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Rigorous Longitudinal Study of AmeriCorps Finds Significant Impacts Eight Years Later

Alums Outpace Controlled Comparison Group in Public Service Careers, Civic Engagement, Community Activism, and Life Fulfillment

Washington D.C. - AmeriCorps is building a powerful pipeline for public servants, civic leaders, and social entrepreneurs, finds a new longitudinal study released today by the Corporation for National and Community Service.

Released in coordination with a Brookings Institution briefing this morning, the study, *Still Serving: Measuring the Eight-Year Impact of AmeriCorps on Alumni*, is the most rigorous evaluation ever conducted on AmeriCorps' long-term impacts on its members. Based on data collected eight years after members completed their year of service, the study conclusively demonstrates that AmeriCorps causes long-term positive impacts on the civic attitudes and behaviors of the program's alumni. AmeriCorps alums are significantly more civically engaged and more likely to pursue public service careers in the government and nonprofit sector than their counterparts in the scientifically crafted comparison group, which has also been tracked for eight years. They are also significantly more likely to be happy and satisfied with their lives. The report, executive summary and other information is at www.NationalService.gov/research.

"Even those of us who started off believing that intense service can make better citizens have been astonished at the strength of these findings," said David Eisner, CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which oversees AmeriCorps. "With more than 60 percent of our alums working in nonprofits or government, these results are way more than statistically significant. AmeriCorps is becoming America's most important pipeline to careers in nonprofits and government—this at the same time crisis level shortfalls in leadership and workforce are looming in these areas."

The study and its implications for the future of AmeriCorps are under discussion at a Brookings Institution forum this morning as part of a nationwide series of events marking the second annual AmeriCorps Week. Speakers include Reps. Gwen Moore, (D-WI) and Christopher Shays (R-CT); E.J. Dionne of the Washington Post and Brookings Institution; David Eisner, Corporation for National and Community Service CEO; Paul Light, author and New York University professor; Janet Murguia, President and CEO, National Council of La Raza; Roxanne Spillett, President and CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of America; and Stephen Goldsmith, Board Chair of the Corporation for National and Community Service and Daniel Paul Professor of Government, Harvard University.



The study, conducted in partnership with the independent research firm Abt Associates Inc., tracked more than 2,000 AmeriCorps members in the State and National and the AmeriCorps National Civilian Corps (NCCC) program who served between 1999 and 2000. The study compares these AmeriCorps members with a group of like individuals who were interested in serving in AmeriCorps but did not, looking at changes in civic outcomes and career choices over time. Key findings of the study include:

- * AmeriCorps makes alumni more likely to enter into nonprofit or government careers, with 60 percent of AmeriCorps alumni choosing to work with a nonprofit organization or public agency.

- * AmeriCorps has an even greater relative impact on the career choices of minority members and individuals from disadvantaged circumstances. Minority AmeriCorps members in the State and National program are significantly more likely to choose a career in public service than similar members of the comparison group (44% compared to 26%). AmeriCorps members from disadvantaged circumstances are 20 percentage points more likely to be employed in a public service field (46% compared to 26%).

- * AmeriCorps has a significant positive impact on members' attachment to community, their understanding of community problems, their sense of efficacy in working to address community needs, and their participation in community meetings and events.

- * AmeriCorps exposes members to new career opportunities and is beneficial to them in the job market. About 80 percent of members reported that their service exposed them to new career options (83% of NCCC members and 79% of State and National members), and more than two-thirds of the former members report that their service was an advantage to them in the job market.

- * Members who served in AmeriCorps are more satisfied with their lives eight years later than individuals who did not end up serving in AmeriCorps. Ninety percent of NCCC and 86 percent of State and National alumni, for example, are satisfied with their careers.

"This study shows that AmeriCorps opens the doors to lifelong public service and motivates alumni to continue serving their communities through their careers and in their personal life," said Paul Light, author of "A Government Ill Executed" and professor at New York University. "These findings offer public agencies and nonprofit organizations renewed hope as they work to address the coming workforce crisis. AmeriCorps is a powerful booster shot to address this crisis and help build the next generation of public servants and social entrepreneurs."

Light and other experts have pointed to a looming crisis in the nonprofit and government workforce due to the aging the Baby Boomers, competition from the private sector, burnout and retention issues, and other factors. The federal Office of Personnel Management projects that more than 550,000 federal employees –almost one third of the federal workforce –will leave government in the next five years. By 2016, nearly 40 percent of current federal workers will retire. The U.S. will need 2 million new teachers in the next decade, and 1.2 million new nurses and 250,000 public health workers by 2020.

"AmeriCorps is perhaps the best pipeline for helping the nonprofit sector recruit its next generation of



leadership. AmeriCorps is a sleeping giant of a solution with 75,000 members each year being directly exposed to nonprofit and public service," said Paul Schmitz, CEO of Public Allies and Chair of the Nonprofit Workforce Coalition. Public Allies reports that 80 percent of its 2,200 AmeriCorps alumni have entered careers in public service. Many national nonprofits including Habitat for Humanity, Points of Light & Hands On Network, and Boys & Girls Clubs of America see AmeriCorps as a vital source of future staff for their organizations and the nonprofit sector at large.

Giselle John, a Public Allies AmeriCorps alum, is one example of this pipeline effect. After spending seven years living in foster care, she joined Public Allies as an AmeriCorps member in 2000. Public Allies placed her with Voices for Youth, an organization focused on helping other people leaving foster care, where she now serves as Program Director. Nathan Rothstein, who joined AmeriCorps in 2006 to serve in the Katrina recovery effort, created New Orleans Young Urban Rebuilding Professionals as a way to help young professionals find ways to connect with each other and find the resources they need to stay in the city. Katrina "is our generation's civil rights movement," says Rothstein, 23. "People come from all over to make an impact, to have a part in history."

More than 540,000 women and men have served in AmeriCorps since the program's inception in 1993, providing more than 705 million hours of service. AmeriCorps members serve with more than 4,100 nonprofit and faith-based groups expand their reach and better meet their mission. AmeriCorps members recruit volunteers, expand services, build capacity, and create innovative and sustainable programs. Last year AmeriCorps members mobilized or managed 1.7 million volunteers for the organizations they serve.

AmeriCorps Week will be marked by hundreds of events across the country, including a Habitat for Humanity blitz building project featuring 700 AmeriCorps members on the Gulf Coast and a closing ceremony in Miami where more than 600 AmeriCorps members will restore an historic beach park. An AmeriCorps Week website, located at [AmeriCorpsWeek.gov](http://www.americorpsweek.gov) <<http://www.americorpsweek.gov/>> , features a database of events, news, stories, and information about how to join.

The Corporation for National and Community Service improves lives, strengthens communities, and fosters civic engagement through service and volunteering. Each year the Corporation engages more than four million Americans of all ages and backgrounds in service to meet local needs through its Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America programs. For more information, visit [NationalService.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov) <<http://www.nationalservice.gov/>> .