

**BGX Orientation - August 2002**  
**Evaluation Results**  
*(Preliminary Report)*

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One hundred twenty-five (125) incoming Bowling Green State University (BGSU) freshman elected to participate in the Bowling Green Experience (BGX), a novel initiative being implemented by BGSU to teach students how to recognize values and value conflicts and expand their understanding of why this is an important aspect of the learning process. The BGX students arrived on campus three days prior to the beginning of the fall semester to engage in an intense orientation to the program. On the final day of the program, the students were given a survey, consisting of both qualitative and quantitative questions, to assess their reactions to the three-day event. Of the 125 of students participating in BGX program, 105 completed orientation surveys. The results of the survey are described below. (See Appendix A for full survey)

The beginning of the survey consisted of an open-ended sentence completion question, which provided space for three answers to the following sentence stem: **As a result of my involvement in the BGX Orientation, I...** The students were asked to explain how the BGX Orientation most influenced them and were instructed to consider the impact on their beliefs, values, attitudes, feelings, behaviors, and interpersonal relationship when answering the question.

Responses to this sentence completion item were quite diverse, but several kinds of themes were quite common. By far the most frequent theme was “Got to meet new friends.” About 60 percent of students mentioned this in some manner. The next three most common themes were “enjoyed bonus of moving in early” (22%), “chance to discover my own values,” (17%), and “openness to different perspectives and values (17%). Many participants (40%) made other diverse comments that included some reference to values, such as “realized impact of other’s values,” “feel a need for a values initiative critical thinking program in highs schools,” and “take my values seriously.” In addition, 13% mentioned benefits relating to their service activity.

Thus, the facet of the program that appeared most vivid for these students was the opportunity to make new friends before school started. Also, it's very clear that many were mindful of the concept of values but expressed it in diverse themes.

The next section of the survey consisted of 12 statements regarding the influence different aspects of the BGX Orientation had on the students. Each statement was followed by a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) "not at all" to (6) "to a great extent." Following the rating scale, students were given the opportunity to explain their rating in their own words.

The data were analyzed by first examining the responses and then making a subjective decision regarding how favorable the students responded to each statement. This favorability rating was determined by considering the numerical rating given for the item in conjunction with the follow-up responses to the paired open-ended question. Overall favorability for each item (and for each student) was given a rating of, "extremely positive," "somewhat positive," or "not positive." These ratings were then tallied across all participants to determine the overall distribution of ratings for each item. Next, responses to the follow-up questions were examined for emergent themes, which were then tallied to determine frequency. These frequencies were then converted to percentages of all students evaluated who responded with that theme. The range of responses to the various themes was quite large, the overall means varying from a high of 5.24 to a low of 3.30. Item results and discussion are presented in descending order of response favorability (See Table 1), and also include the range of means across the five classes.

**My group leaders were effective.** (Item 3;  $X = 5.24$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ; Class range = 5.04 – 5.45)

Both the ratings and the follow-up responses revealed a high level of satisfaction by the students with their group leaders, with little variability among classes. The mean rating of 5.24 was the highest mean on the survey. Similarly, the follow-up questions revealed that 91% of the students were very satisfied with the leaders, 7% were fairly satisfied, and only 2% were dissatisfied. Regarding the specific strengths of the leaders noted by the students, "explaining things well" (19%) and "facilitating discussion well" (18%) were the most common themes. Other recurrent themes referring to the leaders included, "knowledgeable" (10%), "generally helpful" (10%), "kept student interest/effective" (9%), "fun" (7%), and "helped students think" (6%). Thus, the results suggest that the BGX students were considerably pleased with the quality

of their group leaders, with particular appreciation for their ability to explain things and facilitate discussions well.

