# **Fall 2022 Engaged Learning Initiatives Executive Summary**

Bowling Green State University (BGSU) undergraduate Student Learning Analysts (SLAs) from the Office of Academic Assessment conducted this assessment project. The SLAs designed a focus group protocol to gain insight into engaged learning. The purpose was to gather information on students' outlook on learning, faculty use of engagement strategies, and availability of resources. The SLAs facilitated four focus groups with 16 participants from varying class standings and majors from four colleges. Out of the 16 participants, 68.75% identified as female (n=11), 12.5% identified as male (n=2), 12.5% identified as non-binary (n=2), and 6.25% identified as transgender male (n=1). From the race/ethnicity information participants provided, 68.75% self-reported their race/ethnicity as White (n=11), 18.75% as Asian (n=3), and 12.50% as Hispanic (n=2). Zoom was used as the online meeting platform, and the focus groups were recorded. These recordings were then transcribed and analyzed. At the beginning of each focus group, the SLAs asked participants about their thoughts on engaged learning. Below is a summary of their responses.

Engaged Learning: *when students interact in classes with the help of instructors and take the knowledge they learned to other classes and life.*

The SLAs used a three-step coding process, which involved open coding, focus coding, and theme identification. Five themes with their corresponding subthemes emerged throughout these discussions and are highlighted below.

## **Motivation** – Students discussed preparation for their future careers and interests.

* 1. Future Career – Students discussed their passion for future fields and how they are learning information about them.
	2. Financial/Scholarships – Students were motivated by maintaining scholarships and the responsibility of paying for classes.
	3. Getting the Degree – Students talked about being motivated to complete their future degrees.

A participant explained how paying for classes motivated them to learn:

 *...My motivation for learning during my college experience is that I'm paying for these classes I am taking... so I want to make the most out of what I'm doing, even if they're, like, Gen Eds... I feel like that's a driving force to be motivated for learning because, like, I chose to be here. I'm choosing to pay for this, and I've chosen most of my classes. (T2, L42-52)*

## **Student Initiative** – Students discussed what they are currently doing or have done to learn effectively.

* 1. Student Preparation – Participants talked about the role of a student and what students are doing outside of class to hold themselves accountable.
	2. Strategies – Students discussed how they studied and engaged in tutoring.
	3. Involvement – Participants discussed how they engaged in the classroom by having discussions, taking notes, asking questions, and making connections between courses and life.

One student mentioned how reviewing past lessons was essential:

*When it comes to my career, technology is constantly evolving. By reviewing old things, I can get the foundations down … and learn new things through those same computer programs. It's essential for me to continue to review, so that I don't lose the skills I may not be practicing all the time, just in case my job or internship asks me to apply them. And [if] there's a new updated version that I have to relearn, I'd rather be relearning a little bit [at a time] than the whole thing. (T4, L142-147)*

## **Course Elements** – Participants discussed critical aspects of courses that assisted with learning.

* 1. Course Structure – Students talked about how the class was run and resources offered (e.g. office hours and study aids).
	2. Instructor Connections – Participants talked about instructors (i.e., professors and TAs) being personable, checking in with students, and sharing real world experiences and examples.
	3. Transparency – Students discussed the importance of clear communication with professors, professor feedback, and honest expectations provided by professors.

Below is a summary of what a participant described active learning to be:

*It is not just sitting there and listening to a lecture; it is doing activities and making the content more interesting. (T1, L15)*

## **Disadvantages –** Students talked about what limits them from learning in their classes and studying.

* 1. BGSU Structural – Participants discussed the impact of advising and access to services.
	2. Mental Health – Students discussed how depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges can negatively impact learning.

One student explained the difficulty of receiving support for mental health challenges:

*One thing that is hindering my educational experience and some of my friends...[is] severe depression. [My friends] have applied for accessibility and they're basically asking for [something similar to] academic probation required study tables. My friends are asking because they really need extra structure as motivation. They have mental health disorders; it's not that they don't want to be motivated, it's that it's really difficult... I need more routine, structure, and I need that in the forms of accessible study tables. [The structure would be in] required study hours and ...recorded as a part of my education. (T4, L 307-319)*

## **Recommendations –** Participants provided suggestions for professors and BGSU.

A student recommended prioritizing mental health:

*I think making sure BGSU and or professors encourage students [to] take care of themselves first and foremost because it took me forever to learn my mental health comes before my classes. Because if my mental health is down, my classes are going to go downhill with it. I've had, uh, a few professors in the past tell me, 'I know a lot of ... students are broke, but by all means, buy food before ... supplies.’ And just knowing that [they were] saying it was okay if we missed the class as long as we told [them]… helped me gain respect for my professors. Realizing that they cared about me, and that my mental health came first. (T4, L364-371)*

For more information about this assessment project, please contact Dr. Jessica M. Turos, Associate Director of the BGSU Office of Academic Assessment, at jmturos@bgsu.edu.

**Engaged Learning Infographics Summary**

