, (b) understanding context, (c) identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, (d) understanding process, and (e) understanding causal explanations (Stake, 1995).

Qualitative research differs from quantitative methods in that it seeks to understand rather than explain phenomena. For that reason meaning and context are important components of qualitative research that provide the researcher with an opportunity to explore phenomena in their natural setting and interpret their findings based on field. This interpretation often calls

upon the researcher to be fully involved and connected to the study in a more personal way than quantitative methods (Stake, 1995).

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is particularly useful for this study given my personal connection to IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships as a former administrator of one of the partnerships that was studied while currently serving as an IHE administrator at the institution. Having experience managing such a partnership and working within an IHE provides me with site access, background knowledge, and insights that were useful for understanding the phenomena taking place. It further allows me to put the findings in the larger context of what the findings mean for higher education.

My former role as an IHE-AmeriCorps administrator for one of the cases being studied was an asset, particularly because I no longer work with the program, but have intimate knowledge of its operation. Qualitative research is ideal for instances where the researcher is close to the subject matter because it provides the space for the researcher to be personally connected to the research while also providing a framework for critical reflection that forces the researcher to critically analyze and assess their relationship to the study to ensure credibility (McMillan, 2012). Due to my former involvement with one of the programs and knowledge of the partnership process, reflection was an integral and ongoing part of the study to help me work through my own perceptions and how they relate to the phenomena taking place. Additionally, the process of triangulation used in qualitative research ensured that the findings occurred at multiple levels (McMillan, 2012)

The ability of qualitative research to be flexible lends itself to an exploratory study because there may be unanticipated findings or influences that cause the researcher to change course during the study. This may include altering the structure of the study to fit the needs of

the environment. Given that this study was reliant on several cases with varied settings, it was important that I had an ability to adapt the study to each setting understanding that they may have unique characteristics and research needs (Stake, 2006). Qualitative research is inherently interactive calling upon the researcher to work with key informants and environments to organically construct meaning throughout the study (Maxwell, 2005).

Finally, qualitative research is a method that seeks to understand process and causal explanations. In this study the researcher is exploring the administrative process of IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships in the hopes of understanding how those relationships operate specifically. As such, this type of research lends itself to a qualitative methodology that is process-based with the goal of understanding why instead of what (Stake, 1995).

Case studies are particularly useful for studying a particular phenomenon up close. Stake (1995) writes:

In qualitative case study we seek greater understanding of the case. We want to appreciate the uniqueness and complexity of the case, its embeddedness and interaction with its contexts. Hypotheses and goal statements sharpen the focus, minimizing the interest in the situation and circumstance. (p. 16)

This study seeks to do the opposite of beginning with preformed judgments and goals. Rather, it hopes to enlarge the narrative of AmeriCorps and IHEs through examining uncharted issues around collaboration and civic engagement. In addition to being flexible, case studies are important first steps in developing questions and findings for further research both qualitative and quantitative.

Using a process evaluation as a form of case study assists with looking at how things are done in a particular program over time. In many instances, case studies focus on outcome

monitoring or what a program accomplishes at its conclusion. Typically, outcome evaluation is what most programs, particularly those sponsored by the government, use to show program effectiveness. Unfortunately, outcome evaluation data does not provide a comprehensive picture of how a program performs. Using process evaluation to document and assess key aspects of program performance can assist with understanding how implementation failure and/or success impacts the program overall (Rossi et al., 2004). To put it simply, outcome evaluation looks at what happened while process evaluation looks at how it happened. Quality is assessed rather than quantity. In many instances, it is the quality of program services that directly impacts the overall outcomes. As such, this study relied on process evaluation to answer the research questions.

Population and Sampling

This research used purposive sampling. Each participating IHE was active with AmeriCorps in the last 3 years and is still currently operating. Access and geographic barriers limited the study to a group of eight institutions that fit the criteria for the case studies—sponsorship of an AmeriCorps state or national program within an IHE. All eight institutions were asked to participate in the study via e-mail using the program administrator at the IHE as the key informant and main point of contact. Of the eight eligible IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships, four initially agreed to participate in the study. One program eventually dropped out because the program was discontinuing during the 2013-2014 year due to funding limitations leaving three remaining eligible programs.

After deliberation, it was decided to proceed with two of the three programs. The two IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations were selected because they operate within the same city and were more feasible given the time and fiscal constraints of the study. Although service activities

differed, both of the collaborations faced similar issues that come with working in the specific community. While the community aspect was similar in both case studies, the demographics of the members in the program were different due to the fact that the two IHEs have different student demographics, missions, and types of institutions (public vs. private). Finally, each of the programs operated using a different model for IHE-AmeriCorps collaboration: one using a Bonner AmeriCorps model and the other using the AmeriCorps state model. This difference is important because it demonstrates the potential for these collaborations to exist using a structure that fits the needs of the specific IHE. The selection of these two IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations, although not generalizable, provides a more comprehensive picture of how these types of partnerships work in different institutional settings. This differentiation of program types makes the study more relevant to a variety of stakeholders and demonstrating that IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships do not have to be a “one size fits all” model. Below are brief descriptions of each IHE.

Institution A

This IHE is a highly-ranked urban 4-year public institution with an enrollment of nearly 24,000 undergraduate students and over 6,000 graduate students located in the capital city of a mid-Atlantic state with a population of over 200,000 citizens. The majority of students are in-state residents and the IHE caters to both traditional (between the ages of 18-24) and nontraditional students (older than 24 years old). Retention of students hovers at the mid-50-60% mark. The cost of tuition and fees for a full-time student taking 15 credits is approximately \$12,000 for an in-state student and \$30,000 for an out-of-state resident (excluding room and board).

The AmeriCorps program at Institution A began in 1995 and serves the local public school system providing tutoring and mentoring to elementary students who are reading below grade levels. AmeriCorps members at Institution A can be students or community members. They receive an annual living allowance of \$3,018 for quarter-time members (450 hours) and \$12,100 for full-time members (1,700 hours) provided in biweekly increments over the course of the year. When member service is complete, they receive an education award of \$1,486 for quarter-time members and \$5,550 for full-time members. There are currently 10 full-time members and 30 quarter-time members serving in 10 elementary schools in the program.

Institution B

This IHE is a highly ranked liberal arts 4-year private institution with an enrollment of nearly 3,000 undergraduate students and over 1,000 graduate students located in the capital city of a mid-Atlantic state with a population of over 200,000 citizens. Eighteen percent of students are in-state residents and the IHE caters to the traditional undergraduate aged 18-22. The most recent retention rate for undergraduates was 94% for 2012. The cost of tuition for in- and out-of-state students is \$47,000 (excluding room and board).

The Bonner Scholars Program (BSP) at Institution B is a part of a national group of 23 campuses that work collaboratively with the Bonner Foundation to provide college students with opportunities to have transformative learning experiences through sustained volunteering during the academic year. The AmeriCorps partnership is embedded within the larger Bonner Scholars Program. Second year scholars are eligible to participate in the Bonner AmeriCorps Program as an added component of their Bonner experience.

The Bonner Scholars Program at Institution B began in 1993. Students serve in a predetermined nonprofit for 6 to 10 hours per week during their entire 4-year undergraduate

career. Scholars receive a \$2,500 annual living allowance and up to \$5,500 additional payment for summer service. Alumni may also qualify for up to \$2,000 in loan reduction. Each year 25 new scholars are selected for a total of 100 active scholars at any given period serving at various community organizations.

Procedures

CNCS requires all active AmeriCorps programs to submit a proposal to request funding under the AmeriCorps grant. Grants are generally for a 3-year cycle and are renewed on an annual basis with multiple means for progress monitoring that occurs throughout the grant period. These include monthly reports, administrator meetings and conference calls, and site visits by CNCS staff. Information on performance measure outcomes, member activities, and service activities are documented on an ongoing basis in electronic databases.

In order to gain access to program information, the directors at each institution in the sample were contacted. The study was explained to them, and they agreed to sign a letter of consent agreeing to interviews, observations, and document review and analysis.

Data Collection

Several methods of data collection were used for the study. They include the following methods described below.

Review of Program Documents

Several program documents were reviewed that documented program activities and reporting during the most recent completed service years. These years were selected to have access to the most recent program information of completed service years. These included the initial grant submitted by the IHE (if applicable), reporting documents, and websites.

Documentation for each IHE was selected based on the structure of the program and information

available. Program information that is generally provided to the public in the form of newsletters, flyers, handouts, and website information was also be reviewed. The documents were used primarily as a source of information to understand basic program operations related to service activities and program management.

Semistructured Interviews With Key Informants

Interviews were conducted with both IHE and AmeriCorps key informants. All key informants were provided with a consent form via e-mail at least one week prior to their scheduled interview informing them of the procedures and risks related to the study (see Appendix A). The participant signed the consent form at the time of the interview and was asked if he or she had any questions or concerns. The interviews were semistructured allowing for flexibility in questions based on the specific program (see Appendixes B and C). In addition to signing the consent form, participants also completed a basic demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). This provided basic information that captured the characteristics of the participants as a group.

All interviews were voice recorded for transcription. Once transcribed, each transcript was provided to the participant for member checking. The participants were asked via e-mail to review the transcription and confirm that their major points came across. They were provided an opportunity to add information or points by e-mail or through another interview to clarify or emphasize ideas.

Within the IHEs, these key informants included the program directors, coordinators, fiscal staff, and IHE staff associated with management and oversight of AmeriCorps programs. The interviews for the IHE staff all took place on-site at the institution at a day, time, and

location of the participants' choosing. This was done to provide the participant with a sense of ease and comfort about the process that led to a more open dialogue.

The interviews for the AmeriCorps staff had to be even more flexible to accommodate the schedules and constraints of the participants. The interviews with staff members responsible for Bonner Scholar Program-AmeriCorps oversight took place by phone because they are located out-of-state. The consent forms were reviewed, signed, and sent back to me via e-mail.

The interviews with the AmeriCorps state office associated with Institution A had to be done as a focus group. The change from an individual interview process to a focus group format was better for the AmeriCorps staff and provided me with an opportunity to talk with several key stakeholders at one time while not taking up too much of their time. Focus groups are especially useful for getting together a group of stakeholders with similar knowledge on an issue to discuss the nature of a problem and their assessment of it (Rossi et al., 2004). Focus groups are different from individual interviews largely because they involve the interaction of participants. While some researchers find the interactive nature of focus groups to be cause for concern on the credibility of findings due to group think, others believe that the dialogue between individuals in the focus group provides a rich backdrop to develop meaning and context for a phenomena taking place (McLafferty, 2004).

On-Site Observations of Programs

Observation of various program activities occurred for a period of 3 months from August to the end of October. The prolonged engagement in the natural environment of the programs provided a more credible study based on multiple interactions with programs rather than a single observation at one time (Stake, 2006). Additionally, the timing of the observations was strategically selected to enable the researcher to see critical periods of program operation—the

closing of the 2013-2014 year and opening of the 2014-2015 year. The conclusion and beginning of a service year program cycle are critical points of program operation when the program is at its busiest completing progress reports, reflecting on the service year, exiting members, onboarding new members, and conducting training, respectively.

Observations primarily included service activities and member training. Depending on the type of activity observed, my role varied from complete observer to participant. In meetings and trainings, I served in an observer role while service activities in the community lent themselves to a more active research approach to understand the full nature of what was taking place and to have an opportunity to interact with program members.

Field notes were taken during observations using a journal documenting the behavior and activities taking place. The field notes included detailed descriptions of what occurred in addition to reflections about what the descriptions mean. In addition to field notes, I talked with participants observed after activities were completed to ask clarifying questions and get further details related to the activities. This assisted with developing a richer context for descriptions based on multiple perspectives. Due to the emergent nature of qualitative research, speculations were made during the collection phase that shaped the findings and assisted with the development of emerging themes, patterns, and issues. Observations played an integral role in providing rich descriptions that enhance information I gathered from interviews and documents.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Triangulation is an important method in qualitative research that seeks convergence of findings using various methods of collection from different sources at different times (McMillan, 2012). The varied methods of data collection used in the study allowed the researcher to triangulate findings within and across cases to provide diversity of perspectives that enhance

credibility (Stake, 2006). In particular, I looked to find out whether observations and interviews supported information found in program documents. Program documents such as grants and progress reports are reviewed and approved by CNCS staff and should be reflective of best practices set forth by the corporation and be in compliance with major policies. Unlike monitoring visits from CNCS state program officers that typically last for 1 to 2 days, I spent varying amounts of time at each site over a 3-month period to provide a more comprehensive representation of each site that was then be compared within and across cases.

In qualitative research data analysis is ongoing and happens during all phases of data collection as the researcher makes meaning of the phenomena as it occurs (Stake, 1995). Data analysis included compiling information gathered from all data collection methods. I looked at the information obtained from each site to generate a descriptive analysis of each partnership into single cases. Once each IHE-AmeriCorps partnership was assessed, a cross-case analysis was conducted to compare partnerships across institutions to determine if common themes emerged (Stake, 2006).

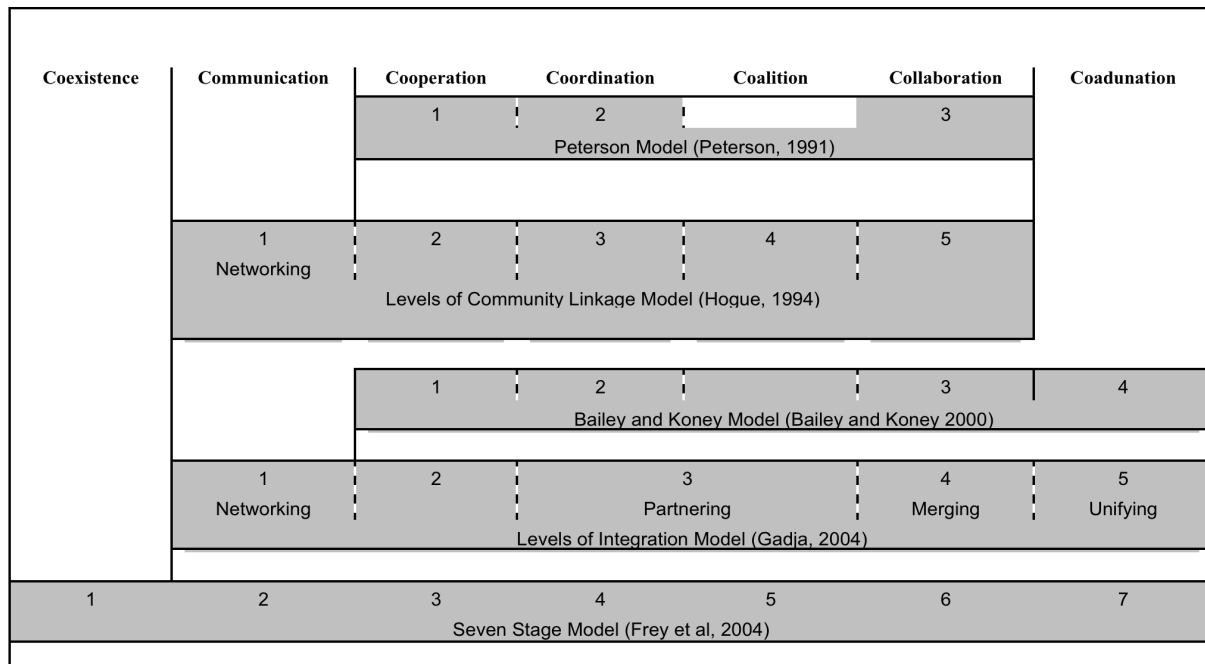
I used a method of data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions as set forth by Miles et al. (2014) to analyze the information collected. Data condensation involved systematic coding of data from observations and interviews into smaller chunks that give meaning to what is taking place. This method of data condensation was completed for each individual case prior to doing a cross-case analysis. Data condensation involved making sense of both emic and etic data. Emic data included the information captured from participants in their own words and actions while etic data involved the researcher's interpretation of the emic data (McMillan, 2012).

I began with an initial coding process that used descriptive codes. Descriptive codes are especially useful for case studies that use a variety of sources of data that assess social environments (Miles et al., 2014). As I began making sense of the data I collected, major themes of communication, coordination, civic engagement came up again and again. These themes proved too general to provide enough context to illustrate the degree to which collaboration and civic engagement were a part of the IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships being studied. As a result, I changed methods to a deductive coding system that focused specifically on addressing issues related to the levels of collaboration and types of civic engagement present. I used the stage models of collaboration developed by Frey et al. (2006) in collaboration with the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric developed by Gadjia (2004). Together, these models served as a foundation for assessing and evaluating the level of collaboration in each IHE-AmeriCorps partnership (see Figure 2 and Table 1).

For the process of determining if the partnerships included the key recommendations for higher education set forth by *A Crucible Moment*, I used the definitions found in the report detailing the kinds of civic engagement that institutions should use. These types of engagement included civic ethos, literacy, inquiry, and action. I combined the information found in Frey et al. (2006), Gadjia (2004), and *A Crucible Moment* (2012) to develop a list of 11 codes (see Appendix E). These codes were specifically used for analyzing data from the interviews and observations. The document review looked more broadly at civic engagement and collaboration as two major indicators rather than using the specific codes.

I used a peer debrief to review a sample of the interviews and observations using the code list I developed to assess the validity of the constructs I used. A peer debrief provides an objective review of findings from someone that is not personally engaged in the study as a

Figure 2. Stage models of collaboration.



Adapted from "Measuring Collaboration Among Grant Partners," by B. B. Frey, J. H. Lohmeier, S. W. Lee, & N. Tollefson, 2006, American Journal of Evaluation, 27(3), 383-392.

Table 1

Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric

Level of integration	Purpose	Strategies and tasks	Leadership and decision making	Interpersonal and communication
1 Networking	Create a web of communication. Identify and create a base of support. Explore interests.	Loose or no structure. Flexible, roles not defined. Few, if any, defined tasks.	Nonhierarchical. Flexible. Minimal or no group decision making.	Very little interpersonal conflict. Communication among all members infrequent or absent.
2 Cooperating	Work together to ensure tasks are done. Leverage or raise money. Identify mutual needs, but maintain separate identities.	Member links are advisory. Minimal structure. Some strategies and tasks identified.	Nonhierarchical, decisions tend to be low stakes. Facilitative leaders, usually voluntary. Several people form "go to" hub.	Some degree of personal commitment and investment. Minimal interpersonal conflict. Communication among members clear, but may be informal.
3 Partnering	Share resources to address common issues. Organizations remain autonomous but support something new to reach mutual goals together.	Strategies and tasks are developed and maintained. Central body of people, who have specific tasks.	Autonomous leadership. Alliance members share equally in the decision making. Decision-making mechanisms are in place.	Some interpersonal conflict. Communication system and formal information channels developed. Evidence of problem solving and productivity.

Table 1 - continued

Level of integration	Purpose	Strategies and tasks	Leadership and decision making	Interpersonal and communication
4 Merging	Merge resources to create or support something new. Extract money from existing systems/members. Commitment for a long period of time to achieve short and long-term outcomes.	Formal structure to support strategies and tasks is apparent. Specific and complex strategies and tasks identified. Committees and sub-committees formed.	Strong, visible leadership. Sharing and delegation of roles and responsibilities. Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths.	High degree of commitment and investment. Possibility of interpersonal conflict high. Communication is clear, frequent, and prioritized. High degree of problem solving and productivity.
5 Unifying	Unification or acquisition to form a single structure. Relinquishment of autonomy to support surviving organization.	Highly formal, legally complex. Permanent re-organization of strategies and tasks.	Central, typically hierarchical leadership. Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths.	Possibility of interpersonal conflict very high. Communication is clear, frequent, prioritized, formal, and informal.

Adapted from "Utilizing Collaboration Theory to Evaluate Strategic Alliances," by R. Gajda, 2004, *American Journal of Evaluation*, 25(1), 65-77.

researcher or participant (McMillan, 2012). The peer debriefer independently coded the sample I provided using the code list I generated. I then compared my coding and that of the peer debriefer to get intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability is a measure of agreement between multiple coders on a given text (Kurasaki, 2000). Intercoder reliability is particularly useful in case study because findings can be subjective. Using a peer debrief, although not a failsafe, provides an added validity and rigor to qualitative research.

Intercoder reliability is most commonly achieved using the percentage of agreement between coders. I randomly selected a small sample of text units from interviews and observations. I provided the coder with the code list I developed and had them do a basic debrief using the two major codes for collaboration and/or civic engagement. The coder was given the items via e-mail as Word documents and told to use specific colors to identify codes. I then compared the items from the coder with my own coding to find the percentage agreement.

To find the percentage agreement, I selected 10 random lines from each document. For each randomly selected line, I examined at least three lines below and above to accommodate for differences among coders in how the data was bounded (Kurasaki, 2000). The percentage agreement for the texts sampled was 70%. This percentage, although not particularly high, is generally acceptable in exploratory studies (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2010).

The initial peer debrief was done by a fellow researcher with a background in housing policy and administration. She was familiar with content analysis, but unfamiliar with the AmeriCorps program. To ascertain whether the debriefer's lack of background knowledge on AmeriCorps had an impact on the intercoder reliability, I had an additional coder review a subsection of the same sample. This debriefer, although not familiar with the specific AmeriCorps programs being studied, had experience as a former AmeriCorps member and

coordinator in another state. After reviewing her coding, the percentage agreement between her sample and mine was also 70%. While I anticipated the agreement being higher with this debriefer, this solidified that the intercoder reliability was at an acceptable level, particularly for a study of this nature that is a qualitative case study and, therefore, highly subjective.

Another strategy that the researcher employed to enhance credibility was negative case analysis. This process of looking for findings that show discrepancies across cases is an important aspect of multiple case studies (McMillan, 2012). While the researcher selected cases based on a shared identity as IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships, findings may demonstrate that there are differences across cases that are just as important to highlight and recognize as the similarities.

Meta-matrices were used to display data across multiple cases. The data were explored using a case-ordered descriptive meta-matrix to look for phenomena that cross cases. The researcher continued to look for trends that emerge using the meta-matrix as a tool to converge findings and assist with finding similarities and differences across cases using a visual representation (Miles et al., 2014).

In the final step of analysis the researcher drew and verified conclusions. This process involved assessing the data condensation and data display on a deeper level. Before asserting that the findings are accurate the representativeness of the sample, researcher bias, triangulation, weight the evidence, and rival explanations must be considered. Once this process has been completed, I can be more confident that the findings presented accurately reflect what is happening in the case and across cases (Miles et al., 2014).

Data analysis and interpretation is an ongoing process in qualitative research that does not have a set starting and stopping point. The process flow chart in Figure 3 reflects the

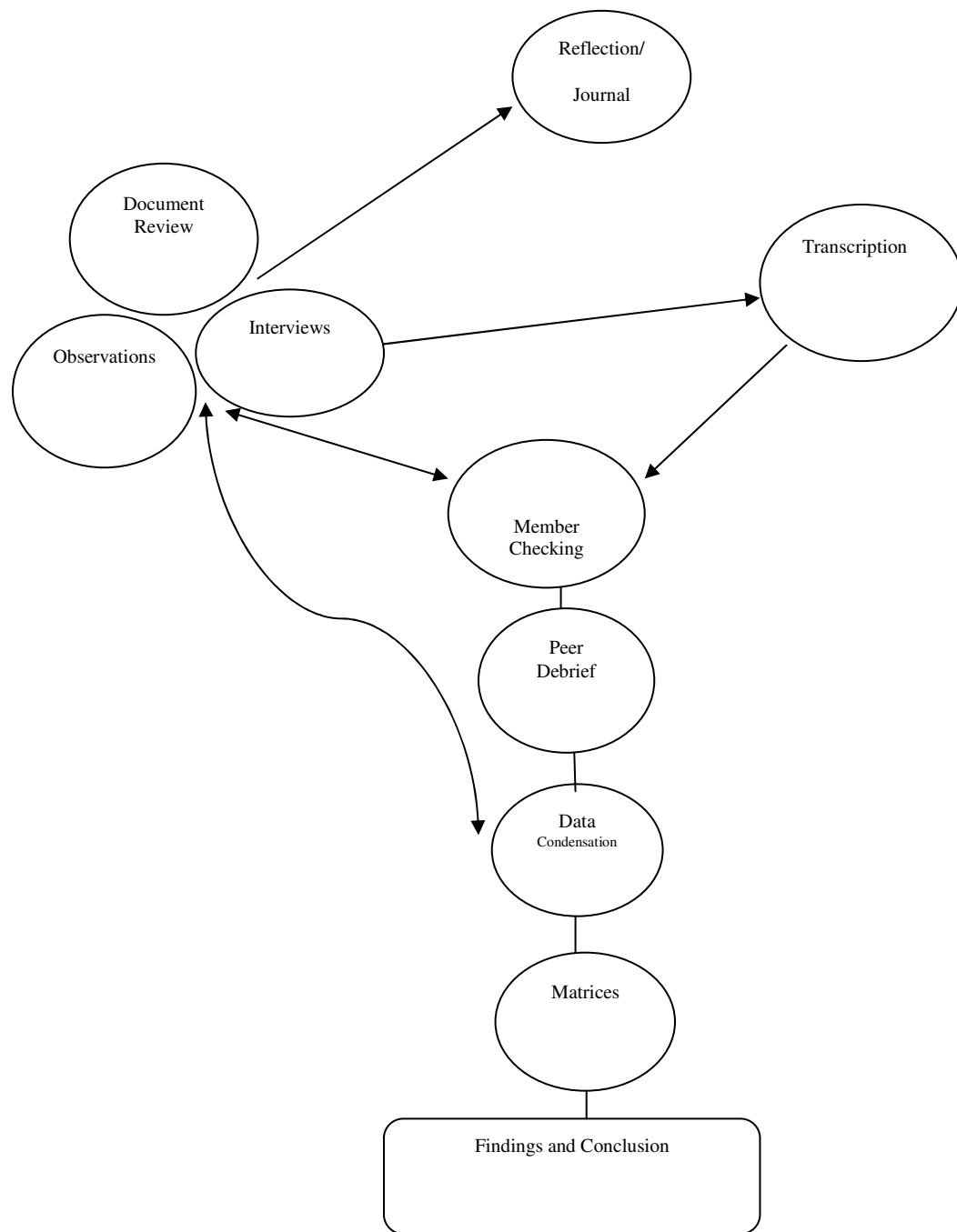


Figure 3. Process flow chart.

ongoing analysis and interpretation that the researcher used during the study. The flow chart illustrates the triangulation of data sources from documents, observations and interviews in addition to showing the cyclical nature of qualitative research.

Delimitations

The findings of this research will focus on IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships and are not generalizable to all AmeriCorps programs. Specifically, programs examined were AmeriCorps state and national programs. Findings will represent the programs examined in this sample. Additionally, the data will focus heavily on information gathered from the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 service years. Much of the findings in the study reflect the opinions, perceptions, and ideas of key stakeholders involved in the specific partnerships examined and may not be a representation of how others involved in AmeriCorps partnerships feel.

Institutional Review Board and Informed Consent Protocol

As required by federal law, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) has policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety of research, particularly when it involves human subjects. I followed the protocol of the VCU Institutional Review Board (VCU-IRB) for this study. All participants in this study were adults. They were all sent correspondence regarding the study via e-mail. This included an initial introductory e-mail about the study requesting their involvement followed by the eventual approved IRB consent form that was officially granted on August 6, 2014 and is listed under VCU IRB No: HM20002138 (Appendix A).

All participants that were interviewed reviewed and signed the IRB consent form and were provided with opportunities to ask questions throughout the study and/or decide not to participate at any time of their choosing. There were no conflicts of interest noted in the study and my previous role as the director of one of the AmeriCorps programs under observation was

fully disclosed prior to beginning research. I currently have no formal role in either of the programs being studied and had not been involved in the administration of an AmeriCorps program for more than a year prior to the study taking place.

CHAPTER 4. INSTITUTION A FINDINGS

Program Description

The AmeriCorps program at Institution A began in 1995. It was initially housed in the Office of Community Programs, which eventually became the current Division of Community Engagement (DCE). The division is a part of the provost's office at Institution A and houses several programs related to community outreach, teaching and learning, and community-engaged research. The provost's office is responsible for the academic planning of the university and leads the charge in the development and implementation of the university-wide strategic plan.

The AmeriCorps program at Institution A began as part of a larger citywide initiative to improve literacy of young children in grades K-3. The AmeriCorps program eventually included additional support provided by America Reads, a program initiated by then President Clinton to get one million tutors engaged in local schools (America Reads, 2014). While AmeriCorps members consisted of both university students and community members, America Reads participants were all university students receiving financial aid through federal work-study. Together, the AmeriCorps members and America Reads work-study students worked in local elementary schools tutoring students in literacy to improve academic performance.

The participating schools, also known as community partners for the AmeriCorps grant, consisted largely of Title I schools in the city and nearby counties. According to the U.S. Department of Education, schools are designated with a Title I status to indicate that 40% of students in the school are from low-income families. Schools are able to receive extra funding

and support to assist these students with being academically successful (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The schools selected to have AmeriCorps and America Reads members had high concentrations of low-income students and low academic performance. There have been up to 17 schools participating in the AmeriCorps program at a given time. Each school and participating district receives a Scope of Work (SOW) agreement detailing the activities members will complete along with the responsibilities of the school and AmeriCorps program. This document is signed by the superintendent (or authorized district level party) and/or principal of each school, and the director of Institution A's Office of Sponsored Programs, the IHE office responsible for mediating the grant process.

The AmeriCorps program at Institution A is an AmeriCorps state program. The AmeriCorps state office is housed in the Department of Social Services (DSS). The department has a portfolio of AmeriCorps programs across the state that it manages that are known as subgrantees or operating sites. Each program, including the one at Institution A, is responsible for reporting to the AmeriCorps state office on an ongoing basis throughout the year. The state office is responsible for ensuring the compliance of each program with federal guidelines and for compiling the information from the various programs into state reports for CNCS. In this model, there is no intermediary between the program at Institution A and the state office. Each program is responsible for focusing on service activities related to the AmeriCorps focus areas of education, health, public safety, or the environment (AmeriCorps State and National, n.d.). Additionally, each program tracks its outcomes using national performance measure standards created by CNCS.

Program Funding

AmeriCorps funding is based on what is known as the Member Service Year (MSY). An MSY is the equivalent for one full-time AmeriCorps member. Programs can determine how many MSY slots they need using a combination of full-time (1,700 hours), half-time (900 hours), reduced half-time (675 hours), quarter-time (450 hours), and minimum time (300) members. The total cost of a given program is determined by multiplying the total MSY requested by the cost per MSY (AmeriCorps Key Terms, n.d).

Programs that are new to AmeriCorps are generally fully funded during the first grant cycle. Funding decreases with each additional grant cycle to provide an opportunity for new programs to be funded and for older programs to become more self-sustaining. As an older program, Institution A must contribute a match of 50% to the grant they receive from AmeriCorps. Matching sources include in-kind support from the university and payment for services from the school district(s) they serve.

Staffing Structure

The day-to-day staff of Institution A's AmeriCorps program consists of one full-time program director, a part-time program coordinator, and a full-time AmeriCorps VISTA member. All three are young, white, females in the first 3 years of their staff position with the organization. They all have bachelor's degrees. Two of the staff members, although in their first few years as staff members, previously served as AmeriCorps members within the program and have familiarity with how the program operates from both an administrative and member perspective.

The director is responsible for the day-to-day management of the AmeriCorps program. She oversees the grant process, including working with fiscal staff at Institution A. She also

serves as the liaison between the AmeriCorps state office and the IHE and is responsible for reporting on program progress throughout the year. She supervises the program coordinator and AmeriCorps VISTA in their tasks and is responsible for overall member management and training. She works particularly closely with the team leaders in the program to assist them in managing their members. She provides communication to the school system and individual school sites regarding member activities. This includes overseeing the development and processing of the SOW from the schools and district detailing the partnership relationship. The director is supervised by the outreach director in the division who serves as the manager of programs that operate within the community.