**The relationship that I developed with other students in my group was beneficial.** (Item 4;  $X = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ; Class range = 4.91 – 5.22)

This statement had the second highest mean, and the positive reaction was further supported by responses to the follow-up question. The variability in ratings among classes was small. Most students (84%) stated that these relationships were very beneficial, and 15% felt they were fairly beneficial. More specifically, many students reported that it was “nice to meet people/make friends” (37%). Students also felt that it was helpful to “already know people in class and around campus” (17%). Other popular themes included, “students being friendly” (9%), “making the transition to college easier” (8%), “getting to know others’ values” (7%), and “a chance to meet people on [their] floor/in their dorm” (7%). Therefore, results suggest that the development of peer relationships was an overall very positive aspect of the orientation. Students were particularly pleased with the opportunity to meet new people and establish friendships, in part so that they had the benefit of knowing people around campus when classes began.

**I was an active participant in my group.** (Item 1;  $X = 4.41$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ; Class range = 4.09 – 4.74)

On average, students saw themselves as being quite active with regard to level of participation, and little variability existed among the ratings for individual classes. Approximately half of the students (49%) indicated that they had participated a great deal, and almost half felt that they participated a fair amount (42%). Themes were not coded for the follow-up questions because these responses added no additional information.

**Involvement in the BGX Orientation has facilitated my understanding of what will be expected of me as a student at BGSU.** (Item 2;  $X = 4.38$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ; Class Range = 4.08 – 4.64)

The mean rating of 4.38 suggests that on average, students saw themselves as gaining an understanding of BGSU’s expectations during the orientation, with moderate variability among the individual class ratings. More than half of the students (57%) felt strongly that they had a

clear understanding, 27% felt they had a fair understanding, and 12% did not feel they had gained an understanding of the expectations of BGSU. The rest of the students' answers (4%) were irrelevant to the question. With regard to what the students felt the program prepared them for specifically, the most popular themes were "campus conduct and rules" (17%) and "values" (11%). Other somewhat common themes included, "I already know what's expected of me" (8%), "class discussions/what classes will be like" (7%), and "general campus life" (7%). Thus, students felt the orientation successfully prepared them for BGSU's expectations, with particular emphases on campus conduct and rules, and values.

**Involvement with BGX Orientation has helped me to critically reflect on values and value conflicts.** (Item 6;  $X = 4.27$ ;  $SD = 1.31$ ; Class range = 3.91 – 4.73)

Responses to this item suggest that on average, students felt that their involvement assisted them with critically thinking about values and value conflicts. The mean for this item, however, revealed notable variability regarding the extent to which the students felt each class accomplished this goal. Specifically, the Popular Culture and American Cultural Studies classes received lower ratings ( $X = 3.91$ ;  $SD = 1.43$ ;  $X = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ , respectively), in comparison to the Biology and Philosophy classes ( $X = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ;  $X = 4.7$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ , respectively). The majority of all participants felt that their involvement greatly helped them critically reflect on values (57%), 29% felt the orientation helped somewhat, and 14% did not feel the program was helpful. Specifically, the most popular themes were that the program "helped [them] think about and/or confirm personal values" (22%), and "helped [them] learn about the values of others" (10%). Some students felt they "already knew [their] values" (7%), whereas others stated that the program "helped [them] question [their] values" (7%). Therefore, the BGX students overall reported that the orientation helped them critically examine values and value conflicts, with specific foci on both their own, as well as others' values.

**The service learning experience was beneficial.** (Item 10;  $X = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ; Class range = 3.56 – 4.87)

The mean for this item was above the midpoint, but again, there was marked variability among the classes. For example, the Popular Culture class had the lowest mean ( $X = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ), whereas the Business Administration and American Cultural Studies classes had the

highest ( $X = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ;  $X = 4.48$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ , respectively). Almost three-fourths of the students felt that the service learning activity was greatly beneficial (70%), a few felt it was fairly helpful (24%), and several felt it was not helpful (6%). The main reason given for why the experience was beneficial was, “a sense of feeling good, enjoying the experience, and having fun” (22%). Thus, the service learning experience appeared to be a positive aspect of the orientation, although it was clearly more positive for some classes than for others.

