

Values exploration begins with BGeXperience

Now in its third year, BGeXperience is an academic program designed to increase BGSU student success by offering enriched academic, social and service opportunities. First-year students come to campus in August for a three-day introduction before fall semester classes begin. In interactive sessions students get to know faculty, upperclass students and other first-year students. They discuss a common reading, begin to learn vocabulary and concepts related to critical thinking about values and participate in a service learning project.

All this helps to prepare them for a first semester general education course, taught by their BGeXperience faculty member, that incorporates critical thinking about values within the course content, whether the course is biology, political science or popular culture. The goal is to make learning relevant and to provide students with opportunities to reflect on course content as it applies to decision making in everyday life. Students consider what they are about and how this differs from what other students may value. The BGeXperience thus helps students become active citizens and leaders in a diverse society.

Dr. Don McQuarie of American Culture Studies was selected to teach a course about cultural pluralism. "I've never seen students feel so comfortable in a classroom," McQuarie says. "They have a level of comfort and trust you normally don't see with first-year students."

The classroom experience during the pre-semester introduction also includes upperclass student leaders acting as facilitators and discussion builders. Senior Alex Frondorf assisted Dr. Carney Strange's philosophy class and enjoyed his experience with the program. "It was exciting to try to infuse values into the classroom and help show students that values are the underlying current in our everyday lives," Frondorf said.

Participants and their instructors are afforded another opportunity for growth through a service learning project. Jill Carr, a facilitator from the Office of Student Life, says, "Service learning was my favorite part because it gave students the opportunity to reach out to communities in ways they never experienced before."

BGeXperience offers additional service learning opportunities in the second semester and second year and encourages students to participate in a junior year experience as well as a senior capstone course in their major. This fall 1800 first-year students will be involved in BGeXperience; in fall 2005 the goal is to have all first-year students participate.

With the intensive, thought-provoking opportunities provided by BGeXperience, students build a foundation for further growth during their four years at BGSU and beyond. Or as McQuarie expressed it, “if these students are touched just a little by this program and their college experience is more profound because of it, then we have done our jobs.”

- *Terri Carroll '88*
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