The program coordinator position is specifically geared around meeting the needs of the members. The position is also known as the “member advocate,” a title that indicates the staff member’s responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of the members by acting in their best interests. Most of the responsibilities of the coordinator include visiting the school sites and working with members on their individual progress. This includes troubleshooting issues members have related to tutoring, team dynamics, or personal issues that impact their service. The coordinator reports to the director and provides her with updates on the progress of the members. The coordinator works approximately 20 hours per week.

The VISTA AmeriCorps member role is specifically centered on assisting with developing, implementing, and tracking mentoring outcomes for the program. The position is a part of a VISTA program operated by a statewide mentoring program that trains AmeriCorps members to go into organizations working with youth to assist with capacity building around mentoring. The VISTA assists with training and member development and works with members on issues related to their relationships with the children they tutor and mentor at the schools.

The program has additional support staff that assist with programming needs as needed on specific issues. These include a fiscal technician that assists with monthly and quarterly fiscal support (accounted for in the in-kind matching funds), the vice provost who serves as the principal investigator for the grant, and the outreach director who serves as the direct supervisor of the AmeriCorps director. Additional training support comes from a student engagement expert and two reading specialists from the city who meet with members on a monthly basis during the service year. Site contacts are designated at each school to serve as a main point of contact for the program. This individual is usually the reading specialist.

Member Structure

The AmeriCorps program at Institution A is one of the largest in the state. The program has a total of 40 AmeriCorps members. Member eligibility is based on the general AmeriCorps rules. Members must be at least 17 years old, have a high school diploma or equivalent, and be a U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident alien. The program consists of 10 full-time team leaders who serve as key points of contacts for each site. Each team leader manages and supervises three quarter-time members who tutor at the site for an average of 15 hours per week. Team leader responsibilities include communicating with the site contact, maintaining the team schedule, assigning members to students/classrooms, and ensuring the success of the team at the school. To assist with these added responsibilities, the team leaders receive additional training and support from the program staff.

Team leaders are generally recent college graduates who are using AmeriCorps as a way to gain professional experience before applying to graduate school or seeking out employment. Members of the program at Institution A can be university students or community members. Typically an estimated 70% of members are students at Institution A. The program's location

on-campus and financial incentives make it an attractive option for the student population. Community members that participate in the program are often using it as a way to get funding for school to attend college after the completion of their term and/or get professional experience in a school setting.

The membership structure of the AmeriCorps program at Institution A was recently changed so that each school site would have a full-time team leader. Previously, some sites had a part-time team leader. The program staff found that in the schools with part-time team leaders the teams were less effective and communication was more challenging. Having more full-time slots impacted the other AmeriCorps slots because the overall MSY for the program was decreased. As a result, quarter-time (450 hours) slots were used for the remaining members to allow for the participation of more members.

The organizational chart shows how the staff, members, and community partners fit together in the program (see Figure 4). The organizational chart illustrates the connections between AmeriCorps as a program within Institution A as a part of the DCE. It also shows the relationship to the AmeriCorps state office as a subgrantee. The other relationships depicted include the reporting structure of staff and members along with the involvement from community partners. The organizational chart in this study was copied from the organizational chart depicted in the member handbook of Institutional A; however, the state office was added to depict the reporting relationship that occurs with the director. Solid lines indicate that there is direct supervision occurring while curved lines pointed in both directions indicate that there is communication and/or reporting that takes place of a collaborative nature that does not involve direct supervision.

Institution A AmeriCorps Organizational Chart

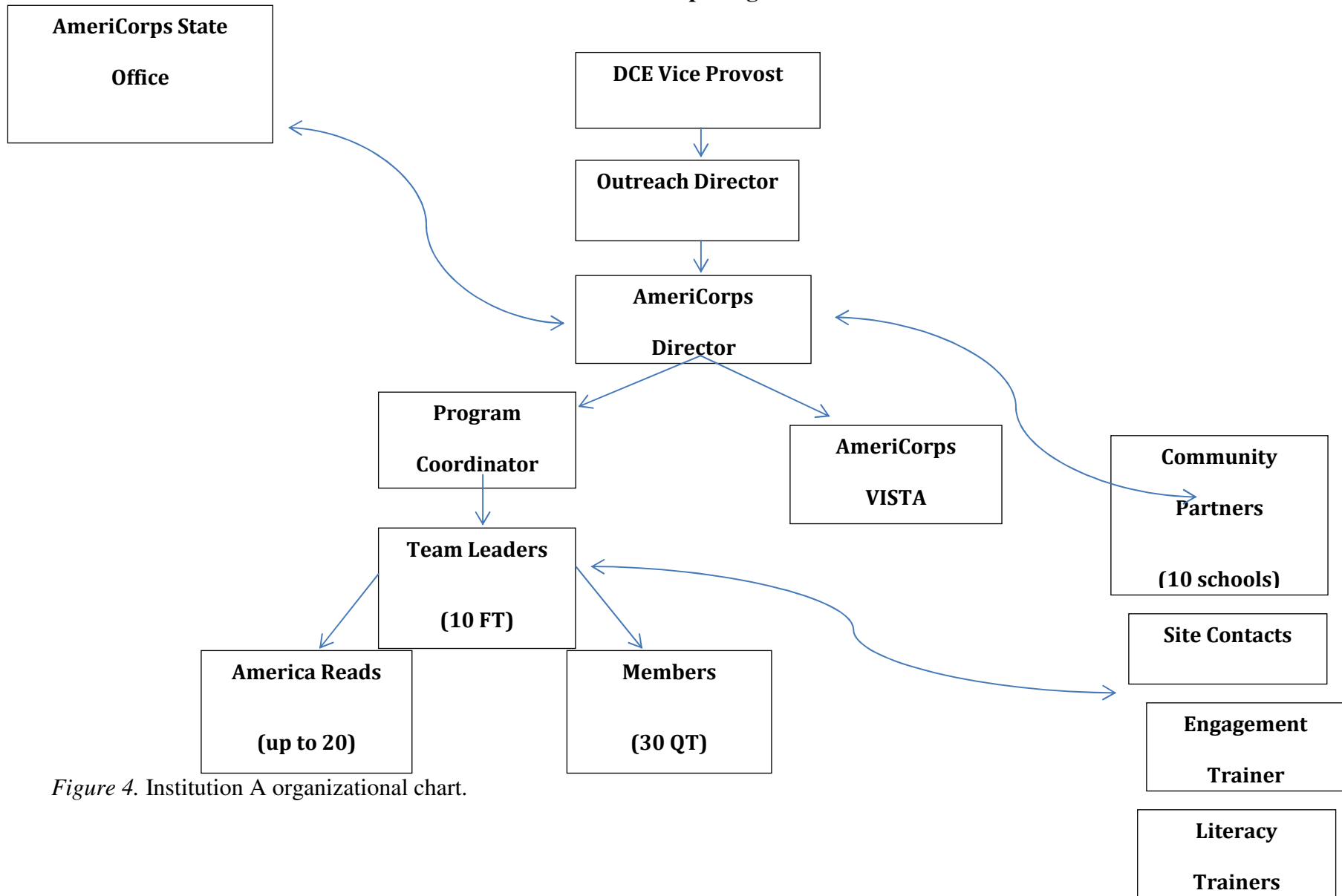


Figure 4. Institution A organizational chart.

Service Activities and Performance Measures

All members in the program participate in tutoring at their designated school site. The performance measures are centered on education and K-12 success. Member activities related to performance measures include classroom support, individual tutoring, and serving as student station support during the literacy hour. The member activities are measured using activity logs, standardized pre and posttests measuring student literacy progress, and teacher pre and posttests.

Other corps activities include participating in national service days such as 9/11 Day of Service, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and National and Global Youth Service Day; completion of Adopt-A-Street clean ups, and biweekly member training. Members are required to report their hours in a Web-based reporting system managed by the DSS. Hours are approved by the school site contact for the team of members at each school before final review and approval by an AmeriCorps staff member at Institution A. Members are encouraged to complete weekly reflection logs in the reporting system about their experience as part of their member development. The reflection logs are viewed as an enhancement to the biweekly trainings that members attend. These trainings focus on literacy and student engagement and are facilitated by external trainers with expertise in those areas. Teams are required to complete a project to benefit their school site at the end of the year. In addition, members must complete an individual culminating project about their AmeriCorps experience.

Document Analysis

The document analysis in this study was used as a method of finding out general information about the programs being examined that would assist with developing interview questions for key informants within the programs. Additionally, the document analysis served as the first method by which collaboration and civic engagement were examined using the

information found in Gadjia (2004), Frey et al. (2006), and *A Crucible Moment* (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Rather than focus specifically on the seven indicators for the levels of collaboration and four civic engagement indicators (totaling 11), I decided to use a more broad approach in this first stage of the research. I looked for evidence of collaboration that showed basic levels of working together for a shared purpose and broad indicators civic engagement that promoted the collective action of individuals to address social issues.

Institution A does a great deal of reporting to multiple stakeholders. As a result, I limited the information I reviewed to key administrative documents that would provide me with insights into the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership. I also used information from varying years to obtain the most up-to-date and complete documentation. These documents included the initial 3-year grant, the 2013-2014 program design manual and monthly reports for 2012-2013. All of these documents are required elements of participation in the AmeriCorps state program. They are completed by the AmeriCorps program staff and then reviewed and approved by the AmeriCorps state office staff.

AmeriCorps Grant

The AmeriCorps grant for state programs is completed for a 3-year cycle that is renewed each year. The initial grant provides the state office with a detailed picture of what a subgrantee hopes to accomplish. It has several parts that include an executive summary, rationale and approach/program design, organizational capability, cost effectiveness, and budget adequacy. For the program at Institution A, this was more detailed than for other programs because program progress in previous grant cycles needed to be shown. Additionally, as the program

match decreases, the program must show match funds from other sources. The grant is submitted through the eGrants portal, reviewed, and approved by the state office staff.

The 2013-2016 grant that Institution A submitted requested 56 members to support 12 schools. When funded, the grant supported 40 members (split between full-time and quarter-time slots). That number of members reduced the schools supported to 10. This change between what was requested by the program and what CNCS provided demonstrates the nature of the collaboration between an IHE and the AmeriCorps program that requires compromise. Even a well-developed grant request could potentially be revised or rejected based on the needs of the subgrantee and funds available. The grant does not explicitly discuss what the state office will do to support the subgrantee and lacks the two-way exchange of a collaborative relationship; however, the grant submission process is a critical first step in opening the lines of communication between the subgrantee and state office.

The grant included a statement of need and description service activities the program at Institution A hoped to complete. As such, it had a variety of aspects related to civic engagement that were highlighted. In addition to describing the service members would complete, the grant specifically detailed how the corps would impact the community through tangible performance measures. The performance measure focus areas provided by CNCS and must be used as guides for program activities based on the service focus area (i.e., education, health, disaster relief, etc.). The performance measures serve as checks and balance system for civic engagement and serve as a basic form of collaboration between the program and CNCS to address public issues together using a shared measurement system.

The grant does not have overwhelming evidence of IHE-AmeriCorps collaboration aside from the fact that it is a binding contract between the two, but it does serve as an important

cornerstone of the collaboration that will occur between the subgrantee and the community partner. In the case of Institution A, the grant spelled out why there was a need in the city for a literacy initiative in elementary schools, how the program could address it through an AmeriCorps partnership, and what the expected outcomes would be in the end.

Program Design Manual

The program design manual is a required component of what the state office calls precontract items for each program. These precontract items must be completed prior to the release of funds for the service year. The program design manual is a document that the individual programs complete using a framework provided by the state office. It complements the initial program grant as a document that spells out how program activities will be carried out as opposed to discussing goals and outcomes. The very nature of the document itself is collaborative in that it connects all of the AmeriCorps programs in the state to a shared structure that has the ability to be individualized to each program. Elements of the manual include the program purpose and objective, program staffing responsibility, member recruitment, member training, member management, fiscal management, and documentation. It has a total of 14 individual sections with the largest section policies and procedures consisting of 33 individual policies ranging from dress code to a nondiscrimination statement. These forms are part of the member enrollment packet and in addition to being in the program design manual are signed by each member and kept on file in the program office.

The program design manual as a requirement of the precontract items, forces AmeriCorps programs to communicate with the AmeriCorps state office about their program structure and activities. It makes clear who will do what in the program including what parties are responsible for communicating with the state office on specific issues. This applies to the program staff and

interaction with the community partners. Most importantly, the program design manual serves as a document to provide internal infrastructure for the program. As a result, it shows the state office's commitment to ensuring that programs have the resources and support necessary to carry out the program. Because the template of the design manual was created by the state office, programs know that the items included within it are mandatory aspects of making the partnership effective.

The items in the manual most directly related to civic engagement are the sections on member recruitment, training, and service days. Member recruitment explicitly asks programs to think about inclusion/diversity and includes a disability self-assessment. These items show the state office's commitment to having a diverse corps. Training must be incorporated into the plan including a calendar for the year to show that it occurs on a continuous basis. Training must also specifically include an emergency preparedness plan. Finally, the programs must describe their plan to actively engage in various service days like the 9/11 Day of Service, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and National and Global Youth Service Day. The service days are separate activities that may not correspond to a program's general activities, but demonstrate the corps' commitment to being active citizens in the community and part of the national service movement.

Overall, the structure, design and intent of the program design manual create a space for program staff to think strategically about how they collaborate internally and externally. It also provides an opportunity for staff to think about the ways that they plan to engage members in the national service movement from recruitment until the end of their service commitment.

Monthly Reports

I reviewed the available monthly reports from the 2012-2013 service year. The reports are fairly short and are submitted to the state office using an online reporting system. The designated program officer reviews the report and approves it each month. The parts of the report include sustainability (includes marketing, media, member development, collaboration, etc.), challenges, special events, and a member highlight. For the program at Institution A, each month included the required member trainings on literacy and engagement. Below, I detailed some unique highlights from the months available along with a list of the challenges that were described from the year. November, March, and June did not have monthly reports.

September→program start-up and orientation.

October→an article is posted about the program on the DCE website.

December→state monitoring visit.

January→team leader optional potlucks begin.

February→midyear meetings with members.

April→program hosts campus-wide book drive.

May→program successfully acquires VISTA for next program year.

July→all quarter-time members exited.

August→program year-ends.

Challenges are listed below:

- The required CNCS background checks are delayed causing members to come enrollment to be slow and staggered (reported 2 months).
- The program has a late start date in the schools.

- There are problems with an after-school partner program that was piloted the previous year (reported 4 months).
- There are problems with a site approving member timesheets.
- There are numerous challenges that impact member hour completion—snow days, spring break, exams, etc.).
- There are several challenges leading to members leaving the program including health issues, absenteeism, and lack of commitment.

The monthly reports have the ability to serve as collaborative documents that promote discussion between the IHE and AmeriCorps office. Unfortunately, based on my experience as a program administrator and discussions with the current director, the monthly reports tend to be approved without discussion. The sustainability efforts section provides important updates on program activities while the challenges section has the potential to spark important discussions on how to improve program administration and management. This is particularly true when challenges occur for several months like the one with the after-school partner or background checks. The reports do promote overall civic engagement through the special events and member highlight sections that provide an opportunity for programs to discuss positive aspects of programming. These aspects of the report have been used by the state office in years past and currently to get information that could be used in the state monthly volunteerism newsletter.

Summary of Document Analysis

The program grant, program design manual, and monthly reports are documents that the AmeriCorps program at Institution A uses to inform the day-to-day management of the program. They greatly impact the way the program is managed and how the program staff interacts with the AmeriCorps state office. While they do not provide a comprehensive picture of the

collaborative and/or civic engagement efforts in IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships, they are an important starting point to think about the relationship between Institution A and the state office.

Interviews

I conducted interviews with several key informants from Institution A. These included the day-to-day staff, vice provost, and fiscal technician. The outreach director was not included as a key informant because he had only been in his position for 1 year at the time of the study and was less familiar with the administrative aspects of the AmeriCorps program specifically. Additionally, the training support staff was not interviewed because they do not have interaction with the AmeriCorps state office.

IHE Day-to-Day Program Staff

I interviewed the day-to-day administrative staff of Institution A at their on-campus office. It is located on the outskirts of the IHE within the bordering neighborhood community. The campus is very urban and a main city street runs through it. There is a lot of traffic on campus along with numerous businesses, restaurants, and housing. The AmeriCorps office is located on the bottom floor of a university residence hall so it is easily accessible to students and faculty while also being more community-centered in its location. The office also houses a outreach director who serves as a liaison with the local neighborhoods surrounding the IHE, a university police station hub, and a computer lab that is open to the general public on specific days listed on the office door.

It is quiet and still on the Friday that I come to talk with the staff despite the many programs operating within the space. This slow pace is largely due to the time of year—university students are still on summer break and the AmeriCorps program is coming to the conclusion of the 13-14 service year. My former role as the administrator of the AmeriCorps

program at Institution A makes me more aware of the high and low periods of programming so I was strategic and intentional in selecting the time of year to interview the staff to ensure they would be available to fully participate. This timing is particularly ideal for completing the interviews because the staff is in a generally reflective mood as they wrap up the service year and begin the process of completing final data collections and reporting for the state office, community partner, and university. In addition, the rush of the new service year cycle is still about a month away providing the staff with an opportunity to take a break for the interviews without feeling as if it is pulling them away from other tasks they should be completing.

Despite the stillness of the office, there are illustrations of the activities that occur throughout the year that show an active environment where students, staff, and community members work together on various projects. There is evidence of partnerships with the local police, neighborhood clean-ups, and youth-oriented activities pictured on the wall. Upon entering the building, there is a large dry erase board with a listing of all of the AmeriCorps service sites. Beneath each location is a color-coded listing of the members that serve at each site along with a picture of the member.

A back office is filled with two computers, art supplies, children's books, and files used for member activities at the schools. There are three individual offices for the staff that work in the location—one for the AmeriCorps director, one for the outreach director, and another that is shared by the AmeriCorps member advocate and AmeriCorps VISTA member.

A large multipurpose room is in the back of the building and is where various community meetings occur, AmeriCorps members meet, and university service-related activities may happen during the year. The large room is surrounded by a small kitchen and computer lab with 14 computer stations on either side.

Program director interview findings. I interviewed the program director, Rebecca Jones¹, first. She had been in her position over 1 year and was admittedly still learning all that it entails. She was formally an AmeriCorps member in the program at Institution A during the time that I was the administrator of the program. After 2 years as a full-time team leader, she went on to work under my supervision as a part-time coordinator in the program for 2 years. When I transitioned to another program within our division, she became a full-time staff member and eventually the director of the AmeriCorps program at Institution A. Her experiences as a member of the program, coordinator, and director provided a variety of insights into how the program operates from different perspectives. During the first year of Ms. Jones' transition to full-time staff, I served as the off-site director of the program consulting with her on overall program management while she ran the day-to-day program activities. At the time of the study, I had not supervised Ms. Jones or had any role in the AmeriCorps program at Institution A for 1 year.

The interview lasted 43 minutes and was done inside Ms. Jones' office. Her office had a dry erase board on the door noting the times that she would be out of the office for the week along with her phone number. I sat in a chair that was reserved for meetings with members. The office was neat, but had several drawers of locked file cabinets lining the walls along with multiple file organizers on the desk—evidence of the large amounts of paperwork associated with the program.

After the interview, I transcribed the interview and coded it using the 11 indicators for collaboration and civic engagement found in the Frey et al. (2006), Gadjia (2004) and *Crucible Moment* (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012) studies.

¹ Pseudonyms are used for all interview participants to protect their identities.

The interview showed evidence of varying levels collaboration and civic engagement. Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of collaboration comments present in the interview.

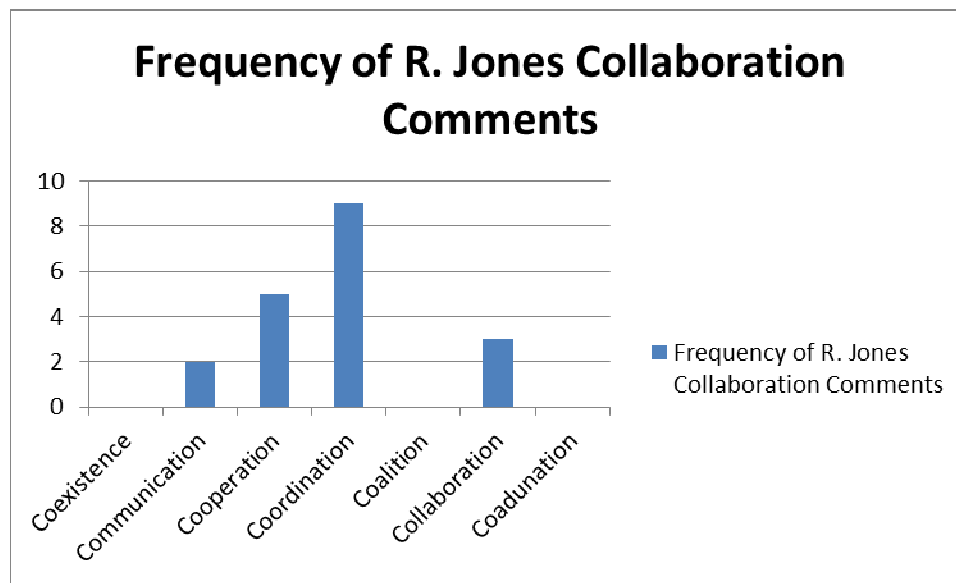


Figure 5. Frequency of R. Jones collaboration comments.

For the most part, evidence of collaboration was based on coordination. According to Gadja (2004), who describes this level of collaboration using the term partnering, collaborations at this level are able to share resources to reach mutual goals, have a central body of people with specific tasks, have formal channels of communication, and have decision-making mechanisms in place; however, there may be a level of conflict present.

During the interview, Ms. Jones frequently cited having consistent communication with the AmeriCorps state office that was predetermined and occurred at various points during the year. In addition, she discussed that reporting was an integral part of her job that provided the state office with updates on how the program was meeting performance objectives and goals. She stated:

As far as support, [the state office] makes sure that we are doing things that are allowable in the grant provisions and they do it on an as needed basis I feel like. I mean they do

have their checks and their monitoring which they do so we get that which wouldn't be as often if it wasn't for the state commission. So it's making sure that we are in compliance on a lot of things. (R. Jones)

It was clear that the state office and program had defined roles to support the program at Institution A and mechanisms for assessing progress that all of the stakeholders at the AmeriCorps state office and Institution A understood.

While evidence of the AmeriCorps state office and IHE working together towards shared goals was clearly demonstrated, there was some indication that the goals of the two organizations differed at times. Ms. Jones stated:

I really think for me it comes down to our performance, our satisfaction of our partners, and the satisfaction of the members. I think that both are equally important and if you don't create the high-quality experience for the members you're not going to have a successful program. That is something that we really try to focus on in providing adequate opportunities for reflection and really customizing the AmeriCorps experience to the members. (R. Jones)

Throughout the interview, Ms. Jones emphasized the AmeriCorps state office's role as compliance officers who were focused on whether the program met the performance measures they stated in the grant. For Institution A, those goals were centered on education and K-12 success. The comment cited above, illustrated Ms. Jones' perception of program success that takes into account the satisfaction of members and partners in addition to meeting performance measures.

Figure 6 shows the distribution of civic engagement comments within the civic engagement model. For the most part, evidence of civic ethos and civic action appear more

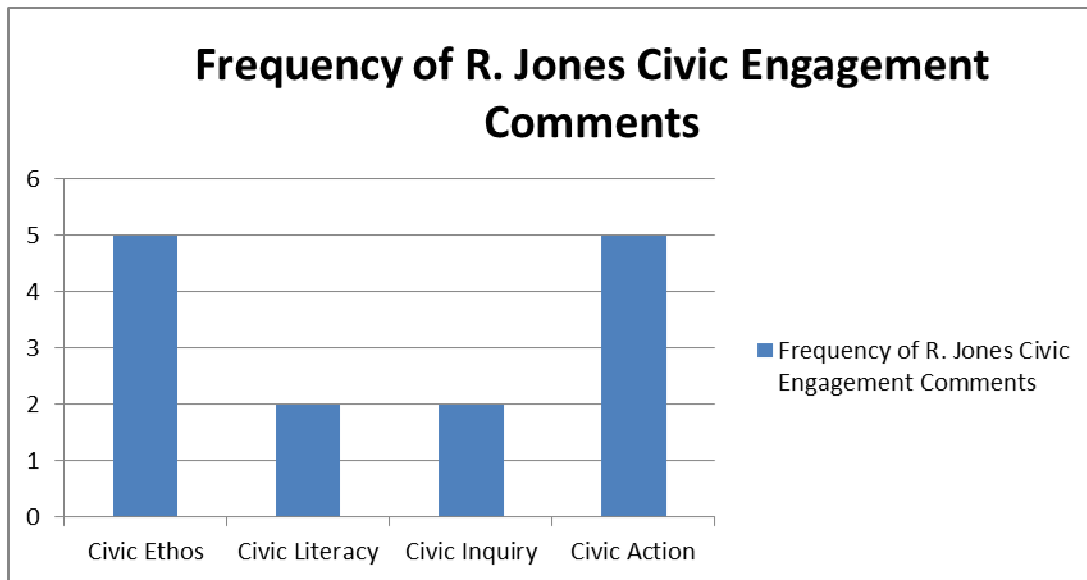


Figure 6. Frequency of R. Jones civic engagement comments.

frequently. This did not come as a surprise since the goal of AmeriCorps is to provide its members sustained civic involvement in the community to engender a lifelong sense of civic responsibility. According to *A Crucible Moment* (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012), civic ethos is the

infusion of democratic values into customs and habits of everyday practices, structures, and interactions; the defining character of the [program] and those in it that emphasizes open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person, ethical behaviors, and concern for the well-being of others; a spirit of public-mindedness that influences the goals of the [program] and its engagement with local and global communities (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15).

Ms. Jones stated that being in the AmeriCorps program provides the members with an opportunity to “feel like they are a part of something that is going across the country—that idea of dedicating yourself to a year of service is something that they are proud of.” The emphasis on

connecting local membership in AmeriCorps to the national movement along with the sustained opportunity to serve provides the members at Institution A with a sense of duty and responsibility to make service a part of their daily lives in a meaningful way.

Civic action as defined by *A Crucible Moment* is the:

capacity and commitment both to participate constructively with diverse others and to work collectively to address common problems; the practice of working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people's lives and the sustainability of the planet; the ability to analyze systems in order to plan and engage in public action; the moral and political courage to take risks to achieve a greater public good (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15).

Ms. Jones noted the ability of the AmeriCorps members to be active at their school sites through special projects designed to get the elementary students interested in reading, volunteering, and giving back to their community at an early age.

While civic literacy and civic inquiry were not as prevalent in Ms. Jones' discussion of the AmeriCorps program at Institution A, they were present. Civic literacy and civic inquiry are defined below, respectively:

Cultivation of foundational knowledge about fundamental principles and debates about democracy expressed over time, both within the United States and in other countries; familiarity with several key historical struggles, campaigns, and social movements undertaken to achieve the full promise of democracy; the ability to think critically about complex issues and to seek and evaluate information about issues that have public consequences,

and the practice of inquiring about the civic dimensions and public consequences of a subject of study; the exploration of the impact of choices on different constituencies and entities, including the planet; the deliberate consideration of differing points of views; the ability to describe and analyze civic intellectual debates within one's major or areas of study (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012, p. 15).

In particular, civic inquiry and literacy came into play as a part of member training and development in the program. Ms. Jones stated:

I mean you talk to them about service, about the service movement and about volunteer mobilization and all those other things. It gets them—I mean through training you have those conversations. It gives them a chance to talk to each other about what community needs are and what they can do. It provides that through training and member development as well as the experience. I think they do get a real clear sense of what their responsibility is and in our program from what our members say a lot of them do continue either in the schools or something that is aligned to help them improve their community. (R. Jones)

The emphasis on member engagement was largely related to tutoring elementary school students and supporting an inner-city school district. AmeriCorps requires that no more than 20% of member time be spent on training. This limited space for formalized member development may have impacted the amount of civic inquiry and literacy the program staff was able to integrate into programming.

Other themes emerged regarding collaboration with AmeriCorps. These included the importance of sustained service and challenges related to funding and timelines.

Sustained service. Multiple times, Ms. Jones’ discussed how the opportunities for sustained service were different from other opportunities typically found in a university setting. She stated, “It is a unique opportunity for students to really get to commit that level of time at the school and it not being such a time burden.” In that statement, Ms. Jones notes the impact of having members serve at a specific location, in this case an elementary school, for their entire service year.

In addition to benefitting the elementary schools with a continual source of support, the part-time membership opportunities at Institution A provide members that are full-time university students with an AmeriCorps option that allows them to focus on their service and academics simultaneously. Ms. Jones further stated, “Again, it also allows us to create an

experience for students that is really not like very many others at the university where they are allowed to spend this much time doing their service.” This has been particularly useful for members at Institution A who, according to Mrs. Jones, are generally older students that are education members whose service provides an opportunity to “demonstrate what they know through working with students. . .and fits into a lot of their goals.” According to Ms. Jones, duration is an important aspect of service that leads to member growth both personally and professionally. Ms. Jones noted that the unique nature of the AmeriCorps program at Institution A has even drawn some students to apply to the university to have an opportunity to serve in AmeriCorps while pursuing their education. Ms. Jones cites this type of feedback as a bonus for the program, community, and university.

Timeline and funding challenges. When asked specifically about program challenges, Ms. Jones discussed difficulty associated with getting in precontract items in the appropriate timelines set by the state office. Each year the state office sends participating programs a checklist of items they must send in prior to the release of funds. These items generally need to be signed by an authorized individual at the university. Forms include certification of various procedures, completion of a program design template, and member position descriptions. She stated.

Everything is pretty clearly laid out as far as the AmeriCorps needs. I think the challenge is the timelines of when they need the information. A lot of times its—there is just a lack of communication. . . .They need things immediately and it’s stressful sometimes. I mean we have our regular reporting schedule and that’s very easy to get that stuff done, but I don’t know the turnaround time is just sometimes quick. (R. Jones)

Ms. Jones noted that universities have their own timelines for reporting that sometimes conflict with those of the AmeriCorps state office and wondered whether other universities are having similar challenges.

Challenges related to funding were apparent throughout the interview. Ms. Jones noted early on that she did not think that Institution A could manage a similar program without the support of AmeriCorps. She stated that without the living stipend and education award that it would not be “as easy to get students to engage in that type of activity if there weren’t the benefits that AmeriCorps specifically offers.” As a university, Institution A does not have the funding available to provide members with incentives like an education award or living stipend to increase participation in a program like AmeriCorps.

Ms. Jones mentioned recent challenges related to staffing and member slots that are directly related to the overall funding of the program that demonstrate how issues within an interorganizational collaboration are often interconnected. She stated:

We are valued by [the city] still and it’s something that we want to keep going for them and I think their biggest complaint has just been the decrease in members and especially this year it was challenging-- just we were in so many different classrooms and the need was just so far stretched. We had a lot of 15 hour a week people in multiple classrooms so it was just making sure that we’re doing everything we can to eliminate the stress on members especially going through transitions. I think just communicating regularly with everyone involved. (R. Jones)

Ms. Jones indicated that the overall grant funding for Institution A’s program had been reduced to allow for more funding of additional programs in the state, with a focus on bringing on new programs. She believes that the state office has been looking for older programs to begin finding

additional ways to be self-sustaining, but noted that the university did not have the capacity to operate the program without funding from the AmeriCorps state office. The decreased funding resulted in less member slots decreasing the overall corps size, which directly impacted the number of members and amount of service each school site received during the year.

Another issue compounded by the decreased funding was the staffing of the program. Ms. Jones noted that while progress monitoring and performance measure requirements often increased over time, that staffing did not. In particular, she expressed a need for more assistance with the reporting requirements stating that it is “a lot and those are just things that I don’t really get that much support in doing.” She further noted that:

I think the university values AmeriCorps. I think that over the years the presence of AmeriCorps has just increased on campus. I think that even though it is a financial burden to some extent on the university I think that they value it and it’s something they want to keep going hopefully by us getting more work-study students involved. Maybe we can see that where takes us. I do see it continuing as long as the funding is available.