**Involvement with my orientation group helped me feel comfortable discussing issues that were important to me.** (Item 5;  $X = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ; Class range = 4.00 – 4.73)

The mean for this item suggests that students felt generally comfortable discussing issues within their groups. Some variability existed among the classes, with the American Cultural Studies and Popular Culture classes receiving lower ratings ( $X = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ;  $X = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.54$ , respectively), in comparison with the Biology class on the high end ( $X = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ). The follow-up responses revealed that 56% of the students felt strongly that the group helped them feel comfortable in discussions. The remainder of the students felt fairly strongly (29%) that the groups were helpful in this regard, and 15% did not feel this aspect as being helpful. With regard to specific themes, some students reported that the issues discussed were not important to them (12%), whereas others mentioned that the issues were important (5%). Several felt that the smaller groups were helpful (7%). Thus, the students responded that they felt generally comfortable in the group discussions, but there was some discrepancy as to whether they felt the issues discussed were of importance to them, as well as some variability among the classes.

**I expect the BGX Orientation experience to influence my future actions as a student at BGSU.** (Item 9;  $X = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ; Class range = 3.5 – 4.6)

The mean for this item was slightly above the midpoint, and the class ratings were considerably varied. Specifically, the American Cultural Studies class had the lowest mean of 3.5 ( $SD = 1.43$ ), whereas the rest of the classes had means above 4.0, with the Biology and Business Administration classes having the highest means ( $X = 4.6$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ;  $X = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ , respectively). The follow-up question to this item provided little information, as most students gave a vague repetition of something they had learned, rather than reference to future action

(66%). Thus, although most of the students responded that the orientation experience would influence their future actions, they were unable to give specific examples of how it might do this, and the amount of perceived influence was largely dependent on the class in which the student participated.

**Participating in the service learning experience increased my desire to engage in further community service work.** (Item 12;  $X = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 1.49$ ; Class range = 3.63 – 4.91)

The mean for this item was above the midpoint, but the means among the classes varied greatly. The lowest means were in the Popular Culture and Philosophy classes ( $X = 3.63$ ;  $SD = 1.62$ ;  $X = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ , respectively), while the highest mean was in the Biology class ( $X = 4.91$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ). The follow-up questions revealed that 41% of the students answered that they would participate, 21% answered that they would not, 12% stated that they might participate, and the rest were undeterminable. Many of the “no” responses were accompanied by comments such as, “I was already committed to community service/already involved in community service,” which was the basis for most of the “no” responses. A few of the “no” responses were associated with negative comments about their BGX service experience. Thus, the overall mean for this item suggests a fairly strong desire by the BGX students to engage in further community service work. However, the mean appears to be elevated due to a high mean in one of the classes. Three of the five class means fell below 4.0, suggesting only a mild desire to continue participating in community service work.

**The BGX Orientation experience has clarified my thinking about my own values.** (Item 8;  $X = 3.98$ ;  $SD = 1.39$ ; Class range = 3.35 – 4.64)

Overall, the students reported that the orientation helped with the clarification of their own values; however, there was marked variability among the classes on this item. Specifically, the American Cultural Studies, Philosophy, and Popular Culture classes had the lowest ratings ( $X = 3.35$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ;  $X = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ;  $X = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ , respectively) and the Biology and Business Administration classes had the highest ratings ( $X = 4.64$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ;  $X = 4.52$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ , respectively). Regarding the follow-up questions, 42% of the students felt the orientation clarified their values a great deal, 38% reported that their values were fairly clarified, and 20% did not feel that the program had this impact on them. The most common theme from the

students was that they “already had good values and/or [their] values had stayed the same” (28%). The next most frequent theme, however, was that the experience had encouraged them to “reexamine their value and/or think about them” (25%). Some students said that it helped them “strengthen [their] existing values” (6%), or encouraged them to “look at things and/or think differently” (10%). Overall, the students felt that the orientation helped at some level in clarifying their thinking about their values, but a sizeable portion reported that they already possessed good values. These results also varied according to which class the student was in.

