

SIENA COLLEGE CENTER FOR ACADEMIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Annual Report 2022-2023

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

I am happy to share with you the exciting projects, research, courses, and service that our students, AmeriCorps VISTAs, and community engaged faculty and administrators have pursued during the 2022-2023 academic year.

As we continue to manage the many ways our landscape has changed in the past few years—I am continuously floored by the dedication of our members as they work toward equitable change as partners and agents of change in the community. Our VISTAs are working to build capacity and fight poverty and uplift the work of community organizations. Our Bonners and NExT Fellows are building mutual and reciprocal collaborative projects that support partner identified challenges. Our faculty and administrators are developing their community engaged identities through engaged research, teaching, and project-based work. All of our members are thinking about ways to work together with the community to build capacity and to collaborate on projects that support a thriving capital region.

As you read through these pages, I am sure that you will be inspired and (possibly) called to action in this or your own community. I look forward to the continued great work to come in the current academic year!

Peace,

Allison

Mission Statement

This past year, the ACE team spent time reworking our mission statement to reflect our center-wide goals. We believe that our stated mission now reflects our hope that all ACE stakeholders—students, faculty, administrators, staff, nonprofit organizations, and community members—will work collaboratively to build a more just, peaceable, humane world.

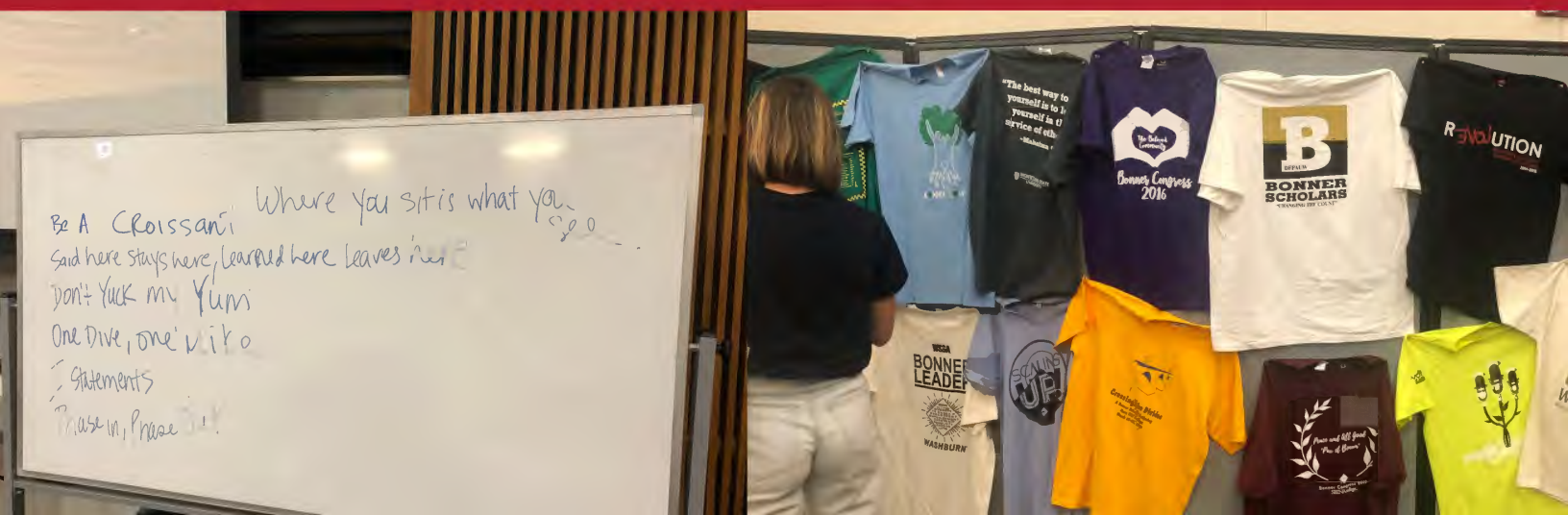
Siena College's Center for Academic Community Engagement (ACE) focuses on the development and success of our members by fostering transformative and impactful experiential learning opportunities through equity centered community engagement initiatives.

Center-Wide Goals

- Equity Centered Community Engagement
- Deepen our Community Partnerships
- Increase our Public Presence

We continue to push forward with the hard work of living our center-wide goals. Many of us participated in a “train the trainer” workshop facilitated by experts from the [University of Michigan's Program on Intergroup Relations](#), which helped us to think about our own lived experiences, the biases that we hold, and how to engage with others with a growth mindset and a sense of wonder.