(R. Jones)

While the AmeriCorps state office provides funding to cover the majority of the member stipend and some administrative costs, the staff salaries are largely left to the university to cover. Ms. Jones had an awareness that to run the program, Institution A takes a financial loss, but felt that the overall community and member benefits outweighed those costs as long as there continued to be reasonable funding from AmeriCorps to support the program.

Program coordinator interview findings. After the program director, I interviewed the program coordinator, Hanna Roberts. She has been in her position for 2 years serving in a part-time capacity. Previously, she served two terms in the program as a part-time member and team

leader, respectively. Like the director, she served in the corps during the years that I was the administrator of the program. Unlike Ms. Jones, Ms. Roberts' participation in the program as both a member and staff person has been limited to part-time opportunities due to her full-time student status.

The interview lasted 14 minutes and was conducted inside of Ms. Roberts' office. She shares her office with the VISTA AmeriCorps member. Like the director of the program, she and the VISTA member also have a dry erase board on the door to indicate their schedules for the week. While there was a hanging cabinet for storage, there were not drawers of files filling the office like the ones in the director's space. Figure 7 shows the distribution of collaboration comments present in the interview.

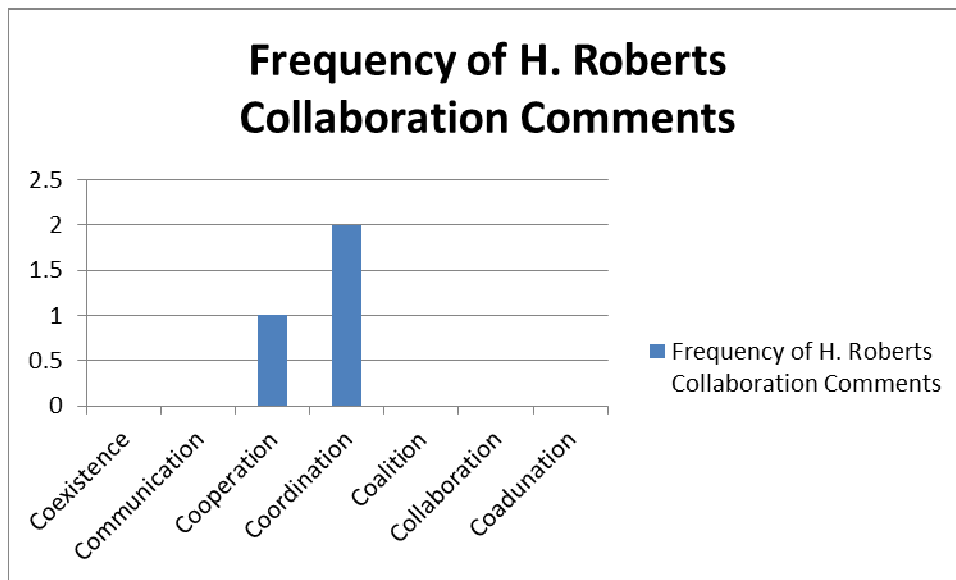


Figure 7. Frequency of H. Roberts collaboration comments.

Overall, there was not a lot of evidence of collaboration with AmeriCorps in the interview. When collaboration was evident, it was usually not in relation to the IHE-AmeriCorps collaboration, but in relation to how the AmeriCorps program fit into the larger IHE structure.

Ms. Roberts stated, “I mean our division supports us and the vice provost is supportive and give suggestions and things.” When asked specifically about challenges in the partnership between AmeriCorps and the IHE, she stated:

I’m not sure if I could answer that fully because I think there is a good partnership in terms of doing what we should and incorporating the university into things. The director has done a lot of work in making sure we have our goals set up for that. (H. Roberts)

As a part-time coordinator who did not interact with the AmeriCorps state office on a consistent basis, it was more difficult for Ms. Roberts to specifically speak to the IHE-AmeriCorps relationship.

Ms. Roberts did allude to differences in how the state office perceived program success. She stated:

I think program success is not always going to be meeting your goals. . . I think my position in general can stand for that because even just stories from members who may not have finished the program can say I felt supported because there was someone there that could meet my needs and that goes along with retention, but our retention might not show that those members might not have finished. (H. Roberts)

Ms. Roberts used her role as member advocate, one that was unique to Institution A, to illustrate factors that cannot be accounted for in performance measures related to program success.

AmeriCorps uses member retention as one several indicators of overall program success; however, that indicator is an end result that is reported at the conclusion of the service year. The work that Ms. Roberts did with members to keep them engaged and committed to the program throughout the year was not reflected in the number that was reported to the AmeriCorps state office.

While Ms. Roberts was unable to speak to many aspects of the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership as a collaboration, she was able to discuss the collaborative process that occurs within the program. She stated, “I think one thing we should do is have one person invested in having communication with site contacts. I think it was more confusing this year because everyone had their hand on supervising.” This comment speaks to internal communication issues that impact the way that the staff members work together.

One aspect of collaboration that Ms. Roberts did discuss was the many stakeholders involved in the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership. She stated:

I think there are a lot of people that we are reporting to so it puts a lot of stipulations and things on us that we have to think about as far as what does the university want, what does our division want, what does AmeriCorps want and then what does [the community partner] want. There are a lot of stakeholders in it so I think it is doable, but there are a lot of things that we can't control. Like some people may not understand—our members may not understand or our [partners] may not understand why we can't have more people, just not knowing that our hands are in a lot of different pots. (H. Roberts)

Ms. Roberts had an awareness of the bigger picture of how complex the partnership is as illustrated by the comment above, but because of her limited role as a program coordinator, did not have as much insight into the administrative factors that impact the relationship between IHEs and AmeriCorps programs.

Collaboration, although a specific point of discussion in the interview, did not show up much in Ms. Roberts' interview responses, but there were a lot of comments that focused on civic engagement. Figure 8 shows the distribution of collaboration comments present in the interview.

In particular, Ms. Roberts discussed the ways in which the staff were making efforts to make the members more civically literate by providing them with member development and training opportunities that promoted their understanding of their role as AmeriCorps members.

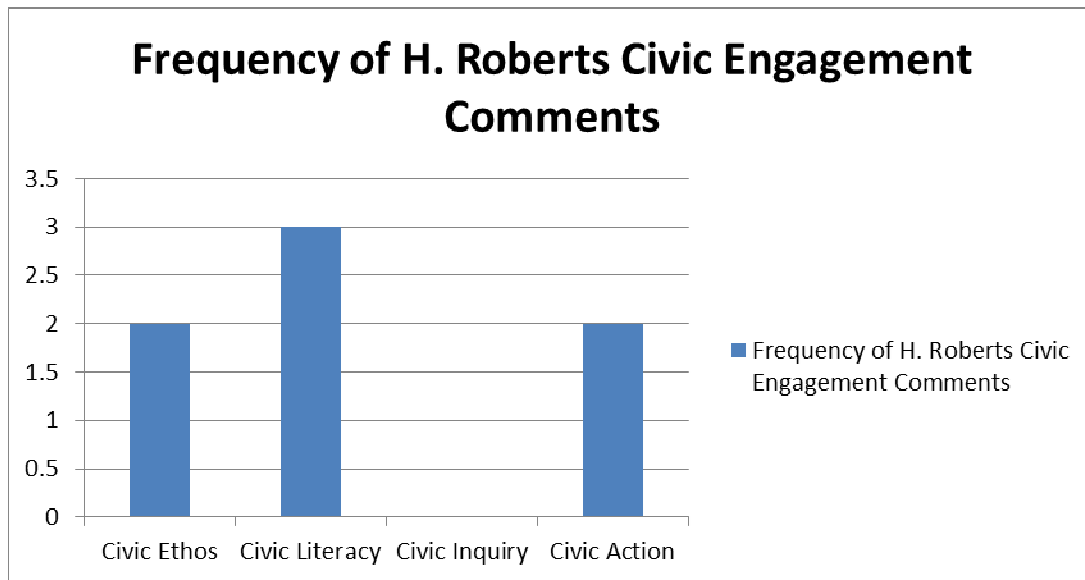


Figure 8. Frequency of H. Roberts civic engagement comments.

She stated:

In our program it comes with training and that bigger picture. With our program our members are trained in tutoring and all of those aspects, but we do talk about that impact we are making and the purpose of our program. Even just making sure people are knowledgeable about the program when they are talking about it in the community as well. (H. Roberts)

In addition, to discussing the importance of training to supporting members' understanding of service and community issues, Ms. Roberts also described AmeriCorps as an important connector between the university and community using the term "bridge" three times in her interview.

Another theme that emerged during the interview with Ms. Roberts was staffing. In particular, she discussed challenges related to internal coordination and staffing support.

Internal coordination. Ms. Roberts discussed how the overlapping roles of the staff members in the AmeriCorps program at Institution A can be confusing for members and community partners. She stated that the “program director approved time sheets, the VISTA visited team leaders, and I visited members.” Creating a successful collaboration between different organizations becomes that much harder when the internal structures at an organization are confusing or complicated.

Staffing support. Like the director, Ms. Roberts also saw the need for additional staffing of the AmeriCorps program at Institution A. She stated:

I think that there should be one more full-time staff member who is focused on site supervision just because it is really hard to have the VISTA focused on mentoring, me focused on my role with training and member development, but I’m only part-time so there should be another full-time person. (H. Roberts)

As indicated in a previous comment by Ms. Roberts, the lack of additional full-time support could also be a contributing factor in the confusion over who completes what tasks.

VISTA AmeriCorps interview findings. I interviewed the VISTA AmeriCorps member, Susie Clark, last. She began her position last August and was nearing the end of her 1-year, full-time term with AmeriCorps at the time of the interview. Prior to becoming the VISTA for the AmeriCorps program at Institution A, Ms. Clark served in City Year, an AmeriCorps program that works to address the achievement gap in education by providing students and schools with tutoring, after-school support, and community resources to promote academic success (City Year, n.d.). Ms. Clark’s experience working in inner-city schools as an AmeriCorps member prepared her to provide support for the program at Institution A. Although, Ms. Clark was familiar with AmeriCorps as an organization, she was new to the program at

Institution A, her role as a VISTA, and the city in which service was taking place. I interviewed Ms. Clark in the multipurpose room of the AmeriCorps office. The interview lasted 15 minutes.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of collaboration comments present in the interview with Ms. Clark. Like the program coordinator, Ms. Clark lacked comments that specifically touched on the collaboration with AmeriCorps. When she did reference the IHE-AmeriCorps relationship she distanced herself from it referring to the role that the director played as a liaison. She stated:

I think Rebecca has been doing a good job being that liaison between the AmeriCorps folks and the state office and Delores and our Division. So the relationship she shares with the state. I know she talks and communicates with them reporting with the vice provost through that connection. (S. Clark)

While Ms. Clark had a full-time role, she had specific tasks that limited her scope of reference for understanding all of the ways the organizations collaborated administratively.

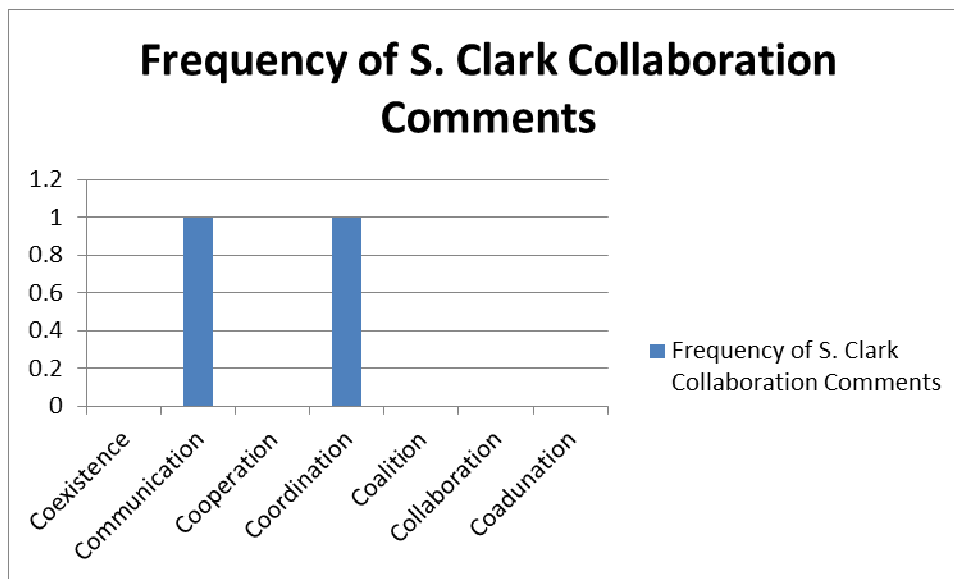


Figure 9. Frequency of S. Clark interviewee collaboration comments.

Unlike Ms. Roberts, who focused on some of the internal collaborative issues, Ms. Clark's other comment regarding collaboration was in regards to the coordination that takes place with the schools. She specifically cited how the members were unable to perform tests with their students to gauge performance, stating that it was not "plausible" for members to complete the tests because of their schedules and roles. This impacted the performance measures because the test was a part of the grant that needed to be reported on.

There was much more evidence of civic engagement in the interview responses from Ms. Clark as seen in Figure 10. Ms. Clark emphasized the goal of AmeriCorps to impact change by taking an active role in the community. She described the active engagement of the members several times citing how it was important that they went to the schools and worked with the children as tutors and mentors. She stated, "AmeriCorps helps serve that role by being extremely involved in the community, especially with education and our [community partner]—serving the university through being engaged with students at our [community partner] and helping raise literacy scores." AmeriCorps differs from other volunteer experiences in that it directly serves the community by addressing a specific need in partnership with community stakeholders.

Comments related to civic ethos came up several times in Ms. Clark's interview. She did not limit her discussion to how students developed a sense of lifelong engagement from participation in the corps, but expanded the conversation to include the IHE. She stated:

As for the university, I think it gives students amazing exposure if they are interested in education, if they are interested in any kind of youth nonprofit field, or just gaining experience it is a great way to do that. In addition to that, it serves a greater university

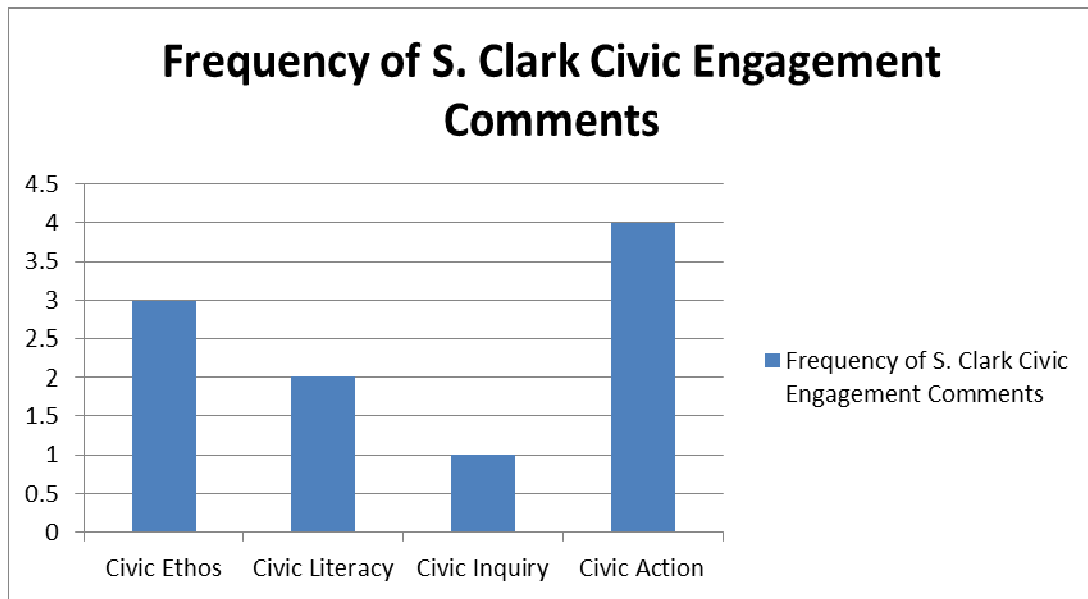


Figure 10. Frequency of S. Clark interviewee civic engagement comments.

and community partnership by strengthening schools and being a part of it. It is a great connection that we share. (S. Clark)

Ms. Clark shared a similar perspective to Ms. Roberts noting that AmeriCorps was an important connector between the university and community. Other themes that emerged from the interview with Ms. Clark included sustained service and data collection.

Sustained service. Like the director, Ms. Clark made several comments about how important the duration of the members' service was the students that were served in the schools. She stated that the "because of the consistency of our members we are really able to influence students and their literacy habits." She further stated that the year-long service commitment often inspired members to "join another year because they are so inspired by it and they want to continue." The time members spend serving the schools serves as a benefit to the community and often spurs personal development and growth.

Data collection. Ms. Clark had some observations regarding data collection as well. She stated:

I think receiving the data from [the community partner] and from our members. The paperwork that they fill out sometimes is inconsistent in the way they fill it out or hand it in—if we can have a better way of doing that. That has been the most challenging part for me. (S. Clark)

Compiling the data from the various sites and members related to student progress was challenging for Ms. Clark. She had thought about ways to streamline the process and make it more efficient stating that developing an app for paperwork might be a creative solution.

Day-to-Day Staff Interview Findings Summary

Overall, the interviews with the day-to-day staff of the AmeriCorps program at Institution A were informative. Evidence of collaboration and civic engagement were present in the interviews. The collaboration stages that were most evident in the interviews were cooperation and coordination. This indicates that the organizations work together with clear roles to share resources (Gadja, 2004). There was some evidence of collaboration, but most interaction was at the low-mid stages of collaboration demonstrating that there is room for collaborative growth in the partnerships between Institution A and the AmeriCorps state office. Figure 11 shows the distribution of comments related to collaboration.

Figure 12 shows the distribution of civic engagement comments for the day-to-day staff at Institution A. There was evidence of all of the civic engagement codes in the interviews of the day-to-day staff of Institution A. Civic action and ethos were the most evident in the interviews. They were most evident when the staff discussed member training and service activities. Civic inquiry, while present, was least evident in the interviews.

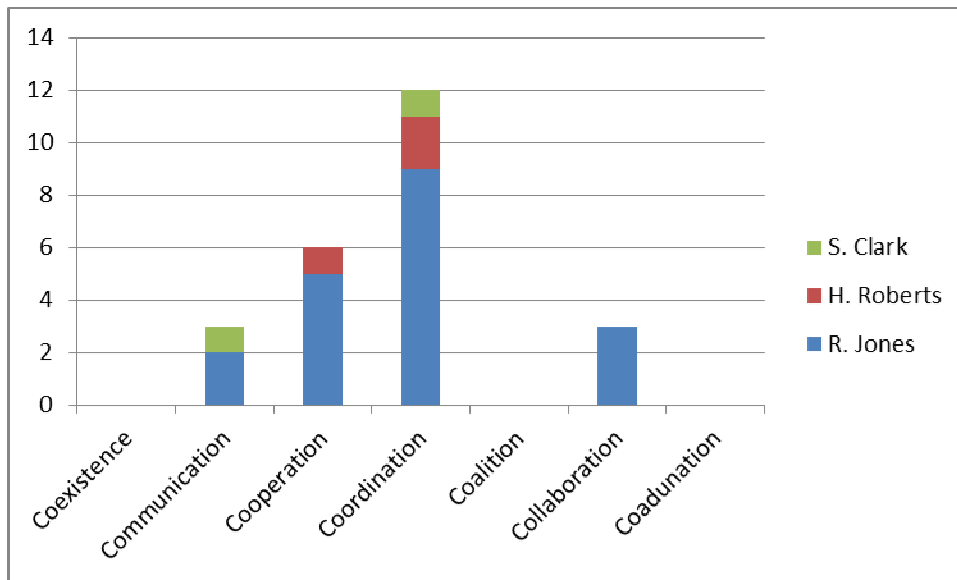


Figure 11. Institution A frequency of day-to-day staff collaboration comments.

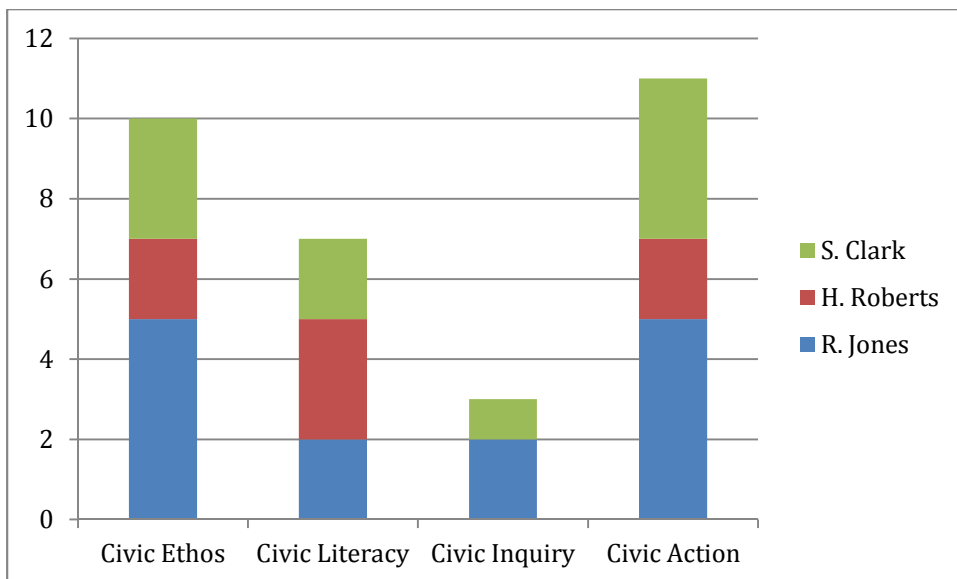


Figure 12. Institution A frequency of day-to-day staff civic engagement comments.

Other themes emerged that did not fit into the categories of collaboration or civic engagement, but were important aspects of program administration highlighted by the staff. Table 2 shows the additional themes that came up in the interviews. These other themes all seemed to fall into the categories of challenge and benefits to having an IHE-AmeriCorps

Table 2

Institution A Day-to-Day Staff Interview Findings Matrix

	Director	Program coordinator	VISTA
Benefits			
Connection to national service movement	X		X
Sustained service	X		X
Member professional experience/ networking	X	X	X
Accountability	X		
Member/program financial incentives	X	X	X
Community influence	X	X	X
IHE↔Community bridge		X	X
Program success outside of performance measures	X	X	X
Challenges			
Timelines/deadlines	X		
Funding	X		
Staffing	X	X	X
Reporting	X		X

partnership. Some of the additional themes that all of the staff noted related to program success outside of performance measures, community influence, and staffing. The commonalities associated with the aforementioned themes are listed below.

Program success outside of performance measures. Some of the comments related to the staff's perceptions of program success are listed below:

- I really think for me it comes down to our performance, our satisfaction of our partners, and the satisfaction of the members. I think that both are equally important and if you don't create the high-quality experience for the members you're not going to have a successful program. That is something that we really try to focus on in providing adequate opportunities for reflection and really customizing the AmeriCorps experience to the members. I think we put a lot of efforts in that. (R. Jones)
- Program success I think obviously comes from reflecting on meeting my personal goals and seeing what I have done, but also looking at our data and seeing what was our retention, how has student scores improved, and seeing that overall picture. And I think program success is not always going to be meeting your goals. There are going to be things that are accessible outside of that, but taking time overall to think about that. (H. Roberts)
- Of course, meeting objectives is important, but I think improving from year-to-year can be an extremely, like that shows success in other ways too. If we improved in our retention rate, if we improved in our literacy rate, if students from our survey results are feeling more engaged [on-site] than that is success to me—having positive feedback from the members as well. (S. Clark)

Each of these comments illustrates how the staff members think about program success. They combine both intrinsic and external motivating factors that are informed by, but not necessarily driven by the performance measures that are required by CNCS.

Community influence. Some of the comments related to the staff's perceptions of the program's purpose are listed below:

- It's really a way to provide an opportunity for community members to engage. So I think that is something that is definitely great for the university. I mean they have to have a way to have some opportunities for that especially in this city where it seems like the university is taking over in a way. We need to have that community connection. . . I think it's mutually beneficial for the university to have AmeriCorps and specifically our type of program as well. (R. Jones)
- We are really working with the community to make sure it is something they need and are doing things that will benefit them as well. (H. Roberts)
- For the community we are helping schools and working with students in grades K-3—primary really important years and helping to build their reading ability just by being there. That is something we can help improve. (S. Clark)

It was evident throughout all of the interviews that the needs of the community were central to the operation of the program. That included thinking about the activities of the members, tracking of performance, and member training. In addition to the idea of meeting the community's needs as it related to the program's community partner, the interviewees also highlighted the concept of the program's mutual benefit. They believed that the AmeriCorps program at Institution A had the ability to provide all the stakeholders involved with the incentives to continue the partnership. For students these incentives included financial

opportunities (education award and stipend) along with professional experience and development. The institution gained an important community connection that demonstrated their desire to a part of the city rather than apart from it. Finally, the community partners gained a committed group of volunteers assisting with the goal of improving student literacy at little to no cost.

Staffing. Some of the comments related to the staff's perceptions of the staffing needs are listed below:

- It's a lot on just having one full-time person. It's difficult. (R. Jones)
- I think that there should be one more full-time staff member who is focused on site supervision just because it is really hard to have the VISTA focused on mentoring, me focused on my role with training and member development, but I'm only part-time so there should be another full-time person. (H. Roberts)
- I think receiving the data from [the community partner] and from our members. . . I think it has just been a lot for the members to remember, but also to have time to do. (S. Clark)

The issues related to staffing were mainly focused on the need for additional full-time support.

The defined characteristics of the job limited the opportunities for the coordinators to assist the director with some of the reporting and administrative aspects of managing the program.

Everyone seemed cognizant that some items were not getting done as effectively and efficiently as they could because of both job and time constraints.

While there were commonalities across interviews, there were also areas that were different for each staff person. For the most part, these contrasts seemed to be related to the role that each person had in the program which shaped their perspective and awareness. This specifically included the challenges encountered by each person and whether they tended to

focus on big picture ideas and concepts or more detailed programmatic issues. These similarities and differences across interviews provided important insights into the administration of the AmeriCorps program at Institution A and the role of collaboration and civic engagement in program operation.

Support Staff

The AmeriCorps program at Institution A has several key support staff that assist with program management. They are called upon at certain times for specific tasks to help the day-to-day staff. These include the outreach director, vice provost, and fiscal technician. For this study, the outreach director was not interviewed because he was newer to his position. Since he did not have institutional knowledge of the program development or experience in the daily management of the program, his insights would be less useful and be based largely on information he had received from the program director. As a result, the interviews with support staff included the key informants that would provide the most relevant information—the vice provost and fiscal technician.

Vice provost interview findings. The vice provost serves as the principal investigator for the AmeriCorps program at Institution A. In that role, she takes responsibility for overseeing the grant process and ensuring that the program is compliant with university procedures. While she does not provide day-to-day support or supervision, she is an integral part of sustaining the program. This includes serving in an advisory role when there are complications in the program and providing vital university sponsorship in the form of in-kind and financial support.

While I interviewed the day-to-day staff of the program in August, I waited until mid-September to interview the Vice Provost, Dr. Delores Richardson. As the leader of the DCE, she is particularly busy during the months of August and early September with meetings and

activities to get the academic year started. The date for the interview was scheduled with her availability in mind. The vice provost is a White woman, between the ages of 55-64, who holds a PhD. She has been in her position more than 10 years and read *A Crucible Moment* when it was published. The interview was conducted in her office and lasted 46 minutes. The office is large and is in the main office hub of the DCE, which has several locations across campus and off-campus. We sat at a table where Dr. Richardson conducts meetings. During the time that I served as the director of the AmeriCorps program at Institution A, Dr. Richardson was my supervisor; however, she has not directly supervised me for more than a year.

Dr. Richardson's interview showed an immense amount of institutional knowledge and perspective. She was one of the original writers of the first AmeriCorps grant and has overseen the program since its inception. She has interacted with all of the key stakeholders in the development and sustainment of the program. In addition, as an upper level administrator at the university, she has a broad perspective on how the program is integrated into the unit, IHE, and community.

The interview with Dr. Richardson had several elements of collaboration. Figure 13 shows the distribution of collaboration codes evident in the interview. Evidence of *coordination* was present more than any other level of collaboration. Dr. Richardson cited several instances of working with the AmeriCorps state office to maintain program operations through formal lines of communication throughout the year. She noted that much of the coordination was filled with tension that comes from the constant demands of the grant. Dr. Richardson stated:

I think that unlike other governmental agencies that manage grants, this particular agency is much more—it's hard to determine where it's coming from whether it is a trickle down from federal government to state government—but it seems like its demanding as far as reporting goes. It seems like it's fickle in that it changes. For the amount of money it provides it takes a heck of a lot more administrative time than most other grants require. Unless you can handle all those demands I can see how it would discourage another of

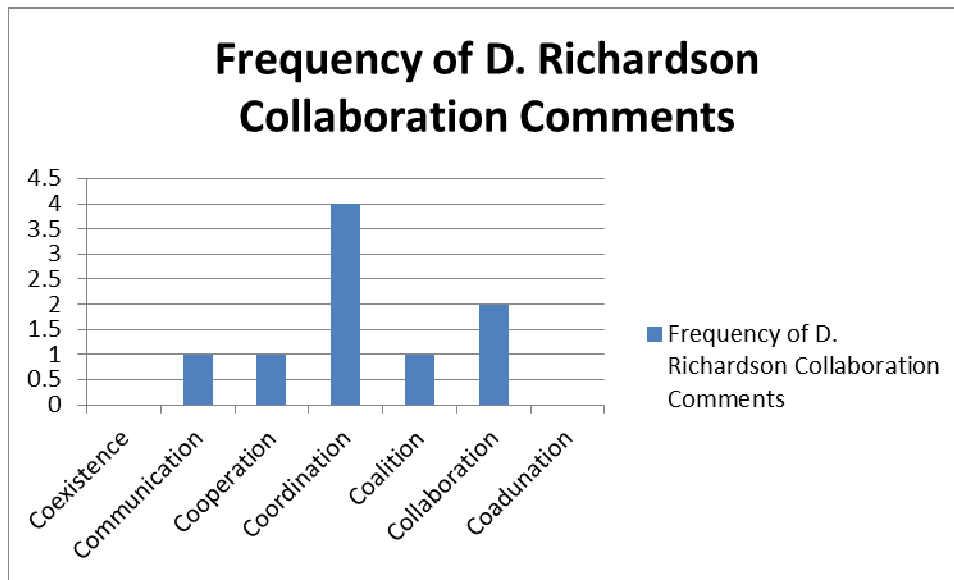


Figure 13. Frequency of D. Richardson collaboration comments.

entities from applying for AmeriCorps. It’s probably one of the most complicated funding sources in programs. (D. Richardson)

When the AmeriCorps program initially started, Dr. Richardson noted that the partnership was a “no brainer” because the initial start-up included a large grant without much upfront cash requirement from the IHE. Over time, as the program got older, the cash match increased along with the reporting requirements. According to Dr. Richardson, the current demands of the program, at times, come close to outweighing the benefits.

Another challenge that impacted the overall coordination of the partnership were the changes to policies during the grant cycle. Dr. Richardson stated:

I think there is a flaw in the system when a grant has been accepted for what it was and after the grant is accepted you have these guidelines to come down and say ‘Oh, we want you to do these x, y, and z activities’ which maybe have nothing to do with the program. I think I have a problem with changing and putting those expectations when they weren’t a part of the original RFP so that’s that. I think that is a real flaw in the system and almost ethical questions about how you can do that to someone you funded. (D. Richardson)

Dr. Richardson called into questions the inability of the AmeriCorps state office to be consistent in their policies and procedures. She later alluded to the fact that many of the policy changes in

the grant came from political changes that occurred when a new administration entered office. These types of changes greatly impacted programs that had previously submitted grants for funding that were approved, but later had to alter their programming structure or activities to accommodate shifting policy. She noted that having a knowledgeable staff at the university who has remained consistent through changes at the state office has been a strength of the program as they have served as “translators” to the university regarding shifting changes and policies in the partnership.

