OUR MISSION

The Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty (SHECP) encourages the study of poverty as a complex social problem, by expanding and improving educational opportunities for college students in a wide range of disciplines and career trajectories. Through its programs, SHECP and its member institutions prepare students for a lifetime of professional and civic efforts to diminish poverty and enhance human capability, while also supporting connections among students, faculty, staff, and alumni engaged in the study of poverty.

SHECP is a collaboration among 25 colleges and universities that integrates classroom study of poverty with summer internships and co-curricular activities. In 2018, SHECP provided 130 students with summer internships, in 21 geographic locations, with 96 poverty-focused nonprofit and government agencies. SHECP interns provided 36,400 hours of service, over the course of eight weeks, in 2018. Interns are a force multiplier, building capacity for our nonprofit partners.

THE NEED

An estimated 40 million Americans live in poverty (12.3 percent of the population), according to a 2018 report issued by the United States Census Bureau.

Higher education in the U.S. is not meeting the demand from students aspiring to consider the moral and social problems associated with poverty. SHECP fills that gap by offering a sustained education to understand the complexities of poverty.

Through classroom study and experiential learning opportunities, these future professionals learn how their work and civic activity will inevitably impinge on poverty. We need your support to sustain and grow our program.

“A knowledgeable and sympathetic graduate pool may be the most important advance to diminish U.S. poverty since the War on Poverty.”

— David Bradley
Executive Director
National Community Action Foundation
THE CONSORTIUM

The Shepherd Higher Education Consortium on Poverty (SHECP) was formally established as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in July 2012; however, it began in 1998 as the “Shepherd Poverty Alliance,” a poverty studies program founded by Washington and Lee University and allied with Berea College and Spelman College. SHECP is currently comprised of:

- Baylor University
- Berea College
- Birmingham-Southern College
- Bucknell University
- Centre College
- College of Wooster
- Elon University
- Furman University
- John Carroll University
- Juniata College
- Manchester University
- Marymount University
- Middlebury College
- Millsaps College
- Niagara University
- Ohio University
- The Cleveland Clinic Lerner College
- University of Arkansas at Little Rock
- University of Lynchburg
- University of Notre Dame
- University of St. Thomas
- University of Vermont
- University of Wisconsin–Madison
- Virginia Military Institute
- Washington and Lee University

LEARNING BY DOING

SHECP seeks to transform the study of poverty in the United States by building a vibrant consortium of colleges and universities that lead the development of undergraduate poverty studies programs and the support of innovative work in poverty-related pedagogy.

The poverty studies curricula begins with gateway coursework at the student’s home institution, followed by community-focused learning opportunities through the SHECP Summer Internship Program.

This eight-week program pairs students with nonprofit organizations that work to strengthen impoverished communities, urban and rural. They focus on a variety of poverty-related areas, including: education, healthcare, legal services, housing, nutrition, social and economic needs, and community building.

Students are matched with agencies that fit their intellectual interests in order to develop professional experience and skills for future civic involvement and employment.

What’s unique about our program is that the internships offer an experiential learning opportunity that encompasses more than work experience, as students live with fellow interns as a cohort within the communities they serve.

Our internship program is bookended by a preparatory opening conference and a closing conference where SHECP interns share what they’ve learned from their experiences. Many continue their studies through capstone projects when they return to their campuses. To date, 1,130 interns have taken part in the program.

OUR VISION: To equip college students to address the problem of poverty, as future professionals and citizens, by expanding and improving opportunities to study the meanings, causes, and consequences of poverty in a wide range of disciplines.