# **Spring 2022 Application of Learning Executive Summary**

Four 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 on how students apply skills and knowledge and adapt their learning. The SLAs collaborated, developed questions and a protocol, recruited participants, and facilitated four focus groups with a total of 15 participants. Participant demographic data are as follows: 67% (n=10) self-identified as female, 27% (n=4) self-identified as male and 7% (n=1) self-identified as non-binary. Of the participants, 20% (n=3) self-identified as African American/Black, 13% (n=2) self-identified as Asian, and 67% (n=10) self-identified as White/Caucasian. 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, and the corresponding subthemes are detailed below:

## Experiences **–** Students discussed things they have done that helped them transfer and adapt their learning.

* 1. Classes – Students discussed college and high school courses that they learned something in and how they have applied learning in new courses. They also talked about how courses built upon one another.
  2. Career Preparation – Students discussed applying outside of class experiences, such as internships, job shadowing, volunteering, and jobs, to their courses and applying what they learned in their courses to these real-world experiences.

One undergraduate student explained how their classes built off one another:   
*I think a lot of the classes I am taking as a freshman will act like building blocks for the classes I take* *later on in college*. (T2, L50-51)

## Skills and Traits –Students discussed abilities that helped them apply their learning.

* 1. Communication – Students talked about applying verbal and written communication skills to new situations.
  2. Professionalism – Students discussed skills gained to support their careers and the future.
  3. Creative Thinking – Students talked about using creative ways to explore new situations.
  4. Time Management – Students talked about organizing and managing their time.

A student summarized the way prior skills and traits helped them transfer knowledge:   
*I’ve [learned prior skills] by combining similar skills and just figuring out a way that they work together*. (T4, L104-105)

## Learning Strategies –Students talk about things and techniques that helped them adapt their learning.

* 1. Online Resources – Students discussed using YouTube videos and social media to help them learn content.
  2. Study Methods – Students talked about using memory aids, repetition, trial and error, and routine techniques and processes.
  3. Purpose – Students discussed the importance of knowing why they are learning something to aid in their success.

One student noted a learning strategy they used when have trouble understanding content:   
*… and I also sometimes watch YouTube videos on things if I don't understand to give more direction.* (T3, L186-187)

## People –Participants discussed individuals who have guided their learning and promoted transfer.

* 1. Family – Students discussed parents and other family who helped them apply their learning.
  2. Professionals – Students discussed how professors and experts in the field helped them apply their learning.
  3. Self – Students talked about the importance going off their own judgment, unconsciously applying skills, using prior knowledge and experience, and reflection.

This student explained how their parent had transferable knowledge from past experiences that was applied to later learning:

*...growing up they just always seemed to know something about any topic I could think of. And it wasn’t necessarily that they had, like, background or experience in that topic. There were always just able to figure out things based off things they already knew and just sort of what's common things between certain other topics.* (T2, L150-153)

## Recommendations –Students provided suggestions to help them apply and transfer their learning.

* 1. Resources – Students focused on ways that resources could be more readily available to them on campus.
  2. Academics – Students discussed how BGSU could help them transfer and apply their knowledge in academic settings.

One student recommended: *... I think maybe having, like, a one-credit hour course where you learn, like, how to communicate with professors via email, what’s a great way to build a resume … one credit hour sports or activities where we can just be physical once a week to, like, help support the way that we think. Because we think ... our academics is just, like… we have to take this next test or write this next essay. And it's really stressful, so it would be nice to have a class where we could just, like, exist in it. And maybe even learning something without having to just feel like we’re constantly cramming information and just like constantly learning just to get the A.* (T3, L365- 374)

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](mailto:jmturos@bgsu.edu).