

# The Stephen D. London Center for Community Engagement and Social Justice

# Annual Report

**Simmons** UNIVERSITY

The Stephen D. London Center for  
Community Engagement and Social Justice

# AY 25 London Center Team

## Center Staff

**Meghan Doran:** Director

**Courtney Kramer:** Associate Director

**Dara Starkman:** Senior Site Manager, Jumpstart

## Faculty Fellow

**Gary Bailey:** Professor of Practice and MSW  
Program Director

## Graduate Assistants

**Levi Reyes:** Bonner Graduate Assistant

**Hannah Bini:** Community-Based Programs and  
Partnerships Graduate Assistant

## Office Assistants

**Madina Salayeva:** Office Coordinator

**Naomi Williams:** Marketing and Communications  
Specialist

**Madalyn Taylor:** Jumpstart Community Engagement  
Leader

**Charlotte Smith:** Civic and Campus Engagement  
Coordinator

**Annie Doherty:** Civic and Campus Engagement  
Coordinator

# The London Center

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

This has been a year filled with many triumphs, with growth, and learning, and success, for our little community of students, faculty, and staff here at Simmons, and those triumphs are what we celebrate in this report. Indeed, such celebrations may be more important than ever, as it also has been a year filled with many concerns - anxieties about how actions that feel beyond our control in the wider world may come to impact our communities. University leadership has emphasized staying true to our values even as we feel them threatened: this is a message near and dear to the London Center where our shared values are at the core of all the work we do, values like social justice, equity, inclusion, diversity and - the one I have been reflecting upon a lot lately - democracy. A university is not in and of itself a democracy, and yet Universities have much to contribute to the healthy and functioning civil society that is a critical element of any democracy. Here is where we learn to lead with our values, and where we develop the skills and habits necessary for not only surviving, but thriving in a multicultural society, skills like critical inquiry, cultural humility, deliberative dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and inclusive, everyday leadership.

We have plenty of impressive numbers to share in these pages - hours served, partners engaged, etc but it's this work that is truly at the heart of everything we do: developing the skills and habits for a life for a life of passion, a life of purpose and life in service to others. Not only is this essential for our own well-being but for the well-being of our city, our nation and our world. I am proud to play a small part of it, and so so proud of our community and excited to see what you will all do next in a world desperately in need of empathy, of change, and of healing. I know it feels like an uphill battle, and I know we have the tools to do it.

In Solidarity,

Meghan V. Doran, PhD  
Assistant Dean for Employer Relations and Community  
Engagement



## Want to support our work?



[Visit our website to learn how to get involved](#)



[Looking to donate?](#)  
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# Our Mission

The Stephen D. London Center for Community Engagement and Social Justice facilitates and promotes community-based learning and develops strategic partnerships to advance learning, promote civic engagement, and enhance community involvement in order to create a more just society.

## Our Goals

- 1** Promote and support community engagement and pedagogically sound community-based learning, grounded in inclusive and equitable practices.
- 2** Develop reflective and socially responsible leaders with a readiness for civic action.
- 3** Form strategic partnerships with organizations that:  
advance women's and girls' leadership and/or are in our local community of the Fenway/ Mission Hill/ Jamaica Plain
- 4** Advance social justice on issues that meet community needs and speak to Simmons student, faculty, and staff interests and strengths.

## Our Impact

**449**

Undergraduate and graduate students formally engaged in our programs

**56**

Organizations partnered with in the greater Boston area

**20265**

Hours served during the 2024-2025 academic year

# Bonner Community Leaders Program

Since its launch at Simmons in 2022, the Bonner Program has provided a transformative, four-year experience centered on service, leadership, and community partnership. This nationally recognized program empowers students to make a tangible difference through their work with local organizations, all while building and refining their leadership abilities.

A key component of the Bonner Program is its commitment to equity: it offers four years of financial aid support to its Leaders. This assistance helps break down financial barriers for low-income and often historically underrepresented students, including students of color and first-generation students, enabling them to fully commit to and benefit from their community engagement.



