



## Case Study 5

### ■ *A Student-Driven Exhibition Honoring and Inspiring Future Mentors*

**Title:** *The Faces of Mentoring*

**Organizer:** University of Richmond

**Location & Dates:** University of Richmond Downtown, April 5–August 23, 2019

**Total Budget:** \$833.44

**Project Team and Partners:** Nicole Benites Roemer, '21, Bonner Scholar and curator; Casey Murano, '21, and Suraya Souidi, '22, art facilitators; Alexandra Byrum, Bonner Center for Civic Engagement; Virginia Mentoring Partnership (now MentorVA); Higher Achievement; Ladies of Focus; University of Richmond Scholars' Latino Initiative; Youth Life Foundation of Richmond

## The Spark

Nicole Benites Roemer, a Bonner Scholar serving at Virginia Mentoring Partnership, approached the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) staff in hopes of curating an exhibition for their University of Richmond Downtown gallery to celebrate mentors in Richmond and inspire others to become involved. The CCE eagerly agreed.

**“I have mentored and been mentored throughout my college career, and I truly believe it can change someone’s life. I wanted to combine my passion for art and civic engagement in a way that would foster connection within our community, while providing a platform that would inspire others to become engaged as well.”**

Nicole Benites Roemer

## Community Context

The Virginia Mentoring Partnership and other national organizations have published strong data about the need for more mentors and the impact of mentoring on youth. Some of these statistics were included in the exhibition, including

- 1 in 3 children do not have a mentor
- In Virginia, 150,000 young people are in need of positive developmental relationships with caring adults.
- In the City of Richmond, more than 10,000 students still need a mentor.

## Exhibition Purpose

The project team wanted to achieve several things through the exhibition:

- Celebrate the multiple mentoring programs across Richmond
- Deepen relationships between mentors and mentees through collaborative artmaking
- Inspire others to commit to a mentoring

The exhibition also provided the students on the project team with a deep learning experience.

## Project Timeline



## Budget Details

Item	Quantity	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Information Panels, 16" x 20" each	8	\$50.67	\$405.36
Intro Panel	1	\$150.08	\$150.08
4x6 Frames	52	\$78	\$78
Art Supplies			\$200.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$833.44</b>

## Exhibition Content & Design

Nicole Benites Roemer, as well Casey Murano and Suraya Souidi, facilitated art workshops at multiple mentoring programs where participants created **blind contour drawings**. Artists traced the contours of their subject's face without lifting their pen or looking at their paper. Mentors and mentees then reinterpreted these lines and transformed them into **expressions of their mentoring relationship**.

These works of art were hung in the exhibition next to portraits by Nicole Benites Roemer of each mentoring pair.

The exhibition also included introductory panels about each mentoring organization: Virginia Mentoring Partnership (now MentorVA), Higher Achievement, Ladies of Focus, University of Richmond Scholars' Latino Initiative, and Youth Life Foundation of Richmond.

The hallway leading into the exhibition space included panels with statistics about mentoring and candid photographs of the mentoring programs.

Nicole Benites Roemer worked closely with Alexandra Byrum to conceptualize the project, order materials, design the panels and labels, and install the exhibition.



## THE FACES OF MENTORING

Virginia Mentoring Partnership's mission is to partner with youth mentoring programs to help grow their impact, because high quality mentoring transforms lives and strengthens Virginia communities.

From January to March 2019, Virginia Mentoring Partnership collaborated with Richmond program partners Higher Achievement, Ladies of Focus, the University of Richmond Scholars' Latino Initiative, and Youth Life Foundation of Richmond to facilitate art projects with their mentors and mentees. During these workshops, participants created blind contour drawings, a basic skill building exercise where artists trace the contours of their subject's face without lifting their pen or looking at their paper. Through this exercise, mentors and mentees studied each other's faces and created authentic drawings without feeling any pressure to create a "perfect" portrait. Mentors and mentees then reinterpreted these lines and transformed them into expressions of their mentoring relationships.

These are the faces of mentoring.

This exhibition was envisioned and curated by Nicole Benites, '19, a Bonner Scholar who has been interning at Virginia Mentoring Partnership for four years. Casey Murano, '21, and Suraya Souidi, '22, were art facilitators at the workshops.

The exhibition was made possible with support from UR Downtown and the Bonner Center for Civic Engagement.

**Young people with mentors are more likely to achieve academic success.**

- They are:
- **52%** less likely than peers to skip a day of school.
  - **155%** more likely to enroll in college.





## Marketing

In addition to promotion through posters, newsletters, social media, and direct email, marketing included a media release sent by University Communications and an announcement to the Virginia Mentoring Partnership community.

## Impact

- The exhibition raised awareness about mentoring opportunities and needs.
- Mentors and mentees had the opportunity to see their art on the wall of a gallery.
- The exhibition continued to be an inspiring backdrop for many events in the University of Richmond Downtown space during its run, including weekly summer workshops by the Next Move Program.
- MENTOR Virginia's AmeriCorps VISTAs visited the exhibition during their orientation.

## Lessons Learned

Art and exhibitions bring people together and inspire joy and action.

The students also reflected about the high time commitment of exhibition projects. In addition to their time investment in the art workshops, they dedicated time to designing panels, labels, and promotional materials, as well as the exhibition installation.

