# **Campus Life and Student Involvement Executive Summary**

Four undergraduate Student Learning Analysts (SLAs) from various majors working for the Bowling Green State University (BGSU) Office of Academic Assessment conducted virtual focus groups to gather information on Campus Life and Student Involvement. The SLAs collaborated, developed questions and a protocol, recruited participants, and facilitated four focus groups with a total of 28 participants. Participant demographic data are as follows: 82.14% (n=23) self-identified as female, and 17.86% (n=5) self-identified as male. Of the participants, 75.00% (n=21) self-identified as White, 21.43% (n=6) self-identified as African American/Black, and 3.57% (n=1) self-identified as Native American/Filipino. Participants represented various colleges and majors. After the focus groups, the SLAs transcribed and coded recordings. The steps in the analysis process included: 1) open coding, 2) focused coding, and 3) identifying themes and subthemes. Five major themes emerged with corresponding subthemes, and they are detailed below:

## Opportunities – Students shared about the chances that they have to get involved at BGSU.

1. Exploratory – Students talked about getting out of their comfort zone, trying new things, and meeting new people.
2. Interests – Students talked about their involvement in student organizations and things that they are passionate about.
3. Scholarship – Students mentioned how their scholarship programs provided requirements for involvement.
4. Promotion – Participants discussed how students are made aware of involvement opportunities through social media, email, Campus Update, or Campus Fest.

A participant talked about how there are a lot of organizations for involvement opportunities at BGSU:

*I feel like campus is just so big. Especially, with how many clubs and orgs [there] are on campus, you really can find a club or org of pretty much any interest you could possibly have. I've been to a few Campus Fests... I was surprised by how many, like, niche subjects...* *There's so many people on campus that you can find individuals who also share interests and just build up a core private group of people to go and do those interests with. I feel like college is a big place where you develop a lot of your interest and personality. Because there's so many options, and you don't have the confines of, like, parents or peers, in the sense of, like, high school peers and a lot of those social clicks to kind of restrict you. It's just really beneficial, I would say,* *in developing more of yourself to get involved in. Especially here at BGSU, where there's so many people. (T2, L418-431)*

## 2. Community – Students discussed being included and supported by others on campus, as well as being part of something meaningful to them.

1. People – Students talked about individuals, such as friends, peers, faculty, etc., that supported or were a part of their involvement.
2. Inclusion – Participants discussed being comfortable expressing themselves and feeling included on campus.

This student talked about how being involved can help students feel part of the BGSU community:

*I think it's very important for students to be involved...It's great because [it can] make you feel ...like BGSU feels like a place that [you] know, and... do, like, schoolwork and stuff. So, [being involved] will make it feel like… a second home in a way, or uh, make it a place that you're sometimes happy to go to school. (T3, L284-289)*

## 3. Personal and Professional Development – Students talked about skills that are gained or goals that they identified as beneficial for their academic, career, and personal lives.

1. Skills – Participants talked about leadership, communication, teamwork, and social skills that they gained or used during their college experience.
2. Networking – Students discussed the importance of talking to people in their chosen field that can support career opportunities.
3. Goals – Participants shared academic, career, and personal objectives that they want to achieve and have achieved.

A student emphasized the impact of their out of class experiences on their career goals and personal aspirations:

*Outside of class experiences have helped with my career and personal goals. So, I've gotten to [be part of] research... labs, and that wasn't a class requirement. That was something I did in my free time, and I'm able to put on my resume that I did this research and presented at the Center for Undergraduate Research [Symposium]. So, that's a great, like, resume builder. And with dance, I quit in high school, and it was one of my goals to get back into it in college. I've been able to do that through some of the outlets we have on campus. (T3, L404-409)*

## 4. Balance – Students discussed being able to manage their time and involvement in academic, work, social, and personal responsibilities.

1. Priorities – Participants talked about managing time and figuring out what is most important and putting time into that.
2. Boundaries – Participants discussed setting limits on involvement to help them stay focused and be able to manage student life.
3. Health and Well-Being – Students shared the impact of involvement on their physical and emotional health.

This participant discussed the importance of getting involved while also having a balance between school priorities and taking breaks:

*... [You] have [to] balance your schoolwork [which] should take a bit of focus between studying for an exam or going out and doing a trivia night at [a] pub or something. You just have to look at it and say, 'Do I need a break right now? Or would it benefit me more to continue studying and whatnot?' It's important to get involved, but you also have to micromanage a bit with your school responsibilities. (T2, L287-294)*

## 5. Recommendations – Students provided suggestions for student organizations and events.

A participant provided a recommendation to help support students who are involved in or want to start up organizations:

*As someone who has started up two organizations this year, I'd say um, giving more support on the faculty side and maybe even just along the student orgs people side, to help these start-up [organizations] a little bit more... So, maybe providing more resources …[for] organizations ... If they could give us more information on how to start up, how you start marketing, and how to do all of those other things, it would be greatly beneficial. (T4, L376-387)*

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