## 2024 - 2025 Highlights

- **22** Bonner Community Leaders served up to **10** hours per week for the course of the academic year
- Bonner Leaders worked alongside **16** Community Partners
- Together, Bonners served a total of **5,498** hours over the course of the year

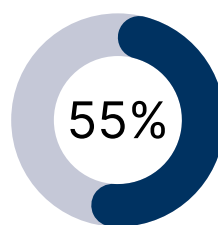


Simmons University is the **first institution** of higher education in Massachusetts and only **the third in New England** to be accepted into the Bonner network.

The Bonner Program model has proven to be a successful model for the enrollment, retention, and graduation of low-income, first generation, and diverse students.



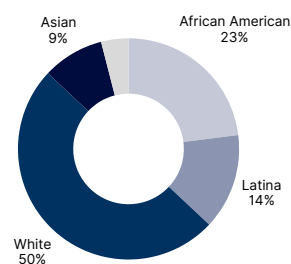
#### First-Generation



Of the 22 Bonner leaders, **55%** are the first in their families to go to college.

Students in the Bonner Program identify as: African American (**23%**); Latina (**14%**); Asian (**9%**); White (**49%**); and two or more (**5%**)

#### Demographics



The Bonner Leaders program has been the most impactful thing I have participated in while at Simmons. It has pushed me to develop personally, professionally, and as a leader and I can't imagine completing my college career without its influence

-Bonner Leader '25



# Jumpstart AmeriCorps

During the academic year, students serve 300 hours by providing language, literacy, and social-emotional programming for preschool children from under-served communities. In addition to the 60+ hours of early childhood and social justice training, students work in teams to intentionally plan their classroom engagement to help the young children in Boston enter kindergarten prepared to succeed. Jumpstart Simmons is an affiliate program of Jumpstart for Young Children Inc.; learn more by visiting [jstart.org](http://jstart.org).

## Funding & Awards

- \$28,171.44 awarded to students in the Segal Education Award scholarship
- \$102,105 sub-granted to Simmons to staff and operate Jumpstart on campus
- \$45,000 secured in stipends from Jumpstart for non-federal work study students

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*“Jumpstart has been a place of belonging for me at Simmons. Before joining Jumpstart, I struggled to find my place here, but all-Corps time on Wednesday afternoons has always been the highlight of my week!”*

*-AY25 Jumpstart  
AmeriCorps member*

”



# 2024-2025 By the Numbers



**7277.5** Hours served



**413** Family activity kits distributed



**329** Children impacted



**26** AmeriCorps members enrolled



**13** Classrooms engaged



**4915** documented interactions with children

*"I have found my time at Jumpstart incredibly rewarding; it has helped me build lasting friendships, offered me an area of service and community engagement, and I had so much fun during it. It helps students build so many professional skills and gain confidence in themselves as leaders. This is really a wonderful program and I am very grateful for my time with it."*

**- AY25 Jumpstart AmeriCorps Member**

# Strong Women, Strong Girls

**Thirty four Simmons students served as Strong Women, Strong Girls mentors working in 4 local elementary schools for a collective 2,470 service hours.**

Through SWSG, mentors utilize a research-based curriculum that incorporates the study of contemporary and historic female role models, skill-building activities, and strong relationships with mentors and peers to work with 3rd through 5th grade girls and nonbinary youth.

The program has helped me think more deeply about the kind of impact I want to have in my future career. It showed me how powerful mentorship and community involvement can be, and it made me realize that I want my long-term goals to include supporting and empowering others—especially young people.

”

- 📍 John Winthrop School
- 📍 Rafael Hernandez K-8 School
- 📍 Mary E. Curly School
- 📍 Josiah Quincy Elementary School



## America Learns

America Learns is an in-school volunteer program that provides fundamental support to teachers and educators at the Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School in Roxbury.