We realized that we needed to expand our thinking surrounding diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging. As a result, we worked as a team to develop a new mission statement (see above) as well as set a revised center-wide goal to address equity centered community engagement.



Meet the ACE Team



Josh Anthony
Assistant Director of
Bonner Service
Leaders Program



Mairead Carr
Assistant Director
of NExT
Fellowship



Taylor Disco '19
Assistant
Director of AmeriCorps
VISTA Program



Dr. Vera Eccarius-Kelly
ACE Scholar-in-
Residence



Allison Schultz
Director



Sarah Toledano
Associate Director



Cheryl Voter
Assistant Director of
Operations and Grants



Our Community Partners



ACE SERVES THE 518!

-
- The Charlton School
 - Spina Bifida Association of New York State
 - C.R.E.A.T.E. Community Studios
 - Schenectady City School District
 - Schenectady Community Ministries (SiCM)
 - Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York
 - Big Brothers & Big Sisters of the Capital Region, Inc.
 - Boys & Girls Clubs of the Capital Area
 - CanCode Communities
 - CARES of NY, Inc.
 - Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany
 - Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region
 - Focus Churches of Albany, Inc.
 - Friends of Recovery - New York
 - Girls on the Run
 - IPH
 - Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York
 - The Food Pantries for the Capital District
 - Radix Ecological Sustainability Center
 - United Tenants of Albany, Inc.
 - Mechanicville Area Community Services Center (MACSC)
 - Connect Center for Youth
 - Mom Starts Here
 - Unity House of Troy, Inc.
 - YWCA of the Greater Capital Region



Bonner Service Leaders



What do Bonners Do?

- Provide capacity-building services to Capital Region nonprofits to create sustainable change in the local community.
- Develop proficiency in community development best practices and civic engagement pedagogy through pre-semester training, weekly seminars, and completion of the Certificate in Community Development.
- Cultivate a lifelong passion for purposeful community engagement through summer service, cultural immersion experiences, and an international perspective component.
- Complete a research-intensive community engaged capstone.

BY THE NUMBERS

- ◆ 33 students
- ◆ 36% work-study eligible
- ◆ 13 community partners
- ◆ 66 trainings
- ◆ 4388 hours served

Bonner Service Leader Facilitated Classes

Each year, we encourage our students to contribute to the Bonner curriculum by identifying topics they would like to explore. Additionally, we ask students to facilitate classes based on their own passions. This has been a great way for students to share their social justice interests with each other and practice developing and delivering curriculum. During the 2022-23 year, students led classes on the following topics:

- Language Matters: Microaggressions and Person-First Language
- The Foster Care System
- Mental Health and Self-Care
- Healthcare Inequity
- The Art of Activism

Bonner Makes an Impact!

“My time in Bonner has been nothing short of transformative. This past year, in particular, has been filled with invaluable experiences enriched with opportunities for personal growth. The sense of community and service-oriented mindset that defines Bonner has shaped me into a more compassionate and empathetic individual. From engaging in meaningful volunteer work to collaborating with fellow Bonners on impactful projects, every moment has been a stepping stone towards a greater understanding of the world and the power of collective action.



Anum and fellow Bonners in Webster County WV, May 2023

Becoming a leader was a challenging uphill battle for me. Understanding the importance of the phrase "get comfortable with the uncomfortable," recognizing the diverse strengths of leaders, and giving myself time were crucial factors in my journey. As I continue in Bonner, now as a Program Associate, I am determined to further develop myself as a leader, student, and an active member of the community. The growth and learning opportunities that Bonner has offered me have been truly remarkable, and I look forward to continuing this journey of making a positive impact.”

- Anum Tehseen '25

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2023!

The Bonner Class of 2023 spent most of their college career managing unexpected challenges. They adapted and adjusted to unprecedented situations with courage and commitment to continue to give their best to everything they do—including more than a year of virtual service, online Bonner training, and figuring out their post-Siena journey amidst the uncertainty of the global pandemic.

We extend a heartfelt congratulations to the Siena College Bonner Class of 2023 and wish them all the best!



Sarah Ahmed-Weidman
Stephanie Da Fonseca
Chandler Edbauer
Mara Golden
Abeer Jafri
Samantha Lunt

NExT Fellowship

Relationship. Leadership. Action.



