

The BGeXperience (BGeX) program, a Bowling Green State University initiative designed to promote critical thinking about values, began its fourth year with the BGeX Introduction in August 2005. Approximately 3,600 incoming freshmen participated in the three-day Introduction, held the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday before classes officially began. During the Introduction, students interacted with the professor who would be teaching their BGeX course that semester as well as their new classmates (approximately 25 of them) and a peer facilitator. Students attended six mandatory sessions, each 1 ½ to 2 hours long, at which they explored values and decision-making, discussed a common reading (*The Kite Runner*), and learned about college life and class expectations.

In the session with their peer facilitator (one of their last two sessions—Saturday or Sunday afternoon), BGeX students were given a questionnaire and asked to complete it during that time. Peer facilitators returned surveys to the BGeX office; data was analyzed with Excel and SPSS. 2820 students (78%) completed the survey. Those who did not are likely band members, athletic team members, and students who decided not to attend that particular Introduction session.

Questionnaires included ten closed-ended, Likert-scale statements and seven open-ended questions. Students were to indicate if they were male or female; 43.8% were male (with 108 students, less than 4%, not indicating their sex).

Closed-Ended Statements

Statements 1-9 were answered using a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, or 5=Strongly Agree). Statement 10 had a slightly different 5-point scale (1=Very Positive, 2=Positive, 3=Neutral, 4=Negative, 5=Very Negative). A corresponding graph for each statement is included in addition to Table 1 on the following page. Only a few students (3-10) omitted a response for a particular question.

Table 1. Influence of BGeX Introduction.

	Mean	Median	Mode	St. Dev.
1: I was an active participant in my group.	2.26	2	2	.859
2: Involvement in the BGeX Introduction has facilitated my understanding of what will be expected of me as a student at BGSU.	2.30	2	2	.813
3: My group leaders were effective.	1.58	2	1	.633
4: The relationship that I developed with other students in my group was beneficial.	2.04	2	2	.827
5: Involvement with my orientation group helped me feel comfortable discussing issues that were important to me.	2.39	2	2	.855
6: Involvement with BGeX Introduction has helped me to critically reflect on values and value conflicts.	2.63	3	3	.958
7: Reading and discussing <i>The Kite Runner</i> influenced my values and beliefs.	2.95	3	3	1.074
8: The BGeX Introduction experience has clarified my thinking about my own values.	2.78	3	3	.959
9: I expect the BGeX Introduction experience to influence my future actions as a student at BGSU.	2.77	3	3	.989
10: My overall experience with the BGeX Introduction has been...	2.19	2	2	.777

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Looking at Table 1 and the graphs for each of the statements, we can see that overall, most students had at least a neutral—and often positive—overall experience with the BGeX Introduction (Statement 10) and with creating new relationships (Statement 4). And even more strongly, they believe their group leaders were effective (Statement 3).

Student responses are more variable in regards to values component in the Introduction (Statements 6-9). There is quite a range of responses on whether students critically reflected on values and values conflicts, whether students found that *The Kite Runner* influenced their values, whether the experience brought clarification in thinking about their own values, and whether the experience will influence the students' actions in the future.

Open-Ended Questions

Students responded to 3 sentence completion prompts in regards to how the BGeX Introduction most influenced them. In the last 4 questions, students provided general comments, what they liked best about the Introduction, what they liked least about the Introduction, and what would improve next year's Introduction.

Sentence completion (“As a result of my involvement in the BGeX Introduction, I...”): In total, 6,669 responses were given. The top five responses included: met new people (17.0%); felt more comfortable with campus, the city of Bowling Green, and/or my surroundings (14.8%); evaluated or became more conscious of my values (14.2%); learned about the classroom environment, expectations, and how to be a better student (14.0%); made new friends (7.0%).

General comments: In total, 1263 responses were provided. The top five responses included: I enjoyed learning from my peer facilitator about college life (10.2%); I already know my values or my values will not change in 3 days (8.9%); the Introduction was helpful overall (8.9%); my professor was great—excited, sensitive, and/or enthusiastic (5.8%); I really enjoyed the common reading book and/or book discussion (4.8%).

Liked best: In total, 3702 responses were given. The top five responses included: I met new people (25.0%); I got a feel for classroom environment and expectations (17.6%); I met one of my professors (9.6%); I found the smaller group discussions and activities enjoyable (7.3%); I felt more comfortable on campus, in the city, and/or in my surroundings (7.2%).

Liked least: In total, 3413 students responses were collected. The top five responses included: the length of the entire Introduction and/or that it was held on a weekend (16.6%); the spread of individual sessions was inconvenient (14.6%); the length of sessions themselves was too long (7.2%); the sessions were boring or pointless at times (7.9%); Introduction was repetitive—with both orientation and within sessions themselves (6.2%).

Improvements for next year: In total, 3175 responses were given. The top five responses included: Shorten the length of the Introduction (19.6%); make the Introduction more interactive—less lecture, more small groups, get out of the classroom at times, etc. (14.9%); make sessions less spread out (8.3%); decrease the length of sessions (7.0%); and give more free time for settling into room and campus (6.0%).

Other recommendations/improvements (percentage of responses):

- Make BGeX Introduction optional or do not have it at all (4.8%).
- Choose a better book—different topic, shorter length, and/or movie instead (3.7%).
- Decrease emphasis on values and add clarity to values discussions (2.8%).
- Decrease repetition of orientation and values material from other Introduction sessions (2.6%).
- Help/let us get to know more people outside of our BGeX courses—and outside of Kohl, Honors, etc. (2.4%).
- Make the Introduction less boring (1.7%).
- Make Introduction more compact and sessions not as early—I'm so tired! (1.7%).
- Give optional campus tours or help students learn their way around campus somehow (1.5%).

