



2005 Venture Summer Institute

Poverty & Wealth: Imagining the American City

MISSION & program GOALS

The 2005 **Venture Summer Institute** will give a small group of students from Venture Consortium schools the opportunity to work in an urban context and consider methods of effective engagement in public life and ethical obligations to social responsibility.

Through direct work in an 8-week internship at a community-based organization in Providence, structured opportunities for individual and group reflection on a weekly basis, and participation in the creation of an intentional community, students will explore the ethical questions that arise when addressing issues of wealth and poverty, public policy, and politics.

Through participation in this program, we hope that you will:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of the issues facing various communities in the city of Providence.
- Better understand the range of methods for being an effective agent for social justice.
- Develop knowledge and skills that you can integrate into your ongoing academic work.
- Reflect about lifetime commitments to political engagement, and your responsibility as powerful and privileged members of society to engage in public life.
- Explore diverse and effective models of leadership, and appreciate the value of coalition building and collaboration.
- Gain valuable work experience and explore public interest work career options.

The internships and the weekly seminars will focus on both systemic issues and particular concerns, and students will bring observations and questions that are taking place in your internships to these sessions. In this way, the program will give students valuable applied experiences as well as contextual and theoretical information.

VISION for program

The institute is geared to encourage students to frame your long-term vision for our communities and the world in terms of your values, and to build your capacity to find common ground and collaborate with others to imagine viable solutions for complex, social problems. All voices are critical for the next generation of citizens and leaders, and students from the Venture schools are particularly poised to ask questions of yourselves and your peers concerning your vision for making a difference, your privilege as college-educated citizens of the world, and your responsibility to lead a life with a public purpose.

Why Providence? All of the Venture campuses are in close proximity to communities that face parallel, challenging circumstances. Students attending the Venture schools have a unique opportunity while in college to learn about systemic reform and social responsibility by finding out more about the assets and concerns of our local community members.

exploring issues of wealth, poverty,
public policy, and politics in providence

The Venture Consortium:

Bates College, Brown University, College of the Holy Cross, Franklin & Marshall College,
Sarah Lawrence College, Swarthmore College, Syracuse University, Vassar College, Wesleyan University
<http://www.theventureconsortium.org>

BACKGROUND

The Venture Consortium, a group of selective, private liberal arts colleges and universities, is dedicated to the development of innovative programs to complement the liberal arts curriculum. Our key objectives include fostering social awareness and a sense of social responsibility among students through experiential learning, and building mutually useful connections between institutions of higher learning and the larger community.

The members of The Venture Consortium share a commitment to enhancing higher education by encouraging students to inquire thoughtfully into self and society through experiences that are in themselves worthwhile. As educators, we know that experiential learning connected with formal instruction provides students with the best educational synthesis. We promote varied forms and settings for this process, and we encourage students toward activities that are growth-oriented, and significant on personal and social levels. Together we hope to inspire bright young people to dedicate their talents and enthusiasm to endeavors that benefit society, to find new ways for students to apply classroom learning to life, to give college students new models for future educational experiences, and to integrate hands-on working experiences with undergraduate and graduate instruction.

The **Howard R. Swearer Center for Public Service** stands at a crossroads where the university meets the larger world. Faculty, staff, and students at the Swearer Center consider active community participation central to a liberal education. We believe that students – indeed all people – can make valuable social contributions while learning. Over the past decade, the Center has evolved to reflect the powerful intersection of service, learning, vital community, and social change.

Recognition of individual social responsibility is intrinsic to the development of solutions to our communities' most pressing concerns. For this reason, the Swearer Center strives to be a center of inquiry for students, faculty and community members to wrestle with the complexity of social problems – exploring their human, political and moral dimensions. While the Center's definition of service includes many perspectives and approaches, it is grounded in a community-development model of respect, cooperation, and partnership. We believe that for service to be of value, it must develop through enduring relationships that strengthen a community's capacity to meet critical needs.

Established in 1987 by Howard R. Swearer, the fifteenth president of Brown University, the Swearer Center has since developed programs that strengthen leadership skills and provide direct service, connect community-

based work with learning, and build meaningful partnerships with local, national, and international communities.

PROGRAM DESIGN

The Institute will run the evening of **Thursday, June 2 through Friday, July 29, 2005**. The first three days will be a program orientation and the last couple of days of the program will be devoted to project presentations.

The program is designed with a progressive pedagogical framework in mind. This is to say, students will embrace the notion that we are all educators and learners, and that you will need to be self-directed in this experience to make the most of it.

Internship

Providence provides a rich learning environment as the most populous city in Rhode Island and as the seat of state government. Colleagues at the Swearer Center for Public Service at Brown will identify community-based organizations for the 4 day a week internship placement. Internships will reflect a range of approaches to community work, including direct service, policy analysis, grassroots organizing, and advocacy.

Seminar

Every week, one day will be set aside as a weekly seminar with lecture/discussions that are given/facilitated by educators from the Venture schools, leaders in the Providence community, or in the state of Rhode Island.

