

Bush Foundation Fellowships: Creating Broader Impact

(A summary of a recent study)

Since 1965, the Bush Foundation has been offering people with promise the opportunity to better themselves—to get more training, to reflect and learn—and then to return the benefits to their communities. So far more than 1,950 artists, doctors and individuals have taken up that challenge. And, although each of the Foundation’s three fellowship programs—artists, leadership and medical—has been evaluated at intervals, until now no study had reviewed all the programs to learn how people become leaders and their subsequent impact on a broader community.

KEY FINDINGS

The recent study of the Foundation’s fellowship programs confirmed the connection between leaders and positive impact on their communities. Critical factors for creating impact are:

- Understanding that impact happens over time.
- Thinking about what they want to do and how they want to do it, while remaining open to new ideas and to expanding and focusing their vision.
- Understanding the positive and negative nature of external factors, such as the awareness and support of others, organizational culture or directives that support change, availability of funding and the ability to capitalize on an initiative already underway.
- Developing personal relationships and trust with residents of the communities they want to influence (found to be especially important in rural and inner-city areas).
- Learning and employing networking and communication skills that motivate and persuade others; improving their capacity to create and sustain relationships.
- Developing necessary knowledge and skills; employing multiple strategies and activities; building on the work of others and on sustaining personal strengths such as passion, persistence and energy.



Learn more inside. . .

- Patricia Sanchez helps troubled youth become community assets
- Dr. Alan Kenien provides vital health services and shapes state policy
- Each program develops leaders
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"I am not an attorney or a policy maker in D.C. I am just a worker with youth in a very rural county, seeing kids turn their lives around."

Patricia Sanchez, 1999 Bush Leadership Fellow

With her fellowship, Patricia Sanchez (far right, leading youth in the Porcupine Mountains) earned a master's degree in counseling and wilderness leadership. She went on to create two innovative programs in her rural Wisconsin community—a wilderness program for low-income women and a county-wide search and rescue team run by youth.



Alcohol and drug problems affect many of the youth and families with whom Sanchez works, including residents of the Native American reservation in Sawyer County. Her youth program has taken troubled youth, many who have been through the juvenile justice system, and produced a cadre of trained emergency responders.

Sanchez said the fellowship brought her credibility, knowledge and tools, as well as "backbone to do these things and to speak out. Part of the fellowship experience is a journey. It is not just about knowledge but is also about developing our own self-efficacy."



A youth development trainer who has observed Sanchez's work closely summed up her influence this way: "She is a champion in the middle of a pretty rough situation in a very rural, high-crime area. She works to help people see other possibilities for themselves and then to act on that."

"The multidisciplinary approach is important to a rural area."

Alan Kenien, M.D., 1990 Bush Medical Fellow

Alan Kenien's (above, treating a young patient) fellowship goal was to "become a resource in the diagnosis and management of inborn errors of metabolism." He had always had an interest in children with metabolic disorders, fitting them into his schedule as needed, but the fellowship (and later, grants) allowed him to create a multidisciplinary clinic serving children in North Dakota and neighboring states. Before many families had to drive to the Mayo Clinic or to the Twin Cities for care.

Kenien's work has also affected North Dakota state policy regarding extra reimbursement for a special and expensive formula for infants with PKU (a metabolic disorder that can cause mental retardation if not treated early.) He led an effort to make legislators aware of the costs of not treating the affected infants. The formula "prevents the need to institutionalize these children as they get older and allows them to mature into healthy and tax-paying adults."

A physician specialist familiar with Kenien's work noted his impact on physicians in North Dakota by serving as the state's consultant for the newborn screening program. "He took over more responsibility for metabolic disease in the state. It means that kids will be diagnosed earlier and appropriate treatment will be provided earlier."