- Have more discussion/assignments on the common reading book if we have to go through the trouble of reading it! (1.4%).
- Ensure all BGeX classrooms have A/C—it was too hot to concentrate (1.4%).
- Be more considerate of time commitments for those in Kohl, Honors, band, athletics, etc. (1.4%).
- Provide more time for discussion and information on college life, activities, other topics, etc. (1.3%).
- Provide opportunities to meet our other professors and classmates (.8%).
- Give more details about BGeX Introduction and common reading in advance (.8%).
- Have more in-depth discussions and more class involvement with them (.7%).
- Have more optional evening and break activities (.8%).
- Provide free food and snacks (.6%).
- Organize registration better (.6%).
- Improve the movies (.6%).
- Do not try to teach us values—we already know them (.4%).
- Include more icebreakers (.4%).
- Do not have it feel so much like high school (.4%).
- Fix difficulties with getting food at Union (.3%).
- Provide session material more fitting for me—I'm a commuter, PSEOP student, from BG, etc. (.3%).
- Tell us more about expectations of us as a student (.3%).

Comments not mentioned by many but still important:

- Numerous transfer and older students were included in the Introduction but felt they shouldn't have been.

- Some felt uncomfortable getting into such serious discussion so quickly and/or not knowing anyone in their class.
- Some recognize and stated that the program is what you make of it.
- Some felt overwhelmed or discouraged academically or socially after the Introduction experience.
- A few rooms were too small or too large (lecture halls) and thus not conducive to learning.
- More smaller shirts need to be provided (some girls felt very self-conscious in the big shirts).
- Several students commented on nuisances because of other parts of university/programs (honors section of 40 students, OLs unfriendly, need A/C in the dorms, etc.).
- High quality community speakers went over well.
- A few classrooms were too cold for concentration.
- The workbook could be better.
- A few professors seemed to get off topic or not know what they were doing.
- Forced/awkward discussions were disliked.
- Students did not like professors who “started class” early—with an essay on the book, a test, etc.
- Facilitator is a pompous word, according to a few students.
- Some students had other important commitments to attend (including work).
- Some noted learning a lot even though they were not active members of the group.
- Some felt that all of the important Introduction material could have been done during regular class.
- Some felt *The Kite Runner* was good but they did not learn anything about values from it.
- Some felt there was too much free time and not enough optional activities (homesick).

- A few commented on really enjoying the class itself because of its subject (psychology, theatre).
- A few did not like how structured the program felt (within the schedule and within the classwork).
- Some made points about not liking the punishments (\$75 fine, lower grades, etc.) for not attending sessions. Some wished for more rewards for attendance, book reading, etc.
- A few mentioned that the professor seemed out of his/her comfort zone with the common book.
- Some felt that the program is not beneficial in the intended ways, and they felt like they were being recruited.
- Some would like more time with the peer facilitator alone and/or a second peer facilitator.
- Get student input for planning next year.
- Give more handouts about campus and more in-depth information.
- Faculty should be nonjudgemental.
- Provide better scenarios (more real).
- Do not use a book that is so negative or has such gruesome scenes (rape).
- Bring groups together for community speaker.
- Have an online registration for BGeX?
- Some feel there is too much walking given the spread of sessions.
- Make classes even smaller yet (and not 30 people either).
- Have a different “common experience”.
- Eat lunch with our group.
- Tour the city.
- Make part mandatory and part optional.

Appendix A

BGeX Introduction Student Questionnaire

General Information:

Sex (circle): A = Male B = Female

Part 1. Rating the influence of the BGeXperience Introduction

Please write the letter at the end of each question that best describes your answer. Please use the scales provided to response to each question.

A = Strongly Agree B = Agree C = Neutral D = Disagree E = Strongly Disagree

1. I was an active participant in my group.
2. Involvement in the BGeX Introduction has facilitated my understanding of what will be expected of me as a student at BGSU.
3. My group leaders were effective.
4. The relationship that I developed with other students in my group was beneficial.
5. Involvement with my orientation group helped me feel comfortable discussing issues that were important to me.
6. Involvement with BGeX Introduction has helped me to critically reflect on values and value conflicts.
7. Reading and discussing *The Kite Runner* influenced my beliefs and values.
8. The BGeX Introduction experience has clarified my thinking about my own values.
9. I expect the BGeX Introduction experience to influence my future actions as a student at BGSU.

Use the following scale for question 10:

A = Very Positive B = Positive C = Neutral D = Negative E = Very Negative

10. My overall experience with the BGeX Introduction has been _____.

Part 2. Sentence completion

We are interested in your response to the following question: In what three ways do you believe the BGeX Introduction 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 our life, including beliefs, values, attitudes, feelings, behaviors, and interpersonal relationships.

11. As a result of my involvement in the BGeX Introduction, I _____.
12. As a result of my involvement in the BGeX Introduction, I _____.
13. As a result of my involvement in the BGeX Introduction, I _____.

Part 3. General reactions and comments

14. General comments: Please relay any comments you may have regarding questions 1-10 in the space provided. Please note which questions you are commenting on if applicable.

15. What did you like best about the BGeX Introduction? Why?

16. What did you like least about the BGeX Introduction? Why?

17. What would improve the BGeX Introduction experience for students next year? Why?