The Nonprofit Excellence and Transformation (NExT) Fellowship cultivates and supports student-led interdisciplinary teams to engage in extensive capacity-building research and consulting with local community organizations. NExT Fellows practice what they learn in the classroom through their work with the community—bringing theory to practice.

During the 2022-2023 academic year, students in the NExT program worked with several different community organizations to complete projects that allowed those partners to work more efficiently and effectively. These projects included researching food as medicine programs and analyzing data, completing a program evaluation for a daycare business incubator, and consulting with a statewide coalition to advocate for Recovery Friendly Workplaces across New York.

NExT By the Numbers

- 20 students
- 5 community partners
- 2400 hours served



NExT Fellow Spotlight: SHRIYA MATTA



“ My journey as a NExT Fellow began with the Friends of Recovery of NY project, where I delved into the world of non-profit consulting and partnered with a remarkable team leader. This mentor showed me how to navigate tough conversations with our project partner and adapt when our path veered off course. Fast forward to my final NExT project where I was a team leader, working with The Food Pantries of the Capital District, my team and I completed a program analysis of their Food as Medicine program. ACE also paved the way for the next part of my development as I step into a service year as a VISTA for the Saratoga Community Health Center, reinforcing the notion that ACE has not only helped me find my passions, but also has supported and challenged me on my path of self-discovery. ”

Shriya Matta '23

NExT Fellows In Action

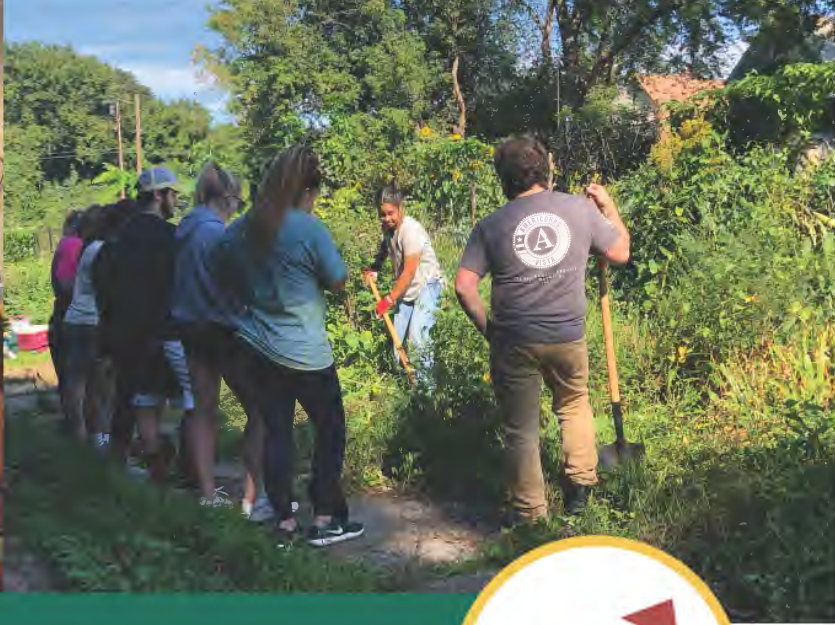
The 2023 Impact Conference

IMPACT is historically the largest annual conference focused on the civic engagement of college students in community service, service-learning, community-based research, advocacy, and other forms of social action. IMPACT is the one time during the year when students, administrators, faculty, AmeriCorps members and VISTAs, and nonprofit professionals gather together to learn and share effective practices, improve personal skills and organizational strategies, discover opportunities and resources, exchange stories, be inspired and challenged to sustain our efforts. Presenting with NExT Fellows at the IMPACT Conference gave ACE a chance to elevate our name from the Capital Region platform to a national stage. Ethan Hull '23 said his big takeaway from the conference was going into a room with attendees from all over the country, some from institutions much more well-known than Siena, and seeing how they could all come together to talk meaningfully about their work. "I loved seeing that ACE has created a program that holds a certain level of sophistication that not all other schools have, even with budgets of hundreds of thousands of dollars."



