

BU Good Work Initiative: Marking Undergraduates' Path to Success as Students, Persons, and Citizens

Mary Katherine Duncan and Jennifer Adrienne Johnson

In this paper, we describe the development, implementation, and assessment of a Summer Assignment and series of Freshman Orientation workshops based on the GoodWork™ model (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001). Informed by previous programming (Johnson & Duncan, 2013) and in collaboration with the Offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, we expanded this first-year experience to include discussions about what it means to do good not only as students but also as persons and citizens. First-year undergraduates completed a Summer Assignment requiring them to reflect on their roles as students, persons, and citizens. During a series of three freshman orientation workshops, first-year undergraduates inventoried their basic responsibilities related to each role and considered what it means to do good work as students, persons, and citizens. First-year undergraduates also previewed a website designed to link them to on-campus resources aimed at helping them meet their basic responsibilities and pursue good work in their various roles. Program assessment data showed their high level of satisfaction with the workshops and the perceived value of participating in the workshops.

Mary Katherine Duncan (mduncan@bloomu.edu) is a Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.

Jennifer A. Johnson is an Associate Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology at Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania.

Authors' Note

The authors would like to thank Dr. Howard Gardner and his colleagues at Project Zero (Harvard Graduate School of Education) for their consultation and support. Additionally, they also wish to thank Dione Somerville (Office of Student Affairs) and Jonathan Lincoln (Office of Academic Affairs) for calling the BU Good Work Initiative project leaders to the table in service of the Class of 2017, Thomas Kresch and Jason Jeremiah (Office of Residence Life) for helping with the design and construction of the University's good work website, Kristin Austin (Coordination for New Student Orientation and Assistant Director of Admissions), and the Orientation Workshop Leaders (OWLs) who facilitated the small group discussions during Freshman Orientation.

According to Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001), good workers are professionals who demonstrate excellent, ethical, and engaged work—the three *Es*—in their domains. The Bloomsburg University (BU) GoodWork Initiative launched in the fall of 2011 with the mission of strengthening undergraduates' understanding of the concept of good work, catalyzing their pursuit of good work, and providing resources to help sustain their commitment to doing good work over the course of their academic and professional development. During the first embedding of GoodWork-inspired programming into freshman orientation (Johnson & Duncan, 2013), we focused on what it means to do academic good work in the culture of higher education. Feedback from incoming first-year undergraduates suggested that they found value in learning about the three *Es* of academic good work, reflecting upon the academic expectations of higher education, being motivated to take on their first year of undergraduate study, and becoming more aware of campus-based academic resources. As we prepared the second year of GoodWork-inspired freshman orientation workshops, we wondered if the GoodWork model would serve as an equally useful compass for helping students navigate through the demands of higher education outside of the classroom in their roles as persons and citizens.

During the summer of 2013, the BU GoodWork Initiative linked the expertise and resources of the Offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs in an effort to provide an integrative and transformative educational experience for first-year undergraduates. First-year undergraduates reflected on their prospective roles as students, persons, and citizens of the university and town through a required summer assignment. Upon arriving on campus, first-year undergraduates participated in three freshman orientation workshops led by undergraduate near-peers (Orientation Workshop Leaders, or OWLs). During small group discussions, OWLs guided first-year undergraduates through a workbook and corresponding website designed to encourage them to reflect on their ability to meet basic responsibilities and pursue good work in each role.

Method

Summer Assignment

Ninety-eight percent of incoming undergraduates ($n = 2154$, 60% female, 22% first-generation) completed the assignment. In addition to completing questionnaires about their high school experiences and their perceived preparedness for undergraduate responsibilities (see Faculty/Staff Resources tab at goodwork.bloomu.edu), incoming undergraduates watched two BU commencement videos. The videos were intended to encourage students to reflect on the legacy that they hoped to leave upon graduating from BU. After watching the videos, students wrote three short answer responses to the following questions: What do you hope to achieve at BU? What will help you reach your achievements? What challenges will you face? Students answered each of these questions

concerning each role: student, person, and citizen. In other words, students wrote nine short answers.

Freshman Orientation

The freshman orientation program was designed to provide a forum during which incoming first-year undergraduates could reflect upon basic responsibilities and the pursuit of good work in their roles as students, persons, and citizens. Approximately 1500 students participated in three 1-hour sessions, each dedicated to one of the three roles. The sessions occurred 3 days before the start of classes and were led by trained undergraduate student leaders (OWLs). OWLs received training through a PowerPoint presentation 1 week prior to freshman orientation (see Faculty/Staff Resources tab at goodwork.bloomu.edu). Most OWLs led discussions with groups of 25 to 35 incoming freshmen.

Workbook. A workbook with sections dedicated to each role (student, person, citizen) was created to help the OWLs guide incoming undergraduates through the corresponding workshops. Sections began with a checklist of basic responsibilities regarding each role (see Table 1: “Basic Responsibilities” for examples). It was noted in the workbook that fulfilling these basic responsibilities lays the foundation for pursuing the three *Es* of good work. Each section ended with a series of thought-provoking questions and activities designed to encourage workshop attendees to reflect upon their pursuit of good work (See Table 1: “Good Work Reflection”). A copy of the workbook is available under the Faculty/Staff Resources tab at goodwork.bloomu.edu.