While only one of the Foundation’s three fellowship programs is formally targeted at “leadership,” the study indicated that each program, in its own distinct way, supports the development of leadership. The fellowships:

- **Were the key first step in a fellow’s path to personal change and broader contributions**, especially the time provided for reflection and focus, the opportunity to develop new skills and have new experiences, and the flexible funding support. Fellowships were transformative experiences for many recipients that helped them gain the skills, confidence and energy to go on to transform their communities.
- **Were an effective strategy for the Foundation to fulfill its mission** and a good complement to grants made to organizations. The study results encouraged the Foundation to maintain the breadth and flexibility of its fellowship programs so that the programs can respond to changing conditions in the region.
- **Provided public benefits that are felt primarily in the Foundation’s region**, even though more than 20 percent of fellows have had their primary effect on a national level. One testament to the commitment fellows feel toward their communities is the lack of attrition; only nine percent of fellows studied have left the region.
- **Were a successful model of support for individuals** and demonstrate how individuals can contribute to the common good.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study focuses on the nearly 600 artist, leadership and medical fellows who received fellowships between 1990 and 2002.

Of these, 264 returned an extensive survey and 112 were interviewed in depth.

For each fellow interviewed, the study also conducted in-depth interviews of “observers”—individuals familiar with each fellow’s work—in an attempt to validate and broaden the fellows’ reports of the types and extent of impact achieved.

WAYS FELLOWS ACHIEVED BROAD IMPACT

The study findings confirmed the Foundation’s implicit theory of change: Investment in individuals produces a return on that investment for the broader community.

This broader impact was evident; fellows had:

- Created or maintained new programs and services.
- Supported, empowered or changed diverse groups of people.
- Contributed to the development of stronger, more stable organizations.
- Contributed to changes in the ways organizations and communities operate and professionals do their work.
- Introduced new methods to fields of work and created new fields.
- Brought to light new perspectives and insight on issues.
- Strengthened or created new public policies.
- Brought new participants to community activities and formed new networks of connection among them.
- Made art in a variety of media and fostered vibrant arts communities.
- Increased access to health care and improved health.
- Provided new and diverse leadership.

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS HISTORY

Since 1965, the Bush Foundation has been offering people with promise the opportunity to better themselves—to get more training, to reflect and learn—and then to return the benefits to their communities. So far more than 1,950 artists, doctors and leaders have taken up that challenge, and the Foundation has awarded them more than \$48 million.

Bush Artists Fellows Program

- Created in 1976; 415 fellowships awarded
- Provides significant financial support that enables artists to further their work and their contribution to their communities

Bush Leadership Fellows Program

- Created in 1965; 1,281 fellowships awarded
- Supports accomplished, motivated individuals at mid-career who are eager to prepare themselves for greater leadership responsibilities within their communities and professions

Bush Medical Fellows Program

- Created in 1979; 302 fellowships awarded
- Enables physicians to receive training in special areas and to develop opportunities for personal and professional growth so they may better serve their communities

GOING FORWARD

The study recommended that continuing and additional strategic support for fellows can increase their ability to create broader impact. The most frequent suggestion from fellows was that the Foundation provide increased networking opportunities; they also said they would benefit from ongoing training in communication, collaboration, marketing and promotion, community outreach and public education, and public policy work.

The study reported that many fellows approached the post-fellowship period in the same way they initially approached the fellowship, by expanding their thinking to include all possibilities. These fellows intentionally consider a full range of approaches, call on other fellows' experience and use the power of the fellowship's reputation to improve conditions in the region. The study suggested these fellows will be more successful in these approaches if the Foundation strives to increase public awareness of the fellowship programs (as well as of the Foundation). Such increased awareness will both attract strong applicants and facilitate the ongoing work of current and prior fellows.

The Foundation will use the findings of the study to modify and add to the fellowship programs going forward.

This material has been excerpted and/or condensed from Bush Foundation Fellowships: Creating Broader Impact, a study conducted and reported by Susan Showalter and Vicki Itzkowitz. To see an executive summary of the report, visit the Publications section of www.bushfoundation.org.

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