“Our presentation centered around the NExT Fellowship, which stands as a transformative opportunity for capacity-building. We emphasized how the program's core focus lies in the progressive advancement of professional development, enabling students to expand their knowledge, refine their professional skills, and develop cultural awareness. Through our presentation, we conveyed how the NExT Program prepares students for their future endeavors. The impact of our presentation was evident in the faces of faculty mentors who attended our session. Witnessing their eagerness to implement such a model at their institutions was truly unforgettable. It was an unparalleled opportunity that left an indelible mark on my college experience. ”

-Mouda Al-Zaydan '23



AMERICORPS VISTA

Volunteers in Service to America



WHAT VISTAS DO

AmeriCorps VISTA is a poverty fighting program funded through the federal government. Siena College AmeriCorps VISTAs make a year-long, full-time commitment to serve in a Capital Region nonprofit organization or public agency. They focus their efforts to build the capacity of organizations to make change in our community.

- Generate funds that **build the capacity** of local nonprofits
- **Connect** volunteers with opportunities to support the work of our partners
- Promote **awareness** of programs and events that benefit community residents
- **Create, develop, and evaluate** programs and projects that alleviate poverty

VISTA 2023 VISTA CHANGEMAKER OF THE YEAR:

The VISTA Changemaker Award recognizes a VISTA Member who has supported program members and shown a high level of commitment to the VISTA Program. This ACE Member has worked diligently to create sustainable change through their service. The 2023 VISTA Changemaker is **Elham Malik at FOCUS Churches of Albany.**

“Elham Malik supported several initiatives at FOCUS Churches of Albany, including creating access to halal meat for the guests who use their food pantry as well as translating intake forms for guests to ensure they have equal access to food as their English-speaking counterparts.

One VISTA, Mel, stated, ‘Elham made a major impact on the organization, the population she served/serves, and the cohort. She went above and beyond to meet the community’s needs. She helped provide feedback to my essay during the process of applying to grad school.’ Elham gave her all to her service site, to her cohort, and to her personal and professional development this year, which is why we are proud to award her the 2022-2023 VISTA Changemaker Award.”

-Mairead Carr, former VISTA Program Director



Elham Malik

Program Highlight: Team Building Days

A unique attribute of our VISTA Program is our Team Building Days, which are themed around personal leadership, professional development, and community engagement. Our personal leadership pillar focuses on the foundational, internal skills that VISTAs need to handle adversity, advocate for themselves, and understand how to best utilize their strengths both during their service year and throughout their future careers. Skills in self-advocacy, emotional intelligence, and identifying one's personal strengths translate to different environments and can be the difference between receiving autonomy or being micromanaged, landing the promotion or getting passed over. The professional development pillar focuses on skills VISTAs need to thrive in the workplace and become polished professionals. We train in transferable skills, such as conflict management and public speaking, to help the VISTAs navigate workplaces and to help them open doors to take on more demanding projects. Lastly, our community engagement pillar focuses on the skills VISTAs need to become strong leaders in their community. With a focus on cultural competency, approaches to community organizing, and understanding the root causes of poverty, this pillar helps to ensure the changes VISTAs work toward are responsible and sustainable.

VISTA IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ 10 VISTAs
- ✓ 7 community partners
- ✓ \$79,563 raised for local nonprofits
- ✓ 141 youth supported
- ✓ 103 volunteers recruited
- ✓ 1,604 hours of training completed





Siena Project Incubator (SPIn) Program and Summer Service Associates (SSA)

What are SPIn and SSA?

Summer Project Incubator (SPIn) is an intensive program that curates academically-grounded, sustainable, and developmental community partnerships. SPIn connects faculty, students, and community organizations in multi-year interdisciplinary community-engaged research projects. Our three-year model allows for projects to grow over time. In year one we explore issues, develop relationships, and celebrate small wins; in year two, we develop and support student and community leadership to implement a targeted intervention; and in year three, we work collaboratively to ensure sustainable action.

Summer Service Associates is a program that is run through a collaboration between Siena ACE and United Way of the Greater Capital Region. Each summer, students from around the region are placed with nonprofit organizations around the region who support youth development, address food insecurity, or another anti-poverty initiative. Members in the program have the ability to participate in either direct, hands-on service or indirect, capacity-building service.

