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New courses to be added for BGX

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Dance Marathon grows every year and quickly has become woven into the University's college experience. The event has grown so big a class has been created for students to study it.

Students participating in the BGeXperience will have the opportunity to take a pilot course that explores the innerworkings of philanthropy.

The class is one of six new courses that will focus on service to the community as part of a new campus initiative. The classes, however, are only open to second semester students in BGX. Only two of the six classes fulfill general education requirements. Seats in the classes will be limited because they are pilot courses and BGX wants good teacher-student interaction.

"Our ultimate goal is to have this kind of service learning integrated into all four years of the BGeXperience," said Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Donald Nieman.

Nieman also hopes that eventually all new students will be involved in the BGeXperience.

In the course-Philanthropy, Society and the BGSU Dance Marathon-students will do traditional assignments such as writing essays and class discussions but they will also do hands-on learning. While students will not actually receive credit for volunteering at Dance Marathon, they may be required to attend meetings, Nieman said.

"They will learn particularly about the end users of the philanthropy. They will meet with the doctors and the people who use the money raised," Nieman said "This will provide them real world context for philanthropy and a broader understanding of the importance of it." The two three-credit courses being offered to BGX students are already existing courses with a service component added.

Introduction to American Government will include hands- on learning of the political system.

"I think what the professor has in mind is some work with the League of Women Voters," Nieman said. "By doing this they [students] will help the organization and they will learn first hand how politics work."

The Office of Service Learning Initiatives was instrumental in the development of the new classes and has been fielding concerns. Some think that the Dance Marathon class is unfair to students already involved on campus.

"The initial confusion is the people who are already involved won't get credit," said Jane Rosser, special projects manager. Student leaders in groups such as the Latino Student Union do not think the classes will get the intended end product.

"I don't think it is a good idea," Jeannine Ware, LSU vice president said. "Students will just take it for an easy grade. Students should actually do community service to do it and not for a grade." The organizers of Dance Marathon disagree.

"I think it is an excellent idea for a class," Jennifer Page, Dance Marathon director, said. "It will raise awareness and could lead to greater involvement in the future."

If successful, these classes may become available to students not in the BGeXperience and the University may develop

additional classes, Rosser said.

"They could be a model for a broader philanthropy in society class, where students will think of sociological issues like, 'should hospitals and families' be so dependent on charities'." she said. Whether the courses will succeed in increasing community involvement among students is yet to be determined, but certainly seats in the classes will fly like hotcakes.

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