



Executive Summary
2011 BGS Summer Survey Series

Results compiled by
Iliyana Kuneva & Daniel Gross,
BGS Interns

Please note that for the purposes of this report survey data has been combined for both the junior and senior focus groups except otherwise noted. Percentages throughout the report are based on total number of students who took survey one and survey two.

Survey One: *First Impressions*

Survey one provided BGS with valuable feedback on member recognition and benefits as well as the BGS website and communicating with new members. Students were also asked to reflect on the invitation process and share their reasons for which they accepted membership.

In the past three years, students' awareness of the Society has steadily increased.¹ However, a significant 68% of all focus group participants² said they were not aware of the Society before they were invited to join. Survey results from this year show that the trend "the bigger the school, the less known BGS is" remains. However, when comparing last year's results to this year's, it can be seen that awareness of BGS in schools of 15,000 or more has increased.³ However, larger schools are not the only place where BGS struggles to be known. Even at schools with less than 15,000 students, the BGS name is not well-known. This responsibility would seem to fall on individual chapters, but the Central Office must provide the correct resources for the different chapters to utilize.

Furthermore, the majority of students do not understand the value of BGS membership at the point of invitation. They receive so many invitations for honor societies that it is hard for them to see the differences between each one. Emphasizing professionalism, exclusivity, and formality during the invitation process is a good way for BGS to differentiate itself from other honorary organizations.

The top three reasons for accepting membership which were selected by juniors and seniors are "the honor and prestige," "the recognition for my hard work," "to put on my resume." When asked how members can be better recognized for their achievement, the majority said they would like to receive more encouragement from faculty. The majority of focus group participants belong to generation Y. This is a generation which craves for personal attention. That is why it is not surprising that students would like to receive personal congratulations from their professors.

¹ From 26% in 2008 to 32% in 2011.

² Percentage based on a total of 1,001 focus group participants who took survey one.

³ Last year 22% of students in schools of 15,000 or more said they were aware of BGS before being invited to join. This year 28% of students in bigger schools said they knew about BGS before receiving their invitation.

Reflecting upon the invitation process to BGS, most members were invited to join through traditional mail and email.⁴ It is interesting to note that 22% of juniors vs. 42% of seniors were invited through a tapping ceremony. Also, 41% of juniors in mid-size schools vs. 52% of seniors were invited by a professor or advisor. Tapping ceremonies clearly positively influence students' decision to join and address many concerns of students including: making the invitation process more formal to better represent the honor of BGS, making the invitation process more public, and receiving more encouragement from faculty.

In terms of benefits, students are most likely to identify themselves as BGS members on resumes and interviews as well as take advantage of the various discount offers. Like previous years, product discounts and test prep discounts remain the most popular discount offers.

Many students explore the BGS website to help them either make a decision whether to join or to learn more about the Society. The BGS website is often the first impression that students have of the Society upon receiving their invitation. It is paramount that the website sends a clear message to BGS's current members and potential ones as well. One member of the junior focus group put it well, "[The website] looks too traditional and not as progressive as the students using it."

When it comes to communicating with new members, most would like to be contacted via email and social networking websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn. There has been an increased interest in communicating via LinkedIn.⁵ This is not surprising since members are looking for professionalism and LinkedIn conveys that professionalism. Scholarships, networking events, and job opportunities are still the most welcome information from the Society to its members.

⁴ 34% of 1,001 students who took survey one were invited through traditional mail and 32% were invited through email.

⁵ 80% of juniors and 84% of seniors who are on LinkedIn would like to be contacted through the BGS LinkedIn group.

Survey Two: Post-Graduation Plans

The second survey focused heavily on members' life after their undergraduate education, specifically their job and graduate school search. BGS wants to serve and assist its members as they transition into a new chapter of their life. The survey also asked members to identify important considerations concerning their higher education and future employment.

Survey two began by asking participants to identify their top three concerns regarding their finish to their undergraduate education. Their three concerns selected were: "job searching," "deciding what to do right after school," and "professional or entrance exams." This is great news for BGS because the Society provides solutions for most of these concerns already -- *CareerCentral* for members' concerns regarding their job search and discounts on common test preparation materials to help members prepare for their professional and entrance exams.

Almost all BGS members realize the importance of having a job or internship related to their anticipated field before they complete their undergraduate education. This directly reflects members' perception that having such a job or internship better prepares them for their entrance into the professional world by providing them with hands-on experience, improving their confidence in their work, and gaining work-related skills that decrease training time.

Networking is becoming increasingly important in our modern world and BGS members recognize that. Even so, most members said their current perspective on networking is that they understand its importance, but do not do it as much as they should. Members' second most popular perspective is that they understand its importance and do so whenever there is an opportunity. Students said their best networking experiences happened at an organization's networking or alumni event or at a private social event. BGS could utilize its alumni chapters' events to show current members that membership extends beyond the university and is truly a lifetime benefit. Also, due to members' increasing use of social networks such as LinkedIn, the Society should emphasize its LinkedIn group as a networking tool as well.

Members' awareness of *CareerCentral* has grown again,⁶ yet that awareness level has not reached 50%. However, we must keep in mind that these are new members. Even though awareness of *CareerCentral* has grown students' willingness to use the resource has not changed much. There is a gap between the amount of juniors planning to use it during their job search

⁶ 28% of last year's focus group participants were aware of CareerCentral compared to 45% this year.

and the seniors willing to use it.⁷ BGS has to find a way to make *CareerCentral* as effective as or more effective than members' university Career Centers if it wants to see use of *CareerCentral* increase.

When thinking about their future employment considerations, members see good compensation and opportunities for promotion and advancement as most important. These were followed by maintaining a good work-life balance and job security. Members were also asked about their short and long term career goals. Their top two short term goals were to gain experience in their field and find a job they enjoy. Their top two long term goals were to maintain a good work-life balance and earn a high salary.

The majority of BGS members plan to pursue a graduate degree, mainly an MBA. However, there are students interested in other degrees. It would of value to the Society to promote Masters in Accounting programs and JD programs as well because those are the second and third most sought after degrees behind an MBA. There was a striking difference between when students plan to obtain these degrees though. More than one-third of juniors⁸ said they would pursue their graduate degree immediately following their undergraduate education. On the other hand, only 27% of seniors said they would pursue theirs immediately following their undergraduate education.

Fewer and fewer BGS members have experience with graduate school fairs, whether they are traditional or virtual. This raises the question, how can the Central Office get students excited about their own virtual graduate school fair? An opening explanation of how a virtual graduate school fair works might be a starting point since many students have never participated in one. The Central Office might even provide some tips on what kind of information to leave with graduate school representatives and resources students should have available as they navigate the graduate school fair.

⁷ 47% of juniors and 39% of seniors plan to use CareerCentral in their job search.

⁸ 36% of juniors