While some of the evidence of coordination involved challenges, Dr. Richardson noted the positive aspects of a partnership with the AmeriCorps state office that provided the program with accountability, credibility, and important oversight to maintain best practices. In regards to collaboration she stated:

I guess their site visits and all while they can be stressful also give legitimacy to the program. Anytime you have to do a site visit I think a principal knows this is a higher up overlooking this as part of the accountability. It's giving that credibility that it is valued by the state and by the government and that they want to see the AmeriCorps symbol up. I think site visits can be seen as punitive, but the main thing is that they show accountability and I think that does have a message to schools and the administration of the schools that there is this—we are not just doing this without following through with things that are expected of us to do. I think there is a lot to say about us being a part of that system that is going to look at making sure that we are doing the record keeping appropriately, that we are following procedures that are considered good practice. (D. Richardson)

Dr. Richardson provided a different perspective from the other staff members of the program that viewed the state office's oversight as a critical aspect of sustaining the community partnerships with the schools. The visibility of program officers auditing the programs and visiting sites on an annual basis demonstrates a commitment to quality program that can assure the schools that the AmeriCorps program is effective. Dr. Richardson also noted that the state office provided collaboration in the form of member training and development opportunities. The annual state

conference, an event that gets together AmeriCorps members and volunteers from across the state, is an important event that gives members a jump start to their service. Dr. Richardson noted that it was an event that the university did not have the capacity or funds to host, but served a valuable purpose for the members.

Like the program director, Dr. Richardson had a comprehensive perspective on the administration of the program that took into account many factors. She was able to see the benefits and challenges of working with the state office as it related to the members, community, and university. While most of the findings in her interview spoke to evidence of collaboration at varying levels, all the aspects of civic engagement mentioned in *A Crucible Moment* were also present. Figure 14 shows the distribution of civic engagement comments present in Dr. Richardson's interview.

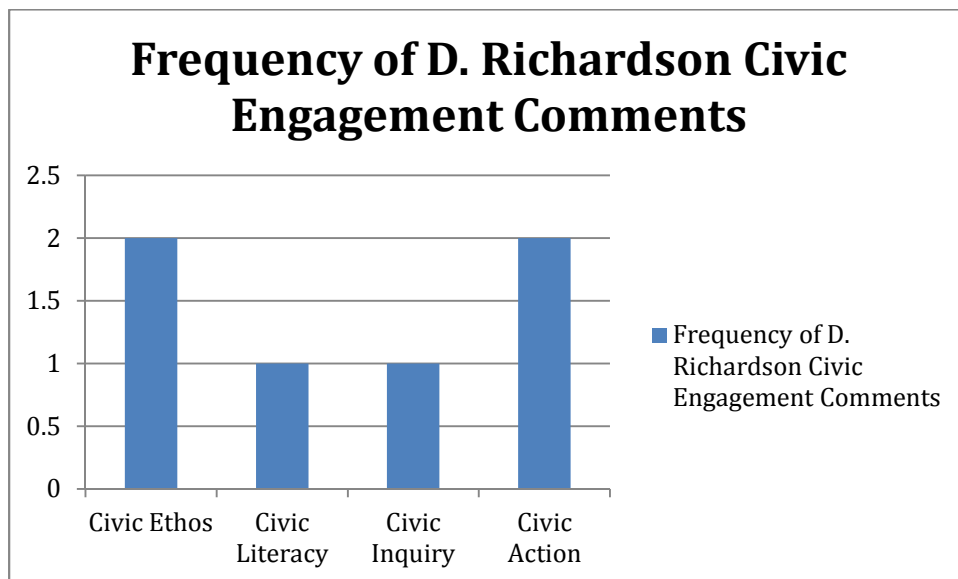


Figure 14. Frequency of D. Richardson civic engagement comments.

Dr. Richardson noted the ability of an AmeriCorps program to instill a civic ethos in its members. She stated, “AmeriCorps members are getting valuable lessons and feeling connected to a state and national movement and these principles that the rest of our students are clueless about.” She called the program “great learning for our students to be exposed to those values and show how those values can lead to a lifetime of service for their own careers or involvement in communities going forward.”

Dr. Richardson further discussed that AmeriCorps, unlike other opportunities for students to engage on-campus, was a prolonged experience that led to increased civic action. Like the program director, she cited sustained service as a critical component of making AmeriCorps both successful and effective. She stated:

I think it goes back to the sustainability and presence. You can have service-learning classes or volunteers, but that just doesn’t have the same level of commitment or potential impact. I see AmeriCorps when we talk about that scale of kinds of service it is really over there where there is that sustained presence that is more likely to have an impact than other kinds of services that you put into the schools. I don’t see how we could ever replace AmeriCorps with our other kinds of service types of programs in the same way unless you had internships, but they are only for a semester so you still wouldn’t have that full 9-month commitment that we have with AmeriCorps. I find it almost impossible to sustain a similar program if we were to lose the AmeriCorps program. (D. Richardson)

Dr. Richardson stated that without the funding from the state office the program would not be able to operate and acknowledged that given the resources of the university, the program could not be replaced if it were lost.

Other themes that emerged from the interview with Dr. Richardson outside of collaboration and civic engagement were the connection of AmeriCorps to university values, sustainability of funding, and increasing the presence of AmeriCorps.

Connection to university values. Dr. Richardson described the creation of the AmeriCorps program at Institution A as one that happened seamlessly with all the pieces of a

puzzle falling into place starting with an identified community need—improve literacy. Once the community need was identified it was relatively easy to get the university on board with an opportunity that would not only serve the community, but provide students with much-needed financial resources. She cited that the support for the program went to the highest level and noted that the university president even came to the first member training to discuss how important the initiative was. She stated:

Just having a program on-campus at Institution A is something that should be celebrated by the university and also taken note because it's a program that we value, a program that we have provided for students, a way that we are meeting the needs of the community. The least we can do is have an AmeriCorps program. I think it is so aligned with the mission of the university. (D. Richardson)

As a program that aligned with the university mission, Dr. Richardson did not place its value solely on meeting the requirements of the grant. She stated:

Sometimes I think we should give this up, but then you hear teachers say "I couldn't address the needs of all the kids in my classroom without the AmeriCorps member." Sometimes, that's all you need. It's just at that fundamental level of knowing how strapped schools are for knowledgeable and reliable hands-on resources which is very different from volunteers that come in which makes our program different. (D. Richardson)

Her sentiments were echoed by the program director who noted that the program often burdens the university with its administration and costs, but provides important services for students and the community alike.

Dr. Richardson was in agreement with the members of the daily program staff that the needs of the community remain central to the AmeriCorps program at Institution A also noting the centrality of community engagement to the university. She noted that community engagement was a major theme in the strategic plan for the university. As such, she believed that the DCE, unlike many other units, was comparatively better off in the areas of staffing and resources due to its high profile in the university. This belief contrasted with the day-to-day staff who all noted a need for more staffing in the AmeriCorps program.

Sustainability of funding. Dr. Richardson mentioned funding several times during her interview. In particular, she focused on how the program could sustain funding to continue providing services. As an outreach program, AmeriCorps provides a link to the community through direct service that does not occur in the same way as programs related to research or teaching and learning. She stated:

That's why I think it's important having AmeriCorps in the Division because it gives us legitimacy that we are out there doing something on the front line. Our AmeriCorps Program really serves that purpose in the Division. As long as we can still find funding internally and we have the city continuing to do their part I think it's really critical that we are doing something on the front line. (D. Richardson)

For Dr. Richardson, the question is not whether or not AmeriCorps is having an impact in the community because that has been proven over the years. Her bigger concern is whether there is money available to support the work it does. She cited funding as the number one source of support provided by the AmeriCorps state office that was necessary to operate the program. At some level, her sentiments about funding were echoed by each of the day-to-day staff members regardless of their position.

Increasing AmeriCorps presence. A final theme that Dr. Richardson mentioned several times during the interview was the need to increase the presence of AmeriCorps on-campus. She stated that the program and DCE tended to “fall short not promoting that we have a program.” The connection of a large research university is something that shows efforts are being made to influence the community in strategic ways that meet the needs of the community. It has the potential to put the university in the national spotlight, but to date has not been done. Dr. Richardson stated that integrating the AmeriCorps program more into the rest of the campus has the potential not only to bring attention and awareness to what Institution A is doing in the community, but be a “source of inspiration to others” as they think about being engaged citizens. Dr. Richardson described the program as being on the “fringe” and “isolated” and expressed a desire to make it more mainstream and connected to the university as a whole.

Fiscal support interview findings. I interviewed the fiscal technician, David Simon, in his office at the end of October. He is a White male, between the ages of 25-34, who has been working with the AmeriCorps program for the last 4 to 6 years. He has a bachelor’s degree and has not read *A Crucible Moment* or done national service. His job is very task oriented and entails assisting with creating and managing the budget, completing monthly and annual fiscal reporting, and onboarding all the AmeriCorps members into the university system. His interview lasted 13 minutes and was focused on aspects of the program he oversees.

Unlike the day-to-day staff and vice provost, Mr. Simon’s interview did not have much evidence of collaboration and did not have any direct connection to civic engagement indicators. This was most likely due to his limited role and tasks within the program. Despite not having much information in the way of this study’s two main indicators, Mr. Simon provided important insights into the fiscal management and administrative processes of the program.

Mr. Simon discussed his cooperation with the state office as the fiscal administrator. This included attending bimonthly webinars hosted by the state office, corresponding with the AmeriCorps state fiscal administrator by phone and e-mail as needed, and an annual audit of his files. He also discussed the constant coordination that takes place between the program and state office related to policy compliance and implementation. He stated:

Sometimes, Institution A says ‘no’ and DSS says ‘yes’ and it is hard to come to that point where we both agree on something and sometimes it takes a long time. We always hash it out, but it is a constant struggle. There is friction between us and DSS. (D. Simon)

Mr. Simon cited coordination of processes related to grant management and fiscal procedures as one of the greatest challenges of collaborating with the state office. Like the other staff members associated with the program, Mr. Simon noted that funding is a consistent area of concern, calling the annual wait for the release of funds to the program “scary.” Oftentimes, the funding gets held up by conflicts between the organizations related to how funds are managed.

Mr. Simon also noted other challenges related to the changing demands of the state office. These changes concern both policy and budgeting. He stated:

Creating the budget—it can change every year and we never know what funds will be available. We always have to wait and make sure that we have our ducks in a row as far as our funding sources. I’d say the budget is very hands-on because it is constantly changing. They are adjusting the budget. Things change. Salaries change, positions change. (D. Simon)

According to Mr. Simon, the changes that consistently occur in AmeriCorps have made him have to be much more hands-on with the program than with others he supports in the DCE. These changes have also occurred internally at the university. At one point, Mr. Simon had to work

collaboratively with the institution's human resource department to find a way to input the AmeriCorps members into the employment system under an exempt status because they are not employees and could not be classified as such. He noted that this process took a great deal of time, compromise, and explaining of how the program operated. His dedication to make the program work at the university despite the conflicting policies was discussed by the vice provost who emphasized how important it was to have skilled staff like Mr. Simon supporting the program.

Mr. Simon, like the program director, discussed the importance of managing deadlines appropriately when managing the program. He cited learning to stick to deadlines and managing his time to ensure that reports were submitted on time and accurately reflected program expenses was a key aspect of ensuring the program could operate. He noted how one late expense report could lead to late approval of the report by the state office that resulted in a deficit in the budget on the university side.

Although Mr. Simon's role in the program is limited, he also believed that the main benefit of the program is the work that members do in the community. He stated:

I love seeing what AC actually does. I love seeing the end products. That is why I love the legacy projects celebration at the end. It is nice to see what the hard work is going into and why we are doing this. It is worth it. It is changing lives. (D. Simon)

He even noted that his work onboarding the members, while not adding to the civic engagement aspect of the program, was often a first step in assisting the member with gaining fiscal literacy.

He stated:

Students, sometimes you have to walk them through the paperwork. Sometimes, they don't understand the tax form and you are not allowed to advise them. So, it is difficult to get everything filled out properly. You go back to 'talk to a parent or guardian or someone you trust financially to fill these out.' It is fun teaching them how to get

everything back. Some people have never had a job before and this is their first experience—not being hired because they are not employees, but their first experience onboarding with something. It’s really neat to watch them grow from the first year to second year, especially people how return and come back the second year and everything is perfect. (D. Simon)

Mr. Simon’s role in helping members understand their financial options demonstrates the program’s ability to assist members with a variety of aspects of personal and professional development that are useful.

Summary of Interview Findings

I combined the findings of the day-to-day staff at Institution A with that of the support staff to create a more comprehensive matrix that adds the perspective of the vice provost and fiscal technician. Table 3 shows the matrix.

There is overlap across the benefits and challenges listed with the support staff agreeing on several of the key issues that the day-to-day staff mentioned. There were two challenges that emerged that day-to-day staff did not discuss. These were policy conflicts with the state office and a need to increase the presence of AmeriCorps on campus. The two items that all the staff associated with the program agreed upon was the positive impact the program has on the community and the professional experience it provides the members. The combination of perspectives from a variety of staff members give a fuller perspective on how the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership operates including ways it could be enhanced or improved.

AmeriCorps State Staff Focus Group Interview Findings

I was unable to schedule individual interviews with the program administrators from the AmeriCorps state office so a focus group was done instead. The focus group was held on-site at their office located in the DSS in the city’s downtown business district. There were four administrators present—the program manager, two program officers, and one former program

Table 3

Institution A Staff Interview Findings Matrix

	Director	Coordinator	VISTA	V. Provost	Fiscal Tech
Connection to national service movement	X		X	X	
Sustained service	X		X	X	
Member professional experience/networking	X	X	X	X	X
Accountability	X			X	
Member/program financial incentives	X	X	X	X	
Community influence	X	X	X	X	X
IHE→←Community bridge		X	X	X	
Program success outside of performance measures	X	X	X		
Challenges					
Timelines/deadlines	X				X
Funding	X			X	X

Table 3 - continued

	Director	Coordinator	VISTA	V. Provost	Fiscal Tech
Staffing	X	X	X		
Reporting	X		X		X
Policy Conflicts				X	X
Lack of campus presence				X	

officer who still works with the department in another area. All of the participants had a masters degree and were full-time employees of DSS. The program manager and one officer had been with the program 4 to 6 years. One of the program officers was newly hired 2 months ago and the other one had served as an officer for 0 to 3 years. None of the participants completed national service or had read *A Crucible Moment*. The interview lasted 52 minutes and was conducted at conference table in a room called the “huddle” room.

The program manager serves as the supervisor for the program officers and is responsible for the overall management of the AmeriCorps programs in the state. She does all major liaising with CNCS regarding the state and works with the state commission and governor’s advisory board on civic engagement initiatives across the state. The program directors report directly to the program manager. They serve as the main source of support for the AmeriCorps programs in the state portfolio. They offer technical assistance and serve as compliance officers ensuring that subgrantees are adhering to all grant requirements and restrictions.

During the focus group several elements of the collaboration stages were discussed by the participants. Figure 15 illustrates the distribution of collaboration comments. The discussion indicated that the partnerships the state office had with IHEs and AmeriCorps programs in general were indeed collaborative; however, the degree of collaboration seemed to fall most commonly in the coordination level. This aspect of collaboration involves communication, clear roles, and share resources, but also indicates that there is conflict present in the relationship. The presence of conflict between the state office and IHEs centered largely on the structural challenges related to collaborating with a complex organization. Former program officer, Arnold Harris, discussed the recent inability of the state office to partner with an IHE that was interested in hosting a program because of this issue. He stated:

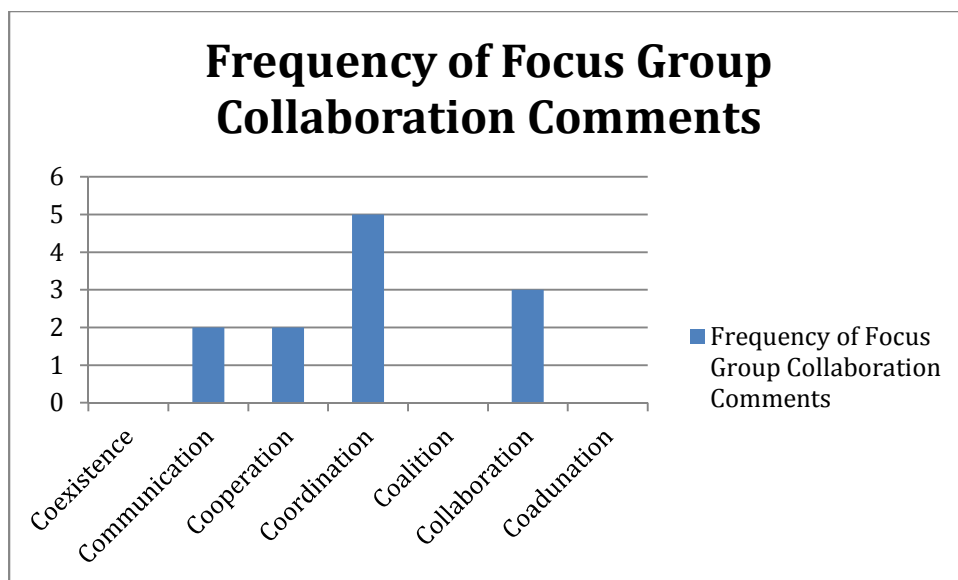


Figure 15. Frequency of focus group collaboration comments.

One of the problems was that the organizational structure at the institution—there were so many programs and so many layers that you have to go through to get something through that they were concerned about being able to dedicate the amount of time to the program that you need with the other responsibilities they had. That was one challenge—having identified staff just for that. (A. Harris)

His sentiments were echoed by newly hired program officer, Thomas Dodson. He stated:

Structurally it's just universities get grants from all over and its coined as a 'grant' and may have less regulations where here a grant is really termed a 'contract' which has to adhere to the public procurement act. There is a lot more steps involved versus just a grant where you may just have a couple of steps versus here. (T. Dodson)

An additional problem associated with hosting an AmeriCorps program at an IHE is dealing with the complex nature of DSS—hence the importance of interorganizational collaboration that is intentional and strategic. Arnold Harris further commented:

On the complexity side our organization has plenty of layers of complexity on the contracting side especially and definitely higher education institutions have it, especially on the contracting sides. There's huge layers of complexity so there is a lot of problems in getting a program through to the contract phase. That is one issue right off the bat. (A. Harris)

The challenge of getting everything coordinated between the two organizations was echoed by others in the focus group. Dana Ford, a current program officer, believed that much of the issue related to compliance had to do with the simultaneous nature of managing an AmeriCorps program where program staff are tasked with completing precontract items and starting up the service year all at once. She stated:

That has been part of the challenge because simultaneously while all that is going on members need to be recruited, brought on board, and trained. That can be a little bit of a challenge for a university, but I think that all the partners that we are working with see the value of the program and work through any challenges to ultimately be able to maintain a successful AC program. It is worth it in the long run, but it can be a bit of a challenge overall. I've worked with all of the university programs we have in our portfolio and I've seen that challenge with all of them including the new one. They went through the same issue with trying to get through their process of getting that contract complete. (D. Ford)

Unlike nonprofit organizations that have the autonomy to sign forms and contracts with more ease, the administrators of AmeriCorps programs at IHEs do not have the legal authority to sign official paperwork that commits funds to a program. As such, there is typically an increased wait time for documents to go through the proper channels within an IHE to get approval that holds up the process of getting the service year started.

Another challenge related to the coordination between IHEs and the state office included inflexible policies and lack of sufficient training. The policies for AmeriCorps apply to all programs within the state portfolio regardless of type of institution; however, one program

officer noted that organizations have different capacities and needs. In terms of training, another program officer mentioned that time and commitment that training takes in AmeriCorps. She believed that more time could be spent on training for both members and AmeriCorps staff. All of the participants seemed in agreement that flexibility to adapt to individual programmatic needs could be useful in garnering more IHE involvement in AmeriCorps.

While there seemed to be a lot of evidence of communication, there were also some elements of collaboration that involved more systematic, long-term initiatives that were mutually beneficial. Participants discussed the internal collaboration at DSS that assisted with garnering more subgrantee applicants in addition to continuous visibility and networking with community members to discuss AmeriCorps. In particular, they discussed the annual state conference as a tangible way that the state office is collaborating with all of its programs to provide effective and efficient training opportunities for members as well as an opportunity for engagement at a large scale in discussions about civic engagement and service. The program manager, Mary Smith, expressed a hope that the collaborative nature of the relationship with IHEs would be strengthened in years to come through funding opportunities. She stated:

I would love to see every institution of higher education starting with state and eventually private as well in the state match the Ed award. It would be a huge spotlight to the value of service, the impact of service, and I think we have a board member that might be interested in pushing that. (M. Smith).

Overall, there was a sense that partnerships with IHEs were strong, but had room for growth and advancement through strategic initiatives that considered the resources of each organization.

In general, the focus group had more comments related to collaboration than civic engagement. When civic engagement was discussed it was in a conceptual way that spoke more

to the idea of building the civic ethos of members and encouraging a lifelong commitment to service. The distribution of civic engagements comments are visible in Figure 16.

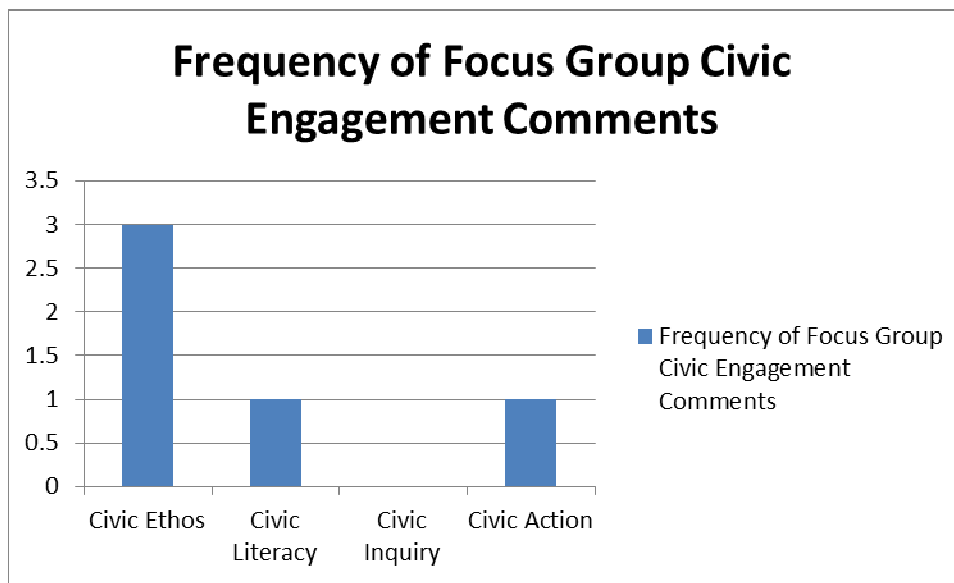


Figure 16. Frequency of focus group civic engagement comments.

When discussing how IHEs can assist with the growth of national service the program manager, Ms. Smith, stated the following:

Having colleges and universities involved in that discussion how can we acknowledge, value, recognize the time that people spend in service through a structured service-learning program or less structured service-learning opportunity—credit for experience that kind of thing. All of that works towards that kind of engagement because it builds a habit. (M. Smith)

Ms. Smith viewed IHEs as an integral part of promoting a civic ethos and awareness among young adults. Another participant agreed with this assertion and noted that college students who were able to sustain the commitment to AmeriCorps while attending school demonstrated a “spirit of service” that would be with them throughout their life. The AmeriCorps state

administrators spoke of the value of the AmeriCorps experience for students as a way of developing important skills that would help them succeed in life.

Other themes that emerged during the focus group included the importance of IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships, performance measure challenges, and ideas for partnership improvement.

Importance of IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships. Some of the comments related to the importance of IHE-AmeriCorps Partnerships are listed below.

- I see our relationships with universities as an investment in the longevity, not only of AC, but of the service in America. This is the best place to go to resource the ongoing service movement. I would love to see all of our programs really engage their alums and I see universities as being a wonderful opportunity for that. . . I would love to see our universities prepared to be intermediaries. (M. Smith)
- In some nonprofits they have great capacity, but I think that—I'm thinking specifically of a program that used to be in our portfolio that did awesome work, but got into some compliance problems. I think that a lot of it was that the people with the great heart and great vision did not have the great skills to go with it. Hindsight is 20/20. We could have intervened and said if you are going to remain in our portfolio you must connect with people at Institution A who can provide some training to elevate your skill level. I think proximity to universities is a huge issue. When I think about my experience with nonprofits, generally, nonprofits in urban areas have identified resources, many through higher ed, to support and to educate their staff, to draw from in terms of developing their board, adding to their board, and I think that that is a natural function of universities. (M. Smith)
- I think with colleges and universities have a majority of young people and it is a humbling experience to teach them that there is something that can be bigger than them that they can be involved in. Giving back to their community before they get to a point where life takes over, for them to gain those types of skills, and take that on as they become community members. To be able to have that type of experience—I've talked to folks where they say that AC or programs like it have been life changing. (D. Ford).

The ability of universities to serve as intermediaries, professional development hubs, and centers for engaging young adults demonstrates the capacity they have to impact communities at a local, state, and national level.

Performance measure challenges. Some of the comments related to performance measure challenges are below.

- A lot of times it's the setup of the performance measure. The amount of effort that goes into getting the right performance measure and getting the right target for it and also setting up a performance measure that you are not intending to crush it. You are supposed to fail on some of those measures and then adjust based on that. I think a lot of people set up those measures to make sure they meet it. (A. Harris)
- I would say not starting the program year with the performance measures in mind because of probably so many other areas you are focusing on as far as getting members on board and trying to meet that goal. Then, the year progresses and 'oops' they remember they should have been gathering the information or training the members to collect the data. Then, they begin playing catch up and get to the end of the year and then it's too late. (D. Ford)
- One of the things that I find that is of concern to me and we see it in our educational programs is that they don't have a way to capture on its measured data at the interim. By the time they get it at the end of the school year, if you haven't met, if you haven't captured it too bad too sad. . .Then, I think programs sometimes are too ambitious. They have too many performance measures and we bear some responsibility with that. (M. Smith)

Many of the issues noted by the state office incorporate coordination both internally with the individual program and externally with the state office. It is important for programs to think about performance measures as ongoing performance checks that serve as critical targets to meet.

Ideas for partnership improvement. Some of the comments related to ideas for partnership improvement are below.

- I wish we had a little bit more flexibility in our funding structure. I think that the application process is really good, but there are elements of it that are really burdensome internally that prevent us from doing other things because we are so caught up in this. As a state agency, from a procurement standpoint, we have the ability to procure or contract with other state agencies without going through this rigorous process. I think it would be interesting to pilot rather than a competitive process, a negotiated process using procurement language. Particularly addressing areas where we don't have programming. . . I think that would be an interesting thing to have as a tool in our toolbox. At the moment, we either haven't figured out how to do that. We don't have that flexibility at all. (M. Smith)
- I was thinking we could have maybe additional funding or staffing at the university levels to have the current programs or interested universities serve as mentors in those areas where we are under-represented or an intermediary type of program so we can expand our programs. (D. Ford)
- I think administratively it would be interesting to maybe go beyond the 1-year for students and structure something so we could spread it out more for them. (A. Harris)

It was obvious from the focus group that the staff at the state office values the partnerships with IHEs and appreciates what they bring to the AmeriCorps portfolio. The ideas they expressed for improving partnerships with organizations demonstrates the potential for strategic alliances and compromises to enhance the work being done by AmeriCorps subgrantees while lessening the amount of tension with the state office.

IHE and AmeriCorps State Staff Comparison

Table 4 displays a comparison matrix between the program staff at Institution A and the AmeriCorps state office staff. There was agreement across the board on the potential for IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships to address critical needs in the community and have positive impact. Additionally there was agreement on the ability for AmeriCorps to provide participants with valuable opportunities to gain professional experience.

Table 4

Institution A Comparison Interview Findings Matrix

	Director	Coordinator	VISTA	V. Provost	Fiscal Tech	State Office
Connection to national service movement	X		X	X		X
Sustained service	X		X	X		X
Member professional experience/networking	X	X	X	X	X	X
Accountability	X			X		
Member/program financial incentives	X	X	X	X		
Community influence	X	X	X	X	X	X
IHE→← Community bridge		X	X	X		
Program success outside of performance measures	X	X	X			
Access to young people						X

Table 4 - continued

	Director	Coordinator	VISTA	V. Provost	Fiscal Tech	State Office
Capacity/infrastructure						X
Challenges						
Timelines/deadlines	X				X	
Funding	X			X	X	
Staffing	X	X	X			
Reporting	X		X		X	X
Policy conflicts				X	X	X
Lack of campus presence				X		
Structural differences						X
Recommendations						
Funding flexibility						
Additional funding						
Multiyear commitment						
for members						
Streamlined reporting						
Best practices manual for IHEs						
Shared policies						

In addition to showing the challenges and benefits associated with an IHE-AmeriCorps partnership, the comparative matrix shows the recommendations that both the program staff and state office suggested for improving the relationship. Both groups agreed that there was the need for additional funding to accomplish program goals.

Observations

I completed seven observations over the course of 2 months with Institution A totaling 20 hours. The observations were a way for me to witness firsthand the activities of the corps. I focused specifically on the role of the administrators during these observations and how the themes of collaboration and civic engagement emerged in action. There were several kinds of activities I observed. These included a book club meeting, a DCE staff retreat, team leader trainings, the statewide AmeriCorps conference, and member orientation. Due to the time of year, the majority of activities were related to member development and training in some way. I had anticipated observing members on-site at their schools; however, changes in the school district caused the program to begin much later than usual. My previous role as an administrator of the program at Institution A provided me with insights into what the members do on-site at their schools so the lack of service observations did not detract from the overall findings in the observations.

Book Club Meeting

The book club meeting happened in mid-August as the end of the 13-14 service year was approaching. It involved the remaining team leaders finishing up their 12-month service term and was facilitated by the program director. The meeting occurred at 6:00 p.m. allowing for members to serve during the day at their summer site locations. There were six members in attendance at the meeting.

The book club was an idea that sprung from the need for team leaders to get more hours. The director had provided the team leaders with a survey of several options to get some additional hours, and they liked the idea of reading articles related to education and/or their neighborhood. The members asked if they could provide the material for the meeting and found articles and YouTube® videos that had information on the history of the communities where their school sites were located. While the meeting did not have very much going on in the way of collaboration related to the partnership with the AmeriCorps state office, the meeting itself was an indicator that the program staff works collaboratively with the members to assess their needs and develop solutions.

Prior to the meeting, two team leaders found the readings and distributed them to their peers via e-mail. During the meeting the program director facilitated the discussion that included a dialogue about the issues that impacted the communities that the team leaders served. They discussed issues related to policy, socioeconomics, educational equity, and race. At the conclusion of the meeting, as the conversation took somewhat of a frustrated turn with members lamenting the dire circumstances of their schools and students, the director had members share the things they had done through their service to improve the community.

The book club was a display of all the civic engagement indicators. It inspired members to be mindful of how the work they did in the schools connected to the larger goal of public uplift that served to emphasize a sense of civic ethos. At the same time, the very nature of the discourse provided a space for civic literacy and inquiry to happen. Finally, the deliberate facilitation of the program director called on members to reflect on and think about their own civic actions in response to community needs.

Staff Retreat

The staff retreat is an annual DCE event that brings together all of the programs for a 1-day reflection and strategic planning session. I was part of this event as both an observer for this study and participant for my own program. The event was held off-campus at a local park. The day was facilitated by an external party who specialized in strategic planning and community engagement. The day was split into two parts—one for retreat activities and the other for a unit-sponsored beautification service project to assist the park where the event was being held. All attendees were asked to bring their copy of the unit's strategic plan and read an article entitled, *The Centrality of Engagement in Higher Education* (Fitzgerald et al. 2012), prior to coming to the meeting. During the first half of the day the participants were split into groups that required them to interact with people outside of their individual unit. Both the director and the newly selected VISTA member for the 2014-2015 year were present representing AmeriCorps.