**Participation in the service learning experience increased my desire to participate in a course with a service learning component.** (Item 11;  $X = 3.81$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ; Class range = 3.44 – 4.59)

The mean for this item was 3.81 ( $SD = 1.48$ ), close to the midpoint, but there was large variability among class means. Specifically, the lowest mean was 3.44 ( $SD = 1.65$ ) in the Popular Culture class, which is in the direction suggesting limited enthusiasm in participating in a service learning course. On the other extreme, the Biology class mean score of 4.59 ( $SD = 1.11$ ) indicated a very positive reaction to a course incorporating service learning. The means for the remainder of the classes were quite uniform, but not very high, ranging from 3.71 ( $SD = 1.59$ ) to 3.95 ( $SD = 1.40$ ). Many of the students did not respond to the follow-up question (20%). The next most common response was a flat “yes,” with no additional information (12%), followed by a flat “no,” with some additional information given (9%). No other recurrent themes emerged. In sum, the overall mean for this item is relatively low, and one class received a considerably higher rating that elevated the overall mean. Thus, aside from students in the one class, the participants did not appear overly excited about the possibility of taking a course in service learning.

**Reading and Discussing *Hope in the Unseen* influenced my beliefs and values.** (Item 7;  $X = 3.30$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ; Class range = 2.95 – 3.73)

This item produced the lowest overall mean on the survey, and none of the mean ratings were very high relative to ratings of other items, although there was moderate variability among classes. Regarding the follow-up responses, 25% of the students felt that reading the book and discussing it were influential, 41% reported that this was only somewhat influential, and 31% did

not feel that this was helpful at all. More specifically, 19% of the students felt that their beliefs were not influenced because their beliefs were already set. A fair number of students felt the book was helpful to become familiar with people different from themselves (12%), but other students did not enjoy the book because they felt they could not relate to the characters in it (11%). Other students felt the book “helped [them] think about/understand [their] personal values” (8%). Thus, students in general did not feel that the book was especially influential, many attributing this response to their belief that their values were already set prior to reading and discussing it.

**My overall reaction to the BGX Orientation has been...** (Item 13;  $X = 1.45$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ; Class range = 1.21 – 2)

Unlike the scale used for the previous statements, the final rating item was a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from -3 (very negative) to +3 (very positive), with 0 being the midpoint, and there was not a qualitative portion to this item. The overall mean score for this item was well above the 0 midpoint. The highest means were 2.00 ( $SD$ , 1.10; Biology class) and 1.64 ( $SD = 1.51$ ; Philosophy class) and the lowest were 1.21 ( $SD = 1.13$ ; Popular Culture), and 1.25 ( $SD = 1.34$ ; Business Administration). Thus, overall reaction to the BGX Orientation experience was quite positive, and the final rating is quite consistent with the ratings on the more specific scales.

The final section of the survey asked students about their general reactions to the orientation and did not include a rating scale.

**What did you like the best about the BGX Orientation? Why?** (Item 14)

The most frequent themes to this question were “moving in early” (39%), and “meeting new people” (48%), and these themes were often conjoined. Other themes included “service learning/volunteer work” (10%), “opportunity to get adjusted” (9%), “Playfair games” (9%), and “small group discussions” (7%). Thus, the major benefits the students felt to the orientation were moving into the dorms and meeting new people before the rest of the BGSU students arrived.

**What did you like least about the BGX Orientation? Why?** (Item 15)

The most common themes were “long hours” (17%), “little free time” (17%), and “getting up early” (10%). Other themes included, “Playfair” (7%), “Not knowing what the program was about prior to getting the BGSU” (5%), and “sitting in on the president’s address” (6%). In sum, the students biggest complaints were being scheduled to start too early, ending too late, and having too few, and too short breaks.