Some possible discussion topics include:

- Conflict, divisiveness, and the challenge of finding common ground;
- Urban environments and the American Dream: confronting race, class, and poverty;
- A "power and privilege" analysis of student's community-based organization;
- The impact of local government compared with the role of grassroots activism in leveraging power and moving social agendas;
- A liberal education as an agent for social justice.

Some of the program's central framing questions include:

- How does dialogue best happen?
- How do we engage in disagreement in a meaningful way?
- How do we find common ground and collaborate to solve social problems?
- What role do values play? What does it mean to be socially responsible?
- How do we measure the impact of systemic reform policies?
- What does it mean to have a vocation? How can I best impact society?

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Intentional community

Especially because the students will not be living in one location, one night per week will be set aside for a **community dinner** and group discussions led by students. A member of the program staff will be present at these dinners.

Reflection

Students will participate in a **directed journal writing** process. The journal will be in electronic or paper form with prompt questions, so that students can share reflections with each other and with the program faculty/staff.

Student participants will need to choose an **academic mentor** from your home campus, who should be a person available to you for an intellectual, academic exchange over the summer and during the academic year after the summer experience. The mentor will read your journal and participate in a fall reconvening of the students and members of the Venture Consortium.

Learning Process

Three days of the program will be devoted to an **orientation** to the framework and theme of the program. The students will get an overview of the critical issues facing various communities in the city of Providence. In addition, we will discuss what is expected in creating an intentional community and the accountability that students have to yourselves and one another for creating the optimal learning experience.

Students will create a **final project** that represents a summation of your work and thinking about ethical responsibility and the efficacy of enacting systemic change and social justice.

In fall 2005, students will **reconvene** with their mentors and members of the Venture Consortium.

Housing

Staff at the Swearer Center and the Venture Consortium will assist students with finding sublets and housing in the city. Many sublets are available in Providence for approximately \$600/month. In addition, campus housing may be available for a slightly higher fee.

Program staff / support

Staff members for the Swearer Center for Public Service and the Venture Consortium will be the on-site contacts for the students.

Program Criteria & Selection

The program is open to students from a variety of academic backgrounds. Students must be rising sophomores, juniors, and seniors. We are looking for mature students who will be adept at operating outside of a rigid structure.

Each Venture school will determine the application and nomination process that best suits them. The Institute Coordinators will review all applications from the students nominated by the campuses.

Completed applications will be due to your campus program coordinator by **Friday, April 8, 2005**. Students will be notified by **Friday, April 15** of the status of your application. Students accepted to the program will work with a member of the Institute to identify the optimal internship placement.

STIPEND

The participating Venture schools for this year – Brown, Holy Cross, Franklin & Marshall, Sarah Lawrence, and Syracuse – will support the participation of one student and provide that student with a **\$4,000** stipend.

If you are a student from another Venture school, please contact Peggy Chang in the Venture office to discuss whether it might be possible to find funding through your school.

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How do we find common ground and collaborate to solve social problems?

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INSTITUTE COORDINATORS

Peter Hocking, MFA, Associate Dean and Director, Swearer Center for Public Service, Brown University
Rabbi Alan Flam, Senior Fellow, Swearer Center for Public Service, Brown University
Kath Connolly, Senior Associate Director, Swearer Center for Public Service, Brown University
William Meinhofer, PhD, Director, Donelan Office of Community-Based Learning, College of the Holy Cross
Irene King, MDiv, Director, Office for Community Partnerships, Sarah Lawrence College
Peggy Chang, The Venture Consortium

QUESTIONS?

Peggy Chang @ The Venture Consortium:
(401) 863-2324

peggy@theventureconsortium.org

- (Contact Peggy if you are a student from a Venture school other than the ones listed below.)

Brown University:

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College of the Holy Cross:

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Syracuse University:

Pamela Heintz, Mary Ann Shaw Center for Public & Community Service

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APPLICATION

The on-campus selection committees and Institute Coordinators are looking for applicants who have reflected on the goals of the program and who are committed to exploring issues of wealth and poverty, public policy, politics, and ethical obligations to social responsibility.

In your application, please reflect on your studies and past experiences, and why they are relevant to your current process of inquiry.

The following materials and documents must be submitted to your program coordinator by the application deadline:

- Completed "Cover Sheet" – please list your faculty sponsor / academic advisor here.
- Official college transcript
- List of courses you are currently taking this semester
- Two sealed letters of recommendation, at least one of which is from a professor with whom you have taken/are taking a course at your school. (See attachment recommendation forms.)
- Please answer the following questions:

1. Why are you interested in this program? How do you think your experience with the **Venture Summer Institute** would contribute to your undergraduate education overall?
2. What resources and talents – academic, personal, extra-curricular, etc. – would you bring to this program?
3. What questions about public policy, social responsibility, and social justice would you like to explore while participating in this program?
4. Describe an experience that you have had with intercultural communication, and how this experience has affected your perspective on culture, conflict, and difference.
5. Please describe the type of internship placement you would be most interested in and why. (We will do our best to find the internship placement that most suits your interests and talents.)

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