The staff retreat was not directly related to the AmeriCorps program. As a result, it did not have specific items that related to the collaboration between the AmeriCorps state office; however, much of the discussion and activities were surrounding how the entire unit could better collaborate with the community in general. As such, the day had a collaborative tone that moved towards a level of coadunation, which supports the complete unification of programs to form one cohesive unit. The strategic plan of the DCE is focused on developing and sustaining quality university-community partnerships across all programs. One particular assessment activity that was used by the facilitator included using clickers to assess the degree to which unit members felt that goals around partnership had been met during the first year of the strategic plan. Most of the anonymous feedback was in the average range.

One time when I specifically observed the program director was during an activity in which each individual had to consider how much their unit interacted with students, community, and faculty. Then, each person went around to others and explained how they broke down their role with each stakeholder by the total percentage of what their program does. For the AmeriCorps director, this activity appeared to be frustrating. Most of her time and energy is spent working with the community and the AmeriCorps members, some of whom happen to be students. As a result, her chart was not filled to the capacity of others in the unit since there was not interaction with faculty. An individual from a program that is more integrated into the university commented to the director that she did not do any work with faculty. The activity was designed to make the participants consider ways in which they collaborate with others to achieve program goals; however, the director later commented that she did not understand the purpose of the activity and felt it alienated her from other programs that were more closely aligned with the IHE academic focus.

Another activity included a more physical representation of teamwork and collaboration. Participants were forced to sit in a circle facing outwards and were connected to each other by one hand holding a string. One person was designated as the leader and gave directions to the participants on how to move their arms and bodies. The participants holding the string did not know what the goal was for the activity. After a while, the participants were allowed to sit facing the circle and the goal was explained that we had to get several wooden circles with hooks in the center of the table and sitting on top of one another. Once everyone knew the goals and could see the activity, it took very little time to accomplish. A debriefing of the activity was completed and we discussed how important it was for everyone to know the direction we were going as a unit and for each of us to participate.

The final activity was focused on the article that participants read prior to the retreat. We were put into chairs and rotated around in a “speed dating” format so that each individual had an opportunity to speak with five different people about engagement at the university. This culminating activity was an element of the retreat that involved the participants becoming more civically literate around issue concerning higher education and engagement. As a result, the staff retreat showed evidence of collaboration and community engagement. The concluding service project, although not completed by the AmeriCorps staff, promoted collaborative civic action among the staff members and encouraged them to work together for a common goal that was not directly associated with their daily work.

Team Leader Training

I observed two different team leader trainings that were held in September. The team leaders are all full-time and serve as anchor points of each school team. As a result, they receive additional training and support throughout the year from the program staff. The trainings were scheduled for half days and I was able to stay for about half of the time at each one. As a group, the team leaders are a diverse group consisting largely of recent college graduates. This is a different group of team leaders from the ones at the book club meeting as this is the kick-off training to a new service year. Out of the 10 leaders, four appear to be minorities, four are males, and one woman is middle-aged. There are two team leaders who are returning for a second term and one team leader that was formally a quarter-time member the previous year.

During each of the trainings there were signs of collaboration that point to a relationship with the AmeriCorps state office. These included the largely displayed AmeriCorps signs and gear that surrounded the training room demonstrating the connection of the university’s program to a larger service movement. The director provided the members with a handbook that they

reviewed during the training that included an organizational chart detailing the ways that the program was connected to the university, school system, and AmeriCorps program. While the handbook is individualized for the program at Institution A, the first section is the national AmeriCorps handbook that is provided by CNCS on their website. Also included in the member handbook was the school district calendar, a demonstration that the program staff integrated the community partner schedule into their own. A welcome by the outreach director, the program director's supervisor, was another method of helping the members understand how the program connected to the larger university and DCE.

The training was filled with evidence of civic literacy and inquiry. The team leader training served as an opportunity to front load a great deal of information on a variety of subjects such as K-3 literacy, poverty, and mentoring. As such, the days I observed were filled with activities that promoted the development of knowledge on certain issues and opportunities for the team leaders to think critically about different perspectives. Some of the literacy and inquiry based activities included watching a TEDTalk by a noted public school principal, a presentation facilitated by the VISTA on mentoring best practices, a discussion of stereotypes of low-income communities, and an activity where they played an online game that called on them to live on a minimum wage income for 1 month. Each of these activities called on the team leaders to think about the community from different perspectives and reflect on their roles.

In general, the trainings displayed an overall sense of civic ethos as the members were constantly reminded of their civic responsibility to the communities they would serve in and their team members. While civic action was the least present civic engagement indicator, one activity at the end of the second training assisted with connecting the things the team leaders had learned about with what they would be doing over the course of the year. Earlier the members had been

asked to each write one line about what they would do during the year. These lines were taped together and read as a poem at the end of the day serving as a compilation of how each of the leaders felt about the service they were set to begin. The poem read:

To strengthen communities and form relationships with students and parents while performing as a mentor and a role model.
To set a great example for our students.
Empowerment.
To help foster creativity and enthusiasm in children in the process of helping them learn to read and succeed academically.
To serve as mentors to our students in order to encourage not only literacy but a love of reading.
We'll support our students, our teacher, our staff, our members and each other to make this year successful.
We empower members and children alike to do and be their best.
To actively engage, encourage, and support students, teachers, and team.
Getting things done.
Strengthening families, motivating children, building a foundation (Team Leader Training, personal observation, September 10, 2014).

The director noted that the poem would comprise the team leader mission. The development of this poem first as individuals and then as a unit demonstrated a literal and symbolic commitment to collaboration within the corps.

While there did not appear to be much evidence of collaboration between the state office and the IHE occurring at the actual training, a follow-up discussion with the program director after one of the trainings shed light on coordination issues between the school district and state office that were impacting the ability of the members to begin service at the schools. The state office had held up the contract process so that funds were not released until late August. At that time, the director was able to schedule her annual meeting with the chief academic officer of the school district knowing that the program would run; however, the new chief academic officer wanted to review the program using her own research and evaluation team before she would sign the annual SOW agreement, and even implied that she may cut the program if she did not like

what she found. It was obvious that these issues related to the collaboration with both the state office and school system were weighing on the program director. In the midst of those challenges, she still had to train the team leaders as if the program was going to run as usual.

State Conference

The state conference was held over the course of 2 days in September and corresponded with the 9/11 Day of Service. It was held at a hotel in the state capital and was attended by all of the AmeriCorps programs from across the state and other volunteers. Because the quarter-time members had not begun their service, only the team leaders were present for the event. It served as a culminating event for their week of team leader training. The team leaders came wearing their corps-specific shirts and all sat together for the official opening and lunches each day. The event was attended by more than 500 people and was particularly well attended because it marked the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps.

Like the team leader trainings, this event was filled with demonstrations of civic engagement. Because it was planned and implemented by the AmeriCorps state office, it also showed evidence of collaborations not only with Institution A, but with all of the AmeriCorps programs across the state. While the interviews and document analysis tended to show collaboration levels that stayed in the mid-ranges of cooperation and coordination, the state conference is the one space that coordination seemed to be reached. The state conference served as a vehicle for all AmeriCorps programs to unite and become one corps as a state and nation. During those 2 days it was less obvious that there were many different organizations coming together that hosted AmeriCorps programs. Rather the focus was on unifying all AmeriCorps members under the national banner of service with a single mission to get things done.

Just as the entire event lent itself to an increased level of collaboration, there was also an overall sense of civic ethos that permeated all of the activities. The foundation of the conference was to build a sense of community and civic responsibility among the members to officially kick-off the service year. During the 2 days there were several keynote speakers including the governor and state senator who each discussed the merits of service for the state and country. A culminating event on the second day included a first-time national swearing in that occurred at the White House in Washington D.C. The corps from across the United States were connected via satellite. Members watched as Presidents Obama and Clinton discussed the birth and evolution of AmeriCorps and swore in the entire nation of new members. That particular aspect of the conference provided a “true esprit de corps” that many members would be unable to get in their individual programs.

In addition to speakers and the swearing in that promoted civic ethos among the members, the 2-day conference included workshops each day on a range of topics including volunteer management, working with veterans, and best practices for completing the program successfully. Each of these workshops provided participants with an opportunity to gain civic literacy in specific areas and avenues to *inquire* about community needs. A series of service projects at the end of the first day to celebrate the 9/11 Day of Service provided members with a chance to take civic action and serve with AmeriCorps members from across the state.

Member Orientation

The AmeriCorps member orientation was very similar to the team leader orientation in that it prepared members for their responsibilities during the service year. The team leaders were required to attend even though much of the information was a repeat of what they had already

learned. The member orientation served as a first opportunity for the leaders to step up in to their leadership roles and facilitate activities with their members.

At the time of the state conference only the team leaders had been selected and enrolled in the program. As a result, the member orientation with the entire corps was filled with trying to help the members see the larger connection to AmeriCorps as a national program. The members had discussions and complete activities about national service that incorporated civic engagement. The members watched a short video that was shown at the state conference on the 20th anniversary of AmeriCorps and take the AmeriCorps oath.

At the end of the training, the members completed their member enrollment packet. The packet is a compilation of required forms from the state office that includes the member contract, various release forms, and schedule. The completion of the packets and their review by the director was the only aspect of the training that touched on collaboration as it showed the *cooperation* between the university and state office to provide members with information to protect their safety and comply with state and federal AmeriCorps policies.

Summary of Observation Findings

Over the course of the 2 months I was able to observe corps activities, I saw two different corps, the ending and beginning of a service year, and a seminal 20th anniversary celebration. Throughout the observations I witnessed the staff working together collaboratively to implement program activities and members excited about beginning their service. Evidence of civic engagement was high across the board with members developing a strong civic ethos and literacy in preparation for the service year to begin.

There was not as much direct evidence of collaboration with the state office during these observations. The observations, specifically of member training, provided confirmation that the

program activities described in the grant, program design, and monthly reports were actually being carried out as written. As such, the program observations add to the narrative of how Institution A and the AmeriCorps state office collaborate providing additional content, context, and meaning to the administrative interactions the organizations share.

Institution A Summary

There were several key findings that emerged from the document analysis, interviews, and observations I conducted for Institution A. Each method provided evidence for how the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership operated while clarifying the parameters of the relationship. As a form of triangulation, the methods built upon one another to strengthen the findings related to collaboration and civic engagement and provided increased credibility and validity to the findings.

The document analysis provided a starting point for understanding the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership at Institution A. The documents showed how the program operated internally and externally. Verification of program activities occurred through both the observations and interviews. The observations showed aspects of the program related to member training and development including an opportunity to observe the state office provide firsthand support to programs at the state conference. The interviews were particularly useful for clarifying unclear items in the documents and providing a variety of perspectives on the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership. Themes that emerged across interviews with different individuals also confirmed the presence of certain issues. The interviews also reinforced some of the challenges cited in the monthly reports while bringing up new challenges that were not documented previously.

The study had two main research questions regarding collaboration and civic engagement. The various methods used showed evidence of each at varying levels. A

comparison of all the key informants for the study showed agreement on two themes—the ability for IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships to provide members with professional experience and/or networking and the positive community influence the program had. There was also agreement that more funding needed to be provided to programs to accomplish their service activities. The differences that emerged within the study may be more telling than the commonalities. Chapter 5 will detail the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership at a neighboring university to determine if similar findings occur. The institutions will be discussed and findings analyzed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 5. INSTITUTION B FINDINGS

Program Description

The Bonner Scholars Program (BSP) at Institution B began in 1993. It was one of the first programs of its kind in the nation. BSP began as the dream of Bertram and Corella Bonner, both of whom were born into poverty but rose to wealth. They were committed to service and education and created the Bonner Foundation in 1989 with the goal of helping communities in the areas of nutrition and access to education (Bonner Network Wiki, 2014). BSP was piloted in 1990 at Berea College with the goal of providing college students, known as Bonner scholars, with a service-based college scholarship. There are now 23 BSP programs that are fully integrated into their institutions with permanent staff, community placements, and scholar development opportunities. Like many Bonner programs in the early Foundation years, the program at Institution B was initially incorporated as part of the institution's religious orders. Eventually, the BSP program was integrated into the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) where it became one of the main student-centered initiatives.

The Bonner Program provides students with a variety of opportunities to get involved. At Institution B, students have a selection of 20 community partners in the city that they can work with during their undergraduate experience. The partners have a range of missions and goals, but the majority deal with issues related to education and/or health. Many of the partners are school-related and include after-school or enrichment programs for children. There are also clinic and churches with service initiatives that host scholars. Partners are provided with a copy

of a community partner handbook that has information about Institution B, community partnerships, programs in the CCE, and on-campus partnerships. BSP specific partners work closely with the students at their sites to develop a community learning agreement (CLA). Each semester the students must sign the CLA detailing what they hope to accomplish. This CLA is reviewed and signed by the BSP staff and put in the online database for review by the national Bonner staff.

Program Funding

While there are nearly 80 schools that participate in the Bonner network, the BSP schools are unique. As a BSP location, Institution B is provided with funding from the Bonner Foundation in the form of a multimillion dollar endowment to support its scholars during their participation in the program. Each student is provided with up to \$5,000 annually as part of their financial aid package. In return, the scholars are expected to complete 10 hours per week of service at a designated community placement site. The 10 hours include 8 hours of direct service at the site and 2 hours of enrichment. These enrichment hours can be spent going to events or lectures related to civic engagement. With limited funding, BSP was not able to grow beyond 23 institutions; however, collaboration with AmeriCorps in 1997 provided an opportunity to grow the network using a different model that allowed for institutions to participate in the Bonner network as Bonner Leader Programs (BLP). Unlike BSP, BLPs were tasked with finding their own funding streams using AmeriCorps slots and/or federal work-study funding (Bonner Network Wiki, 2014). Many programs combine multiple streams of funding from the Foundation, AmeriCorps, and federal work-study.

Despite having a steady flow of funding from the Bonner Foundation, Institution B's BSP integrated the AmeriCorps model into its existing program structure nearly 5 years ago to

provide members with an additional scholarship opportunity. Scholars in their sophomore year at Institution B have the opportunity to become Bonner AmeriCorps members. As simultaneous members of both programs, these scholars are expected to complete all of the requirements of traditional Bonners while being mindful of the regulations and restrictions on AmeriCorps members.

The Bonner AmeriCorps members at Institution B are a part of a National AmeriCorps Program. This national designation has to do with where the funding for the AmeriCorps program comes from. National programs receive funding directly from the federal government through CNCS. State programs receive funding that is funneled from CNCS to the local state commission and distributed to local programs through an application process.

The Bonner Foundation applied for and received a National AmeriCorps grant that provided them with several hundred AmeriCorps slots or MSY. The Bonner Foundation then distributed these slots to their campus partners. Each year, Institution B takes up to 10 of these AmeriCorps slots into part-time increments. Because the grant is managed by the Bonner Foundation, the staff at Institution B is not responsible for grant management or overall reporting on AmeriCorps. Instead, they provide reports on the Bonner AmeriCorps members to the Bonner Foundation at designated times during the year that is compiled with the information from the other participating AmeriCorps sites by the Bonner Foundation AmeriCorps staff. Aside from slight variations in reporting and funding streams, little differentiation is made between Bonner AmeriCorps members and traditional Bonners.

Staffing Structure

The day-to-day staff of the BSP program at Institution B consists of three full-time employees—a program director, coordinator, and administrative coordinator. The director and

coordinator are young males who identified themselves as “other” racially who have been working with the program for 4 to 6 years. They have each read *A Crucible Moment* as part of their professional development. The administrative coordinator is a White female who just completed her first year of employment with the program. Both she and the coordinator participated in national service prior to joining the BSP staff at Institution B. All three staff members are between the ages of 25-34. The director holds a master’s degree while both coordinators have bachelor’s degrees.

The program director at Institution B is responsible for general program oversight and management. He oversees the budget and program operations. He described his role also as that of a “visionary” who thinks about the direction of the program and reflects on where it should go in the future. He oversees the development of the program curriculum. Additionally, he also plays an important role in the development of the Bonners during their junior and sophomore years in the program. The director is responsible for liaising between the Bonner Foundation and the larger CCE. He reports to the director of the CCE.

The coordinator oversees more of the logistical aspects of the program administration. This includes making sure members are completing their hours, coordinating transportation to sites, reviewing and approving CLAs, and meeting with community partners. He also plays an important role in the freshmen and sophomore years assisting with their training and development in a more hands-on way.

The administrative coordinator is also tasked with handling more of the logistical administrative items for the program. This includes ordering supplies, writing check requests, and coordinating the meetings and calendar. She also handles the federal work-study program and civic engagement opportunities for non-Bonner students or “Nonners.” She ensures that

members are paid their stipend at the end of each 5-week period and approves their time. She is the person most responsible for the administration of Bonner AmeriCorps. As such, she provides them with an initial orientation, tracks their hours, and reports items to the Bonner Foundation on an annual basis.

Member Structure

The BSP at Institution B is one of the largest programs. It has a total of 100 members that are divided into cohorts by their undergraduate status—freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior. Each class has 25 students in it. Student eligibility for the program is based on student financial need. The program has a relationship with the admissions office at the IHE that provides them with a list of accepted students who fit that demographic. Students who are eligible for program participation receive an e-mail with information about the Bonner program and are invited to apply. Students can also learn about the program at open houses on campus each spring. About 100 students apply for the 25 available slots. Applications are reviewed by a committee and the freshmen cohort is selected.

Each class of 25 students selects two class representatives who assist with facilitating trainings and coordinating class activities. Leadership development opportunities within the program include serving as a Congress representative or a senior intern. The Congress representatives work with the national Bonner network to implement initiatives on campus and meet with the larger Bonners of representatives biannually. Senior interns assist with planning the large group meetings and orienting new Bonners.

Figure 17 shows the organizational relationship of the Bonner program at Institution B to the CCE and Bonner Foundation. It also details the staffing structure and direct reports. The

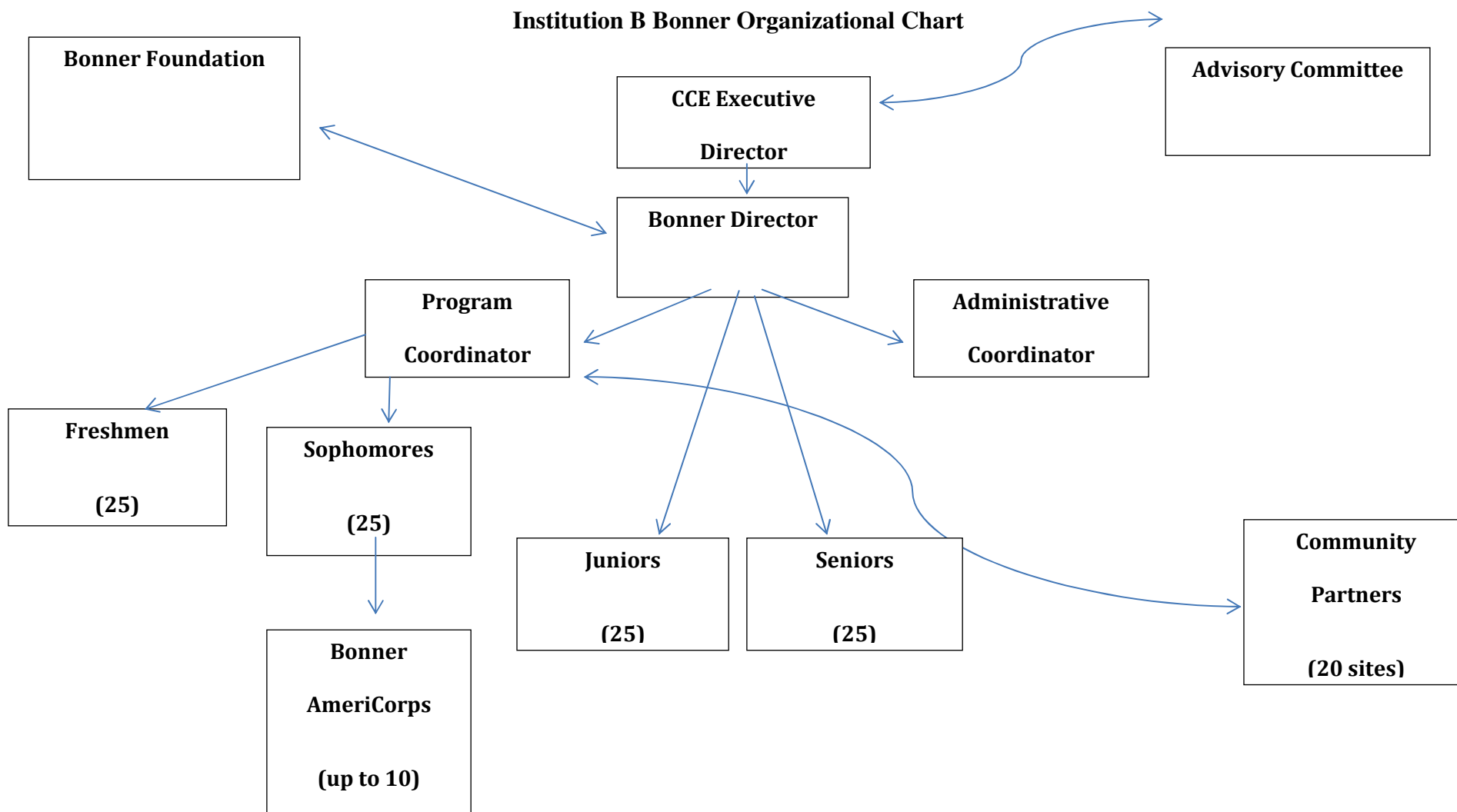


Figure 17. Institution B organizational chart.

curved bidirectional line represents the relationship between the program community partners. The relationship with partners is flexible, but mutually agreed upon. Another curved bidirectional line leads from the advisory committee. The committee is required by the Foundation and meets twice a year to discuss general program management. The line to the Bonner Foundation is also bidirectional showing that direct supervision is not provided to the program director, but that program oversight does occur from the Foundation and reporting is required.

Service Activities and Performance Measures

The program uses a developmental model of engagement with the goal of helping students learn at incremental levels throughout their 4 years. While the freshmen and sophomore years focus on exploration as it relates to being aware of your community and its issues, the junior and senior years begin to examine how social justice impacts the individual and personal responsibility to engage with communities. All students take an academic course in social justice for credit through the IHE's leadership school.

During the freshmen year students are encouraged to explore multiple community partners to decide where they would like to do their service. During the second semester of freshman year students select a community partner and apply to the organization. Organizations then interview and select the students they want to work with for the next 3 and one-half years. The service students complete is viewed as a multiyear internship where students develop learning goals related to their work and have expected outcomes. In addition to doing service during the academic year, students are expected to complete two summers of service. Many Bonners study abroad at some point during their undergraduate experience. As a result, international service can be applied to the scholarship.

The individualized service model allows Bonners at Institution B complete a variety of service activities with their selected community partner. The service is very individualized for each student. Students are required to complete a CLA with their community partner that is reviewed and signed by the partner each semester and then reviewed by program staff. The CLA is expected to have goals and objectives that students can meet and how progress on. The purpose of the CLA is to make students and partners meet and discuss how the service is integrated into the student's development in the program. Each of the community organizations that partners with Bonner was vetted by the staff and fits into the Foundation framework of addressing education and/or health.

The CLAs of each member are an integral aspect of measuring the impact of the program on students. The CLAs serve as individualized performance plans that can be compiled to form a comprehensive report of member activities. This personalized approach supports individual student development throughout their undergraduate career. The Bonner model uses the concepts of developing the “5 Es”—expectation, explore, experience, example, and expertise. The Foundation provides guidance and templates for programs to assist with student development curriculum, but leaves freedom for each IHE to individualize the curriculum for their students and campus (Bonner Network Wiki, 2014). Bonner AmeriCorps program specifically report performance measures related to capacity-building and after-school programming. These two focus areas fulfill the AmeriCorps requirements and were specifically chosen by the Bonner Foundation because of their alignment with pre-existing Bonner activities.

Document Analysis

The Bonner Foundation serves as an intermediary between Institution B and CNCS. As such, the IHE-AmeriCorps relationship being examined is between Institution B and the Bonner

Foundation rather than CNCS directly. Since I was not as familiar with the program at Institution B, the document analysis was an essential first step in understanding how the program works and what it does. As with Institution A, I chose to use a broad framework for collaboration and civic engagement during this phase of the study to get a sense of program dynamics. After talking with the staff at Institution B, I decided not to use specific Bonner AmeriCorps program documents they had completed as they would not provide much useful information about the partnership with the Foundation. This was largely due to the fact that the Bonner AmeriCorps program at Institution B had only been running 5 years and had relatively low membership compared to the overall membership. As a result, I chose to do a more general overview of the program website of Institution A and the Bonner AmeriCorps wiki page maintained by the Bonner Foundation. These key websites provided an overview of how the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership at Institution B works.

Institution B Program Website

The Bonner program at Institution B has a webpage listed under programs of the CCE. The webpage provides a brief description of the program. It includes specific sections on leadership, how to apply, a listing of partners, and community partners. Community engagement and training and education are highlighted as the first focal points of the page. Unique opportunities to engage with the current Bonners include a tab to e-mail a current member and a listing of public presentations that Bonners complete periodically to discuss the impact of their service. A small box on the page has links to the Bonner Foundation.

While the Bonner webpage is not particularly specific on program administrative aspects, it provides a starting point for understanding what the program does and how it is connected to the larger Bonner Foundation. The focus on the Bonner's work with community organizations

makes the civic action aspect of the website stand out. An additional component that is emphasized is the training and education, specifically the requirement for Bonners to take an academic course in social justice. This demonstrates the program's commitment to providing avenues for civic literacy and inquiry in students starting with opportunities to engage with current scholars through interactive presentations and discussions. Finally, the 4-year commitment of the program is evidence of the civic ethos the program tries to instill. Although not as evident on the program's webpage, the links to the larger Bonner Foundation make it clear that collaboration is an important aspect of the relationship.

Bonner AmeriCorps is not mentioned on the program webpage. After using the query box to put in a search for the word AmeriCorps, I found it mentioned several times in the CCE annual report. When I reviewed the reports, the AmeriCorps reference was not to Bonner AmeriCorps members, but to an AmeriCorps VISTA position with the CCE. Perspective Bonner scholars and other visitors of the webpage would not know there was a Bonner AmeriCorps presence at Institution B until they were told about it during their upcoming sophomore year.

Bonner AmeriCorps Wiki

The Bonner AmeriCorps wiki page has a wealth of information for current Bonner AmeriCorps programs and those wishing to partner in the future (Bonner AmeriCorp, 2014). It includes an easily accessible how-to of program management. The page is divided into three sections—program management phases, step-by-step guides, and key documents. Each phase is aligned with the appropriate guide and documents. The phases go from recruiting eligible members to existing members (phases 1-5). Reporting is also included as a section. Each program management phase has a related interactive quiz that program administrators must complete as verification that they have read and understood the guides and documents. The

quizzes serve as an efficient way for the Foundation to interact with IHEs and determine their ability to manage an AmeriCorps program. It can be viewed as a first step in the collaborative process between the Foundation and an IHE and as it tests the capacity of the IHE to add the AmeriCorps component.

There are 15 guides on the wiki page. A quick scan of the guides shows that they are essentially a translation of CNCS policies that are simplified and centralized for Bonner IHEs. The guides include lots of print screens that make the directions easier to follow with less probability of administrators getting confused by unclear language or written instructions. Many of the guides are the same or similar to the guides already in place for Bonner. The key documents appeared to be more specific to the Bonner AmeriCorps program and were distinctly different from traditional Bonner forms.

The section for reporting was the shortest on the page with only one guide and two forms. The guide detailed the progress report, which used performance measures for capacity-building and after-school programs. The performance measures for capacity-building include the number of organizations receiving services, number of volunteers recruited, number of volunteers managed, number of organizations implementing effective volunteer management practices, and number of organizations reporting that the capacity-building services make them more efficient. The performance measures for after-school programs include the number of youth who have met the meeting time requirement and the number of youth who improved in one or more areas. The assessment forms include the logo of Bonner and AmeriCorps.

Pre and postassessment surveys were designed by the Foundation to capture the information that needs to be shared with CNCS. The Bonner website stated that the surveys were designed by the Foundation in an effort to make the data collection easy and helpful for

program administrators. The transparency in the development of the performance measures and communication of the clear goals shows that the Foundation wants the IHEs to feel included in the process of partnering with CNCS while not feeling burdened by individual administrative tasks. The centralization of reporting shows a high level of collaboration within the Foundation to fully integrate Bonner AmeriCorps into the existing network structure.

There was no evidence of civic engagement within the Bonner AmeriCorps wiki page aside from the obvious service commitment that AmeriCorps entails. The alignment of the AmeriCorps program with the existing Bonner structure makes it unnecessary to highlight concepts related to civic engagement because they are addressed within the Bonner model and apply to all Bonners, including AmeriCorps members.

Summary of Document Analysis

A review of the program website for Institution B and the Bonner AmeriCorps wiki provide a great deal of information about Bonner-AmeriCorps partnerships. It provided a basic framework for how the program at Institution B operates. In particular, the wiki page demonstrated the centralization of the AmeriCorps requirements and emphasized the role of the Foundation as intermediaries between IHEs and CNCS. The webpages provided different perspectives. While the program webpage for Institution B highlighted specifics related to that program, the Bonner wiki gave a general overview that was applicable to programs across the nation.

Interviews

I conducted interviews with several key informants from Institution B. These included the day-to-day staff—the program director and two coordinators. I did not interview others at the institution because their roles were not directly related to program administration and the

day-to-day staff had the most insights into how the program operates and works with the Bonner Foundation.

IHE Program Staff

I interviewed the program staff at Institution B at their office in mid-August at a day and time of their choosing. The campus of Institution B is nestled in a quiet suburb on the outskirts of the city. It is considered a high-end neighborhood where houses can cost upwards of one million dollars. The campus has a closed design so traffic is limited to students, faculty, and intentional visitors. The Bonner office is located in the main student activity building on campus. The director noted that its placement is fitting because many of the participants in the program are active in other student organizations and frequent the building often.

The semester had not yet started for students so the campus is more quiet than usual. In the actual Bonner space there is an open space surrounded by three offices. The administrative coordinator sits in the open space and serves as a greeter to visitors. There is a round table in the center of the room that a returning Bonner is sitting at doing what appeared to be lesson plans. There are also several laminated cards for visitors to take detailing the CCE Student Learning Outcomes and sets of reflection questions. The coordinator and director's offices flank either side of the open space. In the director's office there hangs a very large portrait of the Bonners. The third office is a space used by students and has a couple of computers and desks.

Program director interview findings. The program director, Robert Davis, had been with the Bonner program for 4 to 6 years. He began as a coordinator and was promoted to the director position. He had previous experience working as a middle school teacher and working as a coordinator of Greek affairs at a university. The interview was conducted outside on a uninhabited rooftop veranda. The interview lasted 45 minutes.

Mr. Davis had vast knowledge of the administration of the Bonner program, specifically how it fit into the larger Bonner network. During the interview he cited the collaborative aspects of the partnership with the Bonner Foundation several times. Figure 18 shows the distribution of comments by Mr. Davis related to collaboration.