“ I really enjoyed my summer service and found the work to be incredibly meaningful. It is a great program and I am very appreciative to Siena, my partner organization, and AmeriCorps for this opportunity! I feel like my work helped me to reevaluate systems [the food systems in place in public schools, school gardens] that I had never really thought about before, consider my own positionality within those systems, and interest me even more in food justice and how to incorporate agriculture and food justice into my future career. ”

- 2023 Summer Service Associate



SPIN AND SSA BY THE NUMBERS

- ✓ 34 Summer Associate VISTAs
- ✓ 3 team-based community engaged SPIn projects
- ✓ 8 SPIn faculty mentors and community liaisons
- ✓ 11 SSA community partners
- ✓ 9,351 hours served
- ✓ 27 majors represented in both programs



“It was amazing to return for year 2 of Summer Meals and see the impact we had in year 1. Being able to witness the recommendations we provided last year be implemented this year was amazing and so rewarding. While doing research this summer, members of the community shared their personal stories with me and expressed how much they value the work we did. My summer of service also exposed me to a different area of nutrition which has influenced my career goals moving forward!”

-Sam Monks, 2022 and 2023 AmeriCorps Summer Associate with Summer Meals

ACE Associates

WHO ARE ACE ASSOCIATES AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

The ACE Associates are more than just students participating in a work study program. All of our ACE Associates take an active role in various tasks and projects critical to the running of the Center. Some examples are research, data analysis, marketing, social media, as well as general office tasks. Our ACE Associates have the opportunity to work on both individual tasks and as part of a team. The Center relies heavily on the work of our ACE Associates to further our impact and engagement with students, faculty, and administrators on campus and in the Capital Region. The work that our ACE Associates complete is meant to be a sustainable staple for the success of our Center and the skills that are learned will be with our ACE Associates for years to come!



Liamell Quezada '24 Marketing Major and Psychology minor is an integral member of our ACE Associate team. Lia's passion for marketing shows through her work at ACE. Lia's research with Marketing Professor Sinem Atakan was accepted at the European Marketing Conference (EMAC) in Odense, Denmark in May 2023—the largest Marketing conference in Europe. "I presented research I did last summer with Professor Atakan on eating motivations scales. It was a great experience. I met many incredible people and had a great time!" Great work Lia!



Lia and Dr. Atakan in Denmark

Community Engaged Faculty: Pathways and Stories of Engagement



Dr. Vera Eccarius-Kelly, ACE Scholar in Residence and Professor of Comparative Politics, and Dr. Shannon Draucker, Assistant Professor of English teamed up with ACE Admin Sarah Toledano and Allison Schultz to present at the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities in June 2023. The team shared pathways and stories that highlighted how they have developed skills and competencies in community engaged practices that have led to deeper student connection to the communities we serve.

Post presentation smiles (from L to R: Schultz, Toledano, Draucker, and Eccarius-Kelly)



Community Engaged Faculty Spotlight: Travis Brodbeck '17 'G18

“ My first exposure to community engagement was as a first year student. We visited the Children’s Museum at Saratoga to learn about child development and to make bracelets for an Autism Awareness campaign. After that, I was hooked and eager to take the Economics of Crime, a community engaged course investigating the Community Accountability Program in Albany County. Now as a faculty member, my goal is to prepare students with the skills, knowledge, and experience to be successful in their post-graduate careers. I believe community engagement is key to student development and feel obligated to provide accessible experiential learning. With assistance from the Center for Academic Community Engagement, we can offer our students opportunities to make a difference in our local community while leveraging their academic knowledge and their budding skill sets. Community engagement has a place in every classroom, no matter how big or small, regardless of the subject or the student level. Thanks to the support and encouragement of the Center for Academic Community Engagement, I feel that I am a better scholar, a better teacher, and a better citizen. ”

Thank you to our generous sponsors!
**Our community engaged work would not be possible,
without your support**

AmeriCorps

Gerri (Hutchings) '93 and Laszlo Bock

Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation

Stewart's Shops/Dake Foundation

John '80 and Mary (Ryan) Held '83

Partners for Campus-Community Engagement

Sharon (Elser) '84 and Lawrence Sullivan

Carl E. Touhey Foundation

Willits Foundation

Congratulations to our award winners!

ACE 2023 Faculty of the Year | Dr. Jessica Salmon

**ACE 2023 Community Partner of the Year | The Food Pantries for the
Capital District**

2023 Academic Achievement Award | Sarah Ahmed-Weidman

2023 Engaged Scholar Award | Mouda Al-Zaydan

2023 Life of Service Award | Mara Golden

2023 Nicholas Ramundo Class of 2014 Award | Kari Nieber

2023 Bonner Changemaker | Samantha Lunt

2023 NExT Changemaker | Emily Attasi

2023 VISTA Changemaker | Elham Malik

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