

# Center for Community Based Learning (CCBL)

The Center for Community-Based Learning (CCBL) is the central hub of Wofford's community engagement and a vital resource in fulfilling Wofford's strategic vision of preparing students for "meaningful lives as citizens, scholars and leaders."

The CCBL facilitates and strengthens partnerships between Wofford and its larger communities for the mutually beneficial exploration, application and exchange of knowledge and resources. These partnerships improve the human condition and enhance the public good; prepare Wofford students for meaningful, effective lives as citizen-leaders; and enrich the scholarship and character of Wofford College.

The CCBL inculcates Wofford's campus/community partnerships with best practices in higher education community engagement, including:

- **Place:** place-based learning that incorporates community understanding, context and assets, and includes community voice in defining relationships and projects.
- **Humility:** knowledge co-creation in which partners, students, and faculty share co-educator status.
- **Communication:** open, honest, transparent, civil, free-flowing in all directions.
- **Integration:** of both co-curricular and curricular contexts and structures.
- **Depth:** multi-year strategic agreements for capacity building.
- **Development:** grounding in appropriate student and partner developmental needs, changing over time.
- **Sequence:** scaffolded projects evolving over multiple semesters or calendar years.
- **Teams:** involving multiple participants at different levels.
- **Reflection:** structured and unstructured oral, written, and innovative formats.
- **Mentors:** dialogue and coaching by partners, peers, and/or faculty.
- **Learning:** collaborative and responsive teaching and learning opportunities.
- **Capacity-building:** designed to build the organization/agency over time.
- **Evidence:** integration of evidence-based or proven program models.
- **Impact orientation:** identifiable outcomes and strategies for evaluation and measurement.
- **Systems perspective:** systemic analysis of the root causes and consequences of poverty and other forms of social marginality.
- **Justice:** analysis of the role power played/plays in bringing about the situation and preserving the status quo, and the role it might play in moving towards a more just, more equitable system.

## The Bonner Scholars Program

The flagship program of the CCBL is the Bonner Scholars Program. The program engages 60 deserving students in a robust servant leadership development program and 10 hours of service/week during the academic year in Spartanburg community plus at least two full-time summers. In return, the Bonner Scholars receive full-need scholarships and numerous other opportunities. Most Bonner Scholars are selected as entering first-year students and remain Bonner Scholars throughout their tenure

at Wofford, growing in both their responsibility and impact over time. Student leaders within the program comprise the Bonner Leadership Team (BLT) and join student leaders from other Bonner programs around the country on the national Bonner Congress. Wofford's Bonner Scholars program is a joint venture of Wofford College and the Corella A. and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation in Princeton, New Jersey.

## Other Programs, Activities or Collaborations of the CCBL

- **Community Service Federal Work Study (with the Office of Financial Aid):** If you are eligible for Work Study, you can choose to spend your work study time with one of our nonprofit partners, in an internship/project/placement setting.
- **Internships, capacity-building projects & volunteer placements with area nonprofits & governmental agencies**
- **Sullivan Social Innovation (with the Space):** The Algernon S. Sullivan Foundation has long been a benefactor of Wofford folks doing good in the world. Now, they are working with their grantee institutions to facilitate social innovation, offering workshops and summer experiences.
- **Support for Student-led Organizations:** Wofford is home to many student-led organizations. Whether the organization is a service organization (e.g., Alpha Phi Omega, Twin Towers, etc.), a solidarity organization (e.g., Association of Multicultural Students, Spectrum, etc.), a religious organization, or a social organization, the CCBL supports them with technical and other assistance in improving their community impact and student development.
- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA):** The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has been called the best poverty-fighting tool we have; and because people must be both working and low-income to qualify, it enjoys unprecedented bipartisan support. But, many people who qualify for the EITC don't claim it, because doing so feels complicated. To make matters worse, some tax preparation outlets claim the EITC for people and then take most of its benefit from them, in the form of tax preparation fees. With VITA, Wofford students are trained and then certified by the IRS in basic tax preparation. Some of Professor Jenny Johnson's Accounting students double-check the returns they prepare. And, some of Dr. Laura Barbas-Rhoden's Spanish students serve as interpreters at the tax clinic. All of the students say they learn about courage and resilience and social justice from the experience - sitting with, for example, parents who are working two or three jobs and are still not bringing in enough to make ends meet for their families. Each year, Wofford students prepare ~300 returns and bring back ~\$500,000 into the household budgets of low-income, Spartanburg families.
- **Civic Learning Initiative (with the Center for Innovation & Learning, and funding from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations):** Discussions, workshops, site visits, reading groups, etc. for civic-minded faculty and staff; and 17 faculty & staff members identified as Civic Learning Fellows, intentionally teaching for civic learning in their classrooms and co-curricular programs and assessing for that learning through the use of e-portfolio reflections.
- **Community-Based Research Projects:** Our community partners have research needs. Our faculty and students can research things and learn in the process.
- **Milliken Community Sustainability Initiative (with many campus and community partners):** In 2015, Wofford was awarded \$4.25M for this initiative, complete with new courses, an embedded practicum

with community partners and a new residence hall across Church Street in the Northside of Spartanburg.

- **Support for Faculty & Staff:** Increasing numbers of faculty and staff wish to incorporate service learning and/or community-based research and/or civic learning into their classes and co-curricular experiences. Some wish to get involved in the Spartanburg community on their own time, too.
- **Collegetown Community Engagement:** Wofford is one of seven institutions of higher education in Spartanburg. Their collective is referred to as "Collegetown." Because the seven share the same community, it makes sense for them to work together in positively impacting that community.
- **Community Advisory Board:** This group, comprised of the leaders of some of our closest community partner organizations, helps us incorporate community understanding, context, assets, challenges and opportunities in our shared work.
- **Recognition & Awards:** The CCBL recognizes campus and community stakeholders' work toward the common good, through awards like the John Bruce and Currie Spivey Awards; and seeks to gain recognition for Wofford's work toward the common good on the national stage, through awards like the Presidential Service Honor Roll Award and (hopefully) the Carnegie Foundation's Classification for Community Engagement.