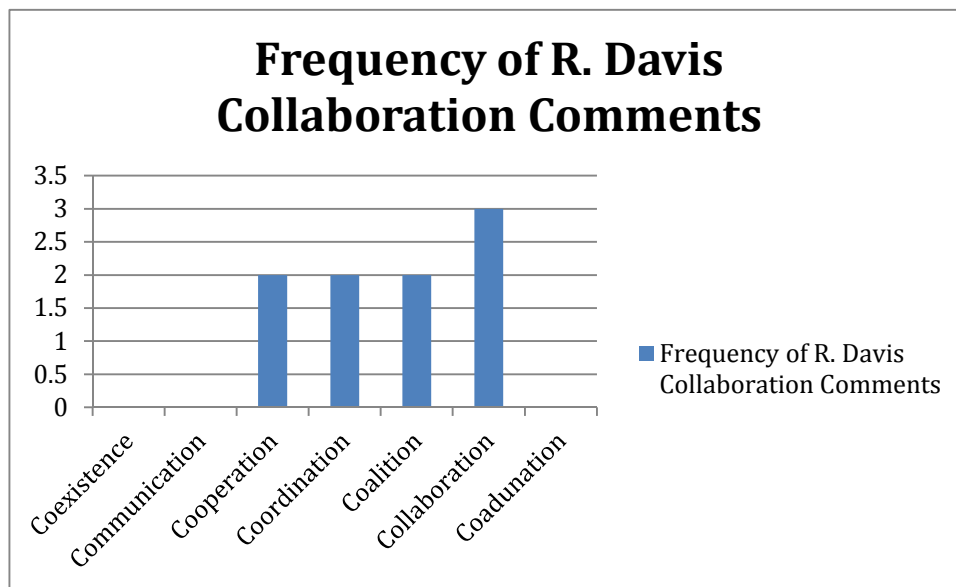


Figure 18. Frequency of R. Davis collaboration comments.

Mr. Davis referred to the collaboration between the Bonner Foundation and the program at Institution B several times. In particular, he focused on how the infrastructure of the Bonner programs provides individual programs with an opportunity to customize the program to fit their needs. He stated:

I think Bonner is a leader in [the civic engagement] movement, simply because the foundation president is pretty innovative. He doesn't want just to focus on Bonner for Bonner's sake, he understands how important civic engagement is to institutions, and to the development of students, and potentially to the development of cities, and towns, and rural areas. He leads very much sort of saying this is not an inter-Bonner dialogue we're having, we need to take this elsewhere, we need to broaden our scope. And what's cool about the Bonner Foundation and the infrastructure they've laid over the past 25 to 30 years, is that an infrastructure exists, which by way of we could start to do research on what students are learning through this type of work. (R. Davis)

Mr. Davis' statement speaks to the ability for Bonner to collaborate effectively with IHEs participating in the program and the larger community to address issues. In the stages model of collaboration, a partnership that has clear and effective communication, designated leaders, and merged resources without conflict has the potential to reach the level known as collaboration.

In addition to citing the Foundation president's ability to lead efforts to have shared goals, Mr. Davis discussed how the internal structures of the university provided a space for collaboration as well. He asserted that his own staff works very collaboratively to make the program work and share ideas on a weekly basis at scheduled individual and group meetings. During an annual summer gathering, the BSP staff reflect on the previous year's accomplishments and setbacks. They use those reflective discussions to guide the collaborative planning for the upcoming year. During this meeting they are thinking about how to integrate the CCE goals with those of Bonner and vice versa.

While describing the evolution of the AmeriCorps program at Institution B, evidence of the collaboration level coalition emerged. In this level, a central body of decision makers works together to achieve a common goal. Mr. Davis described the Bonner Foundation's management of AmeriCorps below:

The way that they structure the service in the community, across a network, at all 80 schools, Bonner Scholars, or Bonner Leader schools—they make sure it's all similar so it all works. So for instance, we only have 9 or 10 of our students who are AmeriCorps, but what they're doing is no different from what the Bonner Scholars do. Except they do the enrollment booklet and they exit. But literally their weekly service is the exact same as Bonner Scholars, except they are limited in where they can serve. So you know the Bonner Foundation – they're very small staff. So they can't manage 80 programs that have different, you know, parameters. So they basically say one size fits all. . . . (R. Davis)

The one size fits all model that Mr. Davis describes is specific to the administration of the Bonner programs and allows for more efficient reporting and management of a national program.

Mr. Davis described similar efforts to coalesce in the CCE. He stated:

The CCE has several different programs, so our program managers have a huddle. A monthly huddle, just to check in, how's the program going, how are we aligned. But I think the center as whole has moved away from the silos that we lived in when I first started working here six years ago, and now we're moving much more like a center. It's been pretty strategic on our executive director and our associate director's behalf and they've done a great job doing that. But it's also a cultural shift. It used to be thinking about: 'Hey I want to partner with this [community partner] because I think they'd be a great fit for our Bonner scholars.' That's how we used to think but it's not like that anymore. Now it's, 'Hey I want to partner with this [community partner] and I think it'd be good for [another CCE program]'. . . Our community partnerships are no longer program-centric they're center-centric and they have to be multilayered in order for us to actually be able to partner with the community organization. (R. Davis)

This shift in thinking about how programs within the CCE connect with one another and work within the community demonstrates a desire to make the CCE more accessible to the community and cohesive. For the BSP staff at Institution B it is an internal change that mimics the structure and strategic planning of the Bonner Foundation.

As Mr. Davis discussed BSP with me there were obvious elements of civic engagement. The chart below shows the distribution of civic engagement comments made during the interview (Figure 19).

The integration of civic literacy into BSP stood out the most during the interview. Mr. Davis consistently discussed the intentional learning that occurred in the program and how that translated to the student academic experience. He stated, "What guides our work is learning by doing." The program provides students with an opportunity to learn in a developmental model starting with the IHE community, the city, and their partner organization. In their final years in the program they begin to think about how they interact with and impact those communities. He further stated:

I think for the students, it's a new way of learning, or a different way of learning. You know, fundamentally we believe that learning is not confined to the four walls of the

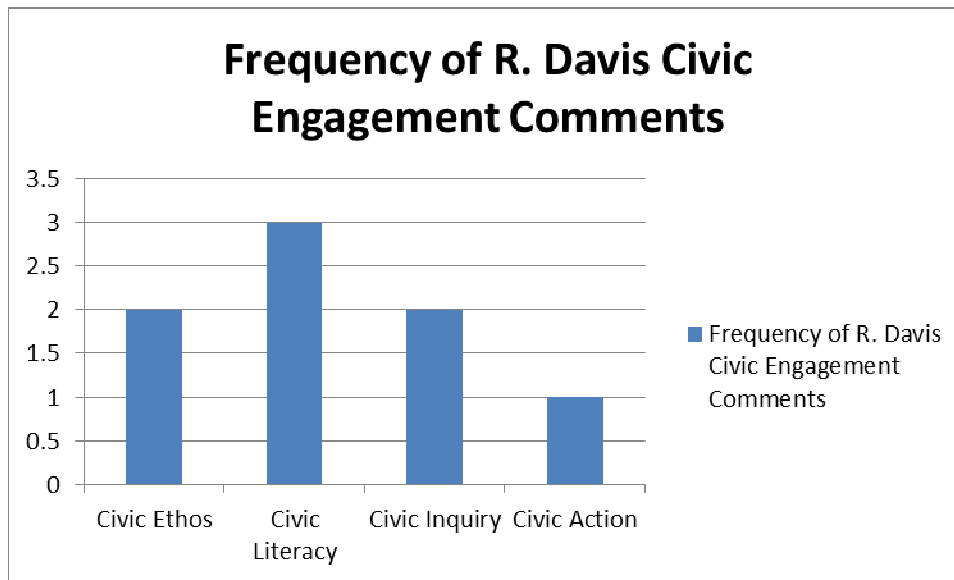


Figure 19. Frequency of R. Davis civic engagement comments.

classroom, nor should it be. So get out there and do. That's the whole reason we do our work. As long as when they're back on campus, we're helping them make meaning of what they're seeing, and doing, and observing, and hearing in the community. Because without that part, then the whole notion of doing in the community is not healthy in the community, in my opinion, for where they are in their lives. So for students, it's definitely a different way of learning. And in fact, I do think it helps them wherever they go after college, just being more present, human in their community. (R. Davis)

The program staff uses the community as text to enhance and support student learning. Learning about the city and its issues becomes as important as doing service in the community in the Bonner experience at Institution B.

The Bonner model incorporates *experience* and *exposure* in an effort to achieve transformational learning for students. As such, it embodies all the aspects of civic engagement recommended by *A Crucible Moment*—civic ethos, literacy, inquiry, and action. According to Mr. Davis, the developmental model of Bonner plays a key role in shaping the student experience. Beginning with their freshmen year students are exposed to information and learning about the community. During the sophomore year they are deeply engaged in taking

civic action and developing a sense of civic ethos. The junior and senior years allow students to think critically about issues and begin to inquire about how they can make a difference.

Other themes emerged during the interview with Mr. Davis were the availability of resources and relationship to the university.

Availability of resources. The program at Institution B is part of the original 23 endowed Bonner programs. As such, funding has not been a major challenge. Additionally, the program operates within an IHE that has many available resources. Mr. Davis was appreciative of the resources at his disposal and noted that other programs were not in similar positions. He stated:

Well I will say when we go to larger Bonner conferences, and we are interacting with a lot of other civic engagement staff at different centers at different universities, it becomes quickly apparent how blessed we are in terms of the space, the size of our staff, the resources we have, we're just able to do a lot more than most other centers. So that definitely is not lost on me by any means. And my peers who are running other Bonner programs do not have the institution support that we do.

In addition to having institutional support and permanent funding, the program at Institution B has access to campus transportation to take students to their service sites. Mr. Davis noted that transportation is often the "biggest impediment to community engagement." Despite having access to a variety of resources, Mr. Davis said he would like more staffing for the program. He stated that he would "like to free up full-time staff to be able to live in the envisioning space with [him] more than they do now."

Bonner relationship to the university. Mr. Davis had strong feelings about the importance of the Bonner program to the civic efforts of the university. He stated:

I describe the Bonners as the spine of civic engagement here. Because they are in the community for 8-10 hours a week for 4 years at the same nonprofit. So, you don't have

students who have as much exposure, consistent exposure over time, to not only the city, but to vulnerable populations in the city, and social issues that are affecting them. There are no other students, quite frankly, staff or faculty that have that much exposure, unless you're staff and faculty members are active members of the community, not just sort of living here and skating by. So these students really know what they're doing and what they're talking about. So in the center, I see them as the spine. (R. Davis)

Mr. Davis believes that the sustained involvement of the Bonners along with the learning opportunities they are provided through training and development makes them an integral part of civic engagement at the university. The Bonner scholars' physical presence in the community and prolonged engagement elevates the university's profile in the community. A future hope of Mr. Davis is that the elevated status of the Bonner scholars in the community at large will soon spread to Institution B so that students can take a "more active role in the community and getting their peers out into the city."

Program coordinator interview findings. The program coordinator, Michael Washington, has been with the program for 4 to 6 years. Prior to working at Institution B, he worked at several nonprofits focusing on youth mentoring and community development. The interview was conducted outside and lasted 59 minutes. Mr. Washington was the first staff member of Institution B that I interviewed and provided a great deal of general program overview and clarification throughout our discussion.

Mr. Washington does a large portion of the logistical work for the program. This includes liaising with the community partners and ensuring that Bonners are able to successfully conduct their service. He did not have as much of a visionary role like the director, but still had a broad knowledge of the program at Institution B and how it fit into the larger Bonner network. This was most evident in his comments regarding collaboration (see Figure 20). Like the director, he had several comments that fell into the collaboration stage. He discusses how AmeriCorps fits into the Bonner model at Institution B below. He stated:

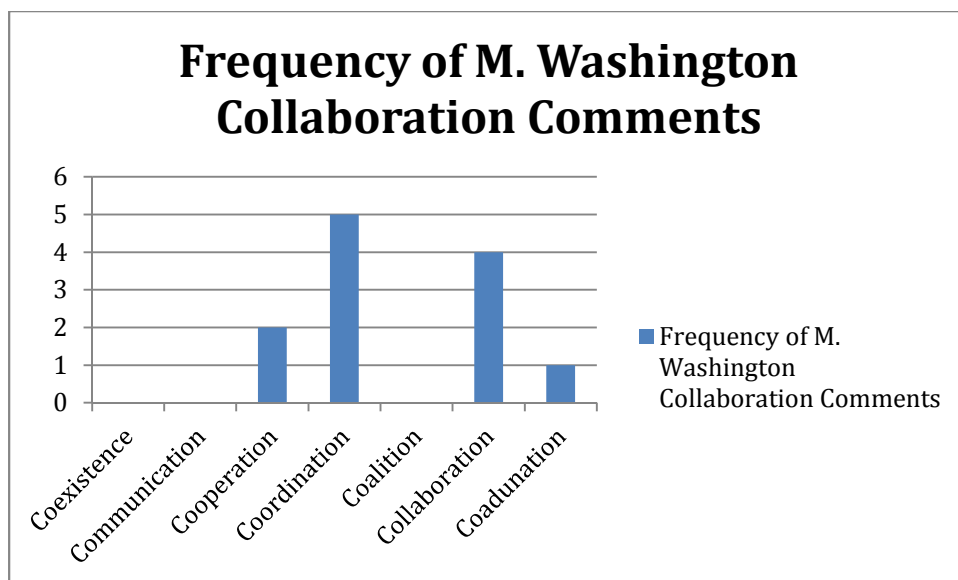


Figure 20. Frequency of M. Washington collaboration comments.

When the AmeriCorps funding was offered to us, we said, ‘How can we align this with the existing scholarship we offer our students?’ . . .The simplest way possible was working with all of our sophomores because 90% of them do a summer of service that summer. So that summer, they are knocking out 280 hours. Then, during that academic year, they’re doing an additional I think 250 hours. So that’s 530 hours between the summer and the academic year. . .So really, there wasn’t a whole lot of additional work to be done. It was just saying, ‘Hey sophomores—you’re already going to be doing a summer of service with the Bonner program, and you’re going to be doing 250 hours during the school year, you can take advantage of this AmeriCorps funding. (M. Washington)

The seamless integration of AmeriCorps into the existing structure of Bonner at Institution B demonstrated collaboration at a high level and the merging of resources to create a new initiative. This was particularly interesting given Institution B’s status as a BSP institution without a necessity to have an AmeriCorps or federal work-study component in their program. Although the program had a steady stream of funding from the endowment, the staff had a desire to make every financial aid opportunity available to their Bonners. He noted that the relationship that the foundation has with CNCS makes the collaboration easier for Institution B. He cited AmeriCorps’ use of the same online database as the Bonner Foundation as an added bonus for

program administrators because they did not have to learn an additional system or take on too much added paperwork.

Mr. Washington also discussed collaboration as it related to the community partners. He asserted that part of the success of the program was that the program staff acted as an intermediary for the students and developed a “deep relationship” with partners that included annual meetings and consistent dialogue. This idea of consistent communication extends to the local community and the larger Bonner network. Mr. Washington stated:

We have a fall directors/coordinators meeting where nationwide everyone gets together. And in May we have this thing where students get together and staff administration come. Yeah we definitely have an ongoing open relationship. The foundation president is in contact with our executive director so they have a good working relationship. So as far as this relational connection, it’s there. (M. Washington)

The Bonner Foundation, while housed in New Jersey, is a constant presence and source of support for Institution B for both staff and students. This kind of collaboration assists with the development of a unified mission and with instills a sense of belonging to a larger community of engaged citizens. Mr. Washington’s assertion that “AmeriCorps aligns so well with the Bonner program” is evidence of coadunation and the ability of two organizations to unify with a single mission.

Mr. Washington’s role as the coordinator gave him more insights into some of the challenges inherent in collaborations at the coordination level. One minor challenge for the program is making sure Bonner AmeriCorps members understand the restrictions of the program. While Bonner has a curricular aspect related to spiritual exploration, AmeriCorps does not allow students to participate in religious activities. Another stipulation is that Bonner

AmeriCorps members participate in capacity-building or after-school programs for their service. Since Bonners select their service during their second semester of their freshman year, this limits who can participate in AmeriCorps. Fortunately, capacity-building is a broad category that most of the organizations partnered with Institution B can fall into.

Mr. Washington described how the program staff have to be cognizant of both institutional and Bonner engagement goals. He stated:

I would say at other schools sometimes they don't have a CCE. And so they are primarily getting all their cues from the Bonner Foundation about what their learning goals should be. So for us, we have both our CCE learning goals and our foundation's that's speaking into what we should be focusing on. So there's this thing called the common commitments. It's like these six common commitments that we should be focusing on with our students, and then we have CCE's learning foundations. For the most part they overlap. (M. Washington)

Like AmeriCorps, the CCE does not have a goal related to spiritual exploration. Coordinating the curriculum to align with the CCE and Bonner is relatively easy task compared to balancing the administrative aspects of the program with the developmental needs of the Bonner students.

Mr. Washington lamented at challenges like transportation, background checks, tuberculosis tests, and reviewing CLAs that kept him from connecting with students more directly. He believed that the administrative aspects could be streamlined, but thought that perhaps the Bonner Foundation passed on those tasks purposely. He stated:

I'd really love to spend time developing this curriculum, to lead a reflection with our student, but we've got stipends to cut. . . So you know, that's probably the tension I feel but it's probably going to change. The foundation can really help us in that respect, the administration pieces, but I don't think that's the foundation's passion. They're not passionate about developing a new database that's easier to use. They themselves are very passionate about the work of active citizenship, and so they focus their resources on

that. But it leaves us, and such a large program with an administrative burden because they're not focused on making those programs efficient. (M. Washington)

The program director discussed the Foundation's use of a one size fits all model of administration. Here, the program coordinator questions whether that is the best form of program management when there are diverse programs involved. This is particularly interesting given Mr. Washington's perspective that the Foundation is passionate about member development given their inability to directly impact it at an institutional level outside of periodic national gatherings.

For the most part, Mr. Washington's discussion of civic engagement was framed around civic action and the work that Bonners do in the community. A distribution of his comments related to civic engagement is shown in Figure 21.

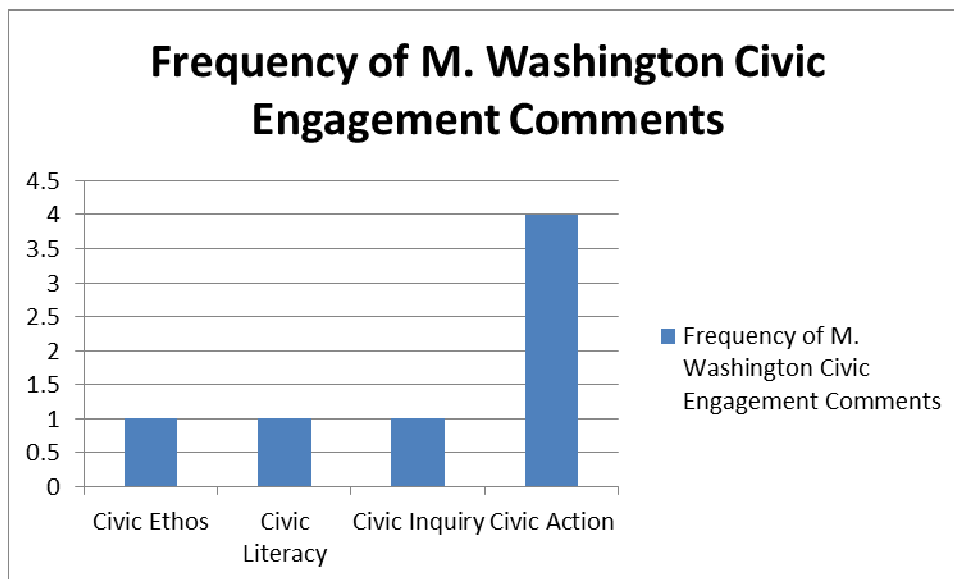


Figure 21. Frequency of M. Washington civic engagement comments.

Mr. Washington provided an example of how the Bonners actively support the community through their service. He stated:

Their volunteer coordinator actually left the organization. The whole organization said [they] might have to shut down this Tuesday/Thursday night ESL class, and [they] might not be able to really partner with [us] unless [we] want[ed] to be part of this morning program. The Bonners that were there had been doing such great work that they actually decided to keep the program in place, and it's still continuing. . .So that's the case with definitely a few other programs, as well, students have kind of served as that anchor. (M. Washington)

Mr. Washington's reference to the Bonners as "anchors" echoes what the program director said about the program being the "spine" of community engagement at the university. The ability for the Bonners to connect directly with community partners and provide service over an extended time period makes them valuable assets. Much of the civic action Bonners participate in is intertwined in opportunities for civic literacy. This includes the way that first year Bonners learn about the city through active participation in service activities that allow them to explore different community issues.

Other themes that Mr. Washington discussed were the availability of resources and the importance of sustained service.

Availability of resources. Mr. Washington cited the conferences hosted by the Foundation as valuable resources for students and staff. He also showed an awareness that the resources available at Institution B were not prevalent at all IHEs. He stated:

We know a lot of institutions don't have the same resources. Someone was at a conference one time and was like I've been doing this for 15 years, but at the end of the day sometimes it boils down to transportation. Like, simply getting my students there. And we're so fortunate that we have the resources to have shuttles to go send our students

out. Not every institution has those resources. It's great to talk about the national movement, but then you have to talk about the resources too to make it happen. (M. Washington)

The program director had a similar acknowledgement of the availability of resources. Like the director, Mr. Washington also shared a desire to spend more of his time in the 'visioning' space developing curriculum and interacting with members as opposed to doing administrative tasks.

Sustained service. According to Mr. Washington, one of the main differences between Bonner and other programs is the opportunity for partners to have a sustained student presence over several years. He stated:

With our program, we give them 4 years. They're not investing in a student for 1 year and then their gone. And you start out in the office, taking phone calls, now you're working in development and helping us secure a grant. That's beneficial for the community. And for the student, they get to learn and gain experience, which is really cool. (M. Washington)

He further cited that Bonners "build this long-term established connection for the rest of campus." This emphasizes Mr. Washington's point that Bonners serve as the anchor at the university helping to build the foundation of community partnerships for the larger institution.

Administrative coordinator interview findings. The administrative coordinator, Ashley Holland, had been with the Bonner program at Institution B just over 1 year. She has the most intimate knowledge of the administration of the Bonner AmeriCorps aspect of the program assisting members with tracking their hours, ensuring compliance with AmeriCorps regulations, and reporting to the Bonner Foundation on activities. Previously she worked nonprofits in the area. The interview was conducted outside and lasted 25 minutes.

Despite having the most interaction with the administrative aspects of the Bonner AmeriCorps program, Ms. Holland had the least comments related to the collaboration with the Bonner Foundation. The distribution of her comments is in Figure 22. In addition to having the

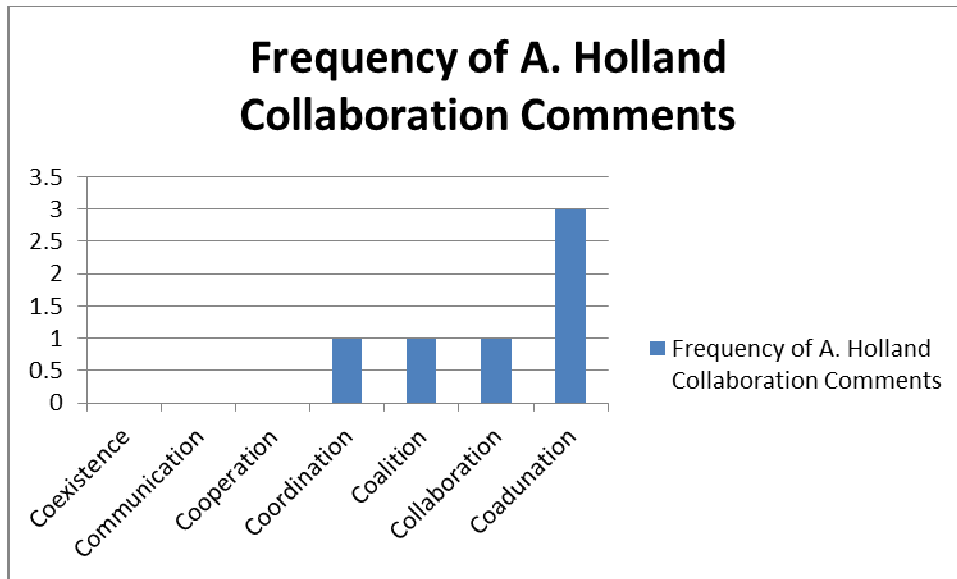


Figure 22. Frequency of A. Holland collaboration comments.

least amount of comments related to the overall collaborative aspect of the relationship with Bonner, Ms. Holland had the most comments discussing the coadunation of the programs into a single organization. She stated:

There is really little separation. Really what it is filling out that AmeriCorps paperwork and that first orientation. Site supervisors sometimes don't even know they are AmeriCorps members until they I ask for the evaluation, and I say this student is also an AmeriCorps student, can you please fill out this evaluation on their work. . . We are also somewhat controlled by the Bonner foundation, they do a lot of the auditing for us, get the positions for us. In the spring I got an email. They asked us how many slots would you like this year for AmeriCorps and I said 10, just based on the history of it. (A. Holland)

Even though Ms. Holland lists the administration of the Bonner AmeriCorps as a separate aspect of her job, she sees it is inter-related to the work she already does at Bonner with little additional work. She further discussed how easily the Bonner AmeriCorps program fits into the sophomore

year experience based on the number of hours the student complete when the summer of service is included. Additionally, the use of the same online system to track hours is helpful. These same aspects were highlighted by the program coordinator. According to Ms. Holland, the program at Institution B does not do “any kind of separation” between Bonner AmeriCorps members and traditional Bonners, something that may change in the future if Bonner AmeriCorps expands.

Ms. Holland had evidence of all the aspects of civic engagement indicated by *A Crucible Moment* (see Figure 23). Most of her discussion focused on the civic literacy and inquiry that takes place in the program. She stated:

I really think very highly of the Bonner foundation and the initiatives that they’ve taken. I really do feel like it’s such a—I think back and wish I had something like the Bonner scholars program just because it is such a wonderful cohort and it’s so amazing to see these students bond together and it’s really just so complementary to learning, it’s another way of—it’s a way of directly applying what they’re learning to the real world and getting that real world experience. Like so many students will sit in classes but they don’t have any direct way to tie to what’s going on in the world. And who am I in the world? So we have a lot of bigger questions. It’s really about student development and pushing students to be their best. (A. Holland)

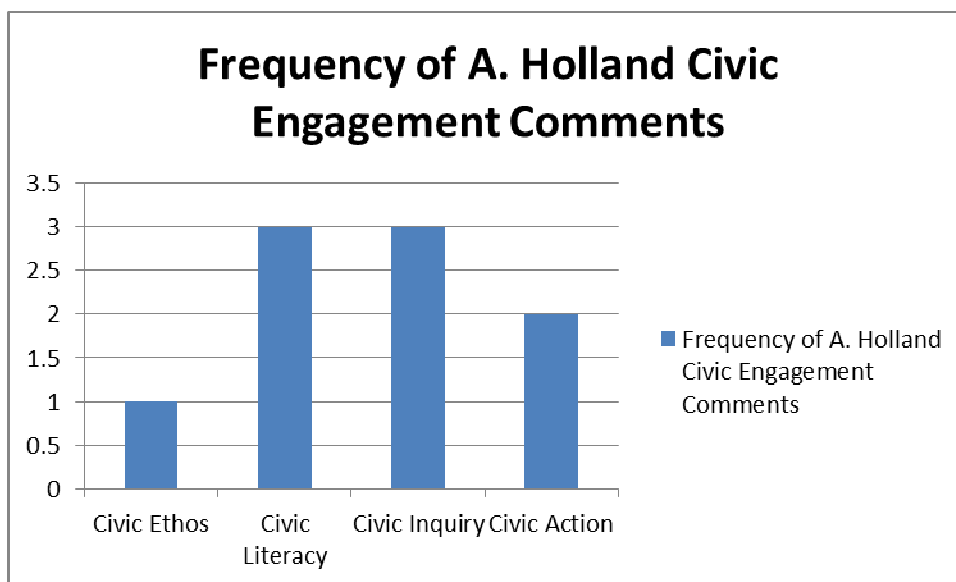


Figure 23. Frequency of A. Holland civic engagement comments.

All of the staff agreed on the importance of applied knowledge in the program and how it assists with students understanding social issues in a local community context. A new initiative that was implemented this year that included having a small group of Bonners explore issues related to nutrition and work as a cohort to study food justice issues. Civic literacy and inquiry is also evident in the Bonner process for selecting service placements that forces students to research local nonprofits and decide whether the program fits their personal and academic interests. Again, the program model civic action is the main component through which civic literacy and inquiry are integrated into the curriculum—learning by doing.

Other themes discussed by Ms. Holland included a desire to grow AmeriCorps and lessen the administrative burden of the program.

Growth of AmeriCorps and administrative burdens. Ms. Holland stated that “there could be tighter things around AmeriCorps” and that there were also opportunities to find out how to “grow it.” While the growth of the Bonner AmeriCorps is a potential future goal of the program at Institution B, Ms. Holland did note the difficulties that come from the paperwork associated with the Bonner program in general. She stated:

I mean, from my standpoint I feel so lucky to walk into something that was already so organized, but I mean it is a heavy administrative burden. So there is 100 students, every 5 weeks, getting a lot of paperwork done for them, and on their behalf, and tracking their hours. So yeah it can be challenging to keep students in line sometimes. It’s a lot, they have a lot going on in their lives and their taking heavy course loads themselves, they’re doing extracurricular things. Then, they’re doing Bonner. So sometimes just to keep them on track. . .and for me, specifically, I have to keep the paper trail going: ‘Come back and sign this,’ and hunting kids down.

Ms. Holland’s statement suggests that paperwork is a challenge that can be compounded by working with the college student population due to their busy schedules and lifestyle.

Program staff interview findings summary. Overall, the interviews with the day-to-day staff of the AmeriCorps program at Institution B were informative. Evidence of

collaboration and civic engagement were present throughout the interviews. The collaboration stages that were most evident in the interviews were and coordination and collaboration with most interaction between the IHE and the Bonner Foundation regarding the Bonner AmeriCorps program operating in the mid-high levels of collaboration. This indicates that there is constant communication, established roles, and productivity taking place within the relationship. Figure 24 shows the distribution of comments related to collaboration.

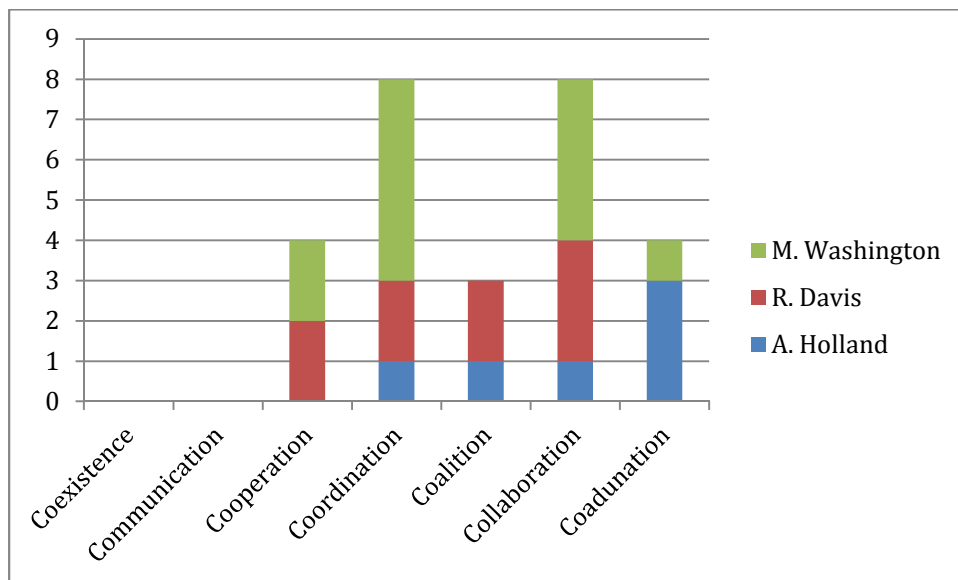


Figure 24. Frequency of day-to-day staff collaboration comments.

Figure 25 below shows the distribution of comments related to civic engagement for the day-to-day staff at Institution B. There was evidence of all the civic engagement codes in the interviews with the staff from Institution B. Civic literacy and action were most evident while civic ethos was least present during the interviews.