**What steps do you think would have been most helpful in improving the BGX Orientation experience? Why?** (Item 16)

The main theme in these responses was in regard to over-scheduling. Specifically, the most common response was “more breaks and free time” (27%), or “don’t over-schedule” (7%). Other themes were in regard to the organization of the program, including “being more organized from the start and explaining the program more thoroughly to the students” (11%). Finally, many students provided no suggestions for improving the program (12%). Therefore, the students’ main suggestion for future BGX Orientation is to make the schedule less rigid, with more breaks and free time.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, participants generally responded in a positive manner to the BGX experience. They were especially positive in their response to the group leaders and in their reactions to developing relationships with other students. They were least enthusiastic in describing the impact of *Hope in the Unseen* on their beliefs and values, and describing the impact of the service learning experience on their desire to take a course including such an experience. In responding to open-ended questions about the influence of the program, they most frequently emphasized the benefits of meeting new friends, being able to move in to the dorms early, discovering personal values, and becoming open to diverse perspectives.

**Table 1. Overall Means and Standard Deviations- Highest to Lowest**

<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Item</b>
5.24	0.79	3. My group leaders were effective.
5.13	0.93	4. The relationship that I developed with other students in my group was beneficial.
4.41	1.07	1. I was an active participant in my group.
4.38	1.08	2. Involvement in the BGX Orientation has facilitated my understanding of what will be expected of me as a student at BGSU.
4.27	1.31	6. Involvement with BGX Orientation has helped me to critically reflect on values and value conflicts.
4.23	1.52	10. The service learning experience was beneficial.
4.22	1.31	5. Involvement with my orientation group helped me feel comfortable discussing issues that were important to me.
4.09	1.32	9. I expect the BGX Orientation experience to influence my future actions as a student at BGSU.
4.01	1.49	12. Participating in the service learning experience increased my desire to engage in further community service work.
3.98	1.39	8. The BGX Orientation experience has clarified my thinking about my own values.
3.81	1.48	11. Participation in the service learning experience increased my desire to participate in a course with a service learning component.
3.30	1.37	7. Reading and discussing <i>Hope in the Unseen</i> influenced my beliefs and values.

Appendix A  
**BGX Orientation Questionnaire**

**General Information:**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sex (Circle One):** M F

**Size of high school graduating class (Approximate):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Group Facilitators:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Part 1: Sentence completion**

We are interested in your response to the following question: In what three ways do you believe the BGX Orientation has *most* influenced you? Please reflect on that question and then answer it below by completing the sentences. You will want to consider possible influences in multiple facets of your life, including beliefs, values, attitudes, feelings, behaviors, and interpersonal relationships.

1. As a result of my involvement in the BGX Orientation, I \_\_\_\_\_

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2. As a result of my involvement in the BGX Orientation, I \_\_\_\_\_

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3. As a result of my involvement in the BGX Orientation, I \_\_\_\_\_

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**Part 2. Rating the influence of the BGX Orientation**

1. I was an active participant in my group.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

2. Involvement in the BGX Orientation has facilitated my understanding of what will be expected of me as a student at BGSU.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

3. My group leaders were effective.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

4. The relationship that I developed with other students in my group was beneficial.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain:

5. Involvement with my orientation group helped me feel comfortable discussing issues that were important to me.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

6. Involvement with BGX Orientation has helped me to critically reflect on values and value conflicts.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain:

7. Reading and discussing *Hope in the Unseen* influenced my beliefs and values.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

8. The BGX Orientation experience has clarified my thinking about my own values.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

9. I expect the BGX Orientation experience to influence my future actions as a student at BGSU.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

10. The service learning experience was beneficial.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

11. Participation in the service learning experience increased my desire to participate in a course with a service learning component.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

12. Participating in the service learning experience increased my desire to engage in further community service work.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Not at all					To a Great Extent

Explain your rating:

13. My overall reaction to the BGX Orientation has been:

-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
Very Negative			Neither Positive nor Negative	Very Positive		

**Part 3. General Reactions**

14. What did you like best about the BGX Orientation? Why?

15. What did you like least about the BGX Orientation? Why?

16. What steps do you think would have been most helpful in improving the BGX Orientation experience? Why?