

WORK DUTY PHILOSOPHY

by Dawn Gauslin

As mentioned earlier, the University of the Nations operates by a live-learn philosophy, whereby students and staff live, work and learn together in a community context. Just as in a family, all members share in the practical chores, everyone in the U of N community is involved in doing work that benefits the total community. Usually, about two hours per day of the students' schedule is allotted for work duties. School staff generally spend many more hours in work per day than that, but their areas of focus are often geared more toward serving the school itself, such as preparing and grading assignments, meeting with students one-on-one, planning calendar events, etc.

It is true that through the student work duties, practical jobs in areas such as the office, kitchen, housekeeping and maintenance get done, so that people don't have to be hired for these roles and student fees can be kept to a minimum. But there is a much greater benefit from student work duties: the formal and informal learning that takes place through staff-student apprenticeship relationships. This can be a key context for staff (both school and base staff) to encourage student in areas of diligence, stewardship, accountability, etc., but this needs to be done in a context of relationship and not through rules or control. And remember, you only have authority to preach what you practice! If school and base staff will take seriously this opportunity to influence and interact with students, as well as inviting students to give input into their lives, the result can be greater personal character development on the part of both. But work duties should never be used by the staff as a tool of the flesh to try to do the work of the Spirit in another person's life!

There are two major side benefits to having students provide the major work force: 1) as students take on a greater sense of responsibility for the campus facilities and equipment, the overall cleanliness and tidiness is maintained at a high standard, and 2) teamwork in the work duty context allows opportunity for important relationship bonds to form. If everyone works whole-heartedly, everyone will benefit from the outcome and God will be well represented by our efforts. In the process, we are committed to doing God's work God's way, according to the first guiding principle for this chapter.

In order for people to enjoy their work, they should be given as much choice and room for initiative as possible. There are different kinds of people--morning people and night people; people with different kinds of gifts and motivations. Some may be really good at doing one thing, but they may hate doing it. They may want to take on something in a totally new area. Some may prefer a team job like working in the kitchen on food preparation, whereas others may prefer cleaning toilets so they can have some time alone to think and pray while doing their work. A father might want to take an early morning job so he can do it together with his son, such as one dad who volunteered one quarter to raise and lower the flags of the nations each day at the Kona, Hawaii U of N campus.

Generally, with the Field-based LTSs, we distribute all the work duties through a group process. We count the number of students available to do work duties and write down that many jobs on a

large white board, with a space beside each job to fill in someone's name.¹ Everyone is expected to work the same number of hours per week,² though the time of day and distribution of work may vary. We go through each category and explain what the job entails. If the job can be done at any time of day, we note that; or if it must be done at a set time or in a team context, we note that. Then we go back through the list and ask for volunteers. The first person to raise his or her hand gets the job. It often ends up being a really fun process, as people race to get the jobs they want. In distributing the work through this corporate process, people are given the motivating power of choice, but everyone understands that all the jobs must be filled.

One thing that is very important is making sure that the requirements and desired outcomes for all of the jobs are clear. People need to understand what a job well done should look like. Because of the diversity of backgrounds our students come from, this may involve training people in the necessary skills or physically demonstrating by example what the end results should be.

At the same time, we need to encourage people to take initiative, as long as the job gets done to the standard required. Personal ownership greatly increases motivation. In making space for ideas and doing things in new ways, we reinforce the second guiding value for this chapter--YWAM's visionary nature--at a grassroots level. In the process, we may discover much better and more efficient ways of completing the job. If we just say, "do it that way because it's always been done that way," we violate our own values and deflate individual motivation.

It is also important to follow up a week or so into the school to make sure that the amount of time estimated to do the job was accurate. If you discover that some students are consistently having to work much longer than others, there should be a redistribution. It is also suggested that you set a time mid-way in the school to rotate jobs, so that there is justice for all. It will be helpful if the person on your staff who coordinates the work duties is someone with good people skills, a creative problem solver, and a person who models leadership as servanthood by being approachable, positive and open to receive input.

¹There may be a few jobs which require specific skills such as plumbing, translation, computer skills, etc. where we contact individual students with those skills in advance, to see if they would be willing to do that job.

²Each YWAM/U of N location may have differing guidelines for individual situations such as moms with young children. With the LTS, we desire to include everyone in the sense of family/community. We don't assign jobs to mothers of young children, but we encourage them to volunteer to help out when they see things within their capacity to do, such as baking at home, collating handouts, etc. In this way, they feel more integrated into the community and others appreciate their initiative to do what they can. We also encourage the involvement of older children in work that will aid the whole community. When we were pioneering the U of N Campus in Tonga, even the little kids got involved in the process by picking up nails, and it made the victory of moving onto the land their personal victory as well!