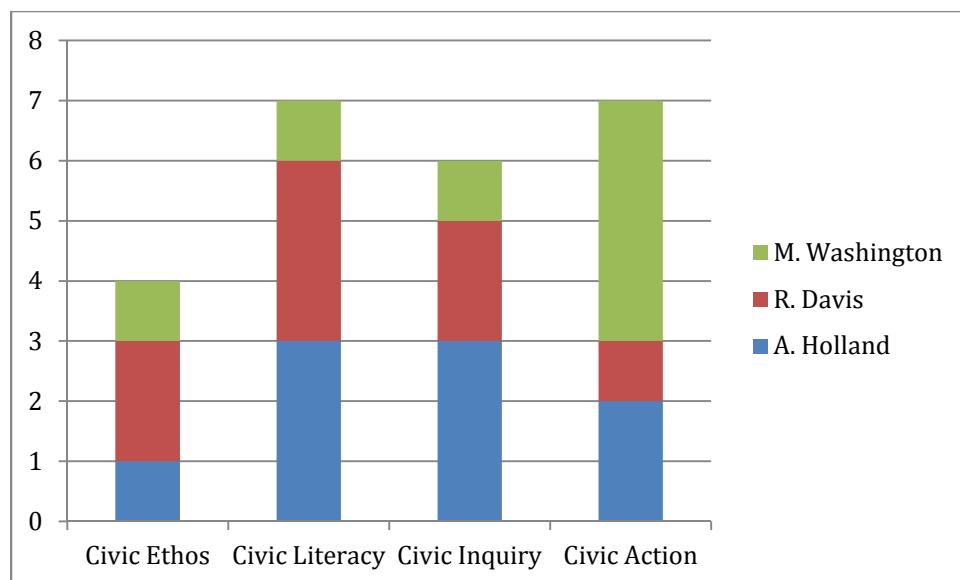


Figure 25. Frequency of day-to-day staff civic engagement comments.

Other themes emerged during the interviews that did not fit into the categories of collaboration or civic engagement, but were important aspects of program administration highlighted by program staff. Table 5 shows the additional themes that came up in the interviews. Some of the additional themes that all of the staff noted were the centralization and integration of Bonner AmeriCorps into the existing Bonner structure and the access to resources at Institution B.

Centralization and integration of Bonner AmeriCorps. Some of the comments related to the staff's perceptions of the centralization and integration of the Bonner AmeriCorps model into the pre-existing Bonner network follow. "There is really little separation. Really what it is is filling out that AmeriCorps paperwork and that first orientation. Site supervisors sometimes don't even know they are AmeriCorps members until they I ask for the evaluation" (Ashley Holland). "And so when you think about AmeriCorps, and the 450-hour requirement in 1 year, that's where our sophomores aligned really well with the AmeriCorps funding that was provided.

Table 5

Institution B Staff Interview Findings Matrix

Benefits	Director	Program coordinator	Administrative coordinator
Program flexibility	X		
Centralization/integration	X	X	X
Institutional support	X		
Partner communication		X	
Foundation support	X	X	
Resources (funding, transport)	X	X	X
Sustained service	X	X	
Challenges			
Reporting		X	X
Policy conflicts		X	

So really, there wasn't a whole lot of additional work to be done" (M. Washington). All of the staff members seemed aware that the centralization of the Bonner AmeriCorps model by the Foundation made many of the administrative aspects of having an AmeriCorps component much easier. They were aware of the AmeriCorps policies and how they impacted other programs, but seemed to have a sense of being shielded from many of these issues by the Foundation taking the brunt of the administrative burden away from the individual IHEs. At one point, the director referred to AmeriCorps as a "moving target." Having the Foundation be the intermediary to track CNCS and determine how to translate their changing policies to the IHEs was viewed as helpful.

Access to resources. Some of the comments regarding the access to resources are listed below.

- Someone was at a conference one time and was like I've been doing this for 15 years, but at the end of the day sometimes it boils down to transportation. Like, simply getting my students there. And we're so fortunate that we have the resources to have shuttles to go send our students out. Not every institution has those resources. It's great to talk about the national movement, but then you have to talk about the resources too to make it happen (M. Washington).
- So the CCE has been really supported by the current president. Both in time, resources, focus. He even sits on the Bonner Foundation's President's Advisory Council. So we are very much well-supported by administration here (R. Davis).

Each staff member commented on the access they had to resources and the support they received from their unit and the larger university. They realized that the resources they had access to were

not available at other IHEs and made the management of the program more efficient and effective.

While there were commonalities across the interviews, there were some differences that came up as well. As with Institution A, the bulk of these differences seemed to emerge as a result of the individual roles that the staff members played in the program. For example, the coordinators were more likely to site paperwork and reporting as a challenge because that is a central aspect of their jobs while the director was more likely to discuss broader program issues like curriculum development.

Bonner Foundation Staff Interviews

Since the Bonner Foundation serves as intermediaries between IHEs and the AmeriCorps program, I scheduled interviews with two of the Foundation staff that have worked closely with the management of the Bonner AmeriCorps program. The Bonner AmeriCorps model is unique because it provides IHEs with the opportunity to be affiliated with the national AmeriCorps program without interacting directly with CNCS. As the gatekeepers of that relationship and the brokers of the AmeriCorps relationship between IHEs across the country and CNCS, the Bonner Foundation staff that work between the IHE and CNCS are key informants for this type of IHE-AmeriCorps partnership. I spoke with two individuals with different insights on the IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships—one a seasoned Bonner Administrator with many years working with CNCS and another, a newly hired Foundation employee working with a variety of AmeriCorps partnerships at the local, state, and national level. The Bonner Foundation is located out of state so each interview was conducted by phone.

Bonner administrator interview findings. During the interview with the Bonner Administrator, John Vinson, several comments were made related to the Bonner-AmeriCorps

collaboration. Figure 26 shows the distribution of comments. Mr. Vinson had worked at the Bonner Foundation for many years as an administrator and had a great deal of knowledge about the development of the relationship with AmeriCorps and the trickle down of that partnership to the Bonner network. As such, much of the comments surrounding collaboration fell into the coordination level. When the partnership with AmeriCorps began there was a great deal of communication and sharing of resources to implement the program at Bonner programs around the country, but there was tension on how to efficiently manage a national AmeriCorps program working through a Foundation begin implemented at individual IHEs across the country. Mr. Vinson discussed the initial idea to begin a partnership with AmeriCorps. He stated:

By that point we had been—colleges had heard about the Bonner program. They said we'd like to have a program and we are a foundation so they would ask us to fund them. We would say 'All of our money is tied up in these original schools, but AmeriCorps now has a part-time version that provides the education award.' Around the same time work-study was modified to require at that time 5 now 7% of each grant to each college has to be spent on students doing community service jobs. In other words, work-study began that requires schools to do some funding that would be similar to the Bonner funding. When schools would call us we would say, 'We can help you because you have work-study dollars that could be the stipend.' Around that time we applied for AmeriCorps funding to supplement what students were getting to get the additional benefit in the form of the education award. That could be both for the students we support with the stipend coming from the Foundation or students who are on work-study at schools that we are working with. We started with a few schools plus our original schools and now we have twice as many schools who don't have any Bonner foundation funding directly, but have Bonner programs because they are leveraging work-study and in many cases, in most cases, AmeriCorps funding. (J. Vinson)

Like many programs operating within the community, the incentive to partner with AmeriCorps held financial incentives for the Bonner Foundation. Unable to support more schools through the endowment, AmeriCorps became a way to continue to expand the Bonner network without increased costs to the Foundation. The story of the Bonner Foundation is really a story of collaboration beginning with individual IHEs and expanding to include AmeriCorps.

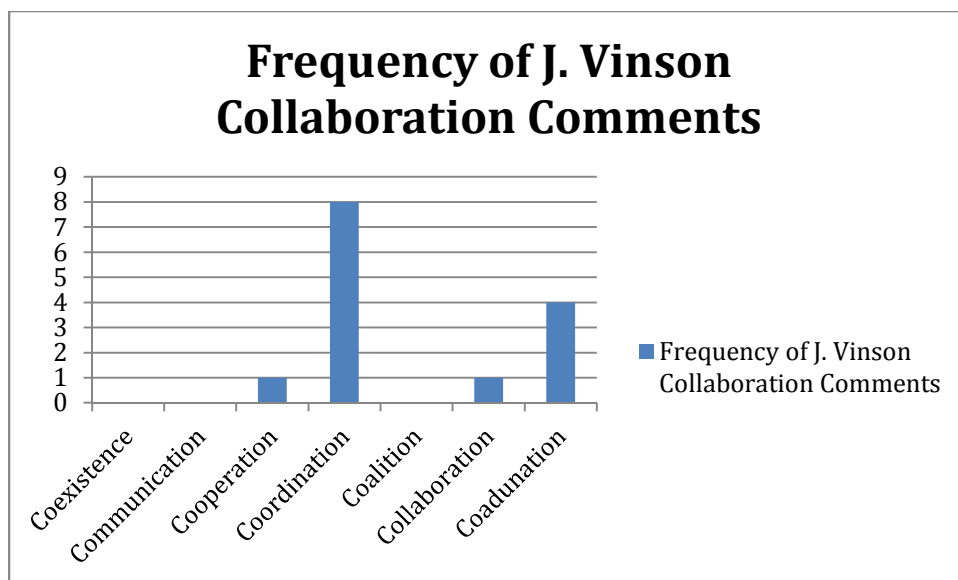


Figure 26. Frequency of J. Vinson collaboration comments.

Mr. Vinson noted that a distinct difference between AmeriCorps and Bonner is the training and development piece. Because Bonner uses a developmental model that requires a 4-year commitment, there is much more time spent on thinking of ways to engage students in civic activities beyond service. He commented:

Our web-based system gives us the ability to build that structure around the students. There is a community learning agreement that is signed by the students, partner, and service staff each semester where the students outline their job descriptions, but also outline their learning goals and service goals of what they are trying to accomplish at their service site. That is a developmental document. You don't really need it to do your service. You need it to be conscious of as a student and thinking about what am I doing here? Why am I doing this? What kind of skills am I trying to develop? How am I going to accomplish my service? That is an example of the kinds of things that are built in to our web-based tracking system that allows us to both manage what is happening and also have a focus on that member development even after a focus on community outcomes. (J. Vinson)

While the Bonner web-based reporting system serves an important purpose of sustaining the collaboration with AmeriCorps through the intentional coordination of online reporting systems, it also has an important role in shaping the civic inquiry and literacy of Bonner students.

AmeriCorps' focus on the completion of hours is enhanced in the Bonner model with the

requirement of CLAs that force Bonners to think about how they are spending their time serving the community.

While Mr. Vinson was able to compromise and use the reporting requirements of AmeriCorps to enhance the Bonner online tracking system, some collaborative elements of the partnership have been frustrated by bureaucracy and overarching policies that impact all programs. He commented:

Things like the criminal background checks, the national sex offender registry and those kinds of things, those are necessary but in some ways you'd like to have that be the responsibility of the agency running the program where the students are doing their service. I'd like to have that be pushed down to that level where if you're a school system and you have volunteers coming into your schools the schools should be responsible for verifying whether individuals are eligible. I think in some instances they are so they are just being done twice. It's a—the bureaucracy and the cost makes it—you understand the need for it, but the structure for it is pretty burdensome overall for us, particularly since we are a national multi-state. Now, we get some waivers sometimes on stuff, but that is a challenge. (J. Vinson)

As an AmeriCorps national program, Bonner AmeriCorps works with IHEs across the United States. The different policies of each state make it difficult to complete a requirement like the background checks, particularly when the mandate is unfunded.

A positive aspect of the collaboration that Mr. Vinson pointed to was the performance measure requirement of CNCS. He noted that the “Corporation’s funding and requirements have been very helpful to keep people focused on the larger long-term goals.” While he did believe the performance measures can be overwhelming, Mr. Vinson believed that focusing on impact and outcome data can serve as a beneficial tool to think about program administration and make appropriate improvements. As a result, the Bonner Foundation took on the performance measures related to capacity-building and after-school programs. This kind of embracement of CNCS goals demonstrates high levels of working together moving towards the collaboration level.

Coadunation, or the complete integration of two organizations to form a new one with a single mission is difficult to accomplish. Yet, it appeared that the Bonner Foundation found a way to do that with the Bonner AmeriCorps program. Mr. Vinson stated:

We have some schools that have chosen not to do it because they do want students to do voting rights. They don't want to have to do the extra work that is required. We have done our best to—every one of our schools whether they do AC or not are doing the capacity-building process with the partners. When I talk to our schools and we do mailings, we are talking to all 65 schools about it not just AC. When we send out the data on tell us what you have done this semester in a particular format we have to do a separate one for AmeriCorps people because it is a distinct thing. (J. Vinson)

Mr. Vinson describes a desire to integrate AmeriCorps fully into the existing Bonner model.

Rather than discuss the Bonner AmeriCorps program as a separate program, the Foundation uses inclusive language. This was echoed across all of the interviews with the day-to-day staff at Institution B who felt that, other than some minor paperwork and restrictions, the programs were one and the same. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the administration of the Bonner AmeriCorps relationship was the Foundation's decision to serve as the primary liaison between CNCS and the IHEs it supported.

The most significant thing was we chose to centralize the management. What I mean by that is the enrollment paperwork came to us. We then verified it and go to eGrants and put the information there. The exit paperwork the same thing. Of course, when you do the exit you are also checking all the hours. We also have a web based tracking system that enables us to—that students were using to track their hours and document their enrollment status. That enabled us to basically see everything that is happening so we could review the position descriptions and training descriptions and document the hours, log signatures, and, again, all the little details. (J. Vinson)

Mr. Vinson told a cautionary tale of the AmeriCorps programs in Washington State and Colorado. Both were the biggest in the country with thousands of members. Rather than centralize the management of the program, they trained individuals at each location to complete the AmeriCorps requirements. With little oversight, CNCS eventually shut down one program

and the other was not granted funding in their reapplication. This administrative warning was a major impetus for Mr. Vinson in deciding to centralize the AmeriCorps partnership.

As members of Bonner AmeriCorps, IHEs did not need to individually apply for grants or take on copious amounts of reporting. The Foundation has taken on the task of being the intermediary. According to Mr. Vinson, this does require more work on their part, but is worth having the consistency and assurance that policies are being followed. To do this extra work, the Foundation has two full-time staff devoted fully to Bonner AmeriCorps and additional part-time staff during high periods of programming. These staff members work closely with the IHEs to translate and relate the information from CNCS. The positions are funded by both CNCS and the Bonner Foundation showing more evidence of the collaborative nature of the partnership to share funding. In Mr. Vinson's mind, Bonner AmeriCorps is not a "distinct program," rather it is an additional resource for Bonner program and students. He cited that the Bonner AmeriCorps experience provided students with "a sense of identity and pride that complements what we are trying to do with Bonner, but has its own unique feature."

Mr. Vinson did not have as many comments related to civic engagement. Figure 27 shows the distribution of comments related to that indicator.

Mr. Vinson noted that the curriculum of Bonner allowed students opportunities to inquire about the world around them and discover their place in it. He additionally noted that being in Bonner created a sense of belonging to "something larger" that was an important aspect of student development as well. While he focused more on the administrative aspects of the partnership with AmeriCorps, Mr. Vinson was very cognizant of the civic engagement efforts being discussed around the country. He commented on *A Crucible Moment*:

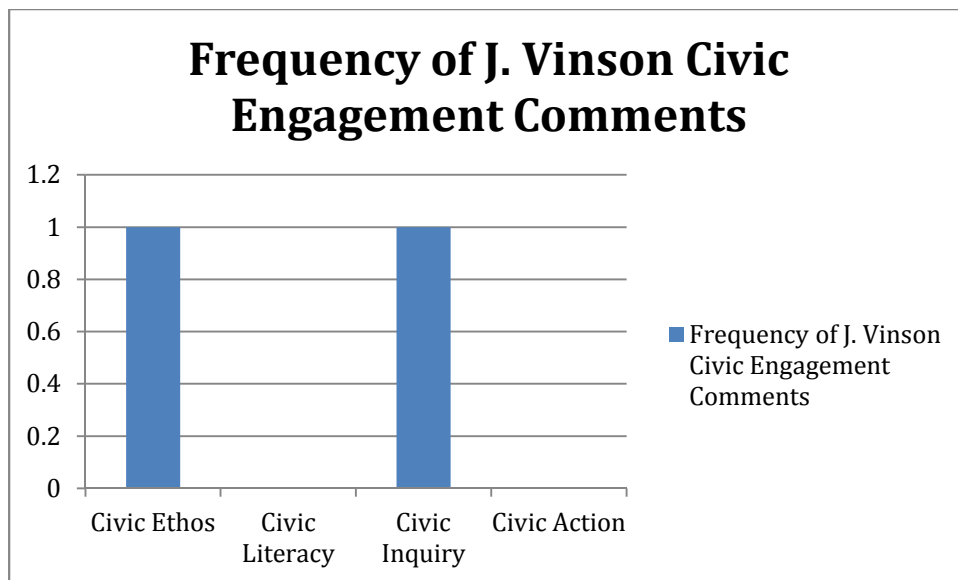


Figure 27. Frequency of J. Vinson civic engagement comments.

My personal view that is reflected in that report is that it is not just about the students' development. It is also about the community and how higher education can be a vital partner in thinking about social change and the rest of it. A lot of the service-learning stuff was about the student learning and what they get out of it and everyone knows that. Everyone that does the stuff talks about that. I think the struggle has been we want to do high-level work, but what does that look like? I think there is too much split between direct service, community service, and advocacy as if those are the only forms that are out there. (J. Vinson)

Mr. Vinson went on to note that the current focus on direct service may be hitting the mark in terms of real engagement. He believes that in many cases the work that needs to be done is starting with coalitions that assess community issues, research them, develop a plan, build an infrastructure, and then begin taking action. His understanding of engagement as a collaborative process that often happens in board rooms and meeting spaces before direct service begins could potentially explain why much of his interview discussed administration.

Bonner AmeriCorps administrator interview findings. I interviewed one of the Bonner AmeriCorps administrators, Tanya Meadows. Her job specifically deals with managing the state, VISTA, and national AmeriCorps grants for the Bonner Foundation. She described the job as one that could require three different individuals to manage the different parts, but noted

the Foundation did its best to keep the various parts of AmeriCorps integrated into the larger Bonner program as much as possible.

Only one element of civic engagement was discussed in the interview when Ms. Meadows discussed the role of Bonners in the community. She stated that the Foundation is “providing that extra quasi-staff member for them and measurement so they can bring their nonprofit to the next level.” This kind of civic action promotes capacity-building in the organizations Bonner support and personal development for students.

For the most part, Ms. Meadows focused on the collaborative elements of her work with IHEs and CNCS. Figure 28 shows the frequency of collaboration comments made by Ms. Meadows.

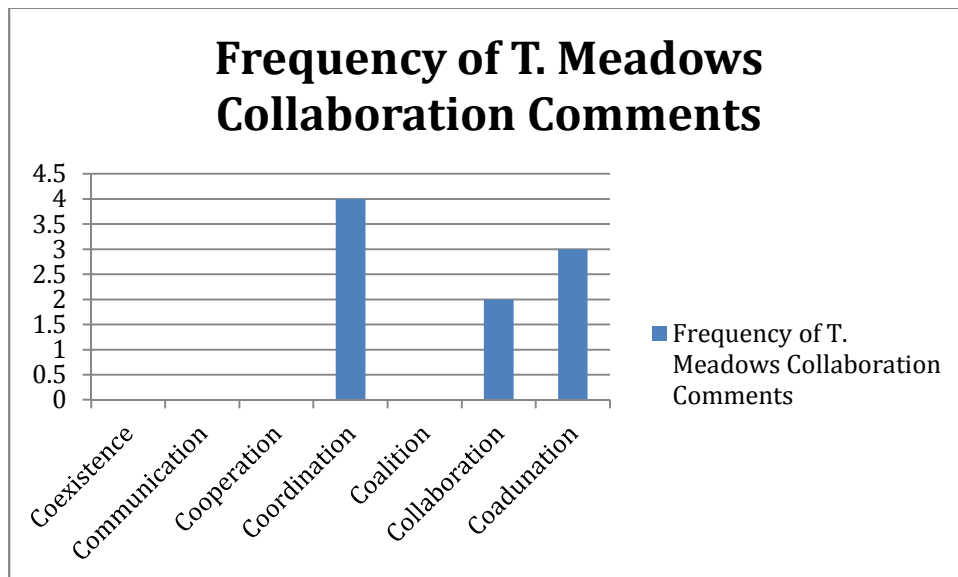


Figure 28. Frequency of T. Meadows collaboration comments.

While many of Ms. Meadows’ comments stayed in the coordination or mid-range of collaboration, nearly half fell into the highest levels of collaboration. In terms of coordinating, Ms. Meadows felt that the hardest aspect of her job was running programs that have unique identities. She stated:

It's just keeping everything in order. A lot of our schools have slots from all three grants so the progress reports can get confusing with them, especially if they are working with just the college students and one could be a national member and another is a state AmeriCorps student. There are communication issues that you have to be aware of when you send out a progress report or guidelines and restrictions to what students can and cannot do. Even walking them through applying for each position itself is drastically different. (T. Meadows).

In addition to each AmeriCorps grant being different, the Bonner program has its own requirements that IHEs are upholding and sometimes they may not match. She believes that the most successful Bonner AmeriCorps administrators are people who can “follow strict rules and regulations” (T. Meadows).

Some of the coordination strategies that the Foundation uses to assist IHEs with the AmeriCorps administration are the Bonner wiki page, conference, and webinars. AmeriCorps program managers are assigned schools to support and help on an as-needed basis as well. On being an intermediary with CNCS she commented:

It's also just the ease of the systems that they have. Being an intermediary manager its not that you are working with just one site and everyone is doing the same thing. We have a lot of levels within our model. It may not traditionally fit into the CNCS cycle or model that they typically work with. Working with us to better figure out the best practices to get this job done because we are one of the larger campus projects in the nation. (T. Meadows)

With more than 1,200 Bonner AmeriCorps members, Ms. Meadows believes that the Bonner AmeriCorps relationship has potential to grow, but only if CNCS begins to consider the needs of the Foundation to maintain such a large membership.

According to Ms. Meadows the most important aspect of the AmeriCorps partnership is the funding. She stated:

The Bonner family when they wanted to start a Foundation one of their forefronts is that they wanted first generation students to go to college. With the AmeriCorps funding we are able to continue the effort and getting funds into communities all over the nation where kids wouldn't normally be able to afford to go to college they are receiving additional money to go to college. At the same time, they are also receiving training and a development that they wouldn't necessarily get at a different college of working strategically and at a high-level with the nonprofit on a daily basis. I think that is the biggest plus of combining the Bonner model with the AmeriCorps funding (T. Meadows).

She echoes a similar view of Mr. Vinson that AmeriCorps while an asset to Bonner did not fundamentally change what the Foundation does. The partnership brings additional resources to the IHEs and students to enhance pre-existing programmatic goals.

Summary of Interview Findings

I combined the findings of the day-to-day staff at Institution B with that of the Bonner staff to create a more comprehensive matrix that compares what the IHE staff said compared to the Foundation staff. Table 6 shows the matrix.

There were many points of agreement between the IHE and Bonner Foundation staff. The points they all agreed upon were the integration and centralization of AmeriCorps into Bonner and the benefit of having resources. Because of their relationship to CNCS, the Foundation staff was more aware of the challenge related to managing the actual AmeriCorps grant and its requirements on a daily basis while the IHE staff was aware of those issues in a more conceptual way. There was an appreciation from both parties about the freedom that

Table 6

Institution B Comparison Interview Findings Matrix

Benefits	Director	Program coordinator	Administrative coordinator	Bonner administrator	Bonner AC administrator
Program flexibility	X			X	
Centralization/integration	X	X	X	X	X
Institutional support	X				
Partner communication		X		X	
Foundation support	X	X		X	X
Resources (funding, transport)	X	X	X	X	X
Sustained service	X	X		X	
Challenges					
Reporting		X	X		X
Policy conflicts		X		X	

centralized management of AmeriCorps gave to the universities to worry primarily about programming rather than policies. The simplification of the partnership at the institutional level seemed to be an emphasis for everyone involved in the collaboration.

Observations

I completed six observations over the course of 3 months with Institution B totaling 8 hours. The observations were a way for me to witness firsthand the activities of the corps. I focused specifically on the role of the administrators during these observations and how the themes of collaboration and civic engagement emerged in action. I observed two main types of activities—member meetings and service activities. While the focus of my study is on the administration of the program, I felt it was important to see students completing direct service to ensure that the program descriptions I read about and discussed with the staff were accurately reflected on the ground.

Service Activities

I observed two Bonner AmeriCorps members at their service sites. Overall, these observations displayed civic action as they were focused on the members completing their direct service in the community. I observed Laura Stephens, assisting with a local after-school program, and Ann Brown working at a local farmer's market. Each observation lasted about an hour. After each observation, I asked the participants questions about their service and Bonner AmeriCorps experience. It was evident that the service that the Bonners were doing, although different, had the elements of civic action. They were working in communities different from their own addressing critical needs for the community—education and food security.

Ms. Brown's experience at the farmer's market seemed to be more transformative in that it aligned with her environmental studies major. In addition to working at the market, she also

planned activities for the preschool that operated in the community organization. On that date, she had the children make homemade play dough. She said this was something she had to look up and figure out how to do herself, something she did often while planning. This showed evidence of enhanced civic literacy that forced Ms. Brown to learn new skills and try new things. When asked specifically why she chose to do AmeriCorps as part of her Bonner experience she stated, “I thought that it sounded like a great opportunity to earn a little bit of extra money without adding a significant amount of time commitments to my schedule” (A. Brown). Ms. Brown’s comments confirm what the staff said about the benefits of the program for students and also verify that the integration of the programs was happening at the student as well as administrative level.

During the observation of Ms. Stephens at the after-school program, I had the opportunity to see another Bonner serving at the site as well. This Bonner, although a sophomore, was not in AmeriCorps. The after-school program was in a community organization that had transformed a residential house into a nonprofit for local children. While the farmer’s market had a very diverse group of people working and in attendance, the after-school program’s participants were all African-American and the volunteers in the room I observed were all white women. The volunteers were told to complete homework with the students. Because many of the students claimed not to have any, most of the volunteers read with the children.

At one point, the non-AmeriCorps Bonner student became frustrated that her student kept lying down on the sofa. When she inquired why she was tired the student told her she went to bed at midnight and woke up at 5:00 a.m. to go to her grandmother’s house because her mother had to get to work early. The Bonner visibly and audibly expressed shock and told the student she should get 8 hours of sleep.

In another Bonner-student interaction, Ms. Stephens finished *The Indian in the Cupboard* (Banks, 1980) with her student and said she would bring her a variety of sweet treats the next time she saw her as a prize for reading well. These responses to the children in the program seemed counter to some of the messages that the Bonners had been discussing and learning about in their meetings.

Member Meetings

I observed four different Bonner meetings over the course of 3 months. These included three member meetings where all Bonners were present and one sophomore meeting, the year that students may select to become a Bonner AmeriCorps member. The elements of collaboration in these meetings typically involved the staff making reference to a connection with the Bonner Foundation. For example, the director told the students that they needed to think about the students that would be representing them as Congress members in the national Bonner network. This integration of Bonners from all over the nation into one Congress to provide support and resources showed the coadunation of the various IHEs into the Bonner network. For the most part, the collaboration that I witnessed was internal. It included the staff introducing the interns for the year and explaining their role and senior members assisting with the facilitation of the meetings.

While there was not much evidence of collaboration, there was evidence of all the aspects of engagement. In many instances, the indicators were overlapping. When the interns were introduced for the year, each of them discussed why they wanted to take on that role. Each of them discussed going abroad the previous year and the impact it had on them. The encouragement to go abroad as a Bonner provided the members with a sense of civic ethos and action as they are required to find a service activity in their host country to remain a Bonner. It

was evident that these students were bringing back diverse experiences that would influence their continued commitment to Bonner during the year. Another way that the civic ethos was developed was through optional meal times together prior to the group meeting. The staff members discussed the importance of getting together socially to feel connected and has a standing dinner planned in the dining hall before Bonner meetings. They told student who did not have meal plans to come and the dinner would be paid for by the program.

One of the most interesting methods that the director used to build civic ethos was through the setting of ground rules. He posted a slide with the following rules.

- Be imperfect.
- Respect each other.
- Share the air.
- Ouch, then educate.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Listen attentively.

He spoke about how the topics that the members discussed were sensitive and to remember the rules as they dialogued with one another. The “ouch, then educate” rule stuck out more than others. It allowed for students who were offended by another Bonner to make others aware of how their words made them feel. This rule assisted with setting the tone for the community and also created a space for civic inquiry to take place.

In addition to setting the ground rules, the director or the coordinator began each meeting with a short speech intended to introduce the topic for the night. The meetings typically had a guest speaker that talked for 30 to 45 minutes about an issue. This year’s running theme, poverty, was addressed from the perspective of community engagement and workforce

development by different speakers. The large Bonner meetings, held six times per year, were grounded in providing Bonners with a context for their service. The speakers, discussions, and interactive activities generally sparked civic inquiry and made the students think critically about the issues that impact the communities they served.

I witnessed civic inquiry at its height in the Bonner program during the sophomore meeting I attended. In this meeting, the program staff was not in the room. This older adult presence may have impacted the discussion in some way. The discussion was led by the two class representatives. Ms. Brown happened to be one of the class representatives. The two student leaders set the stage for the night's discussion on identity and began with a word association activity to make students reflect on how they perceive certain concepts like light, dark, and justice. They watched and discussed a TEDtalk. The facilitators began a discussion about being your "authentic self."

During the discussion a self-identified Black male student gave an example of using the term "nigger" around his friends. He talked about how he knew it was offensive, but chose to use it anyway as a sign of camaraderie with his friends. A self-identified Jewish student expressed frustration at not understanding the unspoken rules of using the N-word. As other students chimed in a polite debate ensued for half an hour. At one point, a student told another Bonner that she "felt some type of way" or was offended by what he said. She explained why she took offense and the meeting continued. This exchange demonstrated the implementation of the ground rule, Ouch, then educate, that were set in the first meeting by the director. It showed that the students had built a sense of community with one another and were comfortable having difficult conversations.

Towards the end of the discussion the facilitator asked students to think more about their sites directly and the issue of identity. The young woman I observed at the after-school program spoke up and admitted to not understanding many of the things her student's reference or say at her site. She felt that this was due to cultural differences and said she did not want to have to keep asking them to "translate" what they were talking about. The student's awareness showed that she was thinking critically about her own identity as an outsider in that community while figuring out how it impacts her service and considering how to improve it.

Summary of Observation Findings

The observations were important aspects of the research design. As an individual that is less familiar with Institution B and the Bonner model, it was critical that I spend time seeing what the program actually does in the community and internally. It was also important for me to see the students and witness their interactions first-hand rather than hear about it from an administrative perspective. Overall, the observations confirmed much of the findings from the interview and document analysis. In particular, it verified that the Bonner program is a high-impact learning experience for students. The integration of learning opportunities and connection to larger issues was evident in nearly every observation. Additionally, participating in multiple activities over time allowed me to see the consistency of the program to discern whether programming changed because I was present. It was clear that what I witnessed was how the program typically operates. While there was not a lot of evidence for the IHE-AmeriCorps collaboration in the observations, the civic engagement indicators were significant.

Institution B Summary

The document analysis, interviews, and observations provided a great deal of information about Institution B and the partnership they have with AmeriCorps. The centralization of the

partnerships through the Bonner Foundation has made the collaboration between the IHEs and CNCS unique. This particular model of integrating AmeriCorps into IHEs shows evidence of high levels of collaboration that demonstrate effort to unify organizations under one shared mission and goal. Additionally, the developmental model of working with students has shown potential to have high levels of civic engagement indicators recommended by *A Crucible Moment* for higher education stakeholders.

There was agreement across the board between the program staff and Bonner Foundation that the centralization and integration of AmeriCorps has been an important component of sustaining and growing the partnership. It was also agreed that resources, both internally at the institution, and external funding from AmeriCorps have enhanced the efforts of the Bonner program. Differences emerged in regards to the challenges associated with the partnership. These differences will be discussed further in Chapter 6 where comparisons will be made between the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership models at Institution A and B.

