## **Academics Post-COVID-19 Executive Summary**

Five undergraduate Student Learning Analysts (SLAs) from the Bowling Green State University (BGSU) Office of Academic Assessment from a variety of majors conducted focus groups to gather information about students’ expectations for academics and their classes post-COVID-19 at BGSU. The SLAs collaborated and developed questions and protocol, recruited participants, and facilitated five focus groups with a total of 35 participants. Participant demographic data are as follows: 66% (n=23) self-identified as female, 31% (n=11) self-identified as male, 3% (n=1) self-identified as non-binary; 69% (n=24) self-identified as White/Caucasian, 11% (n=4) self-identified as African American/Black, 8% (n=3) self-identified as Hispanic, 3% (n=1) self-identified as Asian, 3% (n=1) self-identified as Asian/Korean, 3% (n=1) self-identified as Chinese, and 3% (n=1) self-identified as Hispanic/White. 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. Four major themes emerged, and the corresponding subthemes are detailed below:

## **Adaptation**: Students discussed the outcomes of their transition to COVID-19.

* 1. Mindset: Students talked about altering the way they thought or felt about operating in this environment and emotional reactions.
  2. COVID-19 Habits: Participants shared their experience with the transition to regulations, including compliance or noncompliance, and comfort level with regulations (e.g., wearing masks or social distancing).
  3. Professor Technological Literacy: Participants talked about the way professors adapted well, adapted over time, and/or did not adapt to technology.
  4. Student Technology: Students discussed the learning curve in response to online learning and access to resources.
  5. Self-Paced Learning: Students discussed their active role in learning, including how they had to change the way they learned and their increased individual responsibility for learning.
  6. Skills: Participants talked about the evolution of gaining or losing personal habits, including leadership, motivation, organization, attention span, time management, and flexibility.
  7. Blended Work-Life Boundaries: Students discussed the coexistence between academics and non-academic activities in students’ personal environment and its impact.

One student introduced how their life has changed as a result of COVID-19: *I feel like the way I even think about going through my school day is almost completely different. I used to go to the library all the time and it could be because I live further away, but then also I don't feel as comfortable being around a whole bunch of people. So, I'm not going to the library nearly as often. I think I went there once since we came back*. *(T2, L37-42)*

## **Academic Engagement**: Students discussed factors that affected participation, focus, flexibility, level of individual control, and interaction with course material inside and outside of class.

* 1. Online Format: Participants discussed their interaction, control, and academic progress with synchronous and asynchronous platforms.
  2. In-Person Format: Students talked about their interaction, control, and academic progress with traditional face-to-face experiences.
  3. Course Design: Students discussed how professors conducted class and incorporated course content and class size.
  4. Retention of Learning: Participants talked about their ability to learn and understand the material long-term and their study strategies for the overall outcome of learning.

One student talked about the importance of engaging with their classmates: *...One thing I learned about like how I learn in the classroom ... if I were to have been in the classroom, was how much it was important to just engage with my fellow students before and after class, especially my major. It's kind of on the smaller side and most of our classes you know everyone and everyone's pretty motivated, so you're able to talk with each other or if it's like the day of an exam you know exchange how you're feeling and things like that. (T5, L113-122)*

## **Concerns Without a Solution**: Students talked about past, present, or future challenges, but did not list a way for BGSU to support them.

* 1. COVID-19 Regulations in the Future: Students expressed concerns about how BGSU will handle future COVID-19 regulations and uncertainty about what the future holds.
  2. Mental Health Efforts: Students indicated they wanted more recognition for the importance of mental health, as well as modifications to the view of mental health crises and other emergencies.
  3. Professional Development: Students discussed the potential lack of preparation for future professional endeavors.
  4. Professor Relations: Students talked about expectations of understanding from professors, as well as wanting the ability to communicate personal issues to professors and BGSU in the future; however, no suggestions for how were provided.

One student discussed their uncertainty with COVID-19 regulations in the future: *… I don't know how much more they could be doing. Like I know that they're really cracking down on parties and stuff, but like they can't stop everybody. Um and they also have to be within I'm sure certain guidelines from the state. And they can't do much about if they're told that they can and can't do stuff. So, I think it's just about waiting to see how like the state and the government handles it, so that it will be easier for colleges in general to be able to handle it and get back to normal. (T4, L220-225)*

## **Suggestions with Solutions**: Students talked about past, present, or future challenges and gave ideas for how BGSU can support them in a general or specific way.

* 1. Courses: Students provided feedback on course format, course offerings, the academic calendar, and pass/fail options.
  2. Technology: Students offered suggestions for publishing lecture slides, improving campus Wi-Fi, and professor technological literacy.
  3. Transition to Normalcy: Students expressed their opinions for the ideal transition to the future and desire for more places open on campus.
  4. Health and Wellness: Student discussed their expectations for safe health practices on campus for both mental and physical health.
  5. Resources and Services: Students recommended new or increased programs, events, and services, as well as better advertisement for them.
  6. Professor Demands: Students discussed expectations for professor leniency and academic rigor both during COVID-19 and post-COVID-19.

One participant expressed their opinion of the previous, current, and future educational experience: *I'm going to start off by saying the previous academic system was not perfect, our current system isn't and the next one won't be either. But I really don't want to return to [the previous academic system] because it's inflexible, it's focused on one type of student, and I know again this has opened up so many opportunities for people who wouldn't normally have that opportunity for college and classes. I want to see a lot more incorporation of again those online options because we've learned how to do them effectively. There's a lot of research going on right now about what's working and what doesn't. And so, I think BG needs to take that step into the future or they're going to get left behind. (T3, L429-436)*

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