Website. A corresponding website (goodwork.bloomu.edu) was created as a way to inventory, package, and market campus-based resources to help undergraduates fulfill their basic responsibilities and pursue good work. One page of the website was dedicated to each role. Each page listed the basic responsibilities that were included in the workbook. In addition, each basic responsibility was linked to at least one on-campus or online resource (see Table 1: “On-campus Resources” for examples). Each page also included definitions of good work for that role as well as the same thought-provoking questions and activities from the workbook.

Workshops. The three 1-hour GoodWork-inspired freshman orientation workshops were interspersed with other workshops and activities throughout the day. All students completed the “Good Work as a Student” workshop first. OWLs started with an introduction to the three roles: student, person, and citizen. Then, they introduced the concept of good work and provided definitions of each of the three *Es*—excellence, ethics, and engagement. OWLs acknowledged that pursuing good work in all three roles takes a conscious effort and sustained practice in order to achieve an appropriate balance. Following this introduction, OWLs guided incoming undergraduates through the inventory of their basic responsibilities as students as listed in the workbooks. Then they revealed the BU Good Work Initiative website, which provided links to available campus resources related to each basic student responsibility. OWLs shared stories about their own academic

challenges as students, as well as on-campus resources they found useful. OWLs ended the session by guiding the first-year undergraduates through the thought-provoking good work reflection exercises included in the workbook (see Table 1: “Good Work Reflection”). Some OWLs also shared personal narratives regarding finding a major that matched their abilities, as well as a major in which they found meaning and purpose.

During the second workshop, “Good Work as a Person,” OWLs asked incoming undergraduates to think about how prepared they were to meet their basic responsibilities as persons (see Table 1). The OWLs reminded their peers about the good work website to learn about campus-based and online resources aimed at helping them to fulfill these basic personal obligations. The session ended with OWLs encouraging the incoming undergraduates to reflect on what it means to do good work as a person through the exercises in the workbook. Some OWLs also shared personal narratives about cultivating positive traits and using these traits to contribute to something beyond themselves.

The final workshop, “Good Work as a Citizen,” focused on helping undergraduates inventory their basic responsibilities as citizens of the university and the town, learn about campus-based resources designed to help them fulfill their basic civic responsibilities, and reflect on what it means to do good work as citizens (see Table 1). OWLs informed the incoming undergraduates that our university members work hard to understand and respect the values of all community members. OWLs discussed some of the challenges they faced as they learned to live well with others in our community. First-year undergraduates were advised to keep in mind their own value priorities, while also adhering to the three *Es* of good citizenship.

Results and Discussion

An assessment of first-year undergraduates’ satisfaction with each of the three workshops revealed median responses of 8 (1 *low*, 10 *high*) and modal responses of 10 for each. Incoming undergraduates also reported one thing they took away from the series of workshops that would help them as they began their freshman year. In order from most to least frequent, approximately 80% of responses included at least one of the following five themes: understanding basic responsibilities; gaining knowledge of the three *Es* of good work; learning about campus-based resources; needing to balance roles of student, person, and citizen; and providing an opportunity for self-reflection. Only 1.5% of first-year undergraduates reported finding no value in attending the workshops.

In summary, we sought to collaborate with the Offices of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to empower our undergraduates with the knowledge and resources to pursue good work as students, persons, and citizens. We developed a summer assignment, workbook, website, and series of freshman orientation workshops to motivate and support our first-year undergraduates’ pursuit of excellence, ethics, and engagement. While we acknowledge that these are substantial topics of conversation for first-year undergraduates, we believe that such discussions

and self-reflection set an appropriate tone and send an important message as they transition to the culture of higher education. If we truly seek to educate for excellence, ethical understanding, and engagement in one’s work, then the conversation must begin early and be ongoing. As the BU Good Work Initiative grows, we look forward to integrating more opportunities for self-reflection into the curriculum, academic advisement, and extracurricular programming across the four years of undergraduate study.

References

Gardner, H., Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Damon, W. (2001). *GoodWork: When excellence and ethics meet*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Johnson, J. A., & Duncan, M. K. (2013). Using the GoodWork™ model to introduce first-year students to the expectations of academia. *Journal of College Orientation and Transition*, 21(1), 88-92.

TABLE 1

Content Overview of Good Work Workbook and Website

	Basic Responsibilities	On-campus Resources	Good Work Reflection
Role as Student	Time management Writing papers Speaking with advisor Understand career options Academic integrity	Academic Coaches Writing Center Academic Advisement Career Development Center Dean of Students Office	<i>Excellent:</i> Determine and build on academic strengths <i>Ethical:</i> Learn to uphold academic integrity of the university <i>Engaged:</i> Seek meaning and pleasure in academic pursuits
Role as Person	Managing diet Managing exercise Disease prevention Drug/alcohol choices Managing stress/anxiety Managing finances	Dietician/Counseling Center Fitness Center Student Health Center DAWN Office Counseling Center Financial Aid/Student Employment	<i>Excellent:</i> Determine and build on signature character strengths <i>Ethical:</i> Learn to use strengths to contribute to something beyond self <i>Engaged:</i> Use strengths to create positive experiences each day
Role as Citizen	Knowing mission/values Knowing campus traditions Abiding by university rules Abiding by town laws Respecting diversity Volunteering time	Strategic Planning Athletics and Volunteerism Policies and Procedures Town website Clubs, Organizations, speakers SOLVE Office	<i>Excellent:</i> Determine and build on signature values <i>Ethical:</i> Use strengths to elevate other members of the community <i>Engaged:</i> Seek meaning and pleasure in serving others

Note: For a complete listing of basic responsibilities and corresponding on-campus resources, visit goodwork.bloomu.edu.