CHAPTER 6. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Summary of Findings

This exploratory, qualitative case study examined the IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships at two different IHEs residing in the same community. It had two goals—find out how these interorganizational collaborations function and determine if the partnerships addressed the key recommendations for higher education set forth in the report, *A Crucible Moment* (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). Based on the research findings, it was clear that the answer to the latter question was undoubtedly, “yes.” Institutions A and B both demonstrated that the AmeriCorps programs integrated aspects of civic ethos, literacy, inquiry, and action into their program design. On the other hand, the issue of how the partnerships operated was more complex. Table 7 shows the similarities and differences between the AmeriCorps programs at Institutions A and B using 10 categories—IHE type, program type, primary funding source, institutional placement, staffing, membership, member commitment, program focus, community partners, and member development.

The table illustrates the overwhelming differences between Institutions A and B in almost every area of programming. While there is a tendency in research to label models of programming as “better” or “worse,” the AmeriCorps partnerships at the institutions studied were simply different. They speak to the unique identity of each IHE and the ability to adapt AmeriCorps to fit the needs of an organization. The only area of overlap between the two IHEs was in the placement of the programs within the university structure. Both programs were

Table 7

Institutional IHE-AmeriCorps Comparison

	Institution A	Institution B
IHE type	Public, urban, large, research	Private, suburban, small
Program type	State	National
Primary funding source	Grant	Endowment
Institutional placement	Division of Community Engagement	Center for Civic Engagement
Staffing	1 full-time, 1 VISTA, 1 part-time, support staff	3 full-time
Membership	40 members Community members and students	100 members All students, financial need based
Member commitment	9 or 12 months 40 hours per week (FT)/15 hours per week (QT)	4 years 10 hours per week
Program focus	Literacy	Education and health
Community partners	10 schools	20 community organizations
Member development	20% limit (of total hours) Group based, education specific	2 hours per week Developmental/individualized Broadly constructed

situated within the IHEs' unit for civic engagement initiatives that functioned in similar ways. The existence of such a unit within each of the IHEs demonstrates that each IHE studied has committed to civic engagement in purposeful and tangible ways that many other IHEs have not.

Many of the differences within the AmeriCorps models come down to two major distinctions between the IHEs—institutional priorities and funding. Based on the findings in this study, these distinctions can shape the approach an IHE has towards civic engagement and directly impact the types of programs sponsored by a university. The differences are examined in more depth below.

Institutional Priorities

A Crucible Moment, the report published in 2012 by The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement called upon higher education stakeholders to improve and increase civic engagement initiatives across the nation. They provided four key recommendations for higher education. They asked key stakeholders to (a) foster a civic ethos across campus, (b) move civic literacy to the core of education, (c) practice civic inquiry interdisciplinarily, and (d) advance civic action (The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). The report is premised on the idea that IHEs have a responsibility to cultivate citizenship in their students as part of their mission; however, IHEs vary greatly based on their type, student demographic, location, and a myriad of other factors. The assumption that all universities want or need to prepare an engaged citizenry cannot be made when there are a variety of competing purposes that IHEs have to consider. A look at the strategic plans of most IHEs provides a telling picture of their priorities on a number of issues including whether civic engagement is an integral aspect of the IHE culture.

A review of the strategic plans for Institutions A and B provides a framework for understanding why their IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships function the way they do. Both IHEs showed a commitment to engagement by having the programs, but the models they used to implement the programs reflect on the institutional culture. Both strategic plans included community engagement, however, the way the engagement was described points to different styles of interacting with the community. At Institution A, the strategic plan is built upon five main themes. These themes are related to (a) student success, (b) faculty and staff excellence, (c) research and innovation, (d) community impact, and (e) resource accountability. The strategic plan at Institution B is also based on five goals. These goals include (a) providing an extraordinary learning environment, (b) having an integrated student learning experience, (c) valuing diversity, (d) engaging with the community, and (e) operating as a model IHE.

As a large, public, urban, research university, Institution A sits in the heart of a city with many critical needs. Its open design invites an interaction with the community that is not felt on a traditional closed campus. The strategic plan's theme to have a community impact demonstrates a desire to not only engage with the community, but use the resources at the IHE's disposal to positively influence what happens there. The goal is not centered on the need to provide students with learning experiences (although that is a separate goal), but is completely focused on the community and its needs. This community impact goal aligns with the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership at Institution A that was birthed out of a city-wide initiative to improve literacy.

Institution A's AmeriCorps program's nearly 20-year campaign to improve literacy in the city becomes more relevant as a method of making an impact because it shows dedication to a specific community-identified need. Additionally, the continuous collaboration with a specific

community partner demonstrates commitment to focus skills and expertise in one area rather than provide students with a variety of service experiences. The ability of community members to join the program at Institution A further denotes an engagement between the IHE and community that is bidirectional and informed by the needs of both the IHE and community. Member training and development focuses primarily on improving the members' skills as tutors to assist with having community influence and meeting the needs of the students served by the program rather than personal growth or exploration. While members often experience personal growth during their service commitment, it comes as a result of the service and is not the program's main intent. Evidence from the document review, interviews, and observations of the program at Institution A confirmed that meeting the community's needs was a priority of the program and the main purpose of the partnership for the IHE and AmeriCorps state office.

As a small, private, suburban university, Institution B has slightly different priorities. While the strategic plan discussed a determination to engage with the community, that commitment was not defined with measurable results. On the other hand, the goal of having an integrated student experience was clearly fleshed out emphasizing service-learning, international study, arts, and athletics as ways to accomplish this goal. The Bonner AmeriCorps program as described by the program staff incorporates nearly all of the elements of that particular IHE goal integrating service-learning throughout the experience and encouraging opportunities for the other areas of emphasis through the enrichment aspect of the program.

The emphasis on the student experience permeates three of the five strategic plan goals at Institution B and aligns with the Bonner AmeriCorps model, which seeks to provide students with opportunities to develop their own skills and talents through service. The program is restricted to students with financial needs and puts the Bonner member at the center of the model

rather than the community. Additionally, the focus of the program is varied with multiple community partners that have different service activities. This variety allows for students to select the community partner that best fits their interests and skills rather than the IHE working with the community to see what is needed. Community influence occurs at Institution B; however, it is a by-product of the student learning process.

Each model, though different, lends itself to increasing civic engagement at IHEs using the key recommendations of *A Crucible Moment*. While one program begins with service, the other ends with it. Institution A utilizes civic action as a primary tool to instill civic ethos, literacy, and inquiry into its members through a sustained service experience. On the other hand Institution B utilizes civic literacy and inquiry as tools to catalyze civic action and ethos.

The Role of Funding

Money plays a critical factor in the development of partnerships and AmeriCorps is no exception. Given the institutional support for engagement at Institution A and the strategic commitment to make a community impact, the source of funding for the program makes sense. As a public, state university, Institution A has faced funding challenges resulting from decreased funding from the state. As a result, it is vital that outreach programs at the IHE like AmeriCorps can receive the bulk of their operating expenses from external stakeholders. State grants like the AmeriCorps grant can work structurally and fiscally in an IHE setting. Funded by a local state agency, the two organizations share policies and essentially “speak the same language.” The program at Institution A, although managed by a director, has access to the office of sponsored programs for grant oversight and support—a valuable asset to assist with federal compliance.

While the grant funding makes the program possible, the limited amount of grant funds has made staffing the program difficult in recent years with only one full-time staff person and a

variety of part-time, VISTA, and in-kind department support. Although cited as a major program challenge by the staff, this type of plug and play staffing would not work in most non-IHE organizations and therefore can also be seen as a structural benefit. The lack of funds has also decreased the number of members and sites supported by the program at Institution A. With grants given every 3 years and renewed annually, the possibility of extending the member commitment beyond 1 year is not feasible. Interviews with program staff at the IHE confirmed that without the grant, the program could not operate. This constant staffing flux and funding uncertainty makes it more vital that the program focus on one specific community need so service activities and training can be similar each service year ensuring best practices are met.

Institution B has less financial constraints. As a private university there are less restrictions on how funding can be used. Additionally, an endowment from the Bonner Foundation supports the program. The permanence of endowment funds provides the program with stability. As a result, the program can support 100 Bonners for 4-year terms. This is particularly important for the Bonner program because of its developmental student model. The program can support multiple full-time staff, which is needed for the large number of students. Additionally, the staff can strategically divide administrative duties among themselves to make program management more effective and efficient. The Bonner AmeriCorps model is a streamlined way to integrate an IHE-AmeriCorps partnership at Institution A without dramatically changing the structure of the program or adding additional fiscal constraints.

Summary of Limitation to the Findings

The findings in this study were limited by the research design. The methods used were detailed previously in Chapter 3. The limitations included the type of partnerships examined, the geographic region in which the partnerships were located, and the length of time the program had

been active prior to the study. As a case study, the findings of this research were specific to the institutions that participated in the study and are not generalizable.

Connecting Findings to Theoretical Framework

According to Gray and Wood (1991), interorganizational collaboration occurs when organizations work together to address issues that are too complex for one organization to handle. Both Institution A and B fit that criteria. Institution A wanted to start a program that addressed literacy issues in the city. Institution B wanted to provide its students with additional financial aid. A partnership with AmeriCorps provided each IHE with the funding it needed to accomplish those goals. Conversely, through those partnerships, AmeriCorps added new programs that assisted with continuing to expand its footprint and mission in the United States showing the mutual benefit of the interorganizational collaborations.

This study relied heavily on Frey et al.'s (2006) levels of collaboration and Gajda's (2004) SAFAR model to examine the interorganizational collaboration between Institutions A and B and AmeriCorps. These studies assert that there are several levels of collaboration that occur when organizations work together. These levels range from coexistence or no interaction at all to coadunation or the complete unification to a single structure (Frey et al., 2006). Both institutions showed varied levels of collaboration. Institution A's levels fell largely in the mid-level range of coordination while Institution B's levels fell largely in the upper-level ranges of collaboration and coadunation. These differences in collaboration occurred based on the structures of each IHE and were perceived by stakeholders differently based on their role within the partnership.

As an AmeriCorps state program, Institution A reports directly to DSS. This program structure involves a direct relationship between the grantor, DSS, and subgrantee, Institution A.

As a result, the collaboration involves a great deal of coordinating activities. Gadjia (2004) uses the terms partnering where Frey et al. (2006) use the term coordination to describe that level of collaboration. Gadjia (2004) describes this level as one where resources are shared, decision-making mechanisms are in place, leadership is autonomous, formal communication exists, and there is some conflict. Several staff members at Institution A and DSS cited aspects of coordination in the partnership. These included various types of reporting, monitoring visits, and training. There were a few indications of upper-levels of collaboration, but not many. The stasis in the middle collaboration range may be due largely to the challenges that arise from a partnership that involves two large, complex state agencies. Some of the challenges noted by key informants were conflicting policies, burdensome reporting, and differing organizational structures. While Institution A has had the partnership with DSS for many years, staff turnover in both agencies and the frequent adoption of new policy guidelines has made it difficult to take the collaboration to the next level.

Institution B had high levels of collaboration in the collaboration and coadunation ranges. The collaboration level merges resources to create something new, have strong, visible leadership, a high degree of commitment and investment, and clear, frequent communication (Gadjia, 2004). In the coadunation phase organizations are unified into a single structure (Gadjia, 2004). Discussions with the IHE and Bonner staff showed a commitment to integrating AmeriCorps into the existing Bonner structure. A variety of administrative changes occurred over a period of several years to achieve a higher level of collaboration. Online reporting systems were combined to accommodate the needs of both programs, permanent staff was added to the Bonner Foundation to manage the AmeriCorps partnership, and CNCS requirements were adopted by the Bonner network to track performance of all of their participating campuses. The

Foundation status of Bonner creates a freedom and autonomy to strategically develop partnerships that align with their mission to provide opportunities for college students. They do not have the same internal restrictions that public sector agencies have when partnering with CNCS. Additionally, the Foundation has had the partnership with CNCS for many years and has been able to dedicate the time and effort necessary to critically think through making the partnership work well.

The study indicated that collaboration was happening at both IHEs examined. While the levels varied, it was evident that each IHE-AmeriCorps partnership provided mutual benefit to the stakeholders. Interorganizational collaboration provided a useful framework for thinking about the IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships. In particular, the use of Frey et al.'s (2006) levels of collaboration and Gadjia's (2004) SAFAR model assisted with categorizing the level or depth of collaboration taking place in each partnership. While Frey et al. (2006) and Gadjia (2004) make it clear that coadunation is the pinnacle of collaboration, there are many challenges associated with reaching that point. As such, determining whether a partnership with AmeriCorps is feasible for an IHE depends on its organizational structure.

Policy Implications

Over the past 20 years AmeriCorps has experienced bipartisan support for its efforts to improve communities, engage young adults, and provide access to educational opportunities. *A Crucible Moment* examined the state of civic learning and democracy in higher education in the United States. It described a crisis of engagement that could potentially negatively impact the country if not addressed. This research examined specific partnerships between AmeriCorps and IHEs to explore how they operated and determine if these partnerships engendered civic action, ethos, literacy, and inquiry as suggested by *A Crucible Moment*.

The findings of this study have significant policy implications that are discussed below.

1. IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships should reflect institutional and community needs. It is important to note that this study examined two very different models of an AmeriCorps partnership. One institution used a state model where the IHE sponsored the partnership and was a subgrantee. The other institution's AmeriCorps partnership used the national model where the relationship was brokered through a third party. Each model had its merits and provided the IHEs with the flexibility and structure to design a program to fit the needs of the individual IHE. Given the variety of IHEs across the nation, it is important to have different models of partnering that will not limit opportunities for IHEs to become involved with AmeriCorps.

The difference in IHE-AmeriCorps partnership models can prove an asset, but must also be examined carefully as a potential drawback to IHE-AmeriCorps partnership. AmeriCorps, while receiving bipartisan support, has also faced criticism for its inability to track and measure its impact nationally. This is largely due to the differences across programs that make finding a common performance measure difficult. As CNCS has streamlined and provided more restrictions on performance measures, it will be important for IHEs to fit into that framework. If CNCS plans to provide more opportunities for IHEs to sponsor programs, they will need to think about ways of providing more guidance and support specifically to IHEs to aid in their compliance with federal regulations. The addition of numerous IHEs with complex structures and individual policies could add an unintended administrative burden to CNCS.

2. IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships can improve and increase civic engagement in higher education. As noted in *A Crucible Moment*, there has been a decrease in civic learning and democratic engagement in IHEs across the country. The findings of this study demonstrate that IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships implement the key recommendations for improving and

increasing civic engagement. Additionally, key studies on AmeriCorps demonstrate that program participation positively impacts the engagement of members during and after service (Simon and Wang, 2002; Simon, 2002; Frumkin Jaztrab, Vaaler, Greeney, Grimm, Cramer, Dietz, 2009). As such, IHEs can partner with AmeriCorps as a civic engagement strategy that helps the community, promotes student learning, and provides students with financial aid. In the long run, increased engagement in young adults leads to lifelong engagement. This is vital for the growth of the country and democracy. Young people that are engaged in college will be more likely to vote, participate in organizations, and be active in their communities. IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships have the potential to provide a pathway to engagement that can sustain the country.

3. IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships may improve communities. The findings of this study were focused on the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership; however, every key informant discussed how the partnership positively influenced communities. Large-scale studies on AmeriCorps' community impact have been largely inconclusive with mixed results. This study's specific focus on IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships may provide a new framework for thinking about the types of AmeriCorps partnerships that promote community impact and the role partnership plays in them. IHEs have critical resources AmeriCorps programs need to move the needle on social issues. These include infrastructure, eligible participants, and knowledge.

The strategic placement of skilled volunteers in the community who have guidance from an IHE can help deepen and streamline service efforts to meet the real needs of the community. Additionally, IHEs have the capacity to do what many AmeriCorps programs are unable to—measure impact. Trained researchers are integral parts of IHEs and can be a valuable asset to IHE-AmeriCorps partnership to evaluate program outcomes on a continuous basis. Finally, an

IHE-AmeriCorps partnership can provide an opportunity for IHEs to engage with the community in a more authentic way. AmeriCorps programs do service at a grassroots level and require constant dialogue and communication with community partners. IHEs are not known for having community partnerships that are characterized by a sense of equity and shared benefit. As such, IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships can serve as methods for teaching IHEs how to function in the community as an ally.

4. IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships can help students succeed. President Obama announced, Employers of National Service at the AmeriCorps 20th Anniversary celebration (CNCS, 2014a). This initiative is designed to build a talent pipeline that connects national service participants with employers who value their skills. IHEs that have AmeriCorps partnerships will provide their students with another pathway to employment to assist with their professional development. Students will also have an opportunity to gain applied knowledge that will reinforce the learning that occurs in the college classroom. This kind of mutually beneficial relationship strengthens the AmeriCorps program by increasing its presence and impact while also serving to help college students succeed academically and professionally. The development of a skilled workforce is integral to the success of the country. IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships can assist with ensuring that college graduates are not only knowledgeable in a discipline, but able to practically apply those skills in the workplace.

Recommendations

1. Evaluate existing IHE partnerships. *Crucible Moment* noted a crisis in higher education regarding civic engagement and painted a broadly stroked picture of what is happening across the country. As a report that will inform and shape higher education for years to come, many IHEs are reading and responding to the document by creating new initiatives to address

civic engagement. Before putting resources into new programs, IHEs should evaluate current community partnerships for their levels of collaboration, effectiveness, and ability to address the key recommendations for civic engagement. Programs that are found to be effective should serve as model partnerships and guide the development of any new initiatives. That kind of strategic and intentional planning can assist with saving valuable resources.

2. Educate IHE stakeholders on civic engagement issues.

a. Read *A Crucible Moment*. The findings of this study showed that more than half of the IHE-AmeriCorps administrators had not read *A Crucible Moment*. In order for there to be an improvement and increase in civic engagement in higher education, key stakeholders must be made aware of the issues. Becoming literate on civic engagement in higher education and learning the language of community engagement is an important first step in beginning a dialogue across college campuses about these issues.

b. Integrate external community into IHE community and vice versa. IHE-community partnerships can be difficult due to the perception that IHEs are “ivory towers” that the community cannot enter. Breaking down the walls of separation between IHEs and communities must be done strategically through the mutual exchange of ideas and resources. IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships have the potential to help IHEs bridge the gap by showing a commitment to meet community-identified needs. IHEs can use AmeriCorps partnerships to gain a foothold in the community while the community can use the partnership to expose the IHE to community issues it can help address.

c. Provide spaces for reflection on social issues. IHEs cannot divorce themselves from the communities in which they reside. It is important to find spaces within the university and the community to reflect on social issues. These spaces should be inclusive areas that allow civic

inquiry and critical dialogues to take place with diverse groups of people. Reflection serves as an important form of informal evaluation and temperature check to know that an initiative is headed in the right direction. It allows individuals to debrief about what has happened and think about next steps for the future.

3. Assess the capacity for IHEs to engage with the community. Every IHE has different capacities to engage with the community. After evaluating current partnerships and educating IHE stakeholders on civic engagement issues, it is important to think about the feasibility of engagement. IHEs must think about their resources, structure, and the needs of the community to determine how, where, and when engagement will take place. This assessment must be intentional and involve stakeholders from the IHE and community who possess an understanding of how IHE-community partnerships operate.

4. Develop a best practices handbook for IHEs to partner with CNCS. IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships are distinctly different from AmeriCorps partnerships with community organizations. As such, it will be useful for potential IHEs to have specially designed manuals developed by CNCS that provide them with strategies for partnering. These strategies will include outlining the various models of partnership with IHEs with the pros and cons of each, steps for getting through challenges related to organizational differences, and examples of exemplary IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study was an exploratory, qualitative, case study. It provides a detailed picture of two programmatic models of AmeriCorps at specific universities in one state. While this information adds to the body of literature on AmeriCorps and the role of civic engagement at IHEs, it does not capture a broad perspective on this issue. Important next steps in research will

be to widen the scope of the project to include multiple universities across several states. It will also be useful to integrate additional models of IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships to provide a more comprehensive picture of these collaborations. As the qualitative research expands and deepens the findings, another step will be to add a quantitative component that survey IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships across the nation. An additional component to look at in future studies will be including data on student impact and how program participation influences their academic, personal, and professional choices.

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Appendix A

Research Subject Information and Consent Form

TITLE: Collaboration for the Common Good: Examining AmeriCorps Programs Sponsored by Institutions of Higher Education

VCU IRB NO.: HM20002138

If any information contained in this consent form is not clear, please ask the study staff to explain any information that you do not fully understand. You may take home an unsigned copy of this consent form to think about or discuss with family or friends before making your decision.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to examine how partnerships between AmeriCorps and institutions of higher education (IHEs) operate administratively as interorganizational collaborations. The study will also examine whether IHE-AmeriCorps partnerships fulfill the five actions recommended to increase civic engagement by *A Crucible Moment*, a document commissioned by the American Association of Colleges and Universities to assess the civic learning and democratic engagement of college students.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form after you have had all your questions answered and understand what will happen to you.

In this study you will be interviewed and/or observed performing duties related to your involvement in collaboration with AmeriCorps and an institution of higher education. Interviews will last approximately 45 minutes to an hour while observations may last anywhere from one hour to a full working day (8 hours) depending on the activity.

Interviews will consist of semistructured, open-ended questions related to program administration. You will be asked questions about your role in the AmeriCorps collaboration that describes how it operates.

All interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will be asked to review the transcription, and later an analysis of the interview.

Observations will be recorded through active journaling by the researcher that describes the activities taking place. The researcher will use a log to write what is happening and record reflections. The researcher may ask clarifying questions after observation activities have been completed.

Significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to your willingness to continue participation will be provided to you.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There is minimal risk and discomfort associated with this study; however, participants may have some general discomfort being observed and recorded. In addition, some participants may be hesitant sharing negative feelings related to their role within the collaboration.

USE AND DISCLOSURE OF PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

AUTHORITY TO REQUEST PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

The following people and/or groups may request my Protected Health Information:

- Principal Investigator and Research Staff
- Institutional Review Boards
- Others as Required by Law

AUTHORITY TO RELEASE PROTECTED HEALTH INFORMATION

The VCU Health System (VCUHS) may release the information identified in this authorization from my medical records and provide this information to:

- Others as required by Law
- Principal Investigator and Research Staff
- Institutional Review Boards

Once your health information has been disclosed to anyone outside of this study, the information may no longer be protected under this authorization.

TYPE OF INFORMATION THAT MAY BE RELEASED

The following types of information may be used for the conduct of this research:

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Complete health record | <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnosis & treatment codes | <input type="checkbox"/> Discharge summary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History and physical exam | <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation reports | <input type="checkbox"/> Progress notes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Laboratory test results | <input type="checkbox"/> X-ray reports | <input type="checkbox"/> X-ray films / images |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photographs, videotapes | <input type="checkbox"/> Complete billing record | <input type="checkbox"/> Itemized bill |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about drug or alcohol abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Information about Hepatitis B or C tests | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about psychiatric care | <input type="checkbox"/> Information about sexually transmitted diseases | |

☒ Other (specify): The researcher will collect the names of study participants. These names will be de-identified in the final study and replaced with pseudonyms for the protection of the individuals. The key to the pseudonym list will be kept in a password protected and secure location accessible only to the Principal Investigator and researcher.

RIGHT TO REVOKE AUTHORIZATION AND RE-DISCLOSURE

You may change your mind and revoke (take back) the right to use your protected health information at any time. Even if you revoke this Authorization, the researchers may still use or disclose health information they have already collected about you for this study. If you revoke this Authorization you may no longer be allowed to participate in the research study. To revoke this Authorization, you must write to the Principal Investigator.

BENEFITS TO YOU AND OTHERS

You may not get any direct benefit from this study, but, the information learned from people in this study may help collaborations between AmeriCorps and institutions of higher education in the future in addition to informing potential policy practices.

COSTS

There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time you will spend in the interviews and being observed.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Potentially identifiable information about you will consist of interview notes and recordings, observation notes, and program documents. Data is being collected only for research purposes. Your data will be identified by pseudonyms, not actual names. All personal identifying information will be kept in password protected files and these files will be deleted after three years. Access to all data will be limited to study personnel.

We will not tell anyone the answers you give us; however, information from the study and the consent form signed by you may be looked at or copied for research purposes by Virginia Commonwealth University.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You do not have to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, you may stop at any time without any penalty. You may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study.

Your participation in this study may be stopped at any time by the study staff or the sponsor without your consent. The reasons might include:

- the study staff thinks it necessary for your health or safety;
- you have not followed study instructions;
- administrative reasons require your withdrawal.

If you leave the study before the final regularly scheduled visit, there will be no penalty.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about your participation in this research, contact:

Erin-Marie Burke Brown
804.828.8838
embrown@vcu.edu

The researcher/study staff named above is the best person(s) to call for questions about your participation in this study.

If you have any general questions about your rights as a participant in this or any other research, you may contact:

Office of Research
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 3000
P.O. Box 980568
Richmond, VA 23298
Telephone: (804) 827-2157

Contact this number for general questions, concerns or complaints about research. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or if you wish to talk with someone else. General information about participation in research studies can also be found at <http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.htm>.

CONSENT

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study.

Questions that I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of the consent form once I have agreed to participate.

Participant name printed	Participant signature	Date
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Name of Person Conducting Informed Consent

Discussion/Witness ³

(Printed)

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent	Date
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Discussion / Witness

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above)	Date ⁴
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Appendix B

Interview Questions for IHE Staff and Administrators*

1. Explain how the AmeriCorps program fits into the larger university.
2. How would the IHE conduct the program activities without the collaboration with AmeriCorps?
3. How does having an AmeriCorps collaboration affect the service activities that you are engaged in within the community?
4. How has the collaboration evolved over time?
5. How were you able to meet your program objectives during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 service years?
6. How does the IHE define program success/failure?
7. What administrative factors are related to program success?
8. What is the most challenging administrative aspect of maintaining the IHE-AmeriCorps partnership? Why?
9. How have administrative challenges impacted the program activities?
10. What is the biggest benefit of the program for the IHE? Students? Community? Why?
11. What changes would you make to the administrative structure of the IHE-AmeriCorps collaboration if you could?
12. What kind of supports has the IHE provided to sustain the relationship?
13. What kind of support has AmeriCorps provided to sustain the relationship?
14. Do you foresee the relationship continuing in the future? Why or why not?
15. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations impact the civic and democratic missions of higher education?
16. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations impact the national dialogue on civic education?
17. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations advance the framework for civic learning in a globalized world?
18. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations foster higher levels of civic knowledge, skills, examined values and action as expectations for students in K-12 and higher education?

19. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations expand the number of civic partnerships locally, nationally, and globally to address common problems, empower people to act, strengthen communities, and nations and generate new frontiers of knowledge?

**Interviews will take place after the researcher has conducted an initial document review and will include additional questions to clarify or expand on information found within program documents.*

Appendix C

Interview Questions for AmeriCorps Program Administrators*

1. Explain how collaborations with IHEs fit into the larger AmeriCorps program.
2. Describe your relationship to the various programs.
3. How would the elimination of IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations impact the goals of AmeriCorps?
4. How have the IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations evolved over time?
5. What do you feel are the most common reasons for programs not achieving their stated program goals and objectives?
6. How does AmeriCorps define program success/failure?
7. What administrative factors are responsible for program success?
8. What is the most challenging administrative aspect of maintaining the IHE-AmeriCorps collaboration? Why?
9. How have administrative challenges impacted the collaboration?
10. What is the biggest benefit of the collaboration for AmeriCorps?
11. What changes would you make to the administrative structure of the IHE-AmeriCorps collaboration if you could?
12. What kind of support does the IHE provide to sustain the relationship?
13. What kind of support does AmeriCorps provided to sustain the relationships with IHEs?
14. Do you foresee the relationship continuing in the future? Why or why not?
15. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations impact the civic and democratic missions of higher education?
16. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations impact the national dialogue on civic education?
17. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations advance the framework for civic learning in a globalized world?
18. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations foster higher levels of civic knowledge, skills, examined values and action as expectations for students in K-12 and higher education?

19. How do IHE-AmeriCorps collaborations expand the number of civic partnerships locally, nationally, and globally to address common problems, empower people to act, strengthen communities, and nations and generate new frontiers of knowledge?

**Interviews will take place after the researcher has conducted an initial document review and will include additional questions to clarify or expand on information found within program documents.*

Participant ID No. _____

Appendix D

Demographic Questions*

1. What is your current job title? _____
2. How long have you worked in your current position?
 - a. 0-3 years
 - b. 4-6 years
 - c. 7-9 years
 - d. 10 or more
3. Describe your position.
 - a. Full-time
 - b. Part-time
 - c. Hourly
 - d. Other: _____
4. What is your gender?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
5. What is your age?
 - a. 18-24 years old
 - b. 25-34 years old
 - c. 35-44 years old
 - d. 45-54 years old
 - e. 55-64 years old
 - f. 65-74 years old
 - g. 75 years or older

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- a. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
 - b. Some college credit, no degree
 - c. Trade/technical/vocational training
 - d. Associate degree
 - e. Bachelor's degree
 - f. Master's degree
 - g. Professional degree
 - h. Doctorate degree
7. What is your race/ethnicity?
- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - c. Asian or Asian American
 - d. Black or African American
 - e. Hispanic or Latino
 - f. Non-Hispanic White
 - g. Other
8. Have you read *A Crucible Moment*?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. I don't know what that is.
9. Did you participate in national service as a member prior to having your current position?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Appendix E

Code Definitions*

Collaboration Codes²

1. **Coexistence**-organizations exist side by side with no interaction
2. **Communication**-loose communication seems to exist among organizations without defined structure
3. **Cooperation**-organizations work together with clear communication in a non-hierarchical structure to identify mutual needs, minimal conflict is present
4. **Coordination**-formal communication system exists; resources are shared; some conflict may exist
5. **Coalition**-central body of decision-makers with shared responsibility exists; there is evidence of productivity
6. **Collaboration**-merging resources to create new initiatives/programs; long-term commitment; clear and frequent communication; designated leaders that make decisions
7. **Coadunation**-unification of organizations to form single organization with single mission; hierarchical

Civic Engagement Codes³

1. **Civic Ethos**-infusion of democratic values into customs and habits of everyday practices, structures, and interactions; the defining character of the [program] and those in it that emphasizes open-mindedness, civility, the worth of each person, ethical behaviors, and concern for the well-being of others; a spirit of public-mindedness that influences the goals of the [program] and its engagement with local and global communities
2. **Civic Literacy**- cultivation of foundational knowledge about fundamental principles and debates about democracy expressed over time, both within the United States and in other countries; familiarity with several key historical struggles, campaigns, and social movements undertaken to achieve the full promise of democracy; the ability to think critically about complex issues and to seek and evaluate information about issues that have public consequences

² The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. 2012. *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

³ Adapted from Frey et al. (2006) & Gadjia (2004)

3. **Civic Inquiry**-practice of inquiring about the civic dimensions and public consequences of a subject of study; the exploration of the impact of choices on different constituencies and entities, including the planet; the deliberate consideration of differing points of views; the ability to describe and analyze civic intellectual debates within one's major or areas of study
4. **Civic Action**-capacity and commitment both to participate constructively with diverse others and to work collectively to address common problems; the practice of working in a pluralistic society and world to improve the quality of people's lives and the sustainability of the planet; the ability to analyze systems in order to plan and engage in public action; the moral and political courage to take risks to achieve a greater public good

Code items that are both related to civic engagement and collaboration green.

Vita

Erin-Marie Burke Brown was born in Richmond, VA. She attended St. Gertrude High School. After completing grade school, Erin attended the University of Virginia where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature and African American Studies. She then served in Teach for America in Baton Rouge, Louisiana as a 5th grade teacher. She later attended and worked at Virginia Commonwealth University as an administrator in the Division of Community Engagement. Erin completed her Master's in Public Administration in 2008.