This year, **fifteen** Simmons Students volunteered in, eighth-grade ESL, kindergarten, second grade, ABA Music, and the school library!

Together, they served **522** hours over the year.

“

The program has greatly improved my confidence as a leader. Working in the library, I've learned how to take initiative, communicate clearly with students, and handle challenges with more independence. I now feel more comfortable guiding others and stepping into leadership roles.

-2024-2025 Mentor



# Alternative Spring Break

Alternative Spring Break ("ASB") is a reflection-based, student-led program where teams engage in a social justice curriculum that prepares them to learn and serve in another community during a one-week trip over spring break.

This year's Alternative Spring Break took a diverse group of nine students—ranging from sophomores to seniors and representing a wide array of majors such as nursing, public policy, data analytics, and beyond—to Portland, Oregon. Their journey was designed to immerse them in the historical and contemporary contexts of pressing social challenges.

In Portland, the students had the unique opportunity to engage directly with local community organizations, deepening their insights into systemic issues like affordable housing, the school-to-prison pipeline, and the multifaceted policies required to build a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Over the course of an enriching week, our students participated in a variety of immersive activities and service projects that not only enhanced their academic learning but also spurred profound personal growth. These experiences included volunteering with the Transitions Project, Blanchet House, and Portland's Books through Bars. Students also visited the Oregon Historical Society, the Q Center, and Portland Playhouse to immerse themselves in Portland's history and culture.



When reflecting on the experience, one student said, **"This program has greatly improved my confidence as both a leader and a member of a team. ASB was an incredible experience- I learned so much not only about my peers and the issues at hand, but also about myself. I feel confident in my abilities to navigate a new area with a group, make decisions, and do so with great teamwork."**



**"My experience in ASB has been incredible. It is such a meaningful opportunity for students to engage with communities, learn through service, and reflect deeply on social issues. I especially valued the connections I made — by far, my favorite part of the program was the people, both within our group and in the Portland community!"**

-ASB Participant

# Community-Engaged Learning Courses

The London Center supports community-engaged learning (CEL) courses across the curriculum at Simmons. In CEL courses, students learn through mutually beneficial partnerships with external communities, both in greater Boston and beyond.

## Course Spotlight PSYC328: Health Disparities in the US

Students in this advanced special topics class were able to gain a firsthand understanding of health disparities and how healthcare professionals can address these disparities through volunteering at Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program's Health, Empowerment, and Resources (HER) for women every Saturday. The class also conducted a drive for much-needed supplies for women who access the clinic.

“

**I didn't expect this course to be so hands on with an organization when I went into it. It was super fulfilling and a huge learning experience. This is something I've never done before and gave me inspiration to continue on with this journey.**

-Service Learning Student



264 undergraduate students and 87 grad students took CEL courses this year.



Students engaged with 38 community partners in Boston and across the country.



They contributed to a total of 4,084 hours of service through CEL courses.

# Civic Engagement

Simmons is **one of six** universities in Massachusetts with the Voter Friendly Campus Designation.

This year we engaged **195** students during our events and reached **7,000** community members with our civic engagement newsletters.



## Simmons Students explain why voting is important to them during our Election Day Takeover

## Awards and Recognition



**Voter  
Friendly  
Campus**

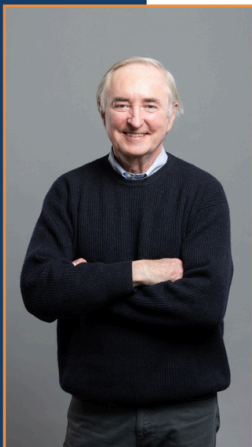


# Leadership in Social Justice:

## Housing Insecurity and the Housing Crisis in Boston

In the Spring 2024 semester, the London Center launched its first “Leadership in Social Justice Series” to help members of the Simmons community to become more socially informed leaders. Our work continued this academic year with an eye towards curricular integration.

### LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL JUSTICE LECTURE



#### CONTINUITY WITHIN CHAOS: CARING FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING CHRONICALLY IN SHELTERS AND ON THE STREETS

BY DR JAMES O'CONNELL, FOUNDER AND  
PRESIDENT, BOSTON HEALTH CARE FOR  
THE HOMELESS

OCTOBER 30, 2024  
11 AM – 12 PM

C520/521 AND ON ZOOM

Join Dr. O'Connell as he  
talks about supporting  
unhoused populations in  
the city.

## Continuity within Chaos

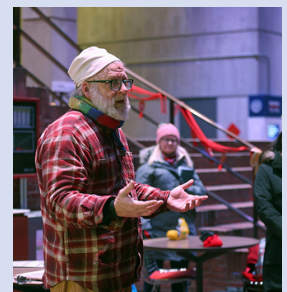
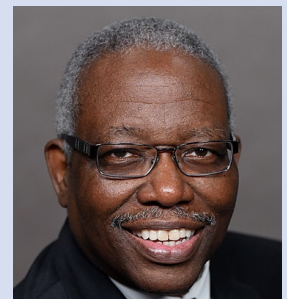
This fall we welcomed Dr. James O'Connell, founder and president of Boston Healthcare for the Homeless, to campus to give a lecture on his experiences caring for chronically unhoused folks.

“It was wonderful to hear Dr O'Connell speak about his many years of care for individuals unable to access safe and affordable housing. His talk both shared the specific details that individuals he has cared for have faced as well as some of the systemic attempts to address the issue and/or failures in doing so.”

-Lecture Attendee

## Housing Encampments Public Health and Public Policy

Our spring event on the housing crisis brought together local experts to talk about housing encampments from a public health and public policy perspective. Moderated by Professor Gary Bailey panelists included: Brendan Little, Co-Founder and Co-Director of Halo Initiatives, Harold Cox, Professor of the Practice at Boston University School of Public Health, Sumbul Siddiqui, Cambridge City Councilor and former Mayor, and Jim Greene, Assistant Director of Supportive Housing at the Mayor's Office of Housing.



# International Women's Day



Simmons has the privilege of working with organizations from across the Greater Boston area that work to advance gender equity to put on this breakfast. This year we hosted about 250 area leaders for the 27th Annual Boston International Women's Day Breakfast with a theme of "Action in Unity." After welcomes from both President Wooten and Mayor Wu, an engaging panel moderated by Collette Phillips discussed how women can collectively rise to the moment.

# Reading Douglass Together

With generous funding from the Mass Humanities Council, Simmons joined organizations across the Commonwealth to host a collective reading of Frederick Douglass' speech, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" The hybrid event welcomed faculty, staff, students, and alumni to participate in the reading. The event featured former Massachusetts State Rep Byron Rushing (HON '11) to discuss the relevance of the speech today.

## Reading Douglass Together


A community reading and discussion of "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" Explore the continued relevance of Douglass' words today. This program is funded in part by Mass Humanities.  
Light refreshments will be served.

**Wednesday,  
February 12th | 5 pm**  
**C-503 and on Zoom**  
(register to access link)

**Featured Project Scholar**

Byron Rushing (Hon, 2011)  
former Massachusetts State Representative

Scan to register:



# Volunteer Engagement

Service, volunteering, and philanthropy are activities which help participants in the Simmons community learn about and understand social injustices and ongoing efforts to make real and lasting social change. This year, the London Center provided several opportunities to invite the Simmons community to engage and support our local communities as well as learn in and with those communities.



## Muddy River Clean Up

In collaboration with Sunrise Simmons and the Muddy Water Initiative, we supported a fall and spring clean up of the Muddy River, helping to contribute to environmental sustainability just outside our campus doors.

## Rosie's Place

20 students volunteered at to serve meals at Rosie's Place, a women's shelter, during Women's Centered College Week. The Student Athletic Advisory Committee conducted a drive to create self-care kits for the women Rosie's Place serves.



## Freedom Rally

Simmons partnered with Embrace Boston to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1965 March and Rally in Boston. Our Bonner staff and student leaders volunteered together to help make this event a success



# Annual Awards

## Jennifer McKee Distinguished Students

This award recognizes a student whose work with London Center for Community Engagement & Social Justice has made a unique and lasting contribution to the college's commitment to engagement:

**Kalea Fields, '26**

**Avery Swasey, '26**

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## Emerging Leaders

This award recognizes a student who has made significant contributions to the community and lead by example early in their time at Simmons:

**Kemaya Lendore, '28**

**Rachel Fretard, '26**

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## Judith Botelho Commitment to Service Award

This award recognizes a student who exemplifies the commitment to community service that Judith Botelho demonstrated as a student and AmeriCorps\*VISTA during her six years at Simmons.

**Aislinn Doherty, '25**

**Madd Witaconis, '25**

**Aurora Daniel, MSMA '26**

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## Leadership in Community-Based Learning Award

This award recognizes a group of students for their dedication and leadership in a community-based leadership component of a course:

**Leah Berdeen, '25**

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## Stephen London Faculty/ Staff Community Service

This award recognizes a faculty or staff member who has shown commitment and passion to engage our students with the communities of Boston.

**Anna Aguilera, Associate Professor and Director of the Honors Program**

**Dara Starkman, Jumpstart Senior Site Manager**

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## Outstanding Community Partner

This award recognizes a community partner for sustained partnership with Simmons University in a spirit of collaboration and mutual benefit as evidenced by:

**Jamaica Plain Head Start**

**Nutury Learning Lab**

# The London Center's Partners 2024-2025

## Bonner Community Leaders

- Girls Leap
- Fenway Health
- Massachusetts Peace Action
- Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School
- Boston Center for Refugee Health & Human Rights
- Fenway Community Center
- PFLAG
- Community Servings
- Reef Support Center
- Families First Parenting Program
- 826 Boston
- Girls on the Run
- Sparkshare
- Little Brothers- Friends of the Elderly
- St. Francis House

## America Learns

- Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School

## Strong Women, Strong Girls

- Strong Women, Strong Girls
- Mary E. Curly School
- John Winthrop School
- Josiah Quincy Elementary School
- Rafael Hernandez Dual Language K-8 School

## Volunteer Events

- Muddy Water Initiative
- Community Servings

## Jumpstart AmeriCorps

- ABCD Jamaica Plain Head Start
- Nurtury Learning Lab
- Jumpstart for Young Children

## Summer Programs

- Sociedad Latina
- Mission Safe
- Girls Get Going

## Service-Learning Courses

- Boston Healthcare for the Homeless
- Boys and Girls Club
- Charlestown Club
- Girls LEAP
- Mount Pleasant Home
- Peterborough Senior Center
- Hearth Inc.
- Fenway High School
- Community Action Agency of Somerville
- Partners in Health United States New Bedford
- Partners in Health
- Jumpstart
- America Learns
- SWSG
- The REEF Center (Simmons)
- Charles River Watershed Association
- Muddy Water Initiative
- Take Back the Night
- Hearth Inc - Olmstead Green
- Hearth Inc - Ruggles
- Tufts Medical Center
- Goddard House (Opening Minds Through Art)
- Simmons Makerspace
- YMCA
- SWSG
- Cooperative Production
- Danny's Place
- Danbury High School
- Davis Square KinderCare
- Harvest on vine
- Rosie's Place
- Found in Translation
- Megan House foundation
- Better Future Project
- Dorchester Food CoOp
- Mass Audubon
- Shine Coalition
- Urban Food Project
- Walk for Hunger

# Our Community

During the 2024-2025 academic year, Simmons students engaged with 56 organizations across the Greater